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# Academic knowledge, policy and the public role of social scientists –

# The case of migration and development

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## Abstract

Academic and public debates on the migration-development nexus often raise the question whether and in what ways social scientific research may form a basis for rational political decisions. The main thesis of this article is that such questions are misleading. Social scientific research may instead offer crucial stimuli for describing, understanding and explaining the migration-development nexus. This means that sociological analysis of the theory-praxis link should go beyond the focus on research and policy and bring in much more forcefully social scientists' role in the public sphere.

"Soon or late, it is ideas, not vested interests, which are dangerous for good or evil." (John Meynard Keynes)

There is an often mentioned gap between research in the social sciences on the one hand and social action and praxis on the other hand. This alleged disjuncture is particularly pertinent in the migration-development nexus. At first glance, this may seem astonishing because migration studies and development research – both fields are interdisciplinary research sites – are characterized by a high degree of commissioned research. This kind of research is often politically motivated, for example, by the intention to reduce international migration through economic development. To illustrate, over recent years politicians across Europe have often claimed that higher levels of economic development, measured by per capita income and/or increased human development symbolized by lower infant mortality and higher rates of literacy, would eventually lead to a decrease in international migration. Academic analysts of migration, however, insist that – while this expectation may be borne out in the long run, considering demographic transitions and economic transformations – increased economic development correlates highly with increased international migration, expressed in concepts such as the "migration hump" (Martin and Taylor, 1996). Moreover, while the policy world may be concerned with more efficient means of migration control, ranging from border controls to development cooperation, academic researchers often insist on the endogenous dynamics of international migration which escape blunt efforts at control, such as irregular migration. Thus, even in these fields of migration and development which seem to be strongly immersed in public policy issues and public debates, both practitioners and academic researchers heatedly debate the difficulties of mutual exchange. At its core, the gap hypothesis raises the following question, which has been debated as long as social science research exists: Would social science knowledge be more useful if it could be more easily applied instrumentally? In other words, would we desire a state of affairs in which political action could be systematically based on knowledge about calculable causal relations, as the term 'evidence-based policy' instead of 'dogma' would suggest (cf. Boswell, 2009)? While this may be a fruitful question to begin with, it is ultimately misleading.

Instead, there is a strong coupling of the two worlds of policy-politics and academia, albeit not through direct application of knowledge but rather through ways of thinking and representation in the public sphere. It is in this way that social scientists are brokers bridging "structural holes" (cf. Burt, 1992) resulting not simply from the absence of social ties but from different systemic dynamics. The public sphere function of academic knowledge goes beyond the "enlightenment" role (Weiss, 1979) because it designates a 'place' for change to occur. Thus, the proposition advanced here is that social science knowledge, on the one hand,  and

the system of public policy, on the other hand, are two very different worlds but are linked via the public sphere, the realm of the exchange of ideas and arguments in publicly accessible forums, ranging from mass media to small circles of debate. The worlds of academic research and public policy work on different assumptions, which in turn provide for different endogenous dynamics concerning views on instrumental usage of knowledge vs. its potential function as ways of understanding and as criticism. The social sciences do not so much produce social technologies but offer world views and lenses which help to categorize observable social facts and to arrive at interpretations. This takes place not through any direct linkage to policy but in the public sphere. The world of public policy making, by contrast, is structured by its own dynamics, which aim toward advancing interests to shape social life. Social science knowledge is used by policy makers when it serves the internal dynamics of policy making, although in fact, quite often, it may not serve this function, as when electoral pressures trump expert knowledge. Politicians are often driven by political exigencies and in such circumstances end up ignoring evidence where it fails to support electorally appealing courses of action--especially in areas susceptible to populist styles of action such as migration. At any rate, the social sciences, including not only sociology but also political science, anthropology, and economics, have delivered such lenses galore, in the form of concepts dealing with human, economic, and social development.

The very fact that the social sciences usually do not have direct impact on decision-making but are able to influence at best the lenses through which "social problems" are viewed make it all the more important to look not only at the interaction of social scientists and policy-makers in governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, social movement organizations and the like, but also at their role in the public sphere. If it is true that social scientists can usefully provide lenses to view and identify issues, topics, and problems and not so much be prescriptive, the direct linkage to policy and thus decision-making should not be overrated. Yet the discursive impact then assumes an ever more crucial role. And it is in the public sphere that such lenses are debated. And it is above all in the public sphere that political decisions in democracies, no matter how particularist the interests behind them are, can usually be seen to be and to have been legitimated by reference to both universal norms and plausible conceptual beliefs. The ubiquitous references in policy debates to meta-norms such as human rights, or the gospel of economic growth, are examples that come to mind.

This proposition can be explicated in three issue areas. The first concerns public policy and research agendas, social order, and the organization of research in the specific field of migration and development. In this area we are basically concerned with the (mutual) condition-

ing and conjunctures of academic research and policy paradigms. The second issue area deals with knowledge production in the social sciences and the public role of social scientists. Finally, the third issue area addresses social science knowledge and its uses in public policy and in the public sphere. Yet before plunging into these issue areas, it is necessary to question the standard account of why the worlds of academic research and public policy supposedly talk past each other.

## The Standard Account: The Gap Hypothesis and its Deficiencies

The standard argument's core is a deficit or gap argument, which states that given the large stock of academic knowledge in various fields of societal life, the de facto usage of this kind of knowledge in politics and by state and non-state policy-makers is widely insufficient. In the field of migration and development, we claim to have knowledge about how financial remittances ameliorate or increase social inequalities in regions of origin and destination of migrants. This knowledge, as the argument goes on, is only insufficiently applied to policies by the respective national governments or international organizations. In this perspective, much more could be done to facilitate the transfer of money by reducing transaction costs in offering channels alternative to Western Union and MoneyGram, or even to "illegal" viz. informal routes, such as the Hawala system. Hence, no publication on the subject of remittances fails to mention the Mexican government's "3 for 1" programme in which each "migradollar" is complemented by an extra dollar from the federal and regional government. The fact that only a fraction of remittances is channelled into this programme is rarely mentioned (cf. Castles and Delgado Wise, 2008).

Usually, three reasons are advanced to account for the allegedly deplorable gap between the plentiful store of research knowledge and its application in decision-making. The first posits that social scientists simply do not yet know enough about certain causal relations. In the case of financial remittances, this refers, for example, to the question how – if at all – remittances sent to family members in regions of origin aggregate from the family level to local communities or even to the national economy. So far, social scientists know very little about these mechanisms of aggregation. The second reason offered relates to the transfer of results from the social sciences to *praxis*. Both worlds use different languages, that is, their particular jargon. It is often held that social scientists write in barely intelligible ways and should strive for greater clarity (e.g. Wilson, 2006). This insight suggests that a simple one-to-one transfer is not possible. Instead, the processes and tasks involved could be better described as the mutual translation of different codes characteristic for the social sciences

and public policy respectively. Thus, it is not surprising that policy-makers establish expert commissions – such as the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM) convened in 2005 by the then Secretary General of the United Nations (UN), Kofi Annan – not only to legitimate decisions or delay them but also to translate actual research results. We can observe a similar pattern of knowledge translation in the run-up to the latest Human Development Report (UNDP, 2009), which has placed international migration as its core subject. A third explanation of the gap suggests that those who apply social science knowledge is thought to lack the capacity to interpret research results correctly, or that their readiness to learn is, moreover, also limited. If so, a change in the style of thinking among this group would be warranted. This third argument is highly questionable because we find that many policy-makers in fact have a social science background. While one may quibble with the fact that among social scientists in the field of development those with an economics background dominate, and while one may also plausibly argue that economics as a field has been buoyant and imperial, and perhaps less reflexive about the transfer problem, it is still true that the staff of national and international organizations is filled by persons with an academic background. And policy makers are certainly capable of being influenced. In a nutshell, as Keynes argued, "(p)ractical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slave of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling the frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back. Not, indeed, immediately, but after a certain interval …" (Keynes, 1970: 361)

This standard account needs to be questioned in a fundamental way because of its rationalist prejudice. This mode of thinking is based on a purely instrumental model according to which the social sciences are to be used in applying generalized findings to particular, concrete situations. In abstract terms this perspective says: if A then B, or B as a function of A. The policy applier then seeks to change B or produce B, and so forth. This formula seems to be rather short-sighted, not least because all knowledge needs to be translated, for example, to consider ceteris paribus conditions. When talking about the effects of a policy, one cannot simply say, when A then B, etc. but one needs to know about consequences of specific and complex sets of factors. Yet such knowledge is not simply stored in the warehouse of the social sciences. There is also no recipe-knowledge in the form of following easy rules (Luhmann, 1992). For example, it is plausible to argue that financial remittances may result in economic improvement of regions of origin. Yet the number of ceteris paribus conditions affecting this formula are legion, and it would take a great deal of specific knowledge other than academic knowledge  – such as tacit, 'everyday' and local knowledge – to appreciate the conditions under which financial remittances make a particular impact.

Even more important is that all social science knowledge is value-bound, even that derived under the ideal of value-free objectivity. Concepts have direct and strong relations to values, such as development, evolution, exploitation, social progress, social integration, and social inequality. Social scientists produce with these notions something of a world view of selected parts of reality, which also imply an urge to act in a certain way. For example, the notions of economic development and social development imply somewhat different policy action regarding the use and desirability of financial remittances. Notions of economic development would emphasize the investment character of remittances, e.g., into education, health or manufacturing. By contrast, notions of social development, such as Amartya Sen's (1999) capability approach, draw upon the idea that persons have a choice in how to employ remittances in aid of certain objectives, for example, geographical mobility, which constitutes one of many possible elements in the individual's well-being and quality of life.

## Issue Area 1: Public Policy, Social Order and Research

This issue area concerns a host of questions revolving around how research and policy agendas are set and potentially interact, and especially how public policy agendas impact on actual research undertaken: How have public policies, foundations, and other actors impacted upon research on the migration-development nexus, and in what ways – e.g. what are the mechanisms of impact, such as funding and hiring? How have institutions such as the World Bank and state governments set the migration-development agenda? Since the concept of development achieved prominence in the late 1940s how have issues of economic growth and political order been bundled over time? What premises have been underlying policy-research agendas, for example neo-liberal or grass-roots perspectives and orientations? How did these agendas reflect the changing or even transformed relationships between principles of social order – that is, state, market, civil society/community? In which institutions has research been undertaken – e.g., in universities, independent research institutes, research institutes of international organizations?

While it is impossible even to begin addressing these questions here, it is helpful to place them into a discursive-institutional context. In other words, one needs to identify how the research and policy interests in the migration-development nexus have coincided in three consecutive cycles or phases, and what exactly the (counter-)paradigmatic strands were. The first and the third of these phases undoubtedly were stimulated by public policy interests – the first in the 1950s and especially 1960s by the OECD. The third and ongoing phase has taken off after the World Bank placed financial remittances through migrants at the core of an

annual report (World Bank, 2002). Other agents, national governments and international organizations included, have followed suit. In the phase in between, the second, one also finds a correspondence between public policy interests in the South and the North, and academic concepts; a 'strange bedfellow' arrangement of both restrictive migration control on the one hand and a critical analysis of underdevelopment through reference to such deleterious mechanisms as the "brain drain" on the other hand. In all three phases research knowledge was and still is scrutinized for its applicability to development, based on different theoretical assumptions and slightly different policy priorities.

In phase 1, during the 1950s and 1960s, with spin-offs into the 1970s, economic policy makers and most representatives of the discipline of economics held migration to contribute to the development of sending regions. In fact, most research was actually undertaken after restrictive migration policies had been implemented in the early 1970s (e.g. Penninx, 1982 on Turkey). Following the 'recruitment halt' in Western Europe public policies aimed to encourage migrants to "return" to the regions of origin. Financial incentives were allotted to those returning. By and large, the theoretical underpinning of the recruitment drive of the 1960s was social modernization theory. International migration, quite apart from the much more massive internal migration in the South, was meant to siphon off excess labour and transfer it to the North, where it could – according to the OECD (Kindleberger, 1967) – fill labour gaps in labour-intensive industries. In this way, international South-North migration (East-West was curtailed by the Iron Curtain) could both contribute to development in the South and the growth of GDP in the post-war reconstruction economies of the West. Although modernization theories coverd a great deal more terrain than economic development *per se*, the focus and terminology of the migration-development nexus was heavily dominated by an economic lens. From a wide array of complex theoretical components in modernization theory, only the economic perspective was chosen to justify public policy choices. Up until the late 1970s, when the first studies were published on the effects of remittances, social scientists and governments alike saw migration as a solution to development obstacles in emigration regions. Empirical results, however, painted a different picture, often concluding that there was little evidence for remittances boosting local, not to speak of national, economic development (e.g. Lipton, 1980).

Whereas in phase 1 causal reasoning went from international migration to development, social science thinking during phase 2 largely reversed causality and replaced migration with underdevelopment: the line now ran from underdevelopment to migration. Still rooted in modernization theoretical assumptions, dependency and world systems theories questioned the impact of economic modernization on developing regions, now cast as peripheries. Coin-

ciding with such theoretical underpinnings, policy debates also highlighted the deleterious consequences of migration, especially the "brain drain" of professionals. The debate reached a climax in the context of discussions of the "New International Economic Order" in which many southern states in the United Nations system raised their voices. Now international migration as a policy solution became problematic. Instead, the solution itself turned into the problem in this reformulation of modernization theory, leading to the conclusion that migration as such contributes to structural economic heterogeneity and ever increasing social inequalities between South and North and between centres and peripheries within these regions. Needless to say, there was little policy impetus in the North to challenge such assumptions. After all, restrictive immigration policies, implemented in virtually all states in the North/West since the early 1970s, were not accompanied by alternative means to promote development, such as international trade. Thus, restrictive migration controls and the brain drain rhetoric nicely complemented each other in portraying international migration as a social problem. In the contemporary research in phase 2 the emphasis lay even more forcefully than in phase 1 on an economic lens, this time with a counter-hegemonic political economic drive.

Phase 3 in policy clearly took off with the wake-up call by the World Bank in its report on development finance (2002). Now, concepts such as increasing competitiveness, hunting for the "best brains," and other key notions dominated the policy debate. In tune with globalization talk, concepts such as "circularity" assumed greater importance (GCIM, 2005), in addition to efforts at tapping into the benefits brought about by return migrants. Now terms such as "brain gain", later modified to "brain circulation," came to replace "brain drain". In an interesting twist, non-economic factors were brought in with associated economic language, such as the concept of "social remittances" (Levitt, 1997), which has been heavily criticized for its one-way character, omitting reverse flows from the picture. The European Union (EU) itself now declared its aim to compete on par with the USA in attracting the so-called highly skilled. In addition, the second demographic transition in most immigration states renewed discussions about attracting migrants as a means to cushion the hard landing resulting from a rapid decline in the labour force and a concomitant increase in the pensioner population over the coming decades. As a legitimizing strategy to engage in attracting the "best and brightest" (Kapur and McHale, 2005), this development policy for the North was placed in the context of helping countries in the South to develop their economies – and, again a direct demand by the EU – to build up their migration control infrastructure. This latter issue has been of particular relevance with respect to states such as Morocco and Turkey, bordering on the EU and being transit countries for migrants from further afar.

In all three phases mentioned there was a confluence of policy and research cycles on the migration-development nexus. This is not to say that there were one-way streets between science and policy or public debates. Nonetheless, it indicates that there were elective affinities or even mutual conditionings. What can be said with some certainty is that public policy drew upon research concepts when suitable and that academic research provided suitable models, which were later (indirectly) used to justify a renewed emphasis on remittances. For example, in the transition from the second to the third phase, in the 1990s, approaches such as the New Economics of Labour Migration  in economics and the livelihood approach, originating in sociology and anthropology, focused on small collective units such as families and kinship groups as main decision-making sites and realms of action regarding (international) migration – the former approach looking at migration as a form of informal insurance against risks such as crop failure, and the latter viewing migration through the lens of ensuring a living in often adverse circumstances. These mid-range concepts constituted a decisive move away from analytical models that prioritized individuals as the main unit of analysis, as in neo-classical migration economics. The change of perspective from individuals to small groups, and from rational choice to social choice, led researchers to take a more nuanced look at the origins, flows, and consequences of financial remittances. For example, in the past the use of remittances to pay bills for health and tuition fees or consumer products had been seen as unproductive. Yet a closer look at how some families or larger collectives pooled resources to cope with risks collectively led researchers to realize that investments into the areas mentioned could be helpful in coping with diverse economic hazards and combating poverty. Now there was a proliferation of arguments that the effect of remittances in the earlier literature and policies was underestimated. Though it would be difficult to trace the exact ways the changing concepts from the social sciences found their way  into the decision-making and planning of (inter-)governmental organizations, it stands to reason that the changes of analytical patterns used across the three phases of the migration-development nexus is no coincidence. In the third phase, in particular, academia-policy brokers of knowledge such as authors of the reports by the intergovernmental International Organization of Migration (IOM), played an important role, and tried thus to gain a prominent place among the spade of international organizations dealing with cross-border migration.

The very fact that a reappraisal of the migration-development nexus has been going on for some years now means that perceptions of negative effects of migration upon development, so prevalent in phase 2, have changed. Indeed, the change would not have been possible without a much broader transformation of the social order and the relationships among the underlying principles. Such a sea-change can be identified on the discursive level and in the institutional and policy domains. If for heuristic purposes we define three principles of social

order as state(ness), market, and civil society or community, we can trace the shifting emphasis of public policy making and research agendas over the past decades since development entered the thesaurus of public debate in the late 1940s: Apparent are two discursive and policy shifts, both of them combinatorial forms including civil society or community. The overarching characteristic is a move away from the national state (apparatus) as an engine and coordinator of development. The demise of the national developmental state was not simply accompanied by a rise of the market, as critics of the so-called Washington Consensus would have it. Indeed, the first shift is a combination of stateness and civil society. The national state has not been replaced but complemented by local state and international organizations. Terms such as 'government' have been complemented by 'governance.' Obvious examples ofr combinations of local state and civil society are programmes labelled *co-développement*, which often include local states – cities, municipalities – in immigration states and transnationally active migrant associations. The second move is the combination of market(s) and transnational civil society. In our case, this shift is best exemplified by the term diaspora. Both those who advocate the entrepreneurial market citizen, an individual migrant economically active across the borders, and those who favour participatory approaches rooted in collectives have used the term diaspora to indicate a new stage of either individual or civil societal involvement. Those who see diaspora as a form of entrepreneurial activity focus on the role of the "highly-skilled" living outside their country of origin. These persons are thought to contribute to development via the transfer of knowledge. By contrast, those taken with the notion of cross-border civil society emphasize the role of hometown associations and other small-scale groups in providing collective goods for the regions of origin. Both approaches make far-reaching assumptions about diasporists as brokers. What can be stated with some certainty is that there has been an increasing cooptation of diaspora groups in policy-making and policy-consultancy (cf. de Haas, 2006).

## Issue Area 2: Knowledge Production and the Public Role of Social Scientists

The second issue area broadly concerns the kind of knowledge produced by academic social scientists and the role these scientists play in the public sphere. The public sphere is much broader than the world of public policy making, goes beyond decision-making, and relates to the realm of public debate. The questions thus are: What role have social scientists played in the linkage of knowledge production and public policies through participation in the public sphere as experts, advocates, partisans, or public intellectuals? What have been the differ-

ences among the various social science disciplines, such as economics, political science and sociology? And what have been the differences, if any, between the interdisciplinary fields of migration research and development research? What kind of knowledge production has been propagated by social scientists, e.g., instrumental vs. reflexive knowledge? What has been the self-understanding of social scientists involved -- professional, critical, or policy-based?

Again, this sketch may offer only a partial frame in which to consider these questions. To start with, knowledge gained from research in the social sciences can rarely be condensed into social technologies. The specific objects of the social sciences are not amenable to social engineering. Yet this technological deficit is not an outcome of the inability of most social sciences to devise ever more sophisticated techniques of observation and measurement but is due to the specificity of the objects and the associated normative implications. In societies with high degrees of personal freedom and a high value on individual autonomy a premium is placed on social change. Progress is legitimized by the concept of "modernity", itself a cultural consciousness of the changeableness of things. A direct consequence of this spirit of modernity is that scientific claims usually allow for various and diverging interpretations. There is a constant debate over results, based in the competing paradigms and the multiple normatively grounded belief systems underlying social scientists' claims. One does not need to adhere to a criticism of the "strong programme of science" (Barnes, 1974) and thus engage in a social reductionist interpretation of the social sciences to realize that the questions posed by social scientists and the interpretations of research results are guided by normatively bounded ideas. The migration-development nexus in general and the term "development" as a short-hand for multifarious and even contradictory goals such as "good life", economic growth, and ecological sustainability lends at least suggestive support to the hunch that such normative ideas need not be very specific and may even have passed their conceptual zenith, -- as the concept of development in fact has – but still serve as rallying foci.

The crucial point of departure is the linkage between knowledge and the public. Often, two types of knowledge are contrasted, that is, instrumental knowledge which is oriented toward the means to achieve goals, and reflexive knowledge, which is geared toward (normatively desirable) ends. This stark distinction is reminiscent of Kant's moral imperative which argues against using persons as means rather than ends. Both forms of knowledge, instrumental and reflexive, can be found in the various self-understandings of sociology and sociologists. While sociology is selected here as exemplary of the social sciences; it stands to reason that similar distinctions could also be fruitfully applied to other social science disciplines such as political science (but not necessarily for economics). Michael Burawoy (2005) has devised a four-fold typology of sociology and its public role. He distinguishes between professional,

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policy, critical, and public sociology. First, in his view professional sociology is heavily engaged in knowledge production along a positivist methodological perspective, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. We could classify many contributions to so-called mainstream journals and publications as professional. This kind of sociology has established clear-cut criteria for ranking the quality of knowledge, such as peer review. Second, policy sociology, quite simply, produces knowledge for a client. It is mainly engaged in carrying out commissioned research for government agencies or private customers. Third, critical sociology incorporates both those researchers who are "reflexive", those who openly question the assumptions and underlying politics of the discipline, and people who are politically aligned activists, and who see sociology as a way of confronting injustice or power or elites. We may refer to C. Wright Mills as representative of this branch. Fourth, Burawoy's favourite type, public sociology speaks directly to "publics", that is, various kinds of groups, either randomly gathered (e.g. a television viewers) or grouped by common interest (e.g. experts working on the migration-development nexus). Public sociology engages diverse publics, reaching beyond the university to enter into an ongoing dialogue with these publics about fundamental values.

There are also 'in between' positions, such as that of "involved detachment", as claimed by Norbert Elias, which is rooted in professional sociology but reaches out to public sociology. Elias remarked that the role of social scientists' engagement is an issue of "how to keep their two roles as participants and inquirers clearly and consistently apart, and, as a professional group, how to establish in their work the undisputed dominance of the latter." (Elias, 2007: 84)  Public sociology also shows some overlap with critical sociology but is not as openly dedicated to advocacy and partisanship as the latter. There are basically two types of public intellectual knowledge, in Antonio Gramci's terms 'traditional' and 'organic'. Traditional public sociology speaks to publics from on high as in such classic works in American sociology as David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*, and Gunnar Myrdal's *The American Dilemma*, or more recently Robert Bellah et al.'s *Habits of the Heart*, and William Julius Wilson's *The Declining Significance of Race*. In Europe, some of Pierre Bourdieu's later works, such as *La Misère du Monde* (1998), may fit this pattern. These books generated public debate, and raised public consciousness about socio-political and economic issues. They work through various media – radio, print, film, electronic – that easily distort the original message. Organic public sociology, on the other hand, involves an unmediated dialogue between sociologists and their publics, taking place in the trenches of civil society. Here we find publics that are thicker, more local, more active, and oppositional -- at any rate, in direct engagement with labour movements, oppressed minorities, prisoners, lawyers, or even transnational or global NGOs.

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The division of the four kinds of sociologies already gives an idea of the role of social scientists in public. Yet we need to go beyond the "intellectual" typology and distinguish more finely the role of social scientists in the public sphere. Essentially, there are three main types or functions, since an individual social scientist may fulfil various roles successively: social scientists may act or function as experts, advocates, and intellectuals. The first type is the expert. A prominent function is that of a consultant to political organizations. Expert hearings, commissions for all types of political issues (ethics, migration and integration, etc.) abound in democracies. Jürgen Habermas (1968) famously criticized this position of experts in that such politics leads to the division of labour amongst experts who are no longer able to understand the wider context of society. Migration policy, as other policy fields, abounds with experts. The "Independent Commission on In-Migration" (*Unabhängige Kommission Zuwanderung*) in Germany (2000-2002), for example, consulted about a hundred academic experts in its comprehensive look at Germany's "in-migration" processes. The second type is the advocate. Advocates take sides. Their self-understanding may correspond to those of Burawoy's critical sociologists who are politically aligned activists and envision their research as contributing to or strengthening the cause in which they are engaged. Not only is the area of migration and development fertile ground for debates on social justice, equality, human rights and other fundamentals; it is also a field in which advocacy is coupled with research. Finally, the third type is that of the public intellectual. S/he corresponds to the image portrayed above of traditional public intellectual who seeks to change the perspective of the reader or listener by strength of the better argument. We may find relatives of this type in the arts. Just think of numerous public artists who have a focus on Africa, such as Bono. One may surmise that while direct input into public policy-making concerns above all social scientists as experts, the public sphere is above all the realm of the advocate and the public intellectual. Needless to say, an overlapping of the three types is possible; for example, a mixed type, called partisan, a combination of advocate and public intellectual. S/he comes close to the organic public intellectual described above.

## Issue Area 3: Knowledge and its Uses in Public Policy and the Public Sphere

The third issue brings together the concomitant production of knowledge and policy cycles from issue area 1 and the public role of social scientists: How have research findings made their way into public debates and political decision-making? Under what conditions has this transfer taken place? Which researchers and research institutes have been influential directly

or indirectly? What kind of knowledge was used and on which level of abstraction? Has theoretical abstraction left room for human agency? What has made a difference – direct knowledge such as concrete research results and suggestions for policies, or indirect impacts such as the spread of concepts, ways of thinking, approaches to problems from the social sciences outward? Which bodies of research, concepts/theoretical guidelines, empirical results, etc., have been picked up, which have been neglected or discarded, and on which occasions?

It is of utmost importance to start any analysis of linkages between research and public policy and the public sphere by considering the inherent systemic rationalities of the different worlds. Political decision-making has its own rationality. The instrumental application of social scientific knowledge does not by any means lie at the centre of political decision-making for public policy.. Politically, knowledge derived from research is a tool but not necessarily an aid to or requirement for problem-adequate solutions. Academic knowledge may serve three functions for decision- and policy-making: a legitimizing, a substantiating, and a symbolic function.

First, social science knowledge may serve to legitimate decisions already taken or to delay decisions deemed undesirable. In this way, policy-making authorities in government can gain 'epistemic authority' in defining what the public, in our case, knows about migration and development. The fields of immigration and asylum are highly contested policy areas and are characterized by a high degree of methodological uncertainty, as can be seen most dramatically in the field of irregular migration. By definition, it is impossible to arrive at a reliable estimate of the number of irregular migrants. Expert estimates can sometimes show an enormous range. For example, experts estimate the number of irregular migrants in the USA to lie somewhere between 2 to 20 million. Clearly, and most important, there is a huge asymmetry in the usage of knowledge in that political decision-makers may tap social science knowledge at their will, largely unencumbered by the intentions of social scientists. Policy makers can select a particular voice from the social sciences to listen to and endorse it. For example, in phase 2 of the migration-development nexus discussed above, a report by the International Organization of Labour, written by authors from the Hamburger Weltwirtschaftsarchiv (HWWA), drew on standard trade theory which argued that trade should substitute for migration (Hiemenz and Schatz, 1979), that is, instead of migrating to work in garment shops in New York, Bangla Deshi workers should produce shirts in Dhakka to be exported to the Americas. In practice, this does not work since the rich countries usually keep protecting their own inefficient industries while forcing the developing countries to drop their import tar-

iffs. Yet, precisely because the paper mirrored a standard economic argument in migration policy, it was used in such a way as to legitimate very restrictive immigration policies.

Second, academic knowledge may have a substantiating function in that it can strengthen the position of an organization, a political party, or politicians vis-à-vis rivals, contending parties, and positions. The World Bank, for example, emphasized the magnitude of financial remittances sent by migrants compared to Official Development Aid (ODA) in the early 2000s in order to position itself as a regulator of international financial flows. After all, in those days fewer and fewer developing countries were taking out loans from the World Bank. The World Bank thus used the migration-development link to reposition itself among international players in the field of finance. The IOM in taking the lead among international organizations addressing the migration-development nexus, mentioned above, falls into the same category.

Third, knowledge sometimes fulfils a symbolic function by contributing to the credibility of politicians and public authorities. To illustrate, one has only to call to mind the spade of academic working papers usually commissioned or invited by organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for its latest Human Development Report (2010) on international migration and the push to connect migration to capabilities (UNDP 2009).

Whatever the specific function knowledge from research plays in policy-making and public debates, political decisions have to be legitimated by referring to universal values and norms although they may be guided by particularist interests. For example, restrictive immigration clauses in the EU regarding asylum seekers are not simply legitimated by referring to potentially tight labour markets or the burden upon social welfare systems. Rather such policies are discussed jointly with 'positive' normative goals, such as policies addressing the so-called "root causes" of migration in the regions of origin; most prominently, out of African countries of origin. Also, the EU has taken vigorous measures to link cooperation with African countries beyond clear exchange packages – migration control in exchange for development aid, as in the case of Albania, Morocco, Senegal, and Nigeria.

Beyond looking at various instrumental linkages between social science knowledge and the world of policy it is important to consider that the main self-declared task of the social sciences as academic disciplines is diagnosis, not guiding social action and generating remedies (Mayntz, 1980). Social science knowledge may thus be most effective in publicly disseminating concepts, notions, and associated arguments. In this way social science knowledge can make a difference in defining relevant policy targets and indicators to measure social problems. The use of knowledge involves attribution of meaning, interpretation of events, and (re)definition of situations. Where public policy in the public sphere is concerned, it is

indirect influence that counts, that is, those crucial notions and concepts which guide societal perception and interpretation of societal processes and not the actual stock of empirical findings.. The definitions of social – economic, political, cultural – situations are highly relevant for defining and framing issues and questions, not decision-making as such. A prominent example is Amartya Sen's work with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), in which he advanced his capability concept as an alternative to notions of development built solely around economic growth. Sen argued that the main criterion for development is the availability of choice for persons to pursue certain goals they regard as essential (Sen, 1984). Moreover, Sen developed indicators which were then concatenated into the Human Development Indicator (HDI) currently used by the UNDP. In sum, the social sciences give ever new concepts and meanings to the changes of objects in societies. Ultimately, this influence increases the reflexivity of societal conditions.

A decisive and close analysis of how social science concepts spread in the public sphere and in public policy making necessitates a look at the secondary effects of social science knowledge and more specifically a study of feedback loops. How sociological knowledge in the broadest sense is received depends very much upon structures of plausibility in public discourse. While social science concepts may be received favourably under certain conditions, these situations themselves may be propelled to keep changing, also as a result of the diffusion of sociological knowledge. The latest and third phase of the migration-development nexus re-emerged at a time when the development industry was casting around for new target groups, when international financial institutions, most prominently the World Bank, was searching for new areas of activity. The re-combination of stateness-civil society and market-civil society principles allowed for the emergence of a new development actor, migrants and migrant associations. Once the associated ideas of migrants as development agents started spreading across Europe, (local) administrations turned to the social sciences for help in framing issues. Thus, the transnationalist paradigm, for example, is now strongly embedded in various institutions in countries such as France and Spain. Such imports from the social sciences prefigure the engagement of public authorities through the funding NGOs and migrant associations engaged in development cooperation with regions of migrant origin.

The proposition that the most important effect of social science knowledge is its potential for creating (a new) public perspective on social issues is borne out by the conclusions of researchers who look at the policy implications of the migration-development nexus (de Wind and Holdaway, 2008): Virtually all studies conclude that it is the analytic (research to determine the impacts of policies) and the explanatory (research to explain why governments adopt the policies) functions which loom largest and are most effective, whereas the pre-

scriptive function (recommendations, based on research, regarding policies governments should adopt to attain particular goals) is usually not very successful in finding direct entry into public policy.

## Conclusion: Production of Orientation and Meaning

We are now able to return to the original question: Would social science knowledge be more useful if it could be more easily applied instrumentally? In other words, would we desire a state of affairs in which political action could be systematically based on knowledge about calculable causal relations? The answer given here is: Not really. What applies to societies in general would also be true for the social sciences. There is a difference between formal and material rationality, between instrumental rationality and reason (Max Weber). In other words, while knowledge about causal relations may make political action more rational in a formal sense, it may also be put to service to do normatively undesirable things. Eventually, social scientific knowledge is "*welt-anschaulich*" and thus has a function for producing orientation and meaning. These results suggest going further and examining the role of social sciences and social scientists beyond the realm of consultancy and policy making. While much ink has been spilled over academics as consultants and advisors, less has been said about the role of researchers in the public sphere. Yet it is here that their functions in providing patterns of orientation and meaning have potentially the strongest impact – and, in the long run, on political decisions and public policies.

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