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Foreigners in the Łódź labour market. Between integration and exclusion – doctoral thesis written under the academic supervision of Professor Jolanta Grotowska-Leder, PhD

The subject of the research constituting the dissertation's empirical basis is the Łódź labour market for foreigners and the functioning of foreigners on the Łódź labour market in terms of their social integration and exclusion. The analysis framework also determines the possibilities of using Łódź's resources as a potential workplace for foreigners.

The following main research areas were established: the scale and dynamics of the presence of foreigners in the Łódź labour market; the legislative-legal and practical aspects of employment opportunities for foreigners in the Łódź labour market; the micro-structural characteristics of the functioning of foreigners working in Łódź; and the non-professional aspects of the functioning in the city space of foreigners working in Łódź.

The empirical basis for the analyses encompassed quantitative data from statistics on the scale and dynamics of immigration Łódź, data on the legal aspects of residency and employment of foreigners and qualitative data from individual in-depth interviews (IDI) conducted with foreigners working in Łódź (on the topic of their experiences in the Łódź labour market and, more broadly, their organisation of life in Poland, as well as their life plans in this respect) and from focus group interviews (FGI) with employers and representatives of labour market institutions. The research was carried out in a qualitative methodological paradigm with triangulation of qualitative and quantitative techniques in the period of 2017-2019.

The research yielded 45 individual interviews with foreigners working in Łódź and residing in Poland for a minimum of 3 years and 3 group interviews with employers and labour market representatives.

The issues addressed in the paper fall within the field of social sciences: sociology, social policy and economics, and are related to four main theoretical areas:

- the concept of push and pull factors;
- the concept of segmentation and a dual labour market;
- the concept and typology of careers and jobs in line with or below qualifications;
- the concept of foreigner exclusion and integration.

Based on the subject literature, the research featured an assumption that foreigners in Łódź integrate into the host society to varying degrees, experience exclusion, and that these processes depend to a large extent on the following: the country of origin; employment in the primary or secondary segment of the labour market; the knowledge of the Polish language; having a Polish partner/spouse; the type of professional career; and on individual features, personality traits, temperament and needs.

The thesis consists of two parts: theoretical and empirical.

Chapter 1 discusses the characteristics of migration processes, which include an interdisciplinary identification of definition issues, selected migration theories and a review of the most important research.

Chapter 2 discusses aspects of the foreigner labour market, taking into account the sociological perspective of selected labour market theories, the occupational mobility of foreigners and the career typology concept.

Chapter 3 provides a definition framework for integration, taking into account multiculturalism and inter-culturalism, concepts and dimensions of foreigner integration, and social exclusion, including its definition.

The second part of the thesis (Chapters 4 to 9) describes empirical findings, starting with methodological analyses. Chapter 4 conceptualises the research, describes the research process, characterises the selected research methods and techniques, and describes the selection of the research sample and specifies its characteristics.

Chapter 5 emphasises the socio-economic and legislative conditions for the functioning of foreigners in Poland, determines the legislative and legal aspects of employing foreigners and reveals the scale and dynamics of migration to Poland, Łódź and the voivodeship, characterising the functioning of the Łódź labour market.

The next four chapters (6-9) summarise the results of the analysis of the collected research material. The chapters were organised in an issue-based manner, corresponding to the course of the analyses processes. The thesis is concluded with a summary of the results of the conducted analyses in the form of conclusions and end.

The conducted analyses indicate that the issue of social integration and exclusion of foreigners is extremely complex, multifaceted and depends on many factors. The following most important areas of functioning were analysed and characterised: the labour market; careers; resources held; education; family relationships; non-family relationships: informal and formal (including institutional).

Foreigners are by definition included in the group of people at risk of social exclusion, and the research carried out confirmed that they experience exclusion in various areas of life. Social exclusion in the normative, material and physical areas was experienced by some groups of interviewees, and its occurrence depended on the country of origin. Foreigners from Ukraine are the group that most frequently experiences social exclusion. They experience marginalisation or exclusion to varying degrees and intensities, and this depends primarily on their position in the labour market. Foreigners taking up under-qualified employment in the secondary segment of the labour market are at greatest risk of exclusion. The second group of interviewees at risk of exclusion are foreigners with visible physical characteristics – they are the most likely to face discriminatory behaviour based on their race and skin colour.

Based on an analysis of subject literature concerning adaptation and integration processes as well as the results of empirical findings, four types of integration strategies adopted by foreigners were defined: *not integrated*, *not interested in integration*, *integrating*, *integrated*. The dominant strategy chosen by foreigners in Łódź was that the *integrating* strategy, which characterised foreigners who declared satisfaction with their employment and remuneration, employed in the primary labour market; communicating in Polish and/or learning the Polish language. The factors that favour integration are as follows: desire to improve own qualifications, participation in courses and trainings; communicative knowledge of the Polish language, establishment of a relationship or family in a binary model with a Polish woman/man; having non-familial informal relationships with Poles; regular participation in the city's cultural and recreational life; declared interest in the socio-economic life of Poland and the need for activity for and participation in the local community.

The vast majority of interviewees stressed the importance of having stable, satisfying employment to meet material needs. Employment most often took the form of *impossible or difficult to achieve promotion in the country of origin* (in the labour market's primary segment) or a *job below qualifications* (in the labour market's secondary segment).

The motivations foreigners have when deciding to emigrate are most often educational, economic or family-related. A significant portion of respondents also emphasised the desire for self-development, travel and learning about new cultures as important decision-making factors. Łódź was rarely the city of destination chosen consciously and the choice was often determined by the location of a company offering lucrative employment conditions, family or partner considerations, the location of a university offering continuing education relative to the country of origin, and very often by chance, reinforced by positive relations with the existing migrant support networks.

One of the most important elements in attracting foreigners to the Łódź labour market is the appreciation and promotion of their language skills. Knowledge of foreign languages is an important asset on the Łódź market, especially for workers natively speaking the desired language groups (e.g.

French, Swedish, Dutch, Hebrew). For foreigner groups that find employment in the labour market's primary segment, knowledge of the Polish language is not a prerequisite for taking up employment and, as shown by the interviewees' responses, it is also not a prerequisite for a long-term residence in Łódź.

The most important factor pulling foreigners to the Łódź labour market according to employers and employment agencies, apart from competitive salaries, are the additional benefits offered by employers, in the form of housing, transport to and from work and amenities: e.g. sports cards, private medical care, etc.

The groups of the most important factors pushing foreigners out of the Łódź labour market according to employers and representatives of employment agencies, include an excessive waiting period for being granted a permit; the need to prove the inability to employ a Polish worker on the desired position (the so-called labour market test for selected groups of foreigners); being guided by subjective assessment and the unfavourable attitude of Łódź officials when issuing permits (especially to potential workers from the Arab-Muslim culture).

An important finding of the summarised research is the micro-structural perspective of foreigners, revealing the adopted integration strategies and the chosen strategies for functioning in the labour market. The identified areas of social exclusion can be an important strategic element in the decisions taken at local government level to implement solutions facilitating the adaptation and integration of foreigners in Łódź and in the region.

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