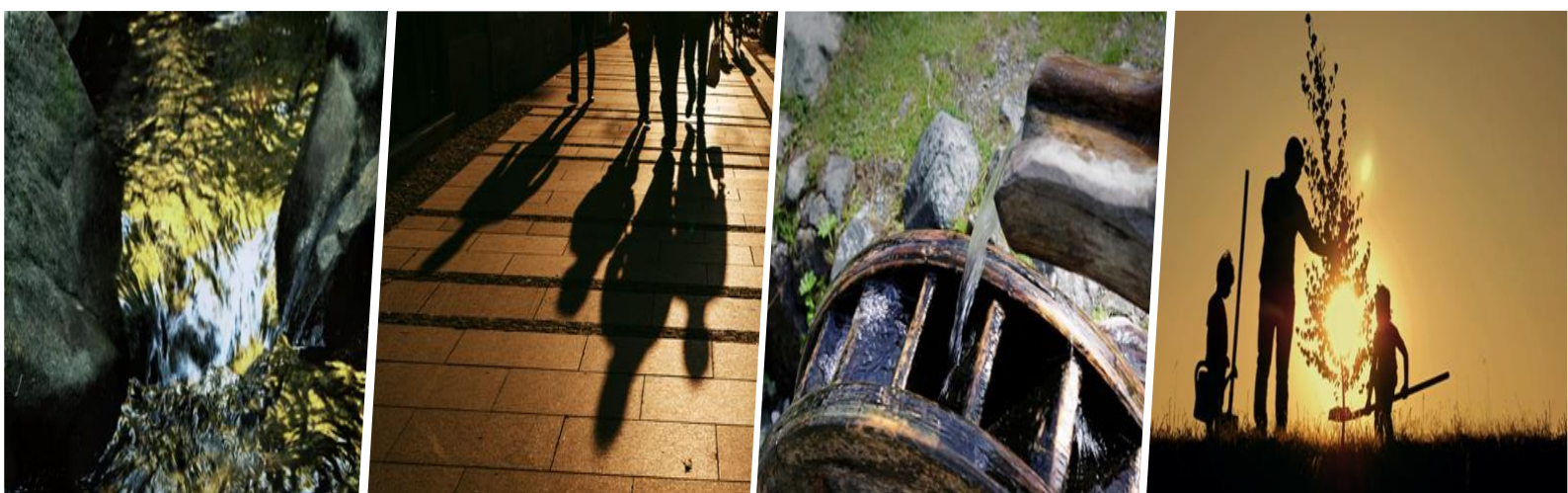# whole COMM

MIGRANT INTEGRATION IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

A whole-of-community approach to study post-2014 migrants' integration in small and medium-sized towns and rural areas

State of the art, concepts, theory and methodology

By

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Abstract

This working paper presents the rationale, theory and methods of the Whole-COMM project. Over the last few years, the EU has received unprecedented numbers of migrants and asylum seekers, often in an unorderly way. This has led to a growing immigrant presence in scarcely prepared small and medium-sized towns and rural areas (henceforth: SMsTRA). The way in which these local communities respond to this challenge will deeply shape the future of integration in Europe. Whole-COMM proposes to address these issues through an innovative whole-of-community (WoC) theoretical approach which conceives of migrant integration as a process of community-making that: takes place in specific local contexts characterised by distinct configurations of structural factors; is brought about by the interactions of multiple actors with their multilevel and multi-situated relations; and is open-ended and can result in either more cohesive or more fragmented social relations. In this Working Paper we first present the relevant background scientific literature, showing how research on local migration policy and policymaking processes has just begun to address the specificity of migration processes in SMsTRA, and how existing studies remain confined to either extreme cases or nationally based small samples of localities. Hence, in the second section we elaborate on the WoC theoretical approach by presenting a typology of SMsTRA and formulating specific hypotheses on integration policies, policymaking relationships and integration outcomes in each type of locality. In the third and last section we present our innovative case-selection strategy as well as the research methods and techniques employed to address the project's research questions.

Summary

List of Acronyms

EC – European Commission

EU – European Union

MLG – Multilevel governance

RQ – Research question

SF2005 – Share of foreign residents in 2005

SMsTRA – Small and medium-sized towns and rural areas

SQ – Research subquestion

UN2005 – Unemployment level in 2005

UN2014 – Unemployment level in 2014

VARNI – Variation in number of inhabitants between 2005 and 2014

VARUN – Variation in unemployment level between 2005 and 2014

WoC – Whole-of-community

WP – Work package

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Acknowledgement

Introduction

In the context of the so-called 'migration and refugee crisis', between 2014 and 2016, small and medium-sized towns and rural areas in Europe have received – either spontaneously or through the operation of national redistribution policies – an increasing number of migrants escaping from areas of political and humanitarian crises (see Box 1). Many of these local communities had been previously affected only marginally (if at all) by migrants' settlement and were therefore suddenly confronted with new challenges. Migrants' arrival and settlement took place in one of the most turbulent periods of recent European history, in a context characterised by increasing political polarization; the terrorist attacks in France, Belgium and Germany; and the consequences of the financial and fiscal crisis in many EU member states (particularly in Southern Europe). More recently, the Covid-19 crisis intervened as a powerful external shock influencing local integration dynamics of post-2014 migrants, having powerful and opposite effects on two sectors characterised by significant reliance on migrant workers and high territorial concentration in small and medium-sized towns and rural areas (henceforth: SMsTRA), namely agriculture/food processing (considered essential services) and tourism.

Box 1. Who are the 'post-2014 migrants'?

The Whole-COMM project, while studying integration policies and processes, focuses specifically on migrants who arrived in Europe (and non-EU countries) after 2014. This group of migrants is quite heterogeneous, but mostly comprises migrants who left from areas of political and humanitarian crises. In most Western European countries, the majority of post-2014 migrants entered the country as asylum seekers, after having reached Europe through the so-called Mediterranean route or the so-called Balkan route. A few years later, these asylum seekers have a variety of legal statuses in their destination countries. Some of them have been recognised as refugees, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection or beneficiaries of a national protection status. Others have had their asylum applications rejected and do not have any legal status (they are therefore rejected or 'failed' asylum seekers). Very few of them, especially in those countries with slow asylum procedures, are still asylum seekers in the narrow sense of being in ongoing procedures. In Eastern Europe (e.g. Poland) but also (to a minor extent) in countries like Spain and Portugal, asylum was nearly irrelevant as a channel in the last decade. However, some of these countries have also received relatively

large-scale inflows of unplanned, yet regular migrants from different unstable and conflict-ridden areas like Ukraine in the case of Poland and Venezuela in that of Spain. Migrants in these inflows are not required to obtain a visa to enter the Schengen zone for short periods. Although from an integration point of view, irregular cross-Mediterranean inflows and crisis-driven, visa-free arrivals are obviously not the same and are likely to raise different challenges, they have still affected many European localities over the same period, feeding the perception of an 'asylum crisis'. As to the non-EU countries analysed in the Whole-COMM project, in the time period analysed Canada mainly received resettled refugees, including government-assisted as well as privately sponsored refugees. Conversely, Turkey represents a key destination and transit country that has seen massive and unprecedented arrivals of post-2014 migrants, yet, because of the geographical limitation clauses applied to the Geneva Convention, the de facto refugee population there only has access to temporary legal statuses, i.e. temporary protection (applied to Syrians) and international protection (all non-Syrians).

Whole-COMM aims to study the policies eventually put in place in SMsTRA to support the integration of post-2014 migrants, their key drivers and their effects. In other words, it aims to understand what shapes, affects or enables migrants' integration into localities that, for their size and economic structure, are not generally regarded in the literature as key destinations of migration flows. These are not entirely new questions. Local integration policymaking and processes (or assimilation processes, in the United States) and outcomes have been analysed by a large number of scholars in Europe and other world regions. We argue, however, in the first section of this paper, that the existing literature suffers from a number of important limitations, which Whole-COMM aims to address. First and foremost, the academic scholarship on both integration policies and integration outcomes has so far largely focused on metropolises and big cities. Furthermore, while a few scholars have produced insights about local integration policymaking in SMsTRA, we still lack refined conceptualisations of local integration policies that are developed in response to different types of migration flows (and, particularly, in response to more recent mixed flows and arrivals of asylum seekers), across contexts with diverse structural, political and socio-cultural characteristics. We also know very little about how local integration policies connect with other 'outputs of local integration governance systems' (see Box 4 on page

11) which are also likely to influence migrants' integration, such as – as we will see in more depth below – local implementation practices, structures of support developed by civil society and resources eventually offered by the business sector, levels of politicisation of the integration issue etc. As to integration outcomes, we still know very little about the impact of local policies on public attitudes to integration in SMsTRA, but also about post-2014 migrants' integration experiences and their relations with other migrant groups already residing in the localities. Overall, while there is no doubt that immigrant integration takes place at the local level, scientific research still faces challenges in properly 'going local', i.e. in explaining how local integration policies affect local communities and the impact on migrants' integration trajectories and experiences.

Thus, in the second section of this paper, we elaborate our whole-of-community (WoC) approach to migrants' integration in SMsTRA. Defining 'integration' is a challenging task. Building upon, but also going beyond existing conceptualisations, we conceive of integration as a process of community-making rather than of mutual adjustment. Such a process of community-making is intended to be situated, i.e. to take place, in specific local contexts characterised by distinct configurations of structural factors (e.g. different local economies and labour markets, different demographic compositions and trends) and different levels of experience with socio-cultural diversity and historical relations with migrant-related groups. We also assume that this process is brought about by the interactions of the multiple actors – individuals, organisations, institutions and/or corporate entities – that shape the local community with their multilevel and multi-situated relations, networks, interests and resources.

In line with this approach, Whole-COMM conceptualises post-2014 arrivals as a watershed for local communities in SMsTRA, which had previously been exposed only to limited (if any) arrivals of asylum seekers and migrants for humanitarian reasons. We therefore ask first of all, *How do the various actors whose actions affect local communities decide, implement and/or act upon local immigrant integration policies?* And, second, with respect to the outcomes of these policies and responses: *How, i.e. through which causal mechanisms and processes, do local policies and other responses by local stakeholders to post-2014 migration flows contribute to producing different outcomes in terms of local communities' 'quality of social life'?*

In other words, we assume that the everyday implementation of integration policies and the interaction with the structures/networks of support and services for post-2014 migrants put forward by the market and civil society will result in an overall process of community-(re)making which can lead either to more cohesive social relations and positive attitudes or to societal fragmentation and hostility.

The third section of this paper, finally, illustrates the methodology through which we are going to explore these research questions, operationalising our WoC approach. First, the section illustrates our innovative case-selection procedure. To generate new comparative knowledge on integration policies and processes of different types of post-2014 migrants in SMsTRA in the EU and beyond, we adopt a truly cross-country/cross-locality comparative perspective. We initially selected 10 countries (eight in the EU and two non-EU countries) which hosted different types of post-2014 migrants. As we will see, these countries also present different types of national redistribution systems, that either impose or do not impose limits to asylum seekers' mobility. Within these countries, the project aims to select over 40 localities, following a diverse case-selection strategy, with the aim of generating a sample of localities including: a mix of small-sized towns, medium-sized towns and rural areas; a mix of localities with high and low experience with cultural diversity, and with vibrant or stagnant economic and demographic profiles; and a mix of progressive and conservative localities. The selection procedure also aims to cover the main territorial areas within each country.

The second part of Section 3 describes our research design, the different work packages in which the project is organized and the different methods of data collection and analysis that the project will use. Overall, Whole-COMM uses a mixed-methods approach, including qualitative, quantitative and quasi-experimental methods, where research results generated through different methods speak to each other. The combination of different methods is an innovation, both compared with existing research on both local integration policies – characterised by a persistent bias towards qualitative methods – and local integration outcomes, where quantitative approaches dominate. By conceptualising integration as a whole-of-community process, Whole-COMM therefore contributes to breaking methodological barriers and creates bridges across different research traditions.

In the conclusion of the paper, we summarise the key theoretical and methodological innovations that Whole-COMM will provide to the literature and explain how it aims to influence policy debates and practice.

1. State of the Art

This first section of the paper aims to situate Whole-COMM in the context of ongoing academic debates on integration policies and outcomes. To do so, we review the existing literature – paying specific attention to research works that focused on SMsTRA – and identify the key research gaps that Whole-COMM aims to address, before articulating the main research questions that underpin the research.

1.1. What do we know so far on migrant integration policymaking and policy outputs at the local level?

1.1.1. The existing literature on local integration policies

Starting from the late 1990s, the debate on migrant integration has experienced a 'local turn' which pushed scholars to look more carefully at the municipality level (Penninx and Martiniello 2004; Neymark 1998). Early studies were still well anchored in the mainstream literature on national models of immigrant policies, and essentially aimed to unravel the key importance of the local level in the debate on immigrants' integration (Caponio 2019:143). With the passing of time, scholars began to focus increasingly on the local dimension of integration policies (Box 2), policymaking processes and policy implementation (Caponio and Borkert 2010; Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009; Jones-Correa 2001), contributing to a better understanding of how and why local integration policies develop in response to specific local problems and policy and political circumstances; and of the several actors and interactions taking place at the local level around migration and integration (Alexander 2007; Caponio and Borkert 2010; Garbaye 2005; Schmidtke 2014; Zapata-Barrero 2015; Penninx et al. 2004). On the one hand, these scholars showed, local governments and other local actors increasingly used discretionary spaces when implementing national and regional laws, for instance adding local components to national-level policies (Schammann et al. 2021; Oomen et al. 2021; Edlins and Larrison 2020; Ellermann 2006; Farris and Holman 2017; Schultz 2020). On the other hand, they started to develop a wide range of original policies (Scholten 2013), adapting, complementing or surpassing national policies, in the areas of housing, language, the labour market and gender (Peace and Meer 2019).

Box 2: What are integration policies?

The academic and policy literature has proposed a variety of definitions of integration policy and developed different typologies of integration policies at both the national and local levels (e.g. EC 2011; Niessen and Huddleston 2010; Niessen and Schibel 2007; ICMPD 2005; IOM 2010; Gonzalez Garibay and Cuyper 2013; Goodman 2010; Rinne 2012). These policies can either target specific groups of migrants (e.g. high-skilled migrants; EU migrants etc.) or they can be broadly conceived for all foreign residents. Our review of the existing literature suggests that there have been some shifts in what the scholarship understands as integration policy (at both the local and national level). The early literature on integration policy often had a narrow focus on immigration law and associated requirements, and tended to focus narrowly on those policies that were explicitly defined as 'integration policies' in a particular country or context, and therefore mainly on policies specifically addressing immigrants. The more recent literature takes a more systematic and broader perspective, including under the label 'migration policies' any generic policies affecting immigrants – and/or affecting them differently than nonmigrants. These developments are in line with the revision of policy philosophies on migrant integration which took place in Europe after the rise and fall of multiculturalism (Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010) and the so-called 'assimilationist turn' in European integration policies (Brubaker 2001; Joppke and Morawska 2003). Following Scholten, Collett and Petrovic (2017), a key part of this process of rethinking of policy approaches towards increasingly diverse societies across Europe is referred to in terms of the 'mainstreaming' of immigrant integration policies into generic policies (a concept that was also introduced into the European set of Common Basic Principles of Integration). Mainstreaming does often combine with policies emphasising diversity or individuals' different backgrounds, and promotes interculturality rather than the recognition of groups' ethnic differences (Zapata-Barrero 2016).

The local dimension of integration policy has therefore become the focus of an increasing number of scholarly works in the last two decades. While a comprehensive analysis of this vast literature goes beyond the scope of this paper (for comprehensive reviews see: Filomeno 2017; Schammann et al. 2021), we can highlight here five key characteristics of the existing scholarship on local integration policymaking.

First, despite a significant share of migrants in the EU living outside the main cities, most of these works, particularly in Europe, tend to focus on metropolises and big cities (Borkert and Bosswick 2007; Caponio, Scholten and Zapata-Barrero 2019; Dekker et al. 2015; Jørgensen 2012; Poppelaars and Scholten 2008; Scholten 2013; de Graaw and Vermeulen 2016; Good, 2019; Martínez-Ariño et al. 2019). Far less attention has been devoted to local integration policymaking in SMsTRA. This is especially evident when reviewing the European literature (see e.g. Barberis and Pavolini 2015; Natale et al. 2019), whereas some works which focus on smaller municipalities have been published on the United States (e.g. Farris and Holman 2017; Williamson 2018; García and Schmalzbauer 2017; Lawlor 2015; Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad 2008; Ramakrishnan and Lewis 2005). In North America, the settlement of migrants in SMsTRA has indeed received more attention throughout the 2000s and was at the core of the debate on so-called 'new immigrant destinations' (NIDs) (Winders 2014; Massey 2008). A parallel debate developed in Europe, but, for many years, NIDs coincided mostly with new countries of immigration, especially in Southern and Eastern Europe. More recently, some scholars – especially geographers and anthropologists – have started to focus on rural and regional NIDs with little prior experience of migration (McAreavey and Argent 2018 and other contributions from the same Special Issue). Rather than focusing on local policies, however, these scholars have prioritised analyses of the 'processes of migrant incorporation in *new* migrant spaces, rural transformations and the evolving inter-group relationships' (Ibid., 148).

Second, most of the published research on SMsTRA (but also on the national level more broadly) tends to focus on integration policies targeting economic migrants[1]. Conversely, less attention has been paid so far to integration policies targeting humanitarian migrants. Among the few exceptions in the United States, Williamson (2018) has recently investigated migrants' incorporation into four small and medium-sized towns there, devoting specific attention to the cases of resettled refugees. In Europe, an increasing number of studies have actually focused on local reception policies developed in the immediate aftermaths of the so-called 'refugee crisis' (Glorius and Doomernik 2020; Hernes 2017; Lidén and Nyhlén 2015; Pettrachin 2019; Peace and Meer 2019; Ataç, Schütze and Reitter, 2020; Myrberg 2017). Despite asylum seekers' reception

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[1] Among the limited exceptions, see Franz 2001; Strang and Ager 2010.

being strictly linked to their integration, the primary focus of these works seems to be on emergency-based responses and organizational challenges, often at the regional level or in big cities, rather than on (more long-term) integration policies (for exceptions see: Haselbacher 2019 on mountain areas in Austria; Semprebon, Bonizzoni and Marzorati 2017 on Italy). Also, importantly, none of these works explicitly looks at situations in which the target of policies includes different types of migrant groups, such as recently arrived humanitarian migrants and older generations of (economic) migrants.

Third, there is a tendency in much of the existing literature to regard local policies as pragmatic and oriented towards accommodating immigrant needs, often assuming a virtuous link between local (pro-immigrant) policies, social cohesion and immigrant social integration (Entzinger and Scholten 2014; Penninx and Martiniello 2004; Oomen and Baumgartel 2018). An OECD report published in 2018, for instance, stated that different types of local integration policies exist, 'but all aim to ensure equal access to services and opportunities' (p. 31). This, despite other scholars having shown that local policies can – and often do– take restrictionist approaches (see, e.g.: Mahnig 2004; Ambrosini 2012 and 2020 on Italy; Filomeno 2017 on the United States). These accounts sometimes seem simplistic, as far as the link between local policy and outcomes, in terms of both local public receptivity and migrants' social trajectories, which remains unexplored in most of these works (for a partial exception see: Çağlar and Glick-Schiller 2018). Some recent works have tried to move beyond this 'progressive bias', distinguishing between inclusive and exclusionary policies and between passive and proactive approaches to local migration policymaking (Pettrachin 2020a; Schammann et al. 2021). Following Schammann and colleagues (2021), an active approach to policymaking is characterised by the adoption of policies that contradict, complement or surpass the existing legal framework (explicitly or implicitly). These include attempts to exploit the discretion allowed by the existing legal and institutional framework for defining a local strategy, designing local governance structures and pursuing its own policies; the mobilisation of additional resources; and attempts to engage with and coordinate civil society. In contrast, a passive approach is assumed to be characterised by strict adherence to national guidance and the formal division of responsibilities; as well as a lack of initiative to mobilise additional resources, and actors' perceptions of not having any room to manoeuvre in this policy field.

Fourth, the literature on local integration policies seems to be dominated by analyses of single case studies and, often, by analyses of cases that stand out because of certain deviant or extreme characteristics, such as the presence of an active civil society or social movements or incidents that were covered by media (e.g. Rosenberger, Stern and Merhaut 2019; Giglioli 2017). Schammann et al. (2021) define this as an 'extreme case bias' of the existing literature on local migration policymaking. An important implication of such a bias is that ordinary 'run-of-the-mill' municipalities rarely find their way into research designs. We could not identify any comprehensive large-scale comparison of local integration policies – or local migration policies more broadly – in the European literature (although some work has been done on the United States, see e.g. Williamson 2018). In particular, no cross-country/cross-locality study has been identified which focuses specifically on local integration policymaking in SMsTRA (for a partial exception see Haselbacher and Segarra 2021, who focus on the role of mayors in small localities in Italy, France and Austria).

Fifth, many of the above-mentioned research works are specifically interested in identifying the factors that make and unmake local migration or integration policies (or the drivers of local migration policymaking; a more comprehensive review of the factors identified in the existing scholarship is included in Section 2). Notably, however, the existing literature lacks refined conceptualisations of the different integration policies that are developed across different contexts and EU countries. The only comprehensive cross-locality analysis of the factors that make and unmake local migration policies, to the best of our knowledge, has been conducted by Schammann et al. (2021), although with a specific focus on Germany (see Box 3). As such, this study – as in other studies which focus on single countries – could not take into account important factors such as the different types of 'crisis-driven inflows' that have affected EU member states (i.e. irregular cross-Mediterranean inflows and crisis-driven, visa-free arrivals); the presence of different national redistribution systems; and restrictions to asylum seekers' and refugees' mobility.

Box 3. Schammann and colleagues' study 'Defining and transforming local migration policies: a conceptual approach backed by evidence from Germany'

In a recent paper, Schammann et al. (2021) try to identify what factors drive municipalities to become active in the field of migration and integration, relying on data collected in 126 German municipalities. These scholars propose a conceptual framework for larger-scale comparisons on migration policymaking at the local level, which is based on two groups of factors: some 'defining factors' – including the institutional framework (e.g. responsibilities, discretionary spaces, multilevel governance) and structural conditions (e.g. urban/rural, socioeconomic conditions) – and 'transformative factors', including local discourses (i.e. narratives creating a local space of possibilities), and local key actors (e.g. mayors, street-level bureaucrats). The scholars empirically assess the relative importance of these factors, by specifically focusing on local integration plans developed by German municipalities.

1.1.2. Beyond policies: works on policy processes and relations

Despite existing research on political responses to immigrant integration showing a prevailing focus on municipal policies (and consequently on local governments and/or mayors and other local policymakers developing such policies), an increasing number of scholars has looked, more broadly, at policymaking relations and at other 'outputs of local integration governance systems' (Box 4). These scholars assume that while local policies are certainly a key output of local policymaking processes, they are not the only one. In particular, the interaction and mobilisation of different local actors around the issue of integration can contribute to produce:

i)   different local practices related to policy implementation;

ii)   different levels of politicisation of the integration issue, where high levels of politicisation are related to the type of actors involved, their (often polarised) views on the issue of migrant integration and a high salience of the same issue in the local context;

iii)   different patterns of interactions between actors and structures, which vary along various degrees of both intensity and hierarchy and especially between different levels of governance;

iv)   different informal networks or structures of support for asylum-seekers and migrants, e.g. established by civil society and the private sector; and

v) different (dominant and marginal) discourses or policy frames about migrant integration in different local contexts.

Box 4: The 'outputs' of integration policymaking

The so-called 'input-output' or 'systems models of public policymaking' (Easton 1965; Birkland 2011) conceptualise political systems as systems of identifiable institutions and processes that transform inputs into outputs for the whole society. Policymaking activities that transform inputs into outputs occur within structural, political, social and economic environments that influence the outputs produced. These scholars therefore use the expressions 'outputs of policymaking processes' or 'outputs of political systems' to refer to decisions, actions and public policy. The expression 'local policy outputs' or 'local government policy outputs' or 'outputs of local policymaking processes' have been also used in analyses focused on the local level (Hoggart 1986). Following the 'governance turn' in political science and EU studies in the 1990s, scholars have started to refer to 'governance outputs' or 'outputs of the governance system'. This label is also sometimes used by political scientists in research on migration governance (Geddes and Hadj-Abdou 2018) and, specifically, local integration governance (Schiller 2019; Pettrachin 2020a). It is often broadly intended to include not only policies and regulations, but also practices, the structures of support created by civil society actors, discourses and levels of public and political contestation. Aware of this debate, and in line with the whole-of-community approach we adopted, we have decided to use the term 'outputs of local integration governance system' in this paper to refer broadly to all the different types of responses produced by local communities to the arrival of post-2014 migrants, including: local integration policies; local practices related to policy implementation; levels of politicisation of the integration issue; patterns of interactions between actors and structures, informal networks or structures of support for asylum-seekers and migrants, e.g. established by civil society and the private sector; and discourses or policy frames about migrant integration. However, we are aware that governance is in itself a highly debated concept. International relations (see e.g. Héritier 2002) and critical scholars (Carmel 2019) use it in a broad or encompassing sense to mean political steering and social regulation, or in other words 'practices of governing'. Scholars working in a public policy tradition prefer a restricted use to indicate a specific mode of policymaking based on coordination and negotiation (see Treib et al. 2007, 4). Furthermore, whereas some scholars favour a perspective focused on the vertical dimension of governing or intergovernmental relations, others link the concept to the emergence of new configurations of relations between public and nonpublic actors in the horizontal state–

society dimension (see e.g. Klijn and Koppenjan 2016). In the context of this working paper, when using the expression 'local governance system', we adopt a broad definition of governance as a (local) system of governing. When using the term in a different sense, we specify it.

These other 'outputs' of local integration governance systems have been investigated in the existing literature, mostly independently of one another. The role of informal structures of support created by churches, faith-based organizations and other civil society actors, has been analysed by scholars who looked at asylum-seekers' reception after 2014 (Ambrosini 2018; Bassi 2014; Sandberg and Andersen 2020; Zamponi 2018; see also: Ehrkamp and Nagel 2014; de Graauw, Gleeson and Bada 2020; Harden et al. 2015; Pries 2018). The role of practices has also occasionally been a focus of analysis (Dubus 2021; Dahlvik 2017). Wilson and Mavelli (2016), for instance, studied how religious traditions and perspectives challenge and inform current practices and policies towards refugees in Europe. Dubus (2018) showed how social workers and policymakers in different countries had very different views on what a 'successful integration process' entails and that 'differing conceptions of the goals and successful outcomes of resettlement can increase frustrations for providers and administrators, create conflicts between services provided and intended outcomes, and affect the provider's perceived effectiveness of the programs' (Dubus 2018, 425). Policy frames about migrant integration have been analysed by Campomori and Caponio (2013), Dekker (2017), Spencer and Delvino (2019), although these works do not specifically focus on small localities.

As to research on the interactions between policy actors and structures at different territorial scales, the reception and integration of post-2014 migrants has provided a critical test-case in this respect, because of the intertwined and sometimes overlapping reception policies that had to be quickly developed at local, regional, national and supranational levels. While in larger towns and cities policies of integration and structures/networks of support were already in place, the arrival of large numbers of migrants between 2014 and 2015 in SMsTRA called for tailor-made new multilevel policy responses, since these localities were often confronting the settlement of asylum seekers for the first time (e.g. see the REFUGEE project, commissioned by ESPON, on the territorial

impact of refugee flows and localities' response capacity). Research on the multilevel dynamics of the reception of asylum seekers has been carried out in the context of the Horizon2020 project CEASEVAL, while other Horizon2020 projects are analysing integration policies regarding displaced people, including post-2014 migrants (TRAFIG, ADMIGOV, RESPOND). None of these projects, however, has specifically focused on multilevel policy dynamics on integration in SMsTRA. Some more horizontal dynamics are investigated by a growing literature on city networks on migrant integration (Caponio and Clément 2021; Fourot, Healy and Flamant 2021; Gebhardt and Güntner 2021), but this scholarship tends to focus on international and European networks that are mainly formed by cities and much less by SMsTRA. Associations of municipalities - organised at the national level - also have positions and policies on migrant integration but their role and their links to international/European networks have so far been largely neglected in the literature.

Box 5. Multilevel policymaking dynamics and multilevel governance

Research analysing **multilevel institutional settings in which local governments operate** (Adam and Hepburn 2019; Caponio and Jones-Correa 2018) looks at factors such as the division of responsiblities between different levels of government (in other words: the degree of decentralisation foreseen in the political system), the degree of autonomy or levels of (legal and structural) discretion on migration policy which are left to local governments (or perceived by them), the policies and policy approaches adopted by higher levels of government which might set incentives or establish norms or values for local policymakers (e.g. see Caponio 2010; Filomeno 2017; Schiller 2019; Dörrenbächer 2018; see also Bloemraad and de Graauw 2012; Schamman et al. 2021; Baumgärtel and Oomen 2019; Castles 2004, 866f; Chauvin and Garcés-Mascareñas 2012; Spencer and Delvino 2019). Most of these findings are drawn from works that focus on bigger cities rather than on small and medium-sized towns and rural areas.

Whereas some scholars use the expression 'multilevel governance' (see Marks and Hooghe 2000) to indicate the topics listed above, we prefer to use the label 'multilevel policymaking dynamics', and to limit the use of the concept of multilevel governance to more specific policymaking configurations characterised by three key defining features: 1) different levels of government are simultaneously involved; 2) nongovernmental actors at different levels

> are also involved; 3) relationships are based on collaboration and cooperation, taking the
> form of nonhierarchical networks (Piattoni 2010; Caponio and Jones-Correa (2018).

Finally, a few scholars have focused on the politicisation at the local level of asylum seekers' reception and of migration more broadly, very occasionally with a focus on smaller municipalities. Politicisation is defined in the literature as an expansion of the scope of conflict within a political system (i.e. a system-level feature), produced by the combination of issue salience, polarization of views and an expansion of actors involved (Grande, Schwarzbözl and Fatke 2019; Kriesi 2016). It is often assumed that immigration issues tend to be most successfully mobilised, at both the subnational and the national level, by 'populist, non-governing parties', particularly the radical right (Grande, Schwarzbözl and Fatke 2019). Several recent contributions, however, argue that the politicisation of immigration at both the national and subnational levels is largely driven by mainstream parties, mostly from the centre-right (van der Brug et al. 2015, 195; Hepburn 2014; Meyer and Rosenberger 2015). Many scholars have also tried to identify the 'drivers' of politicisation mostly through quantitative analyses centred on the national level (for a comprehensive review see: Grande, Schwarzbözl and Fatke 2019). Assuming that opportunities and constraints at the subnational level partially differ from those in play at the national level, a few scholars specifically identified factors that tend to produce negative political contestation of immigration at the regional level (Hepburn 2014; Pettrachin 2020b; Xhardez and Paquet 2020; Zapata-Barrero 2009). The only work we could identify that is focused on the politicisation of migration at the local level is a book by Castelli Gattinara (2016), examining political party competition in two large Italian cities (Milan and Rome) and one medium-sized town (Prato). The latter can be qualified as an 'extreme case' (because of the large Chinese community hosted in this Tuscan town), which again points to the above-mentioned 'extreme case bias' identified in the policy literature. Overall, these works identify as the main drivers of politicisation of migration at the subnational level the following factors: socioeconomic factors such as high levels of migration and high unemployment rates; high issue salience; institutional factors such as proportional or mixed electoral systems; high political variation and the presence of electorally successful anti-immigration parties; extensive authority over immigration policies held by regional and local governments; focusing events and media. An increasing number of scholars have also focused on

pro-immigrant and anti-immigrant social movements and their mobilisation during the so-called 'refugee crisis' (Della Porta 2018; Gardesse 2020; Ristic 2020; Rosenberger, Stern and Merhaut 2018). Despite the general reference to whole countries, these studies are often very much anchored in local contexts, suggesting that pro-migrant mobilisation during the 'refugee crisis' occurred through the increasing political engagement of activists initially involved in humanitarian/voluntary work (Vandevoordt and Verschraegen 2019).

With respect to narratives and discourses on migration policymaking, a few studies have taken a local-level perspective (Ayeb-Karlsson 2020; Glorius 2020; Matos 2017; Vollmer and Karakayali 2017; Pettrachin 2020b; Berg-Nordlie 2018). On the one hand, some studies emphasise how narratives and discourses at the local level can be specifically linked to certain local settings and conditions, therefore influencing local policymaking (Barbehön et al. 2016). On the other hand, the existing literature suggests that policymakers can use available narratives or discourses to pursue their strategic interests and/or impose their policy frames on other actors within local contexts (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2009, 4; Jones and McBeth 2010, 334). Pogliano and Ponzo (2019) suggest that the cohesion of the policy networks strengthens the ability of policymakers (and their potential allies) to infuence local media frames.

Box 6. Discourses and narratives on migration policymaking

Boswell et al. (2011) define 'policy narratives' as 'knowledge claims about the causes, dynamics and impacts of migration, setting out beliefs about policy problems and appropriate interventions. Discourses are instead 'intrinsically political' (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2009, 4), meaning that local actors can draw strategically on pre-existing narratives 'to strengthen existing discourses and impose them on others' (Jones and McBeth 2010, 334). By 'institutionalising common knowledge', local narratives and discourses can influence how actors perceive policy problems, interests, their role in the governance system (e.g. their legal discretion), their identities, structural and institutional conditions, migration and migrants and the wider public (Boswell and Hampshire 2017). In other words, dominant narratives and discourses can influence actors' policy frames, defined by Schön and Rein (1994) as interpretative schemata and ordering devices that policymakers use to make sense of a situation and attach meaning to it (i.e. to structure their perceptions of reality), but also to promote certain courses of action.

1.2. What do we know so far on the outcomes of migrant integration policies at the local level?

Existing research on different aspects of integration policy outcomes, such as natives' attitudes, social cohesion and migrants' individual processes of integration, has traditionally pertained to the national level. An increasing number of works have been published on the subnational level (NUTS 1 and 2), particularly with a focus on labour market integration, although this literature tends to be more descriptive, while most theory-oriented research tends to work more with national datasets. Very little research has been done on the local level, often because of the limited data availability.

Quantitative research on economic and sociocultural integration outcomes at the local level. A large number of scholars have tried to assess migrants' integration in the past decades. This vast literature operationalised social and economic integration in various ways. Common indicators of *economic* integration include migrants' (un)employment level and long-term unemployment, labour market participation, type of jobs, migrants' qualifications, and the percentage of overqualified workers and the number of self-employed migrants (see OECD indicators). Laurentsyeva and Venturini (2017) identify five groups of indicators or proxies of *social* integration from the existing literature. These include: i) general indicators related to migrants' self-identification (Manning and Roy 2010; Constant, Schüller and Zimmermann 2013); ii) various indicators related to migrants' cultural/social preferences and beliefs such as trust, risk attitudes, gender-role values, family ties, religiosity, political attitudes (e.g. Algan et al. 2013; Cameron et al. 2015); iii) behavioural indicators of migrants' social participation/inclusion (e.g. language; planned permanent stay in host country; perceived discrimination; hobbies; membership in local clubs; non-immigrant friendships; reading of local newspapers; residential location choices; see e.g. Hainmueller, Hangartner, and Pietrantuono 2017; Avitabile, Clots-Figueras and Masella 2013); demographic indicators (e.g. age of marriage, intermarriage, divorce rate, fertility rate, household structure; see Adsera and Ferrer 2014; Furtado and Trejo 2013; Gathmann and Keller 2017); and v) indicators of civil and political participation such as party membership, membership in political/civil associations, voting, political awareness and volunteering (e.g. Barslund et al. 2017; Hainmueller, Hangartner, and Pietrantuono 2015). Some scholars also refer to indicators of 'socio-

structural' or 'structural' integration (Esser 2004; Zincone, Caponio and Carastro 2006) such as the decrease in or absence of ethnic stratification, or the decrease in or absence of inequalities attributable to ethnic belonging, e.g. in access to social services (social benefits, health services, housing services), a policy area for which municipalities are primarily responsible in many European countries.

While these indicators have occasionally been assessed at the local level (e.g. OECD 2018), existing quantitative research on the impact of integration policy on social cohesion and immigrant integration processes has traditionally focused on the national level because of serious limitations to data availability at the local level (Wolffhardt, Solano and Joki 2018), especially when it comes to SMsTRA. In most countries, data for these integration outcomes are derived from surveys, but most standard surveys on employment outcomes, housing, living conditions (EU-LFS, EU-SILC), Health (EHIS) – but also public opinion (Eurobarometer, ESS, EVS etc.; see below) – are representative on the national level or, at most, at the regional level (EU-LFS, EU-SILC, EHIS).

 The plurality of indicators and approaches adopted by quantitative analyses assessing integration outcomes suggests that in the scientific community no common perspective exists on - and assumptions are sometimes made about - what 'successful integration' means (see next Section for a more in-depth analysis of the concept of integration). Very few studies have tried to shed more light on the subjective dimension of integration and, particularly, on migrants' own experiences and definitions of integration (e.g. Ager and Strang 2004). This literature is growing, however, and some more recent contributions have investigated migrants' experiences in diverse settings, including some SMsTRA (Åberg and Högman 2015; Adam et al. 2019; Ciupijus 2014; van Liempt and Miellet 2021). Existing research usually conceptualises integration 'from above' and 'from the outside', i.e. by measuring performance on a number of indicators like employment, education, language acquisition etc. (see e.g. the SIRIUS and RESPOND H2020 Projects; Hainmueller, Hangartner and Lawrence 2016; the INTEGRATE Project; Eurostat indicators of migrant integration; Bijl and Verweij 2011). These indicators, however, do not allow us to understand how migrants perceive their paths of integration in the receiving society, i.e. what they experience as a positive improvement and what they see as an impediment to the achievement of their well-being (relations with co-nationals and the countries of origin are likely

to be part of the migrants' complex paths of integration). To assess paths of integration from migrants' perspectives appears to be particularly relevant in SMsTRA, given the centrality of social interactions in such small communities to 'feeling' integrated.

Finally, only few works, to the best of our knowledge, have explicitly tried to measure the impact of local policies on integration performances or on social cohesion, while more works have been done on the national level (e.g. Laurentsyeva and Venturini 2017), despite this debate also remaining 'largely inconclusive' (Lutz 2017, 1).

Social cohesion as an outcome of integration policies. Following Joppke (2007), national integration policies in Western Europe are increasingly aimed at pursuing social cohesion (see Section 2 for a conceptual definition of this context) or a good quality of societal life. The levels of social cohesion within a community or society, from this perspective, are therefore studied as outcomes of integration policies and processes (Dukes and Musterd 2012). Botterman, Hooghe and Reeskens (2012), adopting this perspective, analysed an extensive dataset of social cohesion indicators for 308 local communities in the Flemish region of Belgium, including indicators of religious involvement, social inclusion, crime and voter turnout. Interestingly they conclude that it is impossible to construct one single indicator for social cohesion which applies to all types of communities, even within the same region. In particular, they conclude that a 'traditional form' of social cohesion that depends on social capital, the absence of property crimes and religious involvement prevail in rural areas, while a different 'modern form' which depends on the absence of socioeconomic deprivation and the absence of violent crimes prevails in urban areas.

Local public attitudes to immigration and immigrant integration. A growing strand of research in the past two decades – not explicitly connected with the research strand on integration outcomes and performances – has focused on natives' attitudes toward immigration and immigrant integration, in both Europe and North America. These studies suggest that locals' attitudes toward immigration vary among areas with different degrees of urbanisation (Alba and Foner 2017; Natale et al. 2019; Zorlu 2017). The divide in Europe between large cosmopolitan cities and hostile rural areas has been highlighted by the media and scholars across various disciplines (e.g. Chassany, Wisniewska and Ehrenberg-Shannon 2017; Rachman 2018). This rural–urban divide – some scholars have pointed out – could be 'the result of compositional effect, meaning that

individuals sort themselves into cities or rural areas for demographic and cultural reasons' (Maxwell 2019). Other studies have shown that, when controlling for a range of socioeconomic factors (e.g. age, education, income etc.) differences in local attitudes to immigration based on place of living tend to disappear (ScoRE 2019) or are very small (Natale et al. 2019, 47). The same is true for what concerns differences in the perceived salience of immigration and in perceptions of successful integration of migrants (Natale et al. 2019, 47).

Scholars have also focused on the effects of exposure to immigration or, more specifically, exposure to reception centres for asylum seekers on natives' attitudes to immigration (Hangartner et al. 2019; Hopkins 2010) or on votes for anti-immigration parties (Altındağ and Kaushal 2020; Dinas et al. 2019; Gessler, Tóth and Wachs 2019; Otto and Steinhardt 2014; Steinmayr 2016). These analyses, however, tend to focus on entire countries or regions (most of the above-mentioned contributions). Those few contributions that analyse single municipalities tend to focus, once again, either on 'extreme cases' (Hangartner et al. 2019) or on big cities (Otto and Steinhardt 2014). More broadly, while many surveys are available at the national level, such as the Eurobarometer, the European Social Survey, as well as surveys from the PEW Research Center, none of them encompasses attitudes of populations in small and medium-sized towns or rural areas of particular countries.

As to the determinants of public attitudes in SMsTRA (but also of social relations more broadly), knowledge still seems to be scarce in this respect. While we know that local contexts – or what can be also labelled 'local opportunity structures' – do matter in how residents relate to newcomers, we still know very little about the ways in which they structure local integration processes and generate different outcomes such as different public attitudes to immigration, or different types of social interactions between immigrants and host communities. Also, existing studies tend to neglect attitudes of previously settled migrant groups towards newcomers and social relations between different migrant groups, in those localities where older cohorts of immigrants live. This is an important aspect because, as previous research has demonstrated, it is actually between different cohorts of immigrants that economic competition is often the most pronounced (Van der Zwan, Bles and Lubbers 2017).

As to the effect of local policies on attitudes (and social relations), to the best of our knowledge, only some qualitative research has been conducted (see e.g. Green et al. 2019) suggesting that local policies that actively foster intimate contacts between newcomers and local residents strengthen positive attitudes and relations and reduce perception of threat among locals.

1.3. Key debates in the – still scarce – research on migration in small and medium-sized towns and rural areas

In sum, the still scarce and fragmented research on migration in SMsTRA seems to be centred around three main themes defining the specificity of migrant integration and the effects of migration more broadly in SMsTRA compared to bigger cities:

- the specific demographic and socioeconomic conditions of SMsTRA and particularly rural areas as contexts of migrants' settlement;
- socio-cultural factors and the peculiar interactions between migrants and the local population in SMsTRA; and
- the role of local policymakers and specifically of mayors in SMsTRA.

In this subsection we examine these three themes in more depth and summarise the key findings of this literature that are particularly useful for the development of the Whole-COMM theoretical framework and for identifying the project's guiding expectations.

The first key debate in the literature on immigration in SMsTRA concerns the importance of demographic and/or economic factors in accounting for different modes of local communities' activation vis-à-vis newcomers. A general tendency of the existing literature is that of considering SMsTRA as localities characterised by economic and demographic decline (Flamant, Fourot and Healy 2020): compared to big cities, SMsTRA are found/assumed to be less likely to attract human capital and investment (e.g. Brenner 2011; Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2011), because of power relations in the field of capital flow (see Box 7 on multi-scalar approaches). The many different labels that are often used in the literature to define SMsTRA reflect this dominant view: SMsTRA

have therefore been variously defined as 'transitory spaces' (Martin 2020), 'declining spaces' or 'areas with low residential attractiveness' (Gardesse 2020), 'peripheral geographies of the defence of the rights of migrants and refugees' (Schmid-Scott et al. 2020), 'isolated territories' or 'fragile spaces' (Arfaoui 2020) or even 'margins' (Ristic 2020).

Box 7. Multi-scalar approaches

To better grasp the dynamics of hierarchical positioning of cities and their links to migrants' integration pathways, scholars have proposed to adopt multi-scalar approaches (Belina 2008; Brenner 2011; Swyngedouw 1997). Glick Schiller and Çağlar, for instance, argue that the 'relative positioning of a city within hierarchical fields of power may well lay the ground for the life chances and incorporation opportunities of migrants locally and transnationally' (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2011, 73). More specifically, multi-scalar approaches assume that the differential positioning of a city reflects: '(1) flows of political, cultural, and economic capital within regions and state-based and globe-spanning institutions, and (2) the shaping of these flows and institutional forces by local histories and capacities' (Ibid., 7).

Despite this common view of SMsTRA, the relationship between these structural factors and communities' mobilisations is not necessarily straightforward. On the one hand, some scholars (see e.g. Whyte, Romme Larsen, and Fog Olwig 2019, Barbera and Membretti 2020 and the Alpine Refugees project; Aure, Førde and Magnussen 2018) stress the positive contribution that migrants can bring to shrinking local communities by – partly – compensating for demographic losses and contributing, with their work and entrepreneurial spirit, to the revitalisation of the local economy (see also the H2020 projects Welcoming Spaces and MATILDE). In terms of the potential impact on policymaking of these dynamics the literature suggests that this positive contribution of immigration tends to smooth opposition and favour a pragmatic approach to settlement and integration challenges (Søholt, Stenbacka and Nørgaard 2018). Some studies also identify a key influence of employers on policymaking (and/or their direct involvement in the organization of structures of support) in localities where immigration contributes to local development (Górny and Kaczmarczyk 2018 on Poland; Rye 2018 on Norway).

On the other hand, and conversely, critical scholars, especially in sociology, warn about the flip side of these processes, showing how settlement in disadvantaged and deprived SMsTRA, characterised by high unemployment, poor housing and limited service provision, can lead to conflicts and tensions over the distribution of scarce resources (see e.g. Robinson 2010; Ciupijus 2014; Papadopoulos, Fratsea and Mavrommatis 2018). The scarcity of jobs in SMsTRA would also lead, from this perspective, to fewer opportunities for immigrants to establish contacts in the community, increasing the risk for exclusion in such environments (Åberg and Högman 2015, 199). As to the impact of these dynamics on policymaking, scholarly works in this second research strand tend to suggest that policymaking around integration in SMsTRA tends to be more politicised compared to bigger cities (Semprebon, Marzorati and Garrapa 2017) and to lead to restrictive local policy and worse integration outcomes (see also Glick Shiller and Caglar 2009, 193).

Remarkably, this prevalent view of SMsTRA as localities characterised by economic and demographic decline that dominates the literature on migrant integration is increasingly challenged in both urban studies and some sociological works on migrant integration. Meier (2018), for instance, in a study of asylum seekers' integration, proposes a much more articulated typology of SMsTRA, distinguishing between localities characterised by a restructuring industry, localities centred around residential economy (characterised by a prevalence of local activities such as housing demand, tourist activities and social services) and localities characterised by a 'knowledge-based economy' (relying on technical and social innovations, educational institutions and creative industries). The limits of prevalent conceptualisations of SMsTRA as 'disadvantaged areas' is also acknowledged in some sociological analyses in the Italian context (Barberis and Pavolini 2015; Bonizzoni 2017a; Bonizzoni and Marzorati 2015).

The second research debate, i.e. that on **socio-cultural factors and social interactions** between residents and migrants in SMsTRA, builds on so-called 'social contact theories', according to which opportunities of interaction between majority and minority groups – under certain conditions (e.g. in the absence of conflict of competition, in an institutionally controlled environment etc.) – are crucial to construct positive relations (Allport 1954; Pettigrew 1998).

As in the case of the first key debate, different research strands that examined the impact of socio-cultural factors on integration processes have produced very different findings. On the one hand, sociological research has highlighted the increased opportunities for encounters between migrants and locals that SMsTRA can offer compared to bigger cities (e.g. through voluntary work or gardening, that can turn out to be important 'domains of commonality') and the positive impact of such activities on migrants' integration experiences (Adam and Hepburn 2019; Caglar and Schiller 2018; van Liempt and Miellet 2021; McAreavey and Argent 2018). A different argument that leads to different conclusions is advanced by Liempt and Miellet (2021) who, analysing integration experiences of migrants in small and medium-sized Dutch towns, concluded that the fact that post-2014 migrants' settlement in these localities was imposed by governments (rather than the outcome of migrants' own choices) tends to make their integration more difficult and has a negative impact on subjective integration experiences. In addition, perceptions that opportunities for migrants could be higher in bigger cities moderates the processes of 'migrant rescaling' identified by Glick Schiller and Caglar (2011) involving the 'reproduction of a form of neoliberal subjectivity that reinforces the ethos of the self-reliant, enterprising individual' (2011, 16).

Importantly, several scholars argue that these dynamics are strictly related to the previous experience of localities with immigration. It is often argued in the migration scholarship that socially and culturally diverse communities are more likely to be open and inclusive towards newcomers, appreciate their different cultural backgrounds and favour their rapid integration (Hickman et al. 2012; Netto 2011). Scholars have also stressed how a recent history of immigrant integration can favour positive attitudes towards reception in local communities (Pastore and Ponzo 2016; Glorius 2017; Glorius and Schondelmayer 2018) or positively influence policymakers' perceptions of such attitudes (Pettrachin 2020b). Åberg and Högman (2015) in their study focused on Swedish SMsTRA suggest that 'histories meet histories', highlighting that the context and background history of the receiving community can be crucial to the degree of community connectedness experienced by immigrants to the community, and that this interacts with immigrants' background, original context and motives for immigrating. In terms of the impact of these dynamics on policymaking, this strand of the literature seems to suggest that social contact with migrants and experience with diversity can favour the emergence of pro-immigrant policies

vis-à-vis the arrival of new inflows in SMsTRA (Pettrachin 2020; Giglioli 2017), despite evidence being still scarce and contradictory.

Another strand of this debate reaches very different conclusions. Political scientists like Robert Putnam (2007) pointed out that high levels of ethnic diversity, particularly in SMsTRA, can lead to a sense of 'social isolation' and mistrust of others. In such socially and culturally fragmented local communities, the arrival of new groups is likely to be seen in less positive terms. The scarce local receptivity (on this concept see McDaniel and Smith 2017) are likely to make processes of migrants' settlement and integration more difficult (see e.g. Hiitola, Turtiainen and Vuori 2020), while local governments might be inclined to develop exclusionary policies (Della Puppa 2017; Gargiulo 2017). Notably, several contributions suggest that the mobilisation of civil society can have a major impact on these processes, mitigating these negative effects and, more broadly, compensating for the lack of initiative of the local administration or contrasting exclusionary local policies adopted by local governments (Bonizzoni 2017b).

The third debate concerns the role of **local policymakers in managing migration challenges in small communities**. In particular, many scholars have emphasised the role of mayors and local elites in migration policymaking (Sabchev 2020; Haselbacher 2019; Haselbacher and Segarrra 2021; Driel and Verkuyten 2019; Steen and Røed 2018). In SMsTRA, where boundaries between administrative and political actors tend to be very much blurred compared to bigger cities (Marzorati, Semprebon and Bonizzoni 2017), mayors can easily be reached by both locals and other actors involved in local policymaking processes (and these actors tend to be few and to know each other very well; e.g. see Marzorati, Sembrebon and Bonizzoni 2017). Therefore, mayors of SMsTRA must engage in the difficult task of mediating between nationally imposed reception policies and local residents' concerns (Glorius 2017; Glorius and Doomernik 2020; Søholt and Aasland 2019; Careja 2019; Steen and Røed 2018). In a study of integration policies in the medium-sized Danish town of Odense, Careja (2019: 1327) shows that, 'while devising and implementing integration measures, local authorities mitigate between the demands of national-level integration policies and the local realities'. More specifically the author argues that 'local authorities combined local resources into a variety of horizontal governance structures geared

towards supporting refugees' integration and engaged in vertical interactions responding to local priorities' (Ibid.).

Importantly, and as already mentioned, mayors of SMsTRA are often defined in the literature as pragmatic policymakers. In the United States, Williamson (2018) notes that local governments of SMsTRA tend to have accommodating attitudes towards migrants, stemming from 'a powerful combination of federal policies that frame immigrants as clients coupled with local understandings of immigrants as economic contributors' (p. 5). However, such incentives and policy frames are not necessarily shared by local residents, who might have more negative attitudes towards newcomers. This disconnection is likely to generate resentment and backlash against migrants and the officials who support them, feeding more general processes of politicization which can negatively affect social relations with newcomers.

1.4. Key contribution of the Whole-COMM project

Some key gaps have emerged from our review of the existing scholarship on local integration policies and processes, which Whole-COMM aims to address by focusing on its two key research questions.

First, we ask: How do the various actors whose actions affect local communities decide, implement and/or act upon local immigrant *integration policies in small and medium-sized towns and rural areas*?

Unlike most of the existing research, we focus specifically on SMsTRA, thus aiming to address biases in the existing literature on the local dimension of immigrant integration policymaking in Europe which has mainly concentrated on metropolises and big cities. Whole-COMM conducts one of the first cross-country/cross-locality studies on local integration policymaking, and the first large-scale cross-locality study that focuses specifically on ordinary SMsTRA. Crucially, compared with existing research, we do not merely aim to analyse and compare localities in their national context (as for instance was done in the PROSINT project), but we aim to analyse and compare them with other. This approach aims to close a significant gap in the existing academic literature (as highlighted by Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2011).

Furthermore, while most of the existing literature tends to focus narrowly on local policy, and often neglects the other outputs of local governance systems, we do not restrict our analysis to local policies. Rather, we also analyse other outputs of local governance systems such as implementation practices, local policymakers' patterns of interaction with other actors in the multilevel governance system, the level of politicisation of the integration issue, the structures of support established by civil society and the private sector and the prevailing discourses or policy frames about migrant integration held by the actors involved in the governance system. Whole-COMM is the first large-scale project that proposes a comprehensive analysis of the intersections and mutual influences of these different types of outputs of local governance systems.

As the next section clarifies, we analyse the production of these local outputs through a cross-country/cross-locality research design, across local contexts characterised by distinct configurations of structural factors (local economy, demographic composition and trends), diverse levels of socio-cultural diversity and historical relations with migrant-related groups and different political factors. By doing so, we aim to overcome the limits of the existing literature, and to propose a refined conceptualisation of the different integration policies that are developed across different contexts and EU countries.

Finally, the governance approach that underpins our first research questions will lead us to specifically investigate the interactions of policy actors across different territorial tiers filling current knowledge gaps about the influence of the so-called 'refugee crisis' on multilevel governance dynamics. We will therefore explore: how small and medium-sized towns and rural areas mobilized vis-à-vis the new challenges and in relation to the policies and funding schemes put forward by other levels of government; the factors that led to the emergence of multilevel tensions and conflicts, or else new cooperative relationships or other patterns of interaction between local (policy) actors and regional/national/supranational authorities and stakeholders; and the emergence of new translocal relations or the expansion of existing networks of SMsTRA during the so-called 'refugee crisis'.

Second, Whole-COMM asks: How – i.e. through which causal mechanisms and processes – do local policies and other outputs of local governance systems contribute to producing different

outcomes in terms of local communities' 'quality of social life', including attitudes, social relations and personal experiences of integration?

As this second question suggests, Whole-COMM specifically focuses on the outcomes of integration processes at the local level and on the relationship between policies (and other outputs of governance systems) and such outcomes. In doing so, we take an empirical approach to problematize the still vague and highly contested concept of social cohesion (Kearns and Forrest 2000; Janmaat 2011; Schiefer and van Der Noll 2017) and we therefore look at three types of outcomes, or indicators, that describe the overall 'quality of social relations' in the local community, i.e.: 1) attitudes, of both long-term residents and newly arrived migrants, each group towards the other; 2) types of social relations between natives, long-term residents and newly arrived migrants; and 3) post-2014 migrants' experiences and modes of interaction with the local community's institutions, support organisations and markets (labour market, housing market etc.). In this way, we overcome some of the identified limits of existing research on migrant integration outcomes or processes, which has so far largely failed to properly 'go local', i.e. to explain how local integration policies affect local communities and the impact on migrants' integration trajectories and experiences. Furthermore, and importantly, we explicitly include migrants' experiences as an outcome of local integration (governance) processes, and we also include previously settled migrant groups in our research design, both when we look at attitudes and when we explore social relations. In doing so, we aim to compensate for the current lack of qualitative, in-depth analyses of migrants' integration experiences. We will specifically shed light on how policies interact with the dimensions of gender, age and ethnicity in shaping integration experiences.

The contribution of Whole-COMM to the existing literature on integration outcomes will therefore be twofold. On the one hand, we contribute to producing insights about these three integration outcomes, compensating for the current lack of knowledge on natives' attitudes, social cohesion and migrants' individual processes of integration at the local level. On the other hand, Whole-COMM contributes to producing insights about the mechanisms through which different integration outcomes develop and on the influence of local contexts and factors other than policy on these dynamics.

Overall, through a mixed-methods approach, we aim to create bridges between research on integration policies and integration processes and outcomes, and to connect these two strands of the debate on migrant integration. Whole-COMM is the first research project that comprehensively examines the outputs of local governance systems, the processes that produce them, and their effects.

The next section further clarifies the key concepts of the project; it articulates a number of subquestions linked to specific research areas, thus describing the theoretical framework of the project, and identifies a number of hypotheses or guiding expectations for the research. Section 3 will then describe the methods that Whole-COMM plans to use to investigate integration from a whole-of-community perspective.

2. Concepts and Theoretical Framework

After having illustrated the Whole-COMM research questions, this second section of the paper describes the project's key concepts – in particular, what we mean by studying migrant integration from a whole-of-community perspective – and its theoretical framework. Before that, we briefly summarise the definitional debate around migrant integration.

2.1. The definitional debate: what is migrant integration?

Migrant integration is a highly contested notion. Several sociologist and other social scientists have proposed different conceptualisations of the integration process and its various dimensions (legal/political, the socioeconomic, and the cultural/religious etc.; for comprehensive reviews see Saharso 2019; Gracés-Mascareñas and Penninx 2016). In the following, we briefly summarise the three most influential conceptualisations of migrant integration identified in the existing literature, and the most important critiques raised against them. This review is not intended to be comprehensive, and rather aims to position the whole-of-community approach elaborated in this paper in the framework of the broader theoretical debate on migrant integration, with a specific focus on recent approaches to migrant integration that informed studies of migration governance and/or (local) policymaking.

A first influential approach to migrant integration is the one proposed, among others, by Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx in their book *Integration Processes and Policies* published in 2016. The two scholars define migrant integration as 'the process of settlement, interaction with the host society, and social change that follows immigration' and which involves migrants, the receiving community and migrants' countries of origin (p. 13). This definition builds on – and aims to address the limits of – the one-sided perspective of classical assimilation theories (e.g. Warner and Srole 1945; for a critique of this approach see Safi 2011) and the view of integration as a 'two-way process', i.e. as a process of mutual adjustment or adaptation between migrants and the receiving society. This latter perspective dominates policy discourses on integration at the EU and international level (see EC Communication on Immigration, Integration and Employment 2003;

Council of the EU 2004; but also IOM 2012[2]) and in much of the existing academic literature (e.g. Penninx 2003; Favell 2003; Korteweg 2017).

The main critique raised about the definition of integration as a two-way process concerns the fact that this implies a mutual adjustment among different and separated parts, i.e. migrants and the host community, failing to acknowledge that these have unequal access to resources and power and hold different interests and resources. Moreover, this approach fails to acknowledge that mutual adjustment and social cohesion do not necessarily represent the overall rationale guiding (policy) actors' efforts.

Another recent approach to migrant integration which is highly influential in policy debates is the so-called 'whole-of-society approach' proposed by a resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly on 19 September 2016 (A/RES/71/1) and further specified in the Global Compact on Migration of 19 December 2018 (A/RES/73/195). Following Papademetriou and Benton (2016, 26), the core of the idea of a whole-of-society approach is the need to 'engage people outside government and more importantly outside of insular policy communities and the political establishment' to address the 'challenge' of integration. In other words, this approach, in line with the perspective and vision of the Global Compact, calls for 'broad multistakeholder partnerships to address migration in all its dimensions' (see for instance point 15 of the Global Compact on Migration).

The key limitation of this definition of integration lies in its falling short of acknowledging the key importance of the local dimension of integration policies and processes, and implicitly assuming the 'national society' to be the locus of integration (see for instance Hadj-Abdou 2019).

Finally, we would like to address radical critiques of the very notion of integration. A seminal book in this respect is Schinkel's *Imagined Societies. A Critique of Immigrant Integration in Western Europe* (2017). Schinkel criticises immigrant integration research for failing to properly conceptualise the notion of 'society'. He argues that 'immigrant integration monitoring is a

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[2] 'Integration is the process by which migrants become accepted into society, both as individuals and as groups….[Integration] refers to a two-way process of adaptation by migrants and host societies…[and implies] consideration of the rights and obligations of migrants and host societies, of access to different kinds of services and the labour market, and of identification and respect for a core set of values that bind migrants and host communities in a common purpose" (IOM 2012).

neocolonial form of knowledge intricately bound up with the contemporary workings of power' (Schinkel 2018:1), and proposes that social sciences should move beyond the notions of 'immigrant integration' and 'society' 'towards an imagination against the grain that involves paying due attention to what happens when migrants move across social ecologies, without resorting to common sense and/or policy categories in doing so' (Ibid.). A similar suggestion is made by Bojadzijev (2008) according to which integration is a politically and emotionally loaded concept, which in its daily usage mostly serves to mark otherness, relegating those targeted by integration measures to a position of passivity. Other authors working in a (multi)scalar perspective (Box 7) prefer to use the notion of emplacement, intended as 'the social processes through which a dispossessed individual builds or rebuilds networks of connection within the constraints and opportunities of a specific city' (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2016, 21).

However others, like Hadj-Abdou (2019), propose to continue strengthening critical approaches to the concept of migrant integration rather than abandoning it as a field of research. More specifically, Hadj-Abdou (2019, 1) suggests that 'immigrant integration has to be understood and analysed as a governance technique, rendering differences purposeful for certain ends' (thus keeping categories such as class and race in the picture) and advocates for approaches that look beyond the nation state. Similarly, Collyer, Hinger and Schweitzer (2020, 1) propose using the concept of '(dis)integration' to acknowledge the multiple types and goals of integration policies and practices and the fact that policies and practices justified within a broader integration framework sometimes 'overlook settlement' or even 'actively set out to do harm and discourage it'. Similarly, Penninx (2019) criticises Schinkel's work arguing that his critique fails to take into account that 'the concept of integration has different functions in research and policy'.

In line with Hadj-Abdou's suggestions, we continue using the term 'integration' in this paper, aware of the limits of this notion (and of the contested nature of this label), mainly because it allows us to connect to existing policy and academic debates on migrants' settlement and emplacement in a concise and recognisable way.

Importantly, the concept of integration is often used together with the two related concepts of social inclusion and social cohesion. Social inclusion is generally used as a synonym for incorporation, or of the 'process whereby social groups, classes, and individuals are integrated into

a larger social entity' (Scott 2014), and therefore tends to refer to 'migrants' economic, social, cultural and political participation in host communities' (IOM 2017).

The concept of social cohesion is more contested and there seems to be little agreement on its definition and constitutive dimensions (Jenson 2010; Koopmans, Lancee and Schaeffer 2014; Schaeffer 2016), which sometimes overlap with those of integration[3]. Social cohesion – existing definitions suggest – is very much about trust (e.g. Larsen 2013, see also Putnam's works). More precisely, by reviewing the existing literature, Schiefer and van Der Noll (2017) reduce the social cohesion dimensions to three essential features/components, common to almost all definitions: 1) quality of social relations, including social networks, trust, acceptance of diversity and participation; 2) identification with the social entity; and 3) orientation towards common goods (sense of responsibility, solidarity, compliance to social order). In fact, they regard shared values, equality and quality of life, mentioned in several definitions, as determinants or consequences rather than constituting elements of social cohesion. Furthermore, these scholars point out a micro level (individual attitudes and orientations), a meso level (features of communities and groups) and a macro level (features of societal institutions). Finally, starting from the assumption that social cohesion's components might not be interrelated, they stress how social cohesion can manifest itself differently in different societies: identical levels of social cohesion in different societies can be based on different constellations and exhibit different qualities (Green and Janmaat 2011; Janmaat 2011).

When it comes to migration, questions arise on how integration relates to social cohesion, especially when integration is conceived as a cross-cutting and multisectorial issue that pertains to economic, social, legal, cultural and civic spheres. The link between social cohesion and integration remains particularly undertheorised (for a critique see: Kearns and Forrest 2000, Janmaat 2011, Schiefer and van Der Noll 2017). In this regard, Zetter et al. (2006) highlight how the European

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[3] For instance, Jenson (1998), in her seminal work, identifies five dimensions of social cohesion: 1) belonging/isolation (shared values, collective identities); 2) economic inclusion/exclusion; 3) participation and involvement of the society's members in public affairs; 4) recognition/rejection of diversity and pluralism; and 5) legitimacy of societal institutions. Kearns and Forrest (2000) identify the following domains which partially overlap with Jenson's: 1) common values and civic culture means a culture in which key political values are debated in a democratic manner and through popular culture and where people engage in public and collective affairs and social cooperation; 2) social order and social control; 3) social solidarity and reduction in wealth disparities; 4) social networks and social capital; and 5) place attachment and identity.

Commission and the Council of Europe have promoted social cohesion in integrationist terms in order to reduce the risk of social and political disruption and point out a shift in the contemporary discourse on citizenship and social cohesion towards a more assimilationist model of integration that does not fully recognise the multiple identities of migrant groups. As already mentioned, Joppke (2007) points out that national integration policies in Western Europe are increasingly aimed at pursuing social cohesion.

2.2. Immigrant integration from a whole-of-community perspective. Beyond social cohesion

In this paper we propose a 'whole-of-community' (WoC) approach to study immigrant integration, which builds on existing conceptualisations and yet aims to go beyond them. This new approach crucially acknowledges that the multiple actors involved in community-making processes may have different interests and resources, which implies that mutual adjustment and social cohesion do not necessarily represent the overall rationale guiding (policy) actors' efforts. More specifically, from a WoC perspective we **conceptualise immigrant integration** as a process of community-making:

1. that takes place in specific local contexts characterised by distinct configurations of structural factors in terms of the local economy and the labour market, demographic composition and trends and levels of socio-cultural diversity and historical relations with migrant-related groups;

2. that is brought about by the interactions of multiple actors – as individuals, organisations, institutions and/or corporate entities – who shape the local community with their multilevel and multi-situated relations, networks, interests and resources; and

3. whose outcomes are open-ended and can be empirically assessed on three main dimensions of local communities' quality of social life, i.e.: attitudes of both long-term residents and newly arrived migrants towards each other; types of social relations between long-term residents and newly arrived migrants; and post-2014 migrants' experiences and modes of interaction with the local community's institutions, support organisations and markets (labour market, housing market etc.). Furthermore, such outcomes are likely to be experienced differently by

natives, long-term residents of a migrant origin and migrants themselves, depending on their social position in terms of gender, age, ethnic background etc.

The WoC approach acknowledges the importance of concepts such as governance and mainstreaming in the analysis of integration policies (Scholten, Collett and Petrovic 2017), yet it goes beyond these approaches by directly engaging in the analysis of the link between integration policies/governance and their consequences and outcomes. In other terms, Whole-COMM does not assume a positive relation between (polycentric) governance, mainstreaming and community social cohesion, but rather aims to unravel which type of local policy can lead – under specific structural conditions – to more cohesive – rather than fragmented – social relations. From the WoC perspective, we argue, local integration policy – or the lack thereof – and structures/networks of support from the market and/or civil society, are shaped by such processes of community-making and are key in (re)producing the local community's overall quality of social life.

The new understanding of integration proposed by Whole-COMM addresses the main limits underlying currently prevailing conceptualisations.

First, it addresses the limits of definitions of integration as a two-way or a three-way process (Gracés-Mascareñas and Penninx 2016), as far as it acknowledges that the multiple actors involved in community-making processes may have different interests, resources, strategies and power positions and does not assume that mutual adjustment and social cohesion necessarily represent the overall rationale guiding (policy) actors' efforts. Following Collyer, Hinger and Schweitzer (2020, 1), it duly takes into account the 'politics of' (or 'processes of negotiation around') '(dis)integration', drawing attention to the variety of actors involved in such processes.

Second, compared to the whole-of-society approach (see previous section), it duly acknowledges the key importance of the local dimension of integration policies and processes, without implicitly assuming the 'national society' to be the locus of integration. Conversely, distancing itself from depoliticised understandings of integration as a mutual adjustment, our Whole-COMM approach draws attention to the very locus where integration takes place, i.e. the local community with its specific characteristics. Furthermore, contrary to classical sociological understandings of local

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community as constituted by close ties, place attachment and feelings of identity and belonging, we assume a truly relational and agent-based perspective. In other words, Whole-COMM conceptualises the local community as a relational and 'multi-scalar' entity, which is concretely experienced by individuals through the lens of gender, ethnicity, age, legal status etc. (for a similar approach see: Phillips and Robinson 2015; Çağlar and Glick-Schiller 2018).

An important implication of our approach is that, from a WoC perspective, the link between integration policies and social cohesion cannot be taken for granted but has to be problematized and critically assessed vis-à-vis actors' diversity of values and attitudes, social position and resources in the local community. In fact, rather than using the contested label of social cohesion, we specifically use the term 'quality of social relations' to refer to the outcomes of integration policies and processes. More specifically, against this backdrop, Whole-COMM identifies three key indicators regarding the overall 'quality of social relations' in the local community, that we aim to assess, i.e.: 1) attitudes, of both long-term residents and newly arrived migrants, each group towards the other; 2) types of social relations between natives, long-term residents and newly arrived migrants; and 3) post-2014 migrants' experiences and modes of interaction with the local community's institutions, support organisations and markets (labour market, housing market etc.).

Following the terminology proposed by Collyer, Hinger and Schweitzer (2020), and in line with the perspective proposed by these scholars, the WoC approach assumes that fragmentation and cohesiveness (or integration and disintegration) are not a simple binary categorisation but are intertwined and potentially coexistent, depending on the subjective perspectives of the actors involved.

2.3. The Whole-COMM theoretical framework

Having clarified how Whole-COMM conceptualises immigrant integration, we now move on to illustrate in more detail the theoretical framework of the project and explain in this subsection how a WoC perspective addresses the link between integration policy, networks/structures of support, natives' and long-term residents' attitudes, social cohesion and migrants' trajectories.

Figure 1 illustrates the overall theoretical rationale underlying the Whole-COMM project. The arrival of migrants around 2014/15 in SMsTRA – either spontaneously or through the operation of national redistribution policies – is conceptualised as a watershed for local communities. We assume that the activation of multiple actors to face the new challenge in Time 1, and their interactions in the multilevel policymaking processes, could lead to the emergence of specific local integration 'outputs', depending on a range of (or configurations of) contextual, relational and political factors. As already anticipated in previous sections, we do not restrict our analysis to local policies intended as specific measures or interventions (see Section 1). In fact, we aim to also consider the other possible outputs of local governance systems. In particular, these include:

a) local integration policies.

b) integration-related practices (linked to policy implementation).

c) local policymakers' patterns of interaction with other actors in multilevel policymaking dynamics.

d) the level of politicisation of the integration issue at the local level (which is linked to the number of actors involved in the integration policy debate, the polarization of views and the mobilisation of pro-migrant and anti-migrant actors; see Grande, Schwarzbözl and Fatke 2019).

e) the structures of support and networks established by civil society and the private sector (which might be pre-existing or resulting from these actors' mobilisations).

f) the prevailing discourses or policy frames about who is considered as 'deserving' help, who is considered to be 'helping' and what is expected from these different groups (sometimes more specific frames differentiate target groups based on gender, age, migrant status etc.).

Figure 1 Theoretical framework of the Whole-COMM project, with the main research questions (RQ) and the research subquestions (SQ)
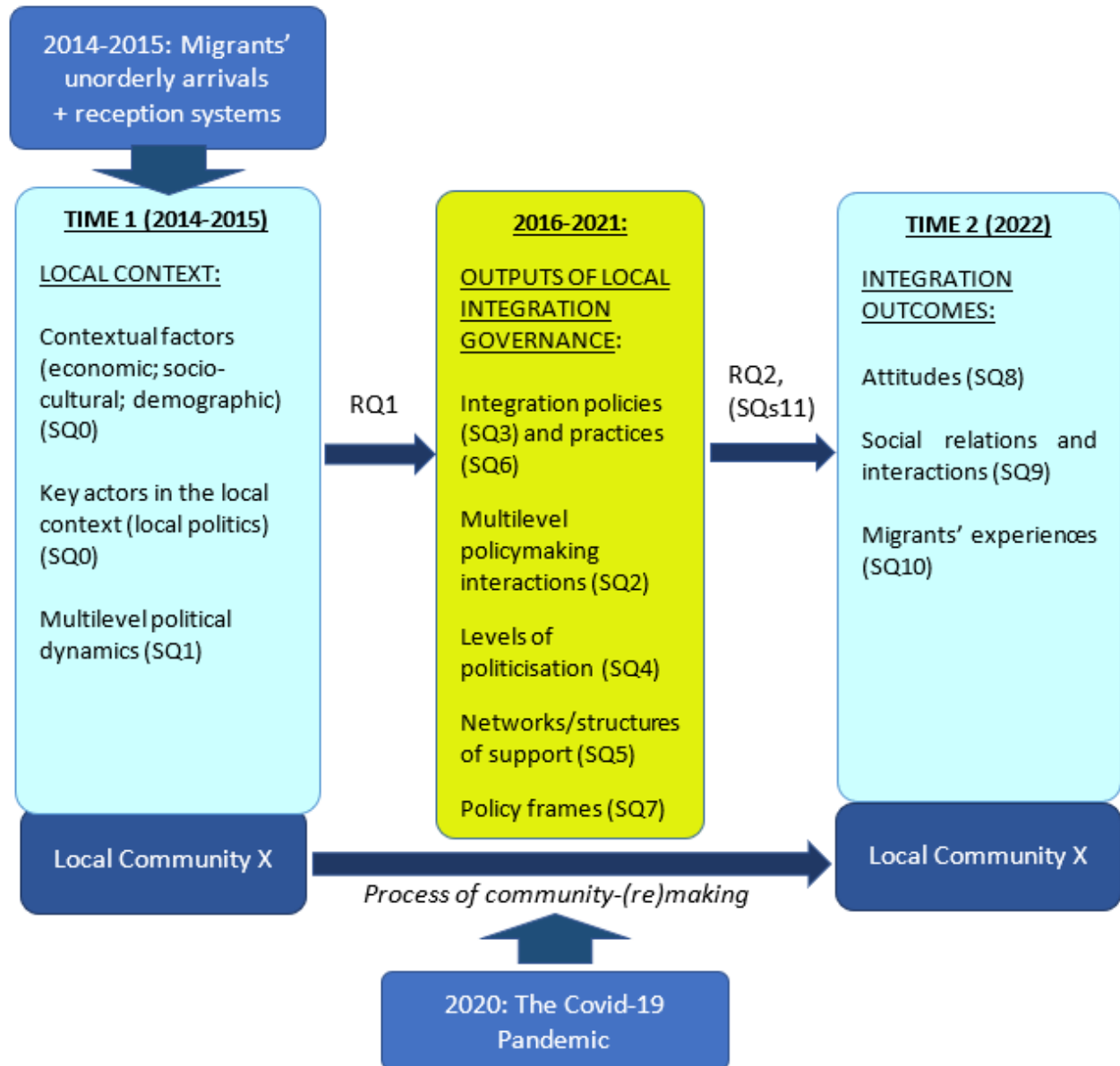
Our first research question – *How do the various actors whose actions affect local communities decide, implement and/or act upon immigrant integration policies?* – focuses on the emergence or 'production' of these outputs of local integration governance systems after the arrival of migrants at Time 1. Such an investigation requires prior identification of potential factors that can influence the processes of local integration policymaking. As shown in Section 1, research on SMsTRA has particularly emphasised the importance of structural and socio-cultural factors. By combining the

structural and the socio-cultural dimensions of local immigrant integration, it is possible to identify four types of local contexts, as illustrated in Table 1. The structural dimension regards (i) the local economy and the labour market, and ii) the demographic composition and trends. The socio-cultural dimension instead refers to levels of socio-cultural diversity and historical relations with migrant-related groups.

Table 1. The Whole-COMM typology of local contexts

		STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS	
		+	-
EXPERIENCE WITH CULTURAL DIVERSITY	+	Revitalising/better-off	Marginal
	-	In Transition	Left-behind

Revitalising/better-off localities are characterised by a thriving or quickly expanding local economy and population growth, as well as by a presence of migrants' settlement preceding more recent arrivals. Left-behind localities are characterized by economic and demographic decline and no remarkable arrivals of migrants before 2014. In marginal localities, demographic and economic decline combines with the presence of migrants' settlements before 2014. Finally, communities in transition are characterised by an improving economic and demographic situation in the absence of migration-related diversity before 2014.

It is against this background that we look at interactions between the various local actors who intervene in processes of community-making, namely local elites and policymakers as well as other stakeholders like NGOs, spontaneous residents' groups, previous immigrants etc. In line with the WoC framework, these actors' agency is 'situated' (Bevir and Rhodes 2005), in the sense that actors' capacity for agency always occurs in a (social, economic, cultural, historical, but also relational) context that influences it. We do not assume that this context determines actors'

actions, but we do admit that actors acting against the same social background can choose to follow different beliefs and act in different ways (Ibid.). We also think that they can develop different types of interactions with other actors involved in the multilevel policymaking processes. Particular attention will be paid to the still-debated and unclear role of political actors, and, especially in the context of small and medium-sized towns and rural areas, of mayors (see e.g. Haselbacher 2019; Oomen et al. 2021). Below we present our hypotheses on the kind of outputs, processes and relations that we expect to find in each type of locality.

The second research question of the project – *How – i.e. through which causal mechanisms and processes – do local policies and other outputs of local governance systems contribute to producing different outcomes in terms of local communities' 'quality of social relations'?* – is concerned with the outcomes of integration policies, practices and structures of support. Our assumption is that the everyday implementation of local integration policies and interaction with the structures/networks of local support and services for post-2014 migrants put forward by the market and civil society results in an overall process of community-(re)making which can produce, in Time 2, a (more) cohesive or fragmented community.

In line with the WoC approach introduced in the previous subsection, we do not aim to measure traditional integration outcomes (e.g. related to migrants' participation in the labour market or societal activities). Rather, we focus on the three key indicators that the WoC perspective identifies as crucial for the overall 'quality of social relations' in the local community, i.e.: 1) attitudes, of both long-term residents and newly arrived migrants, each group towards the other; 2) types of social relations between natives, long-term residents and newly arrived migrants; and 3) migrants' experiences and modes of interaction with the local community's institutions, support organisations and markets (labour market, housing market etc.).

We therefore define a cohesive community as characterised by: prevailing positive attitudes of natives and long-term residents towards post-2014 migrants and vice versa; intense interactions between natives and migrants and positive or meaningful social relations; and positive migrants' experiences. Conversely, we define a fragmented community as characterised by: prevailing negative attitudes of natives and long-term residents towards post-2014 migrants and vice versa; fragmented interactions between natives and migrants; tense or meaningless social relations; and

negative migrants' experiences (characterised by perceptions of hostility, marginalisation, isolation).

As mentioned above, the relationship between integration policy (or lack thereof) and outcomes is conceived as open-ended, and, as such, a matter of empirical analysis. Through in-depth research on attitudes, social relations and migrant experiences, we aim to elucidate/identify the key mechanisms through which integration policies (or lack thereof) can contribute to producing cohesiveness or fragmentation.

Importantly, during this process of community (re)making, another important external shock intervened: the Covid-19 pandemic. Such a disruptive event has modified the local context in which local integration outputs and outcomes are produced. The economy of many localities (e.g. tourist areas) has been dramatically affected by the pandemic. This economic shock, in some areas (e.g. in university towns), also led to marked demographic effects, even if only temporarily. The lockdowns and social distancing rules implemented in all European countries have modified social relations and interactions within our communities. The pandemic has also impacted migrants' experiences (Abdul Azeez et al. 2021; Spiritus-Beerden et al. 2021; Yueping et al. 2021) and, as some scholars suggest, public attitudes towards migrants (Dennison and Geddes 2020). Whole-COMM will aim to identify these effects while studying the mechanisms through which integration outcomes are produced.

Table 4 (page 56) provides a detailed overview of the subquestions underlying the empirical study, which define the different areas of research of the Whole-COMM project.

2.4. Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical framework outlined above, we elaborate here a range of potential hypotheses connected to our main research questions. Considering that little research has been conducted on integration policymaking in SMsTRA, it must be specified that these hypotheses are intended more as expectations guiding our empirical analyses than as straightforward assumptions to be tested for confirmation or invalidation. In other words, we follow a hypotheses-

generating approach to cross-city/cross-country comparison, rather than a strictly hypotheses-testing one.

In terms of local-integration policymaking, based on the insights derived from the literature reviewed in Section 1, we hypothesise that different possible configurations of structural factors can contribute to different types of local outputs, and that other factors can mediate such effects:

o In **revitalising/better-off localities**, we expect to find a receptive community where local policymakers, civil society organisations and other key stakeholders like the business community, engage around the challenges of post 2014-migrant integration in an accommodative and proactive manner, building on previous experiences with the established migrant community. In these localities more resources should be available and we expect to identify resources allocated to social services, housing services and labour market and socio-cultural integration. Local political actors will be actively involved in favouring multilevel governance, i.e. collaborative relations with public and nonpublic actors at different territorial scales, as well as translocal collaboration, including with cities across national borders. We do not expect to find significant differences between conservative and progressive localities: both progressive and conservative local governments or mayors are expected to adopt pragmatic approaches and use inclusive policy frames vis-à-vis the supposed benefits of migration in strengthening ongoing processes of revitalisation. Also, we do not expect to identify relevant differences across countries with different institutional arrangements in place. Furthermore, in these localities we would not expect to find significant mobilisations of anti-migrant actors (the levels of politicisation are expected to be lower compared to other types of localities). Policy frames and practices are expected to be more inclusive.

o The opposite situation is expected to be found in **left-behind localities**. Here, local political authorities will most likely resist national redistribution plans and oppose spontaneous settlement; therefore, policies will be somewhat reactive and restrictive, rather than favouring integration. Actors in local structures of support like civil society organisations

and/or businesses might eventually mobilise to favour integration, but their efforts are expected to be fragmented and poorly coordinated, while we do expect anti-migrant mobilisations to be more widespread than in other localities. These localities will also be least likely to engage in transnational policymaking processes. Again, we do not expect to identify significant differences between progressive and conservative localities. Policy frames and practices are expected to be predominantly exclusionary.

o As to **localities in transition** we expect local governments in these localities to develop proactive integration policies and to actively mobilise in influencing multilevel policymaking processes and to have some interest in participating in translocal networks, regarded as an opportunity to learn from successful revitalising/better-off communities. Compared to these latter communities, we do expect to find fewer services and structures of support already in place deployed by civil society and/or by economic actors. In addition, we expect a higher degree of opposition to newcomers, considering the low historical presence of migrants in the local context. We also expect to find more significant differences between progressive and conservative localities.

o In **marginal communities**, local political actors are likely to show more ambivalent attitudes towards newly arrived migrants and to be less proactive in developing integration policies. We therefore expect policies to be more fragmented and dependent upon the mobilisation of stakeholders in the economy and civil society. In these localities, we expect a key role to be played by the structures of support deployed by civil society and/or by economic actors. As in left-behind communities, we expect to find higher levels of politicisation of the integration issue in these localities and less involvement of the municipalities in transnational policymaking processes. We do expect, however, some differences depending on the local party politics: localities with both a progressive local government and a progressive political tradition are expected to adopt more proactive policymaking approaches (especially in those countries where localities have explicit authority over integration) and to not dismantle previously established services or structures of support, despite the unfavourable economic context. This approach is likely to exacerbate or create tensions with the local community, which might be less favourable towards migrants than public officials and political actors from progressive parties.

As mentioned above, the hypotheses presented in this section should not be understood as rigid but rather as subject to reformulation and refinement once confronted with evidence from fieldwork and research data. Certainly, an important factor that is likely to mediate all of the expectations mentioned so far is **the size of localities** (see also the next section). Overall, we expect policymakers and communities in medium-sized localities to adopt more proactive approaches, either in support of or in opposition to migrants' integration, due to the presumably higher levels of administrative capacity, and to the presence of a more structured civil society and business sector. We expect rural areas to adopt more passive approaches. Some intermediate configurations are expected in small-sized towns. We also expect **the political affiliation of local governments** to have a greater influence in integration policymaking in medium-sized towns, while in rural communities the (gatekeeping?) role of mayors is expected to be more crucial in establishing the overall approach of the local community to migrants' integration. Politicisation can be expected to be much lower in rural areas, given the much lower degree of autonomy, both in terms of legal authority and in terms of capacity. However, politicisation levels are expected to be higher (and interactions among governance levels more conflictual) if the parties in local government are different from those controlling the national and/or regional governments. Conversely, the impact of both pro- and anti-migrant civil society initiatives is expected to be much greater in rural areas, where even smaller groups can potentially have direct contact with local policymakers. The same applies to potential pressures coming from the business sector and private companies.

Furthermore, we expect **the Covid-19 pandemic** to have had effects on both the outputs and the outcomes of local integration governance systems (despite many of the outputs that will be observed being produced before 2020). For instance, as a result of the pandemic, policy frames might have become more inclusive (as a consequence of the more visible role of migrants as 'essential workers' during the 2020 lockdowns in Europe) or more exclusionary, due to rising unemployment and increasing labour market competition. We also expect some effects of the pandemic on the implementation of integration policies and the politicisation of the integration issue. The pandemic likely decreased the salience of the migration issue and reduced the opportunities for public mobilisations, as well as for the creation of structures of support.

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Considering that our fieldwork takes place in the aftermath of the pandemic, some of these effects might be difficult to grasp (see methods section).

As to the integration outcomes – in terms of attitudes, social relations and migrant experiences – we again develop some heuristic hypotheses starting from the typology presented in Table 1, which nevertheless should not be considered as deterministic.

- o First, we expect integration outcomes to be largely shaped by a combination of a) the structural conditions and experience with cultural diversity, and b) the integration policies and structures of support developed in the localities. In revitalising/better-off localities where the local community responded to new arrivals with proactive integration policies and approaches, we expect to identify in Time 2 a more cohesive scenario in terms of: 1) prevailing positive attitudes of natives and long-term residents towards post-2014 migrants and vice versa; 2) intense interactions and positive social relations; and 3) positive migrants' experiences. The opposite situation is expected in left-behind communities which developed exclusionary integration policies or did not develop policies at all. Intermediate configurations are expected in other localities depending on the contextual variables and the policies adopted and the other outputs of local integration governance systems. For instance, we expect similar integration policies to have different impacts on the outcomes produced in better-off, marginal, in transition and left-behind localities. The size of municipalities is also expected to emerge as a key factor which significantly influences integration outcomes.
- o We also expect integration policies to lead to more positive attitudes and meaningful social relations in localities with lower levels of politicisation of the integration issue and less organised opposition to migration. Again, this effect is expected to interact with the socio-cultural and economic context and the type of policies and outputs produced by the local governance system.
- o In addition, we expect the specific policy frames adopted in different localities – e.g. about who is considered to be 'deserving' of help, who is considered to be 'helping' and what is expected from these different groups – to have a nonnegligible impact on long-term residents' attitudes towards post-2014 migrants, and therefore to considerably influence

the type of social relations that will take place in everyday community-making processes in Table 2. In particular, we expect the policy frames adopted by mayors and key political actors, particularly in rural areas (more than in the other types of localities), to have a nonnegligible impact on local attitudes towards migration.

o In addition, since in many localities the resident population is likely to also include older cohorts of immigrants and their descendants, we expect attitudes of previously settled migrant groups towards newcomers and their types of interactions to considerably affect integration processes.

o We expect the Covid-19 pandemic to have had an impact on attitudes towards migration. While the direction of the effect is difficult to hypothesise (see Dennison and Geddes 2020), we do expect a more negative effect of the pandemic on attitudes, social relations and migrants' experiences in those localities more harshly hit by the pandemic (primarily from the point of view of the local economy).

o Importantly, not only do we expect that these three dimensions (attitudes, social relations and migrants' experiences) could potentially be independent from one another, but local policies are likely to be experienced differently by individuals – natives, long-term residents and migrants – within local communities, depending on their position and resources in terms of gender, ethnicity, legal status etc. Rather than being mutually exclusive, cohesion and fragmentation are more likely to coexist. For instance, with respect to gender, measures favouring migrant women's involvement in schools and activities addressing children might have a positive impact on attitudes towards post-2014 migrants and favour the establishment of positive relations with resident women whose children attend the same schools. Yet, in terms of experiences and trajectories of integration, such policies might also be seen as penalising, because of the risk of crystallizing traditional gender roles and impeding access to economic independence, which might be particularly harmful for single women with dependent children.

With these caveats in mind – and given the lack of systematic research on the link between immigrant integration policies and quality of social relations in SMsTRA – we pursue both a

hypothesis-generating and hypothesis-testing research strategy. More specifically, as clarified in the next section, we will initially adopt a mix of qualitative analyses and semi-experimental methods to enable identification of the key causal conditions and mechanisms that account for the emergence of positive reciprocal attitudes, meaningful social relations and positive migrant experiences (WP5). Subsequently, we will test some of these emerging hypotheses in a survey of SMsTRA's long-term residents' attitudes towards and relations with post-2014 migrants, allowing for more robust causal explanations (WP6).

3. Methodology

How can we study migrant integration policies and processes from a whole-of-community perspective? How does the WoC approach translate methodologically? This third section of the paper illustrates the methodology of the Whole-COMM project. We start with an important methodological clarification, concerning how we operatively define SMsTRA. Then, we discuss our case-selection strategy. Finally, we illustrate our research design, and the methods of data collection used in the different stages of the project.

3.1. Defining small and medium-sized towns and rural areas

An important preliminary methodological task in our research concerns defining and distinguishing between medium-sized towns, small-sized towns and rural areas. This is not an easy task considering the extreme variety of state structures and administrative systems characterising the countries investigated by the Whole-COMM project. Our case countries, as specified below, include different types of federal states like Germany, Austria, Belgium, Spain and Canada; regionalised states like Italy and Turkey; and unitary states like the Netherlands, Sweden and Poland. In these different systems, cities and SMsTRA have different degrees of autonomy in developing local policies, as well as different responsiblities in the field of social policy and of migrant integration more specifically. A one-size-fits-all criterion of selection, like taking one specific type of administrative unit, would make cross-locality comparison extremely difficult, given such different institutional contexts. At the same time, it is challenging to identify a classification of types of localities that can be perfectly adapted to all our countries.

Table 3 summarises some of the classifications of urban areas that are used in different European countries and by some international organizations to define different types of municipalities.

As the table shows, two different indicators are commonly used to identify medium-sized and small-sized towns: the number of inhabitants and the population density (in the case of the Netherlands). In the case of rural areas, the indicators include the number of inhabitants, the population density, but also the type of prevalent economic sector and the commuting rate, or the distance from the closest big town or city.

In order to maximise the comparability of our localities, we decided to adopt, across all countries, the OECD/EC definitions of medium-sized and small-sized towns (see Dijkstra and Poelman 2012, 5). Such classification of urban areas distinguishes six categories on the basis of their population, i.e. global cities if they have more than 5 million inhabitants; large metropolitan areas if their population ranges between 1.5 million and 5 million inhabitants; metropolitan areas if their population is between 500,000 and 1.5 million; big-sized urban areas (or: big-sized towns) if their population is between 250,000 and 500,000 inhabitants; medium-sized urban areas if their population is between 100,000 and 250,000; and small urban areas if their population is between 50,000 and 100,000.

Table 2. Some classifications of urban areas used by international organizations or national statistical offices.

	MEDIUM TOWNS	**SMALL TOWNS**	**RURAL AREAS**
OECD definitions	200,000 – 500,000	50,000 – 200,000	< 50,000 (+ low population density)
The 'new OECD/EC definition'	100,000 – 250,000	50,000 – 100,000	5,000 – 50,000 (+ low population density)
Swedish SALAR	50,000 – 250,000 with at least 40,000 inhabitants in the largest urban area	15,000 – 50,000	<15,000 and very low commuting rate (less than 30%)
BBSR Germany	20,000 –100.000	5,000–20,000	Various typologies (e.g. Thuenen Institute)

Statistics Netherlands (CBS)	Density of addresses is higher than 2,500 within 1km	Density of addresses is between 500 and 2,500 within 1km	Density of addresses is lower than 500 within 1km (+ agriculture as predominant economic sector)

Considering the significant cross-country differences with respect to the definition of rural areas we decided to establish a common criterion for all countries – the number of inhabitants of the rural area cannot exceed 50,000 inhabitants – and, in addition to such criteria, we referred in each country to the national indicators that are commonly used to define rural areas.

Importantly, we assume that medium-sized towns, small-sized towns and rural areas all need to be part of a broader territory or functional area in economic and administrative terms that is not strictly dependent on or linked to a big city (see e.g. Natale et al. 2019; Hinger, Schäfer and Pott 2016). In other words, our definitions exclude suburbs or satellite towns.

3.2. Case selection

Case selection is a crucial task for the kind of analysis that Whole-COMM aims to conduct. The project is innovative in designing territorial comparisons, especially in two key respects. First, we propose a truly cross-locality research design which assumes as a reference frame a typology of localities rather than of countries: the aim of case selection is therefore that of developing cross-country/cross-locality comparisons, and it is not primarily aimed at within-country comparisons. Second, by promoting a cross-country, transcontinental empirical comparison (Europe, Canada, Turkey) we aim to bridge geographical areas with different policy approaches and theoretical traditions in migration research.

As a cross-country/cross-locality comparative study, case-selection in Whole-COMM is operated on a double level, i.e. at the country level and at the locality level.

3.2.1. The selection of countries

With respect to the country level, Whole-COMM considers eight EU member states – Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, Spain and Poland – and two non-EU countries – Turkey and Canada.

All of these countries have received increasing numbers of asylum seekers during the so-called 'refugee crisis'. Eurostat data on asylum applications shows how numbers of asylum seekers have been skyrocketing in the EU since 2014 (+53% in 2014 and +123% in 2015). In Germany, in 2014 the number of asylum applications increased 58% with respect to the previous year, and in 2015 155%; in Sweden the increase was 52% in 2014 and 108% in 2015; in Belgium 17% in 2014 and 178% in 2015; in Spain 27% in 2014 and 167% in 2017; while in Austria in 2015 a spectacular increase of 233% was registered with respect to 2014. In the Netherlands and in Italy, the main increase was registered in 2014, +147% and +122%, respectively. In Poland, notwithstanding a sharp decrease in asylum applicants in 2014 (−60%), 2015 registered an increase of 83%.

The selection of case countries is also oriented by Whole-COMM's research questions, beyond the mere criterion of the magnitude of post-2014 inflows. Four criteria were relevant in this sense (Table 3). First, we selected countries that received different types of post-2014 migrants, i.e. irregular cross-Mediterranean migrants (Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and Turkey); crisis-driven, visa-free arrivals (Poland and Spain); and resettled refugees (Canada). Second, the eight EU member states and the two non-EU countries are representative of different modalities of arrival in SMsTRA, with post-2014 migrants reaching the localities either spontaneously or through the operation of national reception systems imposing restrictions on asylum seekers' mobility[4]. Third, these countries display significant variation with respect to national dispersal/redistribution systems, national provisions limiting asylum seekers' mobility, the length of the asylum process and recognition rates related to different forms of protection (refugee status, subsidiary protection, other types of national/humanitarian protection). These latter aspects are relevant because scholars who have analysed refugees' integration performance (mainly in central and northern European countries) have stressed the negative impact of policies

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[4] For an overview of first reception/redistribution systems in Europe see the CEASEVAL H2020 Project, coordinated by Chemnitz University.

imposing lengthy asylum processes and/or mobility restrictions (Hainmueller, Hangartner and Lawrence 2016; INTEGRATE Project). Fourth, the 10 countries are characterised by different political systems (centralised, semifederal, federal) and different responsiblities and degrees of autonomy granted to local authorities. Furthermore, the countries are also to some extent representative of the main socioeconomic differences within Europe (covering Southern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central/Northern Europe).

Table 3. Whole-COMM country cases

	Type of post-2014 migrants	Redistribution system	Limits to asylum seekers' mobility	Arrival in small and medium-sized towns and rural areas
Austria	Irregular cross-Mediterranean routes	Yes	Yes, while waiting for decision	Nonvoluntary
Belgium	Irregular cross-Mediterranean routes	Yes	No	Nonvoluntary
Germany	Irregular cross-Mediterranean routes	Yes	Yes, while waiting for decision on asylum	Nonvoluntary
Italy	Irregular cross-Mediterranean routes	Yes	Yes, while waiting for decision on asylum	Nonvoluntary
The Netherlands	Irregular cross-Mediterranean routes	Yes	Yes, while waiting for decision on asylum	Nonvoluntary
Poland	Visa-free migrants	No	No	Voluntary
Spain	Visa-free migrants	No	No	Voluntary
Sweden	Irregular cross-Mediterranean routes	Yes	No	Voluntary

Turkey	Middle East and Far East crises	Yes	Yes	Nonvoluntary
Canada	Resettlement	Yes, for government-assisted refugees (GAR)	No	Nonvoluntary for GAR (voluntary for privately sponsored refugees)

Table 3 provides an overview of the 10 countries analysed by Whole-COMM in terms of the type of post-2014 migrants, the national redistribution system, limits to mobility and modes of arrival in SMsTRA.

The selection of Turkey and Canada as additional non-EU case countries will enable a better conceptualisation of similarities and differences in the way local communities in very different structural and institutional contexts mobilise vis-à-vis the challenges of inflows originating in areas of political and humanitarian crisis. More specifically, Canada is a traditional resettlement country for refugees, with a long history of welcoming and accommodating migrants more generally; while Turkey represents a key destination and transit country that has received massive and unprecedented arrivals of post-2014 migrants, yet, because of the geographical limitation clauses applied to the Geneva Convention, the de facto refugee population only has access to temporary legal statuses, i.e. temporary protection (applied to Syrians) and international protection (all non-Syrians).

3.2.2. The selection of localities

Our selection procedure for case localities is theory-oriented and based on the Whole-COMM theoretical framework. Therefore, its main aim is that of exploring the influence (or lack thereof) of contextual factors on the outputs and outcomes produced by local integration governance systems in SMsTRA. Despite prioritising contextual factors (the Whole-CoMM typology), the procedure does not entirely disregard institutional and political factors. In each of the smaller countries, i.e. Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands and Poland, we selected four cases; while in bigger countries, with a higher variety of regional areas and territorial contexts, like Italy, Germany, Spain and Sweden, we selected six case localities.

Our strategy for the selection of these case localities therefore resembles a 'diverse case selection strategy', which is defined by Gerring and Cojocaru (2016, 400) as:

> ...an exploratory strategy [which] has as its objective the identification of many—or perhaps all—of the causes of an outcome (…). The chosen cases are diverse if they represent all potential factors (Z), including causal conjunctures, that might explain variation in Y. The assumption is that the true causal factors (X) are to be found among the putative causal factors (Z). (…) Where the potential causal factor is categorical (…), the researcher would normally choose one case from each category. For a continuous variable, one must construct cutoff points (based on theoretical understandings of the phenomenon or natural breakpoints in the data), for example, dichotomizing or trichotomizing the variable, and then choosing cases with each discrete value. If one suspects that causal factors interact, then one will look for cases that represent all possible (or actual) intersections of these variables (understood as categorical variables). Two dichotomous variables produce a matrix with four possible cells, for example. Note that where multiple categorical variables interact, the logic of diverse-case analysis rests upon a typological.

The case-selection procedure is developed through **three main steps**.

The **first step** consists of defining the broader 'population of cases' that our case localities need to represent. To this end, we established a number of general criteria to be fulfilled by all selected cases. Crucially, we decided to select only localities that received asylum seekers and/or migrants from areas of political and humanitarian crisis starting from 2014 (including migrants arriving spontaneously or through the operation of national redistribution policies). In the case of the main recipients of asylum seekers in the EU, we aimed to select localities that hosted a 'reception centre' between 2014 and 2017 (we interpret 'reception centre' in a flexible way, including collective structures, apartment-based reception etc…). While in principle it could have been interesting to analyse localities which hosted some asylum seekers and refugees starting from 2014, but from which all migrants left between 2014 and 2021, we decided to exclude these localities from our sample for practical reasons (i.e. the impossibility of reaching the post-2014 migrants who left the localities; but also the impossibility of guaranteeing the anonymity of

interviewed migrants in localities where the number of migrants is extremely small). In other words, we only focus on those localities that in 2021 still host a relevant number of refugees or that at least still have an infrastructure (stakeholders) in place (according to either official data or key stakeholders/informants in the field). Finally, for practical reasons, we tried to minimise the number of municipalities where local elections are expected to be held during the foreseen fieldwork period.

Second, we selected four dimensions of theoretical interest for our research and, when necessary, we operationalised complex concepts by selecting relevant indicators. This procedure also entailed dichotomising and constructing cutoff points for continuous variables. The four key variables include: the size of localities, the Whole-COMM typology, local party politics and the regional area.

i. *The size of municipalities*. Our sample of localities includes a mix of medium-sized towns, small-sized towns and rural areas (see definitions above) that received – either spontaneously or through the operation of national redistribution systems – post-2014 migrants.

ii. *The Whole-COMM typology*. Crucially, case localities are selected on the basis of the typological space presented in Table 1, which is the main dimension of theoretical interest of the project. This required, first and foremost, operationalising the concepts of 'experience with cultural diversity', and 'structural condition' (including both the local economy and local demographic trends) into a number of indicators. For what concerns experience with cultural diversity we selected as our main indicator the share of foreign residents in each locality in 2005. We call this indicator SF2005. In addition, we considered the established presence of seasonal workers, which is significant in rural areas in some countries, and which is not captured by official statistics on foreign residents. As for the local economy, we use as our main indicator the unemployment level in each locality. More specifically, we are interested in the unemployment level in 2005 and 2014 (we call these indicators UN2005 and UN2014) but also, where data are available, in the variation of unemployment in the decade before 2014, which can be calculated as: UN2014 – UN2005 (we call this variable VARUN). Finally, as far as the demographic trend is

concerned, we selected as our main indicator the percentage variation in the number of inhabitants between 2005 and 2014. We call this variable VARNI. This is calculated as:

$$VARNI = \frac{N°Inhabitants2014 - N°Inhabitants2005}{N°Inhabitants\ 2005} * 100$$

Since all of these indicators are continuous rather than categorical, we established cutoff points, i.e. we decided how to establish that the values of SF2005, VARUN and VARNI in each locality are 'high'or 'low', a crucial step to identify revitalising/better-off localities, localities in transition and marginal and left-behind localities. Considering the very significant differences in the unemployment levels, demographic trends and share of foreign residents across our 10 countries (e.g. the average VARUN ranges from +18% in Spain to –10% in Poland) we decided to establish different cutoff points in each country, using national averages as breakpoints[5].

We therefore define *revitalising/better-off localities* as those that fulfil these three criteria:

➢ VARUN < national average (whenever possible case localities are selected among the 25% of localities with the lowest value of VARUN in the country) *or* UN2005 and UN2014 are both very low (i.e. the case localities are among the 25% of localities with the lowest UN2005 and UN2014 in the country);

➢ VARNI > national average (whenever possible, the case localities are selected among the 25% of localities with the highest value of VARNI in the country); and

➢ SF2005 > national average.

We define *left-behind localities* as those that fulfil these three criteria:

➢ VARUN > national average (whenever possible case localities are selected among the 25% of localities with the highest value of VARUN in the country) *or* UN2005 and UN2014 are

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[5] Considering the significant variation within Italy and Germany, we use macroregional averages for these countries (for Southern vs Northern Italy and Western vs Eastern Germany).

both very high (i.e. the case localities are among the 25% of localities with the highest UN2005 and UN2014 in the country);

➢ VARNI < national average (whenever possible, the case localities are selected among the 25% of localities with the lowest value of VARNI in the country);

➢ The locality did not host foreign residents in 2005 or SF2005 is significantly lower than the national average (i.e. case localities are selected among the 25% of municipalities with the lowest SF2005 in the country); and

➢ The locality is not characterised by a significant presence of seasonal workers.

We define *marginal localities* as those that fulfil these criteria:

➢ VARUN > national average (whenever possible case localities are selected among the 25% of localities with the highest value of VARUN in the country) *or* UN2005 and UN2014 are both very high (i.e. the case localities are among the 25% of localities with the highest UN2005 and UN2014 in the country);

➢ VARNI < national average (whenever possible, the case localities are selected among the 25% of localities with the lowest value of VARNI in the country); and

➢ SF2005 > national average.

We define *localities in transition* as those that fulfil these four criteria:

➢ VARUN < national average (whenever possible case localities are selected among the 25% of localities with the lowest value of VARUN in the country) *or* UN2005 and UN2014 are both very low (i.e. the case localities are among the 25% of localities with the lowest UN2005 and UN2014 in the country);

➢ VARNI > national average (whenever possible, the case localities are selected among the 25% of localities with the highest value of VARNI in the country);

➢ The locality did not host foreign residents in 2005 *or* SF2005 is significantly lower than the national average (i.e. case localities are selected among the 25% of municipalities with the lowest SF2005 in the country); and

> ➢ The locality is not characterised by a significant presence of seasonal workers.

iii. Local politics

Considering the role that local party politics can play in the production of integration policies and other related outputs (see literature review above), particularly in some of the selected countries, we aimed to select a mix of 'progressive cases' and 'conservative cases'. Again, we needed to select indicators to define progressive and conservative localities. We decided to select as our main indicator the type of parties in government between 2014 and 2020. In addition, we also considered the political tradition of each locality (trying to select localities with both progressive/conservative parties in local government *and* a progressive/conservative political tradition).

We kept a higher degree of flexibility in the case of rural areas, because the existing literature suggests that the role of local party politics is much less evident in rural areas, where often members of local governments are not affiliated with the main national parties or have a mixed/unclear political affiliation. In general, while selecting the localities, we aimed to avoid extreme/deviant cases, e.g. cases with local governments that have a very strong reputation, at the national level, for their local immigration policies and/or whose political affiliation is not representative of their region/country. This does not necessarily mean excluding municipalities with the radical right in the government, in those countries or regions where the far right has become 'mainstream' (e.g. Flanders, Northern Italy).

iv. Regional areas

While selecting our case localities, we aimed to represent as much as possible different regional areas, even within our case countries. More specifically, we decided in each country to focus on at least two macroregions which are representative of the main territorial cleavage for each country – e.g. the North–South cleavage for countries like Italy and Spain, and the East–West cleavage for Germany and Poland – which might be characterised by different local narratives or discourses (see above).

After selecting our dimensions of theoretical interest, indicators and cutoff points, the **third and final step** of our case-selection procedure consisted of the construction of a matrix or 'case-selection grid' to represent all possible (or actual) intersections of these variables (understood as categorical variables), or at least to maximise the number of potential combinations of the values of our main variables. The case-selection grid is illustrated in the Appendix, where each of our case localities has been matched to a set of values for our four variables.

Figure 2. Sample of selected case localities
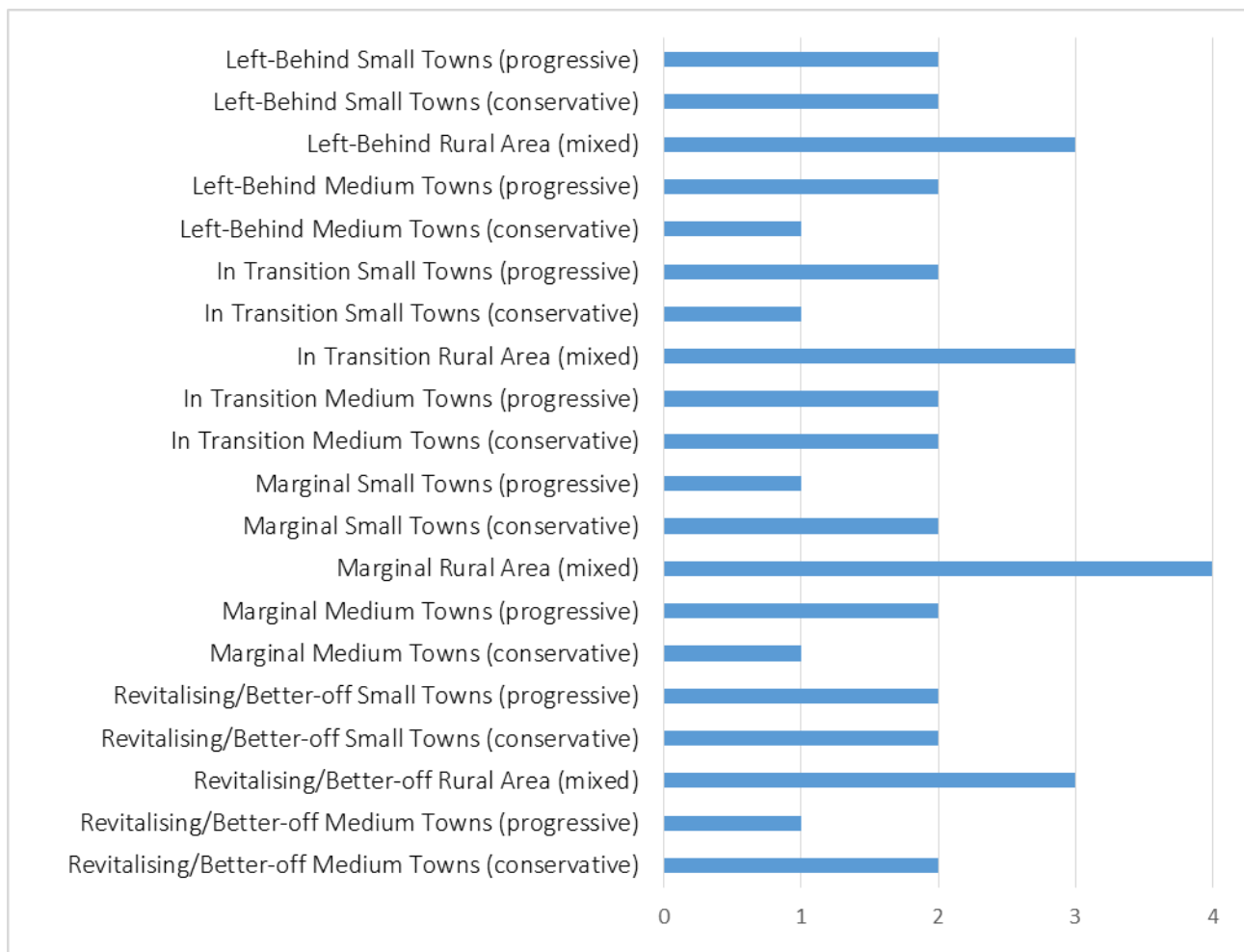
As shown in Figure 2, the sample includes 40 case localities in the EU. Among them are: 14 small-sized towns, 13 medium-sized towns and 13 rural areas; 10 left-behind localities, 10 localities in transition, 10 marginal localities and 10 revitalising/better-off localities; 14 progressive cases and

13 conservative cases (and 13 rural areas including local governments with mixed/unclear political affiliations). The case localities are spread across 16 regions in eight EU countries. Importantly, our sample was constructed in a way to have, for each combination of our three main variables, a minimum of two cases (and a maximum of three) in those EU countries that were most directly affected by asylum-seeking flows in 2014 (Italy, Germany, Austria, Sweden, Belgium, Netherlands).

As to the non-EU countries, we selected three localities in Turkey, which reflect the prevalent characteristics of SMsTRA hosting post-2014 migrants in the country, and six localities in Canada, which are destinations of resettled, post-2014 migrants. In both countries, we aimed to select a mix of small-sized towns, medium-sized towns and rural areas, and a mix of revitalising/better-off, marginal, in transition and left-behind localities.

3.3. Methods of data collection and analysis

As mentioned above, Whole-COMM adopts an innovative, mixed-methods research design, where research results generated through different methods speak to each other (figure 3). The research is organized into two main phases which are related to the two research questions. Each of the two research phases is organized into two different work packages. The different work packages are conceived as strictly interrelated and all contributing towards achieving the project's overall research goals (WP2 and WP7 have the functions, respectively, of developing the theoretical framework and coordinating the research, and of developing policy-learning and co-creation activities).

The methods of data collection selected to investigate each set of subquestions are listed in Table 4 below. As the table shows, in the first phase of the research (WP3 and WP4) we aim to employ a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods, conducting intensive fieldwork in the localities selected in each country. Fieldwork involves the collection of official documents, grey literature and interviews with a wide range of stakeholders including semi-structured questions as well as a structured survey to collect quantitative data for a social network analysis. The second phase also entails a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods. Initially, in-depth interviews with post-2014 migrants, participant observation, focus groups and quasi-experiments will be used to generate, specify and refine hypotheses on the integration-related outcomes (WP5). These hypotheses will

be subsequently tested, in WP6, through quantitative analyses on attitudes towards post-2014 migrants in small and medium-sized towns and rural areas (developed through a survey) and the effectiveness of local integration policies, both in terms of quality of social relations and post-2014 migrants' integration trajectories.

Figure 3. Pert diagram showing the interdependence among different work packages
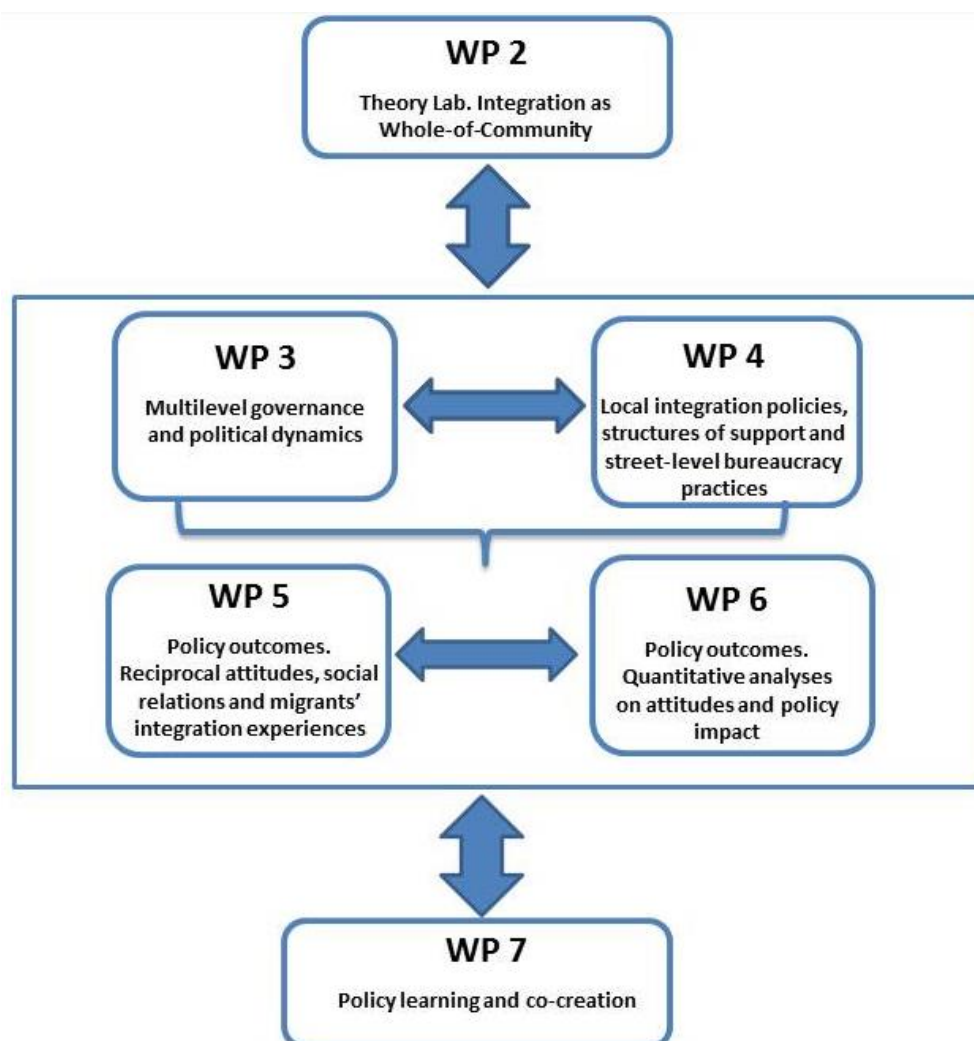
Table 4. Methods of data collection

RESEARCH QUESTION	RESEARCH SUBQUESTIONS	METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION
RQ1) How do the various actors whose actions affect local communities decide, implement and/or act upon immigrant integration policies in different types of small and medium-sized towns and rural areas?	SQ1: What were the key features of the local context in selected localities before the arrival of post-2014 migrants, in terms of a) key socioeconomic and socio-cultural variables; b) the key actors involved in migrant integration policymaking; and c) the relationships between local policy actors and regional, national and supranational authorities?	Collection of policy documents and grey literature
	SQ2: What are the national, regional and local policies on immigrant integration in place and who are the key actors involved in policymaking and implementation?	Collection of policy documents + semi-structured interviews
	SQ3: How have SMsTRA mobilised vis-à-vis the new challenge and in relation to the policies and funding schemes put forward by other levels of government? Which factors have led to the emergence of multilevel tensions and conflicts?	Semi-structured interviews + short online survey for social network analysis
	SQ4: What actors mobilise around the implementation of integration policies in different types of localities, either in favour of or against migrant integration? What are their modes of mobilisation?	Semi-structured interviews
	SQ5: What are the structures of support in place as a result of these mobilisations or regardless of these mobilisations (e.g. pre-existing public services or local businesses providing employment in specific sectors, solidarity networks promoted by NGOs and civil society organisations)?	Semi-structured interviews
	SQ6: How do street-level bureaucrats, market and civil-society actors concretely implement integration policies (beyond narratives and discourses)?	Semi-structured interviews
	SQ7: What are the implicit and explicit policy frames of post-2014 migrants' integration and assumptions about social cohesion mobilised by different actors and emerging from policies and practices?	Semi-structured interviews

RQ2) How do local policies – i.e. through which causal mechanisms and processes – contribute to producing different outcomes in terms of local communities' 'quality of social life', across different types of small and medium-sized towns and rural areas?	SQ8: What are the attitudes that long-term residents and post-2014 migrants hold towards each other? What is the impact of local policies and support structures (WP4) on these attitudes?	Participant observation and focus groups
	SQ9: How do long-term residents and post-2014 migrants interact? What is the impact of local policies and support structures on social relations and interactions between long-term residents and post-2014 migrants?	Participant observation and focus groups
	SQ10: How do migrants experience integration? What are the effects of local policies and support structures on post-2014 migrants' integration experiences?	In-depth interviews with migrants
	SQ11a: What is the potential for new local practices/policy measures or adjustments to existing local measures with special regard to innovative solutions, to foster social cohesion in terms of positive social relations and interactions between long-term residents and migrants?	Quasi-experiments and questionnaires
	SQ11b: Are integration policies effective with respect to social cohesion and integration outcomes of migrants in different types of localities on which relevant data are available, i.e. not only small and medium-sized towns and rural areas but also larger urban areas which have been surveyed by previous research?	Production of a data inventory on available statistical data and collection of original data on integration policy
	SQ11c: What are the determinants of attitudes towards integration of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in small and medium-sized towns and rural areas? What is the impact of local policies on such attitudes?	Survey

Note: All questions will also try to investigate the impact of the pandemic on outputs, outcomes and mechanisms.

The methods adopted by each work package are described more in detail in the next paragraphs.

3.3.1. WP3

WP3 addresses the first, second and third subquestions, pushing forward our understanding of the multilevel governance and political dynamics of migration policymaking in local communities and, more specifically, of how cooperative and conflictual multilevel policymaking relations contribute to shaping local integration policies and other integration-related outputs in different types of SMsTRA.

On the one hand, it aims to map the formal relationships between policy actors in different types of SMsTRA and regional, national and supranational authorities and policy actors (SQ1). This task will require the collection of two types of materials: 1) official policy documents regarding policies of integration for post-2014 migrants promoted by SMsTRA, as well as by regional, national and supranational authorities; and 2) grey literature – reports, online newsletters etc. – on the integration of post-2014 migrants produced by NGOs and civil society organisations. This corpus of data will be analysed through qualitative content analysis focusing on those policy aspects relevant to multilevel policymaking relations (such as disbursement of policy responsibilities in different areas like housing, education and labour, and the distribution of funds and the mutual involvement of policy actors in policymaking at different levels).

Against this backdrop, WP3 will analyse concrete relationships and policymaking dynamics between policy actors in SMsTRA and authorities at other levels of government and/or stakeholders operating at different territorial scales on the integration of post-2014 migrants (see Table 5 below). To this end we will develop a social network analysis, using quantitative data on the frequency and quality of these interactions collected through an online survey with around 300 interviewees, across our 40 localities. The social network analysis will be supplemented by insights derived from semi-structured interviews with the same actors, including: 1) officials responsible for reception and integration policies for post-2014 migrants at the local, national and regional level in all countries considered in the research; 2) 3–6 experts on policies for reception and integration of post-2014 migrants at the European level, including Eurocities and ECRE; and 3) representatives of NGOs and other relevant civil society organisations mobilised on issues of post-

2014 migrant integration at different territorial scales. The interview questions will aim to generate new knowledge on modes and patterns of involvement of different types of SMsTRA in multilevel policymaking interactions around the issue of post-2014 migrants' integration; to unravel the role of politics in shaping migrant integration policies in SMsTRA, overcoming the widespread idea that localities, especially small-sized ones, are the locus of pragmatism and problem-solving; to develop an empirical and theoretical understanding of the eventual emerging of translocal relations between small and medium-sized towns and rural areas, e.g. with local communities in the same or different countries including the countries of origin of migrants.

3.3.2. WP4

WP4 investigates integration policies from a different perspective, i.e. by considering the networks, the resources and the implementation practices that can support post-2014 migrants' access to rights. In other words, the goal is to investigate the opportunity structures available in SMsTRA.

First, WP4 will collect relevant policy and legal documents and analyse them in order to: i) identify formal rights as granted by national, regional and local policies to migrants with different statuses; 2) map the key actors involved in mediating access to these rights; and 3) identify existing (mostly quantitative) data on each local context in terms of socioeconomic characteristics of the whole population, specific data on the migrant population and data on existing social services. Insights from the documents and collected data will be complemented by insights derived from the interviews.

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a wide range of actors involved in integration-related initiatives addressing post-2014 migrants (see Table 5 below). Interviewees' answers will allow us to map structures of support, like pre-existing public services or local businesses providing employment in specific sectors, solidarity networks promoted by NGOs and civil society organisations, as well as groups or movements against migrants' settlement and integration.

In order to assess street-level bureaucrats' practices, WP4 will conduct interviews with social workers, volunteers and employers working in key private sectors. To go beyond narratives and discourses and grasp how things work on the ground, interviews will make use of vignettes,

namely stimuli constructed in the form of short realistic descriptions and representations with precise references to events and situations that the respondents could hypothetically encounter in their personal or professional lives, and for which they will be asked to simulate a decisionmaking process (Barter and Renold 2000; Schoenberg and Ravdal 2000). These interviews will allow us to investigate the actual working of policy measures in answering target needs of inclusion analysing their impact on immigrants' paths and modes of access to rights, social services and facilities, with specific attention to the role of the gender dimension in these processes.

Finally, in order to identify the implicit and explicit policy frames of post-2014 migrants' integration and assumptions on social cohesion emerging from concrete policies and practices of access to services and other resources, we will conduct a frame analysis of interviewees' responses to questions such as, 'What do you define as integration and whom does it concern?'; 'If integration were achieved, what would social life in your municipality look like?'. To capture perceptions of the specificities of SMsTRA, interviewees will be asked 'What would you say is specific about migrant integration in smaller towns/rural areas?' The frame analysis will also try to investigate how policy actors at different territorial scales eventually define and deal with gender issues in relation to post-2014 migrants' integration.

The interview material collected as part of WP4 will be analysed with the support of a qualitative analysis software. The analysis will assess concrete policies, structures/networks and practices of access to services, rights and other resources from a cross-local and cross-national perspective.

3.3.3. WP5

The fifth and sixth work packages move to analyse the second main question of the project, concerning how local contexts, integration policies and support structures/networks shape individual attitudes, social relations and interactions among natives and post-2014 migrants and how they impact migrants' integration experiences.

WP5 largely builds on findings produced by previous work packages on the output of local governance systems. It adopts qualitative in-depth methods and aims to generate hypotheses about integration outcomes that will be assessed in WP6.

More specifically, to observe (and generate hypotheses about) attitudes (SQ8), relations/interactions (SQ9) and forms of mobilizations around integration policies, WP5 will initially conduct participant observations in the selected localities, in social sites such as local communal and public spaces, as well as sites of mobilization (e.g. protest group assemblies, meetings and other protest activities). In addition, in order to investigate perceptions of the challenges and opportunities in the local context with regard to the integration of post-2014 migrants, as well as to further explore reciprocal attitudes and relations, WP5 will carry out focus groups with both long-term residents and post-2014 migrants in at least one locality per country. Contacts with local organisations of residents and leaders of residents as well as post-2014 migrants will be taken during WP3's and WP4's fieldwork. In larger localities – and depending on the collaboration of local authorities and/or civil society organisations – researchers will consider organising two focus groups to engage a larger pool of residents and post-2014 migrants.

To better understand, from 'the inside', experiences of integration (i.e. to assess our SQ10), we will conduct in-depth interviews with small groups of post-2014 migrants (7–20 per locality, depending on the number of post-2014 migrants living in the locality). Furthermore, these in-depth interviews will allow 1) deepening findings obtained from WP4 about eventual impediments and/or modes of access to rights and services; and 2) reconstructing migrants' experiences from different positions in terms of gender, age, ethnicity etc. These in-depth interviews will therefore enable a better understanding of how migrants perceive their paths of integration in the receiving society, i.e. what they experience as a positive improvement and what they see as an impediment to the achievement of their well-being. Again, particular attention will be devoted to the gender dimension, to understand how this can influence the perception of and interaction with public policies and other local actors.

Based on findings obtained from the participant observation, focus groups and in-depth interviews, WP5 will subsequently conduct a semi-experimental study to evaluate the impact of the introduction of a policy measure and/or of the adjustment of an existing one on the overall community's 'quality of social relations', i.e. their potential to foster positive attitudes and social relations/interactions (SQ11a). More specifically, a maximum of four localities will be selected in the target countries that have received the highest numbers of post-2014 migrants, i.e. Italy,

Austria, Germany and Sweden, in order to explore – with the active engagement of local stakeholders – the potential effects of policy changes through experimental evidence.

Table 5 provides a synthetic overview of the interview components and the type of interviews involved in each interview component. Single interviewees (e.g. representatives of civil society or the business sector) will first be identified based on the document analysis, and then selected through snowball sampling techniques and following a criterion of relevance built up during the course of the research itself. Snowballing will hopefully be improved thanks to other interviewees' responses, and to information collected in a few public meetings and open-door events related to migrant integration.

Table 5. Types of interviewees

	Type of Interviewee	Locality level	Regional level	National level	EU level
POLICY ACTORS	EU officials (WP3)				✔
	National officials responsible for integration (WP3)			✔	
	Regional officials responsible for integration (WP3)		✔		
	Mayor and/or members of local governments responsible for integration (WP3)	✔			
	Local officials responsible for integration (WP3)	✔			
STREET-LEVEL ACTORS	Street-level bureaucrats (WP4)	✔			
	Business community (employers' organizations and private companies) (WP4)	✔			
	Trade unions (WP4)	✔			
	Service providers (WP3; WP4)	✔			
	Estate agencies (WP4)	✔			
POLITICAL	Pro-migrant groups / CSOs (WP3)	✔			
	Anti-migrant groups (WP3)	✔			

Opposition groups (WP3)	✔			
Experts / journalists (WP3)	✔			
Groups of 7–20 post-2014 migrants (WP5)	✔			

3.3.4.WP6

WP6 will build on the findings from WP5 and other previous WPs in order to assess the consequences and outcomes of post-2014 migrants' integration policies (or lack thereof) from a quantitative point of view by considering their impact on: 1) attitudes towards post-2014 migrants' integration of natives and long-term residents of a migrant background in SMsTRA; and 2) social cohesion and migrants' integration trajectories. Research in WP6 is organized into three main steps, and will focus on the main destination countries of post-2014 Mediterranean migrant inflows, i.e. Austria, Italy, Germany and Sweden.

First, WP6 will map available statistical data on various aspects of post-2014 inflows in Austria, Germany, Italy and Sweden, that will lead to the production of a Data Inventory to be employed in subsequent quantitative analyses. Three different types of data will be collected:

➢ Contextual data: national and international data on migration flows and stocks; contextual data that could influence attitudes towards migrant integration and/or migrant integration outcomes, such as demographics, economics, labour markets and politics (i.e. political majorities in the local government).

➢ Data about our independent variables (the outputs of governance systems), including:

 ▪ policies at the national level, MIPEX (Migrant Integration Policy Index, developed by the Migration Policy Group [MPG]);

 ▪ Multilevel governance indicators, and in particular the data recently collected by the European Web Site on Integration (EWSI, developed by the European Commission and MPG) on specific indicators related to multilevel governance (including national strategies developed with local actors; national strategies that assign specific

responsibilities to local authorities; and implementation of a national strategy at the local level with a specific budget allocated for local authorities); and

- Local policies of integration, ICC (InterCultural Cities Index, developed by the Council of Europe), LIAT (the Local Inclusion Action Tool, developed by OECD, MPG, the Council of Europe and Welcoming International) and Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)/OECD data collection on integration policies at the local level.

➢ Available data on social cohesion and immigrant integration trajectories and outcomes (i.e. data on our dependent variables). These will include:

- Data on attitudes towards immigration and migrant integration in SMsTRA;

- Data on social cohesion and local trends in related aspects, such as quality of life, GDP and employment (total population), from the following sources: Eurobarometer's 2015 Quality of Life in European Cities, QoL, OECD and Eurostat (subregional/city level, NUTS3);

- Immigrant integration trends such as labour market outcomes of migrants and educational attainment, from the following sources: OECD and Eurostat (although at the regional level, NUTS2).

In line with the project's focus on integration of post-2014 migrants, all of the selected data sources will provide information on policies and trends after 2014. The InterCultural Cities Index provides information on different cities on the period 2009-2019, which will also allow for understanding policy differences during the time before and after 2014.

To expand the number of local areas in which to analyse the impact of immigrant integration policy, original data on relevant indicators of local policies of integration, as well as of social cohesion and other related aspects, will be collected in the SMsTRA investigated.

The second step entails developing and conducting a pan-European survey on attitudes towards the integration of post-2014 migrants in SMsTRA in Austria, Italy, Germany and Sweden. In each country, WP6 will select a representative sample of 2,000 respondents in SMsTRA, and 2,000 respondents in main cities and urban areas (for a definition of these categories see: https://data.oecd.org/popregion/urban-population-by-city-size.htm). This amounts to a total net

sample of 16,000 respondents (2000*2*4 countries). In this way, we can identity eventual specific effects of SMsTRA localities compared with other bigger urban areas, as well test and complement the determinants of attitudes identified from available statistical sources (see first step above). Furthermore, the survey will test the hypotheses on the impact of integration policies that will be elaborated on the basis of the results of the qualitative analyses conducted in WP5. The sample and subsample sizes will allow for comprehensive statistical analyses that take into account the individual and aggregate levels for all four countries.

The third step of WP6 research involves two different types of analyses:

➢ To assess our subquestion 11c – i.e. to understand possible determinants of attitudes towards post-2014 migrants and their integration in different types of localities (small and medium-sized towns and rural areas vs. main urban areas) – we will largely rely on data on migration and contexts collected as part of the Data Inventory, used as factors in the analysis of survey data. Initially, national data in each country will be analysed in conjunction with secondary and qualitative data and subsequently we will conduct a comparative overall analysis of the entire dataset.

➢ To assess our subquestion 11b – i.e. to understand the impact of national and local post-2014 migrant integration policies on social cohesion in local communities and on migrants' integration outcomes – we will carry out some additional quantitative analyses on the collected data. On the basis of the independent/control variables, we will identify different groups of local areas and illustrate the differences between those group on the dependant variables. We will use cluster analysis and bivariate analysis (e.g. t-test; ANOVA). The analysis will also disentangle the specific effect of policies (national policy, multilevel governance, local policy) on dependent variables (social cohesion, integration outcomes) by means of regression analysis.

Importantly, all work packages will also specifically address the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the processes and dynamics analysed.

4. Conclusion

This paper has illustrated the rationale, concepts, theory and methods of the Whole-COMM project and positioned the project against the existing literature on immigrant integration policies and processes. In fact, as pointed out in the State of the Art presented in Section 1, researchers on migration policies and processes of settlement and integration are still hesistant properly investigate the local level. While it is true that a turn towards the local began to take place in the early 1990s, most research still focuses on big cities and metropolises assumed to be 'the local' *par excellance*. This seems to considerably limit the potential for innovation that a local level perspective can provide to migration studies.

Whole-COMM aims to provide an innovative contribution to existing debates by focusing on the specific challenges faced by SMsTRA in the context of the massive arrivals of migrants for humanitarian reasons and seeking asylum between 2014 and 2015. From a theoretical point of view, the project aims to study the link between 1) the policies put in place to favour the integration of these migrants, or the lack of policies thereof; 2) the networks/structures of support deployed by the civil society and the resources available in the local context (e.g. in terms of employment); and 3) community cohesion or fragmentation. By assuming a relational and agent-based perspective that conceives of immigrant integration as a community-(re)making process, Whole-COMM will theorise on the key dynamics and causal mechanisms that can lead to either more cohesive social relations and positive attitudes or to societal fragmentation and hostility, while at the same time throwing light on migrants' perceptions of their paths of integration, i.e. on what they experience as a positive improvement or as an impediment to the achievement of their well-being.

In other words, whereas existing debates tend to present the arrival of migrants as either an enrichment or an additional burden for SMsTRA, the Whole-COMM project proposes a different and more sophisticated approach based on a typology of local communities – revitalising/better-off, in transition, marginal and left-behind – that allows for cross-local/cross-national comparisons. Our hypothesis is that immigrant integration policy and processes will be experienced differently in each type of community, leading to different outcomes in terms of social relations and migrants' perceived satisfaction with their paths of integration. However, the more specific hypotheses on

each type of community presented in Section 2 should not be understood as straightforward assumptions to be tested empirically. Quite the contrary, we take a hypothesis-generating approach, one that aims to push forward our understanding of migrants' integration in specific local contexts as a whole-of-community process, in which multiple actors are involved and various relations are brought into play.

The ambition to theorise on immigrant integration in the still under-researched SMsTRA of course requires methodological innovation. In this respect, as shown in the last section of the paper, Whole-COMM stands out in at least four aspects. First, it proposes a research design which assumes as a reference frame a typology of localities rather than of countries. Second, it proposes rigorous, yet not rigid criteria for the selection of over 40 localities across Europe and beyond. Third, it bridges geographical areas with different policy approaches and theoretical traditions in migration research including perspectives from outside Europe, and more specifically from Canada and Turkey. Fourth, it adopts a mixed-method approach that matches qualitative and quasi-experimental methods, a survey on attitudes and quantitative analysis on the impact of policies on social cohesion and immigrants' integration trajectories.

Importantly, Whole-COMM has the ambition of contributing to pushing forward the boundaries of both scientific research and policy debates on immigrant integration, thereby innovating not only in the way of conceptualising and theorising, but also of making integration policy. We therefore aim to complement grassroots work with stakeholders (i.e. policy workshops in selected local communities) with their involvement in multilevel and international high-level policy dialogues with the intention of stimulating their ownership of the project and increasing the likelihood of real utility and exploitation of the project's results. By laying out Whole-COMM's theoretical and methodological basis, this paper represents a key step in the attempt to reconcile cutting-edge research and theoretical innovation with policy relevance and impact on local processes of policy change.

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Appendix 1. Selection grid for case localities

CASE NUMBER	TYPE OF COUNTRIES	COUNTRY	WHOLE-COMM TYPOLOGY	TYPE OF MUNICIPALITY	COUNTRY SUBREGIONS	LOCAL POLITICS
C01	Southern European Countries	ITALY	C1 (REVITALISING/ BETTER-OFF)	small town	subregion A	'liberal/progressive' case
C02	Southern European Countries	ITALY	C2 (MARGINAL)	rural area	subregion A	MIXED
C03	Southern European Countries	ITALY	C3 (IN TRANSITION)	medium town	subregion A	'conservative' case
C04	Southern European Countries	ITALY	C4 (LEFT BEHIND)	small town	subregion B	'conservative' case
C05	Southern European Countries	ITALY	C1 ((REVITALISING/ BETTER-OFF)	rural area	subregion B	MIXED
C06	Southern European Countries	ITALY	C2 (MARGINAL)	medium town	subregion B	'liberal/progressive' case
C07	Southern European Countries	SPAIN	C3 (IN TRANSITION)	small town	subregion A	'liberal/progressive' case
C08	Southern European Countries	SPAIN	C4 (LEFT BEHIND)	rural area	subregion A	MIXED
C09	Southern European Countries	SPAIN	C1 ((REVITALISING/ BETTER-OFF)	medium town	subregion A	'conservative' case
C10	Southern European Countries	SPAIN	C2 (MARGINAL)	small town	subregion B	'conservative' case
C11	Southern European Countries	SPAIN	C3 (IN TRANSITION)	rural area	subregion B	MIXED
C12	Southern European Countries	SPAIN	C4 (LEFT BEHIND)	medium town	subregion B	'liberal/progressive' case
C13	Centralised European Countries	SWEDEN	C1 (REVITALISING/ BETTER-OFF)	small town	subregion A	'conservative' case
C14	Centralised European Countries	SWEDEN	C2 (MARGINAL)	rural area	subregion A	MIXED

C15	Centralised European Countries	SWEDEN	C3 (IN TRANSITION)	medium town	subregion A	'liberal/progressive' case
C16	Centralised European Countries	SWEDEN	C4 (LEFT BEHIND)	small town	subregion B	'liberal/progressive' case
C17	Centralised European Countries	SWEDEN	C1 (REVITALISING/ BETTER-OFF)	rural area	subregion B	MIXED
C18	Centralised European Countries	SWEDEN	C2 (MARGINAL)	medium town	subregion B	'conservative' case
C19	Centralised European Countries	NETHERLANDS	C3 (IN TRANSITION)	small town	2 regions (2 cases each)	'conservative' case
C20	Centralised European Countries	NETHERLANDS	C4 (LEFT BEHIND)	rural area	2 regions (2 cases each)	MIXED
C21	Centralised European Countries	NETHERLANDS	C1 (REVITALISING/ BETTER-OFF)	medium town	2 regions (2 cases each)	'liberal/progressive' case
C22	Centralised European Countries	NETHERLANDS	C2 (MARGINAL)	small town	2 regions (2 cases each)	'liberal/progressive' case
C23	Federal Central European Countries	AUSTRIA	C3 (IN TRANSITION)	rural area	2 regions (2 cases each)	MIXED
C24	Federal Central European Countries	AUSTRIA	C4 (LEFT BEHIND)	medium town	2 regions (2 cases each)	'conservative' case
C25	Federal Central European Countries	AUSTRIA	C1 (REVITALISING/ BETTER-OFF)	small town	2 regions (2 cases each)	'liberal/progressive' case
C26	Federal Central European Countries	AUSTRIA	C2 (MARGINAL)	rural area	2 regions (2 cases each)	MIXED
C27	Federal Central European Countries	BELGIUM	C3 (IN TRANSITION)	medium town	2 regions (2 cases each)	'conservative' case
C28	Federal Central European Countries	BELGIUM	C4 (LEFT BEHIND)	small town	2 regions (2 cases each)	'conservative' case
C29	Federal Central European Countries	BELGIUM	C1 (REVITALISING/ BETTER-OFF)	rural area	2 regions (2 cases each)	MIXED
C30	Federal Central European Countries	BELGIUM	C2 (MARGINAL)	medium town	2 regions (2 cases each)	'liberal/progressive' case

C31	Federal Central European Countries	GERMANY	C3 (IN TRANSITION)	small town	subregion A	'liberal/progressive' case
C32	Federal Central European Countries	GERMANY	C4 (LEFT BEHIND)	rural area	subregion A	MIXED
C33	Federal Central European Countries	GERMANY	C1 (REVITALISING/ BETTER-OFF)	medium town	subregion A	'conservative' case
C34	Federal Central European Countries	GERMANY	C2 (MARGINAL)	small town	subregion B	'conservative' case
C35	Federal Central European Countries	GERMANY	C3 (IN TRANSITION)	rural area	subregion B	MIXED
C36	Federal Central European Countries	GERMANY	C4 (LEFT BEHIND)	medium town	subregion B	'liberal/progressive' case
C37	Eastern Europe	POLAND	C1 (REVITALISING/ BETTER-OFF)	small town	2 regions (2 cases each)	'conservative' case
C38	Eastern Europe	POLAND	C2 (MARGINAL)	rural area	2 regions (2 cases each)	MIXED
C39	Eastern Europe	POLAND	C3 (IN TRANSITION)	medium town	2 regions (2 cases each)	'liberal/progressive' case
C40	Eastern Europe	POLAND	C4 (LEFT BEHIND)	small town	2 regions (2 cases each)	'liberal/progressive' case
C41-C42-C43	Non-EU	TURKEY	Different types	Different types	Three different regions	Different types
C44-C45-C46-C47-C48-C49	Non-EU	CANADA	Different types	Different types	Three different States	Different Types

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