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Police confrontations in Macedonia, Calais and Lesbos, suffocation, drowning and shootings at borders and in the Mediterranean, rival demonstrations for and against refugees, accusations of poor governance and irresponsibility, all express the "migration crisis." I've been asked to talk about how research could have better anticipated the migration crisis. So it's hard not to be defensive: most economists didn't' predict the economic crisis, and they've got maths! 'Research' is an amorphous beast and most research does not attempt to forecast. Academic researchers in particular typically seek to analyse and to understand and from this to advise, but not usually to predict. Having said that, that I'm going to start by looking at the kinds of issues that were being raised before the summer of 2015, then look at what was not anticipated, and what we can learn about the research/policy interface, and what research can offer policy.

2020 Hindsight

Current theories of international migration assume that once a flow has been initiated, the flow will grow. Over time the dynamic interplay between individual strategies, network operations and structural change creates powerful feedback mechanisms leading to cumulative causation of emigration. Irregular migratory systems have a long and established history across Europe and while numbers have peaked and troughed – not least because of changing relations with Libya - smuggling across the Mediterranean has been a phenomenon for nearly two decades.

The long tail of the movement to Europe is easy to trace. Even before the Arab Spring the Middle East and North African region was being singled out as a potential source of migrants, and 'unresolved conflicts' and political unrest suggested as potential motivating emigration to Europe (Fragues 2008). By the mid-2000s there were warnings that Middle East's states of reception were over strained and under considerable pressure from the challenges of coping with displacement, meaning that people might start moving on. Notably this was even before the civil war in Syria, and the collapse of Libya which had functioned as an effective migration buffer zone.

What we have seen in 2015 is in part an interaction between a longstanding structural phenomenon (irregular migration to Europe) and international events. Migration is highly susceptible to geopolitical shocks. A geopolitical shock has been defined by my colleagues Nick Van Hear and Martin Ruhs as 'a sudden and relatively event or series of events that has the potential to, and often does lead to a destabilization of regional and/or international politics and security'. Such shocks typically lead to human displacement and mobility, but they are by their very nature hard to predict. It might have been possible to forecast some factors that contributed to mass migration – the rise of IS for example and the disintegration of Syria, but those concerned with that kind of forecast are rarely focused on migration. One challenge of predictions then is that migration is epiphenomenal. It occurs as a consequence of other events and relationships, it is a symptom of change but those working on migration are more focused on migration as a reason for change. Migration scholars, more than most, connect their field to a broader social, economic and political context, but need to be more integrated into the studies of geopolitical shocks.

A second challenge is that migration is highly sensitive to policy change. Migratory networks interact in complex ways with policies, including but by no means limited to immigration and asylum policies. Indeed illegalization does not necessarily stop movement, though it does change the environment within which networks function. Sudden policy shifts can contribute to flow volatility in unexpected ways. And of course migration itself is highly politicized and in this way can become a negotiating instrument between different states, and indeed between EU states and those on its borders. This was clearly exposed in Khadafy's threats in an interview with the France 24 television station: "There are millions of blacks who could come to the Mediterranean to cross to France and Italy, and Libya plays a role in security in the Mediterranean".

These two factors, migration as epiphenomenal and its complex relation to national policy reinforce each other in the current context which exposes the inadequacy of the current refugee regime in protecting those fleeing generalized violence (Van Hear and Ruhs 2012). Such people are often unlikely to qualify for more than subsidiary protection (and of course in Turkey this is a consequence of the geographical limitation on the applicability of the Refugee Convention). This means states have considerable discretion – and therefore variation in how to respond to shock migration. Cristina Boswell has argued that the emphasis of European states on outsourcing immigration controls has meant that collaboration between states has failed to be enough of a priority. The Dublin system is a clear example of such a failure, and the longstanding analyses of the shortcomings of the Dublin system and recommendations for its root and branch reform (Guild 2014) have been largely ignored.

So what has been anticipated by research includes the unsustainability of attempting to contain people who are displaced as a result of geopolitical shocks, and the structural reasons for and consequences of lack of collaboration and discretion. This suggests that the impact of research is often environmental, looking at the consequences and impacts of already existing systems rather than predictive. Nevertheless the fact remains that the sudden shift in gear in terms of numbers of people heading for Europe was not anticipated. Why?

One obvious answer is that nobody, to my knowledge, was being asked to anticipate. This is not just an excuse. One can anticipate that 'a lot' of people might come, and many people did, but anything more specific, even if it is a range of numbers, demands particular methodological tools. It is not just picked up along the way. Scenario building is a useful, but narrow field of academic research. It is a method that helps officials think in a disciplined way about the future when making public policy decisions and to anticipate the context in which they have to act, but it is not a method that is widely deployed in academic study.

I think though that there is a broader challenge to the field of migration that will not be addressed simply by utilizing scenario building and is for too long we have concentrated on *space*, and not thought enough about *time*. Migration is about both space and time, states control mobility across borders but also temporal framings. Legal status often means that displaced people can be waiting for prolonged periods, sometimes entire lives. After the 'shock' is the escape, but as temporary respite becomes limbo one might indeed anticipate the urge to change. How to measure hope and hopelessness? So in summer 2015 one might hypothesise that some people began to move from Turkey because they no longer imagined themselves as temporarily displaced. In a situation where

about half of refugees are under 18 building a future rather than tolerating a present, may lead one to move on. Temporariness may be swiftly resolved by a policy change, and for migrants the implications of being 'permanently temporary' may take some time to be felt, that is, temporalities are difficult to capture in research, but we need to develop methodologies to facilitate this.

Research policy interface

So what can we learn from this about the research/policy interface? It is necessary to recognize that academics and policy makers have very different cultures, differences which can be productive but must be acknowledged. Three differences are prominent:

The first is the different emphasis on numbers. Policy makers tend to prefer quantitative studies with generalizable results. This is understandable, but it can mixed up with forecasting numbers, and this is a risky business which even quantitatively inclined migration researchers are cautious about. People hold on to numbers. You can guarantee that that's the one slide of the lecture that students will make a note of. A number will get picked up in a research press release even if it's in a footnote as a rough estimation. Caveats are too often ignored and the top figure of a range finds its way on to the front page. This is true of social research more generally of course, but it is a particular issue for work on migration because *migration cannot be forecasted without substantial error*. Baseline data are often unreliable. Who counts as a migrant itself is not agreed upon and there is incompatibility between country datasets. Even when data are good and the flows are relatively stable, numbers are difficult to estimate. Ranges may be forecast, but shock migration is volatile and often has no baseline data, and asylum flows are the most unpredictable type of mobility. Furthermore, migration forecasts are mainly at national level and give absolute numbers while impacts are experienced at the local level and migrant characteristics can be critical in terms of accessing public services. The most robust models of prediction are those that do not assume stability – that is, that forecast uncertainty (Bijak et al 2015). Statisticians cannot reduce uncertainty for policymakers, but researchers can help policymakers understand its contributory factors and make decisions that account for it.

The second difference is time: officials and academic researchers work to very different tempos (here we should distinguish between academic and policy research). It can take 4 or 5 years before you have the results of a robust piece of social science investigation. In this time governments have come and gone, and the policy environment and questions have changed. However, while proximate causes, 'triggers' can be unpredictable, academic research is good at discerning long term trends, 'root causes' and structural tensions. The problem for the interface with policy is that these are rarely susceptible to a quick fix, which may be what public opinion and politics demands. Engagement with research can help mitigate short termism and facilitate a better informed public debate.

This leads on to the third difference: whose interests are we serving? This question might be less vexed for policymakers but academic researchers might have to juggle the interests of the funders, the research subjects and gatekeepers, our national governments, the taxpayer, a vaguer general good and a commitment to the integrity of knowledge. The ideal of course is to serve all these, but migration is a field fraught with conflicting interests. Forecasting numbers for instance may on the

one hand facilitate a planning process that ensures adequate capacity for newcomers, but on the other it can feed a frenzied public discussion for whom any number is too many, and harm the interests of research subjects whom researchers have an ethical requirement not to harm. Ultimately research, however technical, cannot depoliticize political debates and decisions.

These differences do not mean that academic research cannot be useful and productive for policymakers, but they suggest to me that a more sustained, creative and less instrumental approach might ultimately be more productive for both. What do I mean by this…

Crisis? What crisis?

There has been considerable debate about what words to use to describe the catastrophes at Europe's borders, specifically, is this a 'migration' or a 'refugee' crisis. I'm not going to get into this debate, other than to say that there is an emerging body of work that points to the importance of how migration is framed and this both reflects and shapes public debate. Furthermore, there is an academic literature stretching back over decades that discusses both the inevitability of 'mixed flows' (i.e. of both refugees and migrants), and analysing and critiquing the basis of the distinction between forced and voluntary migration.

Academic research can inquire: Why is the migration crisis a problem? Is it because of the deaths? Is it because there are just too many people to accommodate? Is it because of popular unrest? Or because of the divisions exposed between different states of the Union? This is not to suggest that these are unrelated questions, but to point out that where our starting point is, and its consequent priorities are absolutely critical if we are to evaluate suitable responses. What are we trying to solve? To take a politician's lead, last week Prime Minister Valls described the migrant situation as "a crisis that endangers the European project." That is, as well as a migration crisis confronting Europe, what is unfolding is what Sam Kriss has called a *European* crisis confronting migrants: A multi-dimensional European crisis of solidarity between member states, many of which are struggling with austerity and with rapidly diminishing state capacity. A crisis that is bringing into question not only the principles of asylum and of free movement within the European Union but Europe's very idea of itself as a space of liberal values, freedom, moral equality and human rights.

For over twenty years the outsourcing of migration controls has meant that European publics have been protected from the practical reality of forced displacement and economic desperation that is now showing up on holiday beaches. Agreements with source and transit countries, readmission agreements, the creation of migration management policies and facilities in countries of origin have kept ethical dilemmas away from the general public. Many Aylan Kurdis die in camps and on the streets of Istanbul and attract little attention. How to deal with the popular responses pulling in such different directions, the impulse to welcome those fleeing persecution and the fear of illegal immigration? The question, what is our moral obligation to the stranger has haunted European philosophical and religious thought for centuries. The tension between sovereign self-determination claims on the one hand and adherence to universal human rights principles on the other is arguably a constitutive feature of liberal democracy. Scholars like Benhabib have argued that the demos constitutes itself through more or less conscious struggles of inclusion and exclusion, and this is the

struggle that is being waged in a very practical way. While policy making and public opinion is often treated as pragmatic and atheoretical it is guided by concepts and histories of ideas deeply rooted in the European tradition. Excavating these can be of considerable value and academic researchers need to make far more effort in this kind of work. That is to say, appropriate and useful research is not restricted to technical knowledge and expertise.

Conclusion

In order to understand migration we need to use tools from a wide range of disciplines each with their own epistemologies and methodologies. Social science, politics and economics must speak to philosophy, political theory and history. We need to think about how we can use the past to develop concepts that illuminate the present. For academics this speaks to the problem of disciplinary siloes and for policy, the need to engage with disciplines that are often sidelined in the rush for impact, and for both academics and policymakers the importance of engaging with European theory and European values.