

HAWKE EU CENTRE FOR MOBILITIES, MIGRATIONS & CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS

Global Tipping Points: Migration Summit (1-2 November 2016)

ROUNDTABLE 3

Research for Evidence Based Policy on New Migrants

When assessing policy-relevant results from various national policies on migration, to what extent are two-way interactions observable between governmental policies and migration flows? What is the nexus between migration, asylum-seekers and economic development? What are the challenges of migrants' integration, and how might such integration help create a stronger sense of national identity – across Europe and throughout Australia?

Panellists – Professor Mary Crock, Professor Klaus Neumann, Professor Alison Phipps, Dr David Radford, Carla Wilshire

Chair – Susan Luckman

Professor Mary Crock from the University of Sydney says migration is part of the nation's creation story and who comes to the country and the circumstance driving policy. She said that in our constitution there is no agreement on who could be a citizen. How can you say what our rights are when there is no bill of rights?

Professor Crock argued that each change since 1989 could be tied back to events, which is usually the arrival of boats ie from Vietnam and Cambodia. What drives it now? Since 2010, we started seeing politicians make claims about the effect of policy on migration. She suggested that push factors seem to be the drivers for boat arrivals relevant to other asylum seekers. We have to acknowledge that everything is in the message. There's a huge awareness of policy that involves a decision to leave one country for another

Professor Klaus Neumann from Swinburne University of Technology highlighted six attempts to generate evidence from research projects and their outcomes and suggestions:

- Books and articles on resettlement. Mindful of not over researching.
- History of rights to grant and be granted asylum
- Australia response to refugees
- The response to refugees

- The lives of refugees and migrants
- Politics of compassion

He also offered six evidence-based suggestions:

- Want to imagine alternative futures, not something that comes out of the present. Continuities and genealogical explanation
- Engagement with past policies ought to entail a critique of present day histories
- Some non refugees resist attempts to integrate them
- Let us imagine national histories that encompass more than territorially bounded nation state
- European and Australia policy and popular responses to irregular migrants differ because of different emphases on human rights and compassion
- Grieving for strangers is an opportunity to acknowledge how Europeans and Australians are implicated in border-related violence and to imagine alternative models of citizenship

Professor Alison Phipps from The University of Glasgow said the policy focus in Brussels when talking about research is about the impact of their policies. Professor Phipps suggested all policies are ideological and not evidence based. She demonstrated this by highlighting the fact that research that was developed to make sure things like torture don't happen again, is now being used to inform the way these same kinds of policies are being administered again. She suggested that we have difficulty in the presentation of evidence and ability for people to trust knowledge.

She also argued that aid is nothing when compared to money sent home by families. She suggested that we don't need stronger senses of national identity; we need multiple sense of identity. She also questioned how we inhabit multilingual worlds and the ways people practice belonging in multiple ways.

Dr David Radford from the University of South Australia discussed the questions within the context of rural migration. He highlighted that there's government policy directing skilled migrants to rural areas. People live alongside these migrants and refugees. He argued that international and national events led to increased tensions and fears of Muslims in communities. The community antagonism, rural racism and exclusion appear to contradict ideas of a culturally tolerant Australia. There's a conflict of acceptance and fear. There's success of local regions settling refugees in rural places and some councils have adopted cultural diverse identities. He highlighted that community partnerships, supportive host communities, effective processes, housing, community based resources are all important.

Part of his response looks at local government often with limited resources. Leadership exerted at local government level explicitly creates environment for change. Social and cultural capital is building and some begin to feel that these communities are becoming home. It's not just about jobs, but jobs and belonging. Dr Radford suggested we need an ongoing narrative of re-imagining what the

Australian identity means and that leadership at local government needs to be explored further.

Carla Wilshire is the CEO of the Migration Council of Australia and said good policy works with human nature and anything that goes against it is destined to fail. She suggested that policy is like a sausage factory - no one wants to know how a sausage is made. Policy is now a discussion process with the electorate and changes are more incremental and accidental as a consequence. Tweaks and changes to policy and the policy dialogue are constantly under review in terms of migration.

Wilshire suggested that the way migration affects the economy is complex. It's a big challenge to appreciate, for instance, the way migration interacts in the Australian labour force in terms of knowledge and skill transfer, trade, investment, business environment, productivity and cost of infrastructure. She highlighted that an outward looking country is in a better position than inward looking one. In Australia we don't realise migration has become our strategy for growth. There's so much we've got right about migration program, but economic integration holds back with the under utilisation of skills. She said social policy has not kept base with visa policy.

Discussion

- Alex Reilly – asked about the economic paradigm around migration. He fears that it's the economic contribution that matters instead of the need to bring out family and the possible contribution to society other than economic like social areas.
- David Radford – it is far more complex. It is problematic to bring out one but not the others. Not just about economics much broader social issues.
- Klaus Neumann – it is important to disentangle the argument for migration. Asylum seekers and refugees, that's a human rights issue. There's compassion on one hand and economics on the other.
- Alison Phipps – we know the cost of everything and the value of nothing. It's about justice and social justice. What do we do with X money that is generated each year from migrants? In UK spent on nuclear weapons. It creates refugees and arms trade paradox.
- Carla Wilshire - part of reason it's put in economics is that it's the dominant discourse. We need to adapt to the politics. If you adapt too far, you lose the nature of what you wanted. We need to keep fundamental reasons for the project at the centre.
- Loretta Baldassa – asked Carla Wilshire about discussions of parent visas and the cost of informal care labour.

- Carla Wilshire – there are seats in NWS with high migrants who want parents out in Australia and temporary parent visas designed to woo those communities. From a treasury perspective it's unlikely to be looked at favourably. There is increasing pressure to make the migration program economic in its focus. It's about labour market gaps in the high and low skilled areas and getting the business community to advocate on those grounds. Often migrants are highly skilled, but often take low skilled for some time. Skill recognition is a big problem in the country.
- Mary Crock – is concerned with how closely the migration program is controlled and is concerned that the focus being on economics and what type of economics. Looking at the cost of parent visas when we're spending money prosecuting people on Nauru and Manus Island, ideology is driving a lot of our policy rather than economics. Parent visas are interesting historically there's a strong argument changes have a strong historic base. With Chinese migrants, family tests preference people from Asia because of the one child policy. There are racial issues behind the decisions now.
- Carla Wilshire – there's a high degree of control over permanent migration program, but the government would like to see 1 million international students, working holidaymakers, significant 457 programs and NZ temporary migration.
- Mary Crock – Australia controls a lot more than other countries. Hears what Wilshire is saying but have to disagree.
- John Cash – are the ethics and norms of recognition attached to skilled migration ones that could be expanded? A tactic could be to not talk about the economic virtues of refugees, but talk about the social contribution of those coming in with skilled migration?
- Klaus Neumann – there's not a reasonable dialogue between government and the electorate. Lack of research also applies to what the parties think they're doing. He said there is a disdain for evidence-based policy when it comes to politics.
- Mary Crock – democracy around the world is broken. The understanding of it as something other than mob rule and pack mentality is going. GetUp is trying to build resistance to certain measures. With the 24-hour news cycle, if you get enough attention you can make modest changes.
- Carla Wilshire – evidence at the moment is polls. When refugees and asylum seekers comes up the government is in advance. There's not a sensible dialogue with the government about policy.
- Alison Phipps – in Scotland there's a sustained reasoned dialogue going on, which is part of the democratic revolution in the country. If migration ends up in top ten issues then we've failed. There is a strategy of dealing

with migration in the public sphere in ordinary public discussion. A lot of it has to do with leadership. People are not prepared to win votes based on xenophobic policies; they would rather not be elected than make racist statements. It turns away from deficit model and look at what people bring to the table.