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## Chapter 1

### The ‘Epistemic Turn’ in Immigration Policy Analysis

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Edited by Gary P. Freeman and Nikola Mirilovic

#### Introduction

Theories of public policy have undergone something of an ‘epistemic turn’ over the past decade, and immigration policy analysis has been no exception to this trend. Numerous contributions have explored the role of expert knowledge and research in immigration and integration policy making, and in public political debate. This chapter will explore this epistemic turn, examining its origins, key findings, and the implications of this type of analysis for immigration policy studies. The paper begins by considering some of the reasons for the new focus on the role of knowledge in policy, a preoccupation that is shared by researchers spanning the fields of political science, international relations, sociology, and science and technology studies. The paper then goes on to review some of the recent literature on the role of knowledge in immigration policy, and outline the main findings. Most studies have concluded that research plays a very limited role in public debate and policy-making in this area, though there are some differences between countries, across sub-areas, and over time. The chapter goes on to examine some of the possible reasons for the neglect of research in immigration policy. It argues that in order to understand this finding, we need more thorough cross-sectoral analysis to identify what distinguishes immigration policy from other policy areas. I will suggest some of the dimensions of policy areas

that might account for cross-sectoral variation. The chapter concludes with some reflections on the role of cross-sectoral comparison in immigration policy research.

## 1. The epistemic turn in policy analysis

What does it mean to say policy analysis has undergone an ‘epistemic turn’? The claim implies that there has been a significant increase in studies exploring the role of research and other types of knowledge in policy-making and politics. Scholars are increasingly turning their attention to how policy-makers and politicians construct knowledge about policy problems: what sorts of knowledge – whether lay, ethical or scientific – they draw on to make sense of policy problems and responses; how knowledge is applied, translated and codified in policy-making; what sorts of functions it plays – symbolic or instrumental; and how it is shaped by, and in turn shapes, the relationship between researchers and other knowledge producers, and policy-makers.

This epistemic turn needs to be distinguished from the broader focus on ideas, frames, or narratives that emerged from the 1980s onwards (Hall 1989; Goldstein and Keohane 1993; Berman 2001; Bleich 2002). These contributions (quite rightly) drew attention to the ways in which the discursive construction of policy problems and solutions shaped policy-making and political debate. The epistemic turn accepts this basic premise about the power of language and ideas in shaping political debate and decision-making. However, it focuses in particular on the cognitive, or epistemic,

content of such ideas. It hones in on the knowledge claims invoked in such frames or narratives: how they were produced, interpreted, applied and legitimised. The assumption is that knowledge constitutes a particular type of idea or claim, one that derives its authority from the rigour of the methods through which it was derived, or from the expertise or research credentials of its producer. This type of claim may be distinguished from – and indeed can conflict with – claims or ideas revolving around rival values or interests.

### Understanding the epistemic turn

The role of knowledge in policy is not a new topic. The 1970s saw a wave of studies on the sociology of research utilization. Scholars sought to explain why research was not taken up more extensively in policy-making, exploring the apparent gap between the types of knowledge valued by academics and policymakers (Gans 1971; Stehr and Baldamus 1983; Holzner et al. 1983; Topf 1993; Hummel 1991). Others identified divergences in values or decision-making styles between academia and policy (Caplan 1978; Gill 1986; Brannen 1986). Others, notably Carole Weiss, examined problems around the absorption of expert knowledge by policymakers, questioning instrumentalist assumptions about a linear process whereby knowledge is produced and then utilised to inform policy. Instead, research findings were more likely to exert a more indirect and gradual influence over the framing of problems policy, through a so-called ‘enlightenment’ effect (Weiss 1978; 1986).

These insights remain influential in literature on the relationship between research and policy. However, the epistemic turn of the past decade or so appears to be prompted by a rather different set of developments, of which I would like to identify three.

First is the changing nature of political contestation, and in particular the increasing role of scientific knowledge in political decision-making. This trend has been explored by (largely sociological) literature on the role of science and expertise in the risk society. As authors such as Beck (1992, 1998), Giddens (1994) and Luhmann (1991) have argued, the debates on (re)distribution characteristic of most of the twentieth century have in many areas of policy been superseded by “post-ideological” disputes about the decision-making premises and outcomes of policies in areas characterized by *risk*: acknowledged uncertainty about the (potentially harmful) impact of decisions (or the impact of the failure to take decisions). In most cases, uncertainty stems from the unavailability of trial-and-error testing for reliably predicting the outcome of decisions in areas of risk. Related to this, we can also identify the increasing importance of expert knowledge in technocratic debates over steering (Fischer 1990). The demise of traditional ideological cleavages shifts the emphasis of political debate to more technical questions of how to steer complex social and economic systems to achieve agreed outcomes. Here the problem is not so much one of risk, but of how to deploy the rather blunt legal and pecuniary tools at the disposal of the state to shape social behaviour in the desired way.

In both cases, the criteria guiding decisions and their justification are fundamentally dependent on different types of knowledge. Whereas classic distributive politics revolved around conflicting interests and values (with knowledge input to help identify target populations or deliver on objectives), debates about risk

and steering both involve invoking rival knowledge claims to justify preferences (Beck 1992). Of course, the relevant knowledge is not limited to scientific research, but often includes the accumulated experiences and expertise of officials, practitioners and professional groups.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the deployment of knowledge claims is not free from interests or values (Wynne 2002) – indeed, deferring to the authority of expert knowledge can be largely ritualistic (Bonss et al. 1993; Weingart 1999). However, the key point is that political contestation and the justification of policy decisions revolves around knowledge claims, rather than interests – what can be termed a technocratic rather than a democratic mode of settlement (Boswell 2009a).

The second development is the trend in public administration towards new management practices, or what has been dubbed ‘hyper-rationalism’ in decision-making (Huberman 1994). Since the 1980s, most OECD countries have adhered to a set of management ideas and tools collectively labelled ‘New Public Management’ (Hood 1991). Many authors see the emergence of NPM as a response to perceived inadequacies of governance, which were most acutely exposed in economic crisis of the 1970s: the rigidity and dysfunctionality of the centralized, command and control, distributive welfare state. NPM promised a new regulatory style, involving forms of outsourcing and marketization of public services, which would be subject to arms-length control through models of quality assurance borrowed from industry (Power 2000: 113-14). Part of this new ‘light-touch’ control was the use of new forms of measurement, evaluation and bench-marking to vouchsafe performance. As Rose and Miller (1992: 187) posed the problem: ‘How might one reconcile the principle that the domain of the political must be restricted, with the recognition of the vital political implications of formally private activities?’ The answer was to enable remote control

through the standardisation of technologies and instruments of government, in the form of monitoring, rational decision-making, and the use of expertise.

The ‘evidence-based policy’ movement can be seen as one of the off-shoots of this trend towards hyper-rationality. Policy-makers are expected to underpin decisions through making use of expert knowledge. The requirement that decisions be ‘evidence based’ (or, more recently in UK parlance, based on ‘what works’) can be seen as one of the techniques employed to steer or control decision-making by imposing rationalist norms and procedures. Such requirements to commission and apply research often emanate from policy, strategy or delivery units at the centre of government, rather than from those closely engaged in policy-making. They are frequently prompted by abstract and modish ideas about what constitutes legitimate decision-making, rather than a recognition of research gaps or desiderata. Similarly, agencies and departments often build research capacity to signal their ability and commitment to taking sound decisions. As such, the requirement that policy be evidence-based is often largely ritualistic, borne out of a desire to derive legitimacy through conforming to norms of rational decision-making (Power 1997; Boswell 2009a).

Finally, we can point to changes in the academic environment, which in many countries are increasingly steering scholars to engage with policy-makers through changes to funding. Academics are increasingly required to undertake so-called ‘knowledge exchange’ and achieve ‘impact’ beyond academia. For example, the six-yearly UK evaluation of the quality of research carried out by higher education institutes now involves an ‘impact’ component: 20% of a research department’s research score comprises an assessment of how far its research has influenced politics, society or the economy. Government funding formulae are based on departmental

rankings following these criteria. Similarly, UK Research Council funding for projects now includes as a matter of course a ‘pathways to impact’ plan setting out how research will be disseminated and influence non-academic audiences.

These three sets of developments appear to have triggered a new focus on the role of research in knowledge. Academics are not just engaging in ‘first order’ knowledge transfer, that is to say becoming involved in carrying out research and sharing ideas and findings with policy makers. They are also increasingly engaging in second order reflection on what such processes might involve and entail. There is an emerging critical scholarship that reflects on the relationship between research and policy, exploring how different forms of knowledge for policy are produced, applied and legitimised in policymaking and political debate; and how such processes in turn shape political discourse and practice.

This new focus spans a wide range of theoretical and methodological approaches. From the more rationalist evidence-based policy movement, which largely buys into policy discourses around instrumental knowledge use (see, for example, the journal *Evidence and Policy*); to more critical contributions that radically question the goals and practices involved in communicating, translating or applying research (much of which is published in journals such as *Critical Policy Studies*). The new literature on knowledge and policy also covers a wide range of empirical cases. It was initially focused on national-level policy making, but has also drawn on cross-national comparisons, as well as an increasing body of contributions looking at the use of knowledge in European and international governance (Haas 1992; Radaelli 1995, 1999b; Grek 2009; Dunlop 2009; Littoz-Monnet 2014). There has also been a proliferation in the sectors covered: health, education, crime, and



environment are among the most represented. But also, increasingly, sectors such as international development, foreign policy, defence, and, of course, immigration.

### The epistemic turn in immigration policy studies

Scholars of migration have often had close links to policy-makers, indeed, a number of scholars have shown how migration research is tightly enmeshed with political constructions of migration problems (Favell 2001, Bommers and Morawska 2005; Thränhardt and Bommers 2010). The paradigms of migration research are politically constituted by nation-state conceptions of immigration challenges (Thränhardt and Bommers 2010). Not surprisingly, then, migration studies scholars have had a long history of engagement with political debate and policy-making. But only fairly recently have they turned their attention to reflecting on the nature of this relationship.

Some of the first contributions in this area explored the co-production of research and policy frames in national polities (Jasanoff 2004). Wimmer and Glick-Schiller (2002) sought to expose how research on migration was guided by, and has in turn influenced, national paradigms of state-building. Favell (2001) identified how integration research was still captive to a bounded 'nation-state-society' paradigm, while Rath (2001:4) spoke of the 'hegemony of the ethnicity paradigm' in Dutch integration research. This debate about the inter-penetration of political and academic constructions and framings of immigration problems continued through the 2000s, with contributions from Thränhardt and Bommers and (2010), Bleich (2011), Bertossi

(2011) examining the relationship between national models for framing immigration issues and academic research.

From the early 2000s, a number of migration scholars began to explore in more depth the relationships and processes involved in research-policy relations. Some of this research focused directly on the impact of research on policy, trying to ascertain how influential research had been in shaping immigration and integration policy. One of the first major contributions in this area was Marco Martiniello's 2002-2004 project on academic research and policy-making in the field of migration. Martiniello led a multi-country project looking at the impact of research, some of whose findings were published in a special issue of the *International Journal of Multicultural Societies* (2005). Martiniello and colleagues' own research on the Belgian case, carried out with Florence, suggested that research had played a rather negligible role in Belgian agenda-setting and policy-making on immigration and integration between 1989-2002 (Florence et al. 2005). By contrast, Penninx (2005) argued that Dutch research on integration had been very influential in shaping multiculturalism in the 1980s. The government-established Advisory Committee on Minorities Research (ACOM), set up in 1976, was an important player in Dutch integration policy, with conclusions of its 1979 report taken on board almost verbatim by the government. However, Penninx suggested that research was more influential at the stage of policy formulation, and less at the phase of implementation. And by the late 1990s, political polarisation around integration issues was associated with the demise of this form of institutionalised, regular exchange between policy and research.

A number of subsequent contributions further explored this apparent Dutch ‘exceptionalism’. Notably Peter Scholten and various collaborators analysed the shifting role of research in framing Dutch integration policy, and sought to account for these changes. Drawing on the work of Hoppe (2005), Scholten deployed a conceptual typology for distinguishing different institutional forms (or dialogue structures) in the relationship between research and policy. He distinguished between enlightenment, engineering, technocracy, and bureaucracy configurations of research-policy relations (Scholten 2007). This framework has been usefully applied to comparative analysis of the role of research in European national and EU-level integration policies (Scholten 2011), notably in the context of the DIAMINT project (Scholten, Entizinger, Penninx, and Verbeek, forthcoming). Applying this comparative approach, Scholten and Timmermans (2010) find evidence of a shift from technocratic to enlightenment and then to engineering configurations, not just in Dutch integration policy, but also in French and UK approaches (albeit the shift occurred earlier). Echoing earlier insights of Penninx, they suggest that the technocratic model is more characteristic of the earlier ‘framing’ stage of integration policy development.

Boswell’s KNOWMIG project (2004-8) took a slightly different approach, exploring the research-policy relationship from a more functionalist perspective. Rather than focusing on configurations of institutional relations and their influence on policy, Boswell explored the different uses, or functions, of research in migration policy-making. Drawing on research from organizational sociology and science and technology studies, Boswell distinguished between three political functions of research: instrumental, substantiating and legitimising (2008, 2009a, 2009b). She suggested that the predominance of the different functions would depend on factors

such as degree of political contestation, the prevalent ‘mode of settlement’ (democratic or technocratic), and inter-organizational rivalry. Her comparative analysis of the functions of new research departments in German, UK and EU home affairs/migration ministries suggested that such units were playing largely symbolic roles: they were valued for their substantiating and legitimising functions rather than their capacity to provide knowledge that helped adjust policy outputs. Hunter and Boswell (2013) found similar tendencies in the UK’s use of special commissions on integration in the 2000s.

Other contributions have generally suggested a disappointing or limited role of research in policy-making. In a study of the use of research in Italy, Caponio et al. (2010) found a lack of confidence in the authority of social scientific research to guide integration policy. Also looking at Italy, Zincone (2011) found that while centre-left governments had been more prone to make use of research, such attempts were undermined by centre-right coalitions, which had generally demoted the role of research in policy-making. Jørgensen (2011) compared research-policy relations in Sweden and Denmark, concluding that while social scientists in Sweden had influenced problem definitions, in Denmark research had been used in a more selective way to substantiate government policies. Caponio, Hunter and Verbeek (2014) applied ideas from Scholten and Boswell to analyse the use of research in the context of ‘crisis’, specifically the integration crisis in the UK, Netherlands and Italy in the early 2000s. They found that research was used in largely symbolic ways, and also found that expertise was constantly contested and ‘deconstructed’ in the context of polemical debates over multiculturalism and assimilation.

In a collected volume based on the DIAMINT project, Scholten, Entzinger, Penninx and Verbeek (forthcoming) draw on some of these ideas and findings to

examine three hypotheses about the evolution of research-policy relations in Europe. First, has the politicisation of immigrant integration led to the de-institutionalisation of established research-policy relations? Second, has such politicisation generated more symbolic forms of knowledge utilisation, as opposed to instrumental ones? And third, has a de-institutionalisation of research-policy structures, and the europeanisation of migration research, eroded the national paradigms of migration research identified in earlier literature? On the first question, they find that politicisation has not generally led to de-institutionalisation (with the partial exception of the Netherlands, Italy and Denmark), but rather to changes in the structure of research-policy relations. Indeed, in some countries (Germany and Austria) politicisation actually precipitated more institutionalised dialogues. The second hypothesis finds stronger support across cases, with all countries showing an increase in the substantiating and legitimising functions of knowledge following politicisation. The third hypothesis finds limited support, with the Netherlands being the most clear-cut case of such a tendency, as well as the UK after an initial period of close research-policy dialogue in the 1950s. By contrast, Austria, Denmark, Germany and Italy arguably never had this kind of symbiotic, co-productive mode of policy-research relations, with research evolving largely autonomously of migration policy.

A number of scholars have also looked at how research and expert knowledge are taken up in public debate, and especially media coverage of immigration and integration issues. In a comparison of UK and German media use of research in covering labour migration in the early 2000s, Boswell (2009b) found that the media was especially likely to use research where it met criteria of novelty, drama and scandal, and especially where it was a means of exposing government transgressions. Balch and Balbanova (2011) looked at how expertise was constructed in the UK

media, and found a polarisation between ideas of migration as manageable/knowable (usually associated with pro-immigrant positions), and ideas of migration as chaotic and indeterminable (associated with anti-immigrant positions). There was very little reporting on research adopting an intermediary position of perceiving migration knowledge as complex, or acknowledging the limits of knowledge. Faist (2010) has also explored the role of research in broader public debates on the migration-development nexus, arguing that the focus on research-policy relations is too narrowing.

Finally, there is an emerging literature exploring the role of knowledge and research in international governance. Boswell (2008) has shown how the production of expert knowledge is a means of both securing legitimacy and ‘softening up’ governments in contested areas of integration, while Geddes and Scholten (2013) have analysed the idea of knowledge production – or ‘going technical’ – as a political strategy for the europeanisation of EU immigrant integration policies. As Geddes and Achtnich argue, selective mobilisation of research has promoted ‘soft’ governance of migrant integration in the EU (forthcoming). In similar vein, Geddes (2013) has argued that the acknowledged uncertainty and incompleteness of knowledge at national level creates social and political opportunities for the EU to expand its role, with member states increasingly reliant on EU-level mechanisms for gathering ‘better’, more complete knowledge.

## 2. Explaining patterns of research use in immigration policy making

## The lack of cross-sectoral analysis

This brief review suggests that scholars have approached the issue from two main perspectives: examining the institutional structures shaping research-policy relations; and analysing the different political functions of knowledge in research. There has been less focus on processes of knowledge construction, translation and application in policy-making (although there has been some attention to these processes in media coverage of research), an area which is being increasingly explored in critical policy analysis (see, for example, Freeman 2009; Freeman and Maybin 2011). There is also relatively little attention to the types of knowledge being used – some of the literature from science and technology studies suggests promising ways of develop these themes (Wynne 1996; Yearley 2000; Prior 2003).

Perhaps the most striking omission, however, is a failure to analyse immigration policy in relation other policy areas. Studies of research and policy have focused overwhelmingly on diachronic and cross-national comparisons. There has been almost no attempt to compare patterns and processes of knowledge utilisation across policy areas or sectors.<sup>2</sup> This may in part reflect the continued influence of the debate on national paradigms of migration research. Whether or not scholars have agreed with this supposition, debate has continued to revolve around the question of how far one can distinguish national cultures of constructing and analysing questions of immigration and integration. Thus cross-national comparisons are conducted to substantiate or challenge this empirical claim. The focus on cross-country case comparison may also reflect the structure of the migration research community. Migration studies as a sub-discipline grew rapidly through the 2000s, with generous

funding encouraging cross-disciplinary but mono-sectoral groupings: graduate programmes, new or expanded migration studies centres, and collaborative EU and North American networks and projects. It made sense financially and practically for such groupings to focus on cross-national comparison within the sector of immigration.

Yet some of the findings from this research imply the need to look beyond migration policy in order to help understand patterns of knowledge use. First, as Scholten et al. indicate (forthcoming), national paradigms are being at least partially eroded by the europeanisation of research, and, we could add, by the harmonisation of migration policy. This insight tallies with a wider literature on socialisation, policy learning and isomorphism within particular policy sectors (DiMaggio and Powell 1991; Knill 1999; Radaelli 2000). Such approaches challenge the traditional preoccupation with distinct policy styles (Richardson 1982) or national paradigms (Howlett 1991) in policy studies. They suggest that the more interesting comparisons might be located between different policy sectors (Hood, Rothstein and Baldwin 2001:6), raising the question as to why cross-national comparison should be privileged over cross-sectoral analysis (Freeman 1985).

Second, much of the literature on knowledge and migration policy points to certain features of immigration and integration that make them especially susceptible to particular patterns of knowledge utilisation. Immigration is often highly politicised and sharply contested, and this has been associated in the literature with more symbolic forms of research utilisation. It is also an area characterised by strong rival values and interests, which can imply that research becomes associated with partisan positions and loses its authority (Weingart 1999) – a tendency which emerged strongly in analyses of how the media constructs migration research. While many



aspects of migration and migration policy are characterised by uncertainty, it is not a classic area of risk, in the sense of decision-making being dependent on highly specialised and technical forms of knowledge (Beck 1992). These features of migration policy could be further elucidated through comparison with other areas.

Third, and more generally, the studies described in the last section all point to a relatively patchy and limited take-up of migration research in policy-making. While there were instances of research utilisation (notably in the now notorious Dutch case), there were far more cases of research being challenged, contested, side-lined and ignored. We know that this is not characteristic of many other policy areas which are highly dependent on expert knowledge – most obviously highly technical areas dependent on science (health, environment, energy, food safety, and so on), or even many areas of social policy (education, poverty and social exclusion, labour market). Again, if we want to comprehend these variations, we need to start engaging in more thorough cross-sectoral analysis.

How do we go about making such a comparison? In what follows, I suggest a number of dimensions that could be fruitfully explored as axes of comparison across policy sectors.

### Risk, uncertainty and complexity

Which features of policy sectors or policy problems render them more or less dependent on expert knowledge? One of the widely discussed variables is the degree of risk, uncertainty or complexity associated with different policy areas. As we saw

earlier, literature on the risk society suggests that certain policy areas are characterised by uncertainty, creating dependence on scientific or expert knowledge (Beck 1992; Giddens 1994; Jasanoff 2004; Levy 1990; Luhmann 1991). This implies that different policy sectors might be characterised by different levels of dependency on research, as a function of the technical complexity or uncertainty of the issues involved (Gormley 1986; Hoppe 2002; Radaelli 1999a). Highly technical and complex issues are more likely to invoke science or expert knowledge to inform policy. Thus we are likely to see greater dependence on expert knowledge in technical areas such as environmental policy, energy policy, or biomedicine.

However, it is important to distinguish between different forms of complexity or uncertainty. Literature on technology in organizations can help capture these distinctions. Perrow (1967) distinguishes two different dimensions of technology: the occurrence of unfamiliar stimuli; and the extent to which such stimuli are analysable or non-analysable. Adapting the model slightly (Perrow applied it to generate a typology of organizations), we can similarly infer four different types of knowledge desiderata in policy areas:

- Table 1 here -

Table 1.1. Technology and knowledge problems in policy sectors

Many areas of immigration and integration policy fall into the top left cell, namely the technical/professional type of knowledge gaps or problems. While migration dynamics are often complex and present a continual flow of unfamiliar or exceptional cases, in many areas such stimuli are analysable by established methods.

For example, many aspects of labour migration, asylum, border control, and areas of immigrant integration such as accommodation, education, or language acquisition. Such policy issues are likely to require ongoing professional knowledge production, whether through professional analysts and researchers located in public administrative organisations, or through fairly institutionalised ties with researchers and analysts outside of government. Other areas are routine: the processing of visa or naturalization applications, or delivery of asylum support. Such areas would be adequately dealt with by the administration.

However, some areas of migration also fall in the top right cell, characterised by a high variability of non-analysable stimuli. Examples might include trying to predict future trends in international migration (e.g. the impact of EU enlargement on migration, or of global warming on forced displacement), or understanding processes of radicalisation or episodes of inter-ethnic conflict in host societies. In these areas, policy actors might find themselves looking to researchers to produce or collate more cutting-edge or innovative knowledge.

It is worth noting that this distinction between scientific/risk, professional/technical, and routine corresponds with insights about the greater dependency on expert knowledge at times of policy formulation, when policy actors face higher levels of uncertainty. Once policies are being implemented, there is greater opportunity for more incremental adjustment based on trial-and-error observation. Thus knowledge problems may shift from scientific/risk to technical/professional, as policy ‘beds down’, so to speak.

Monitoring and time

One of the relatively neglected variables accounting for patterns of knowledge utilisation is patterns of monitoring (Boswell 2012). There is considerable variation in how different policy interventions are monitored or observed, which in turn has a number of effects on political incentives. Where policy interventions are monitored on a frequent, constant or ongoing basis, policy makers have greater incentives to ensure they adjust policy to produce the desired outcomes. For example, asylum applications or work permit allocation are all subject to ongoing monitoring through the regular collection of bureaucratic data. This makes them akin to areas such as welfare, unemployment or recorded crime, where policy outcomes are captured through bureaucratic monitoring of registrations, service provision, or otherwise trackable social and economic indicators.

By contrast, other policy interventions (or failures to intervene) are only monitored on a sporadic or punctuated basis. For example, the scale or characteristics of unauthorised immigrants in host societies tend to be identified through sporadic focusing events or scandals. By their very nature, they are not subject to ongoing, reliable forms of monitoring. Other policies falling into this category would include interventions whose impact cannot be observed or evaluated through ongoing, trial-and-error methods – that is to say, many areas of risk. For example, the effectiveness of military equipment may only be ascertained in the event of deployment, or the safety of certain new energy extraction technologies may be revealed as faulty in the aftermath of an accident or disaster. In such areas, policy interventions can only be monitored on a punctuated basis.

Finally, the impacts of interventions in some policy areas are only observable in the very long-run, or not at all. Thus, for example, the impact of many aspects of integration policy only kick in over a number of years. Indeed, it may be impossible to attribute integration outcomes to policy interventions at all. The same would apply to areas of development policy, or aspects of education or poverty alleviation – in short, areas in which the outcome of interventions is highly uncertain, and it is difficult to observe and definitively attribute such outcomes to particular policies.

Differentiating between these three patterns of monitoring policy interventions is not merely an academic exercise: each pattern of observation may be associated with a different mode of knowledge utilisation. In the case of ongoing monitoring, there may be greater incentives to draw on expert knowledge to adjust policy outputs – and hence a predominance of instrumental knowledge utilisation. At the other extreme, for policy interventions that are only assessed in the longer term or whose impact on outcomes is indeterminable, there will be less political motivation to draw on knowledge instrumentally to adjust outcomes. Instead, knowledge is more likely to be used symbolically, in particular to signal that a government or international organisation is taking sound and well-grounded decisions. Finally, sporadic monitoring may produce various patterns of knowledge utilisation. If policy-makers are relatively sanguine about the political risks of sporadic focusing events – or pessimistic about their ability to avert these – then they may have limited interest in using knowledge instrumentally to adjust outcomes. However, there may also be cases where they are highly motivated to avert such sporadic or punctuated forms of observation, and thus draw on knowledge to pre-empt such problems. This brings us to our third variable: political salience.

## Political salience and modes of settlement

Much of the literature on research-policy relations in migration policy has already identified the influence of politicisation on knowledge utilisation. The assumption – which has been supported by a number of national case studies – is that a higher level of politicisation generates more symbolic forms of knowledge utilisation. It is worth unpacking this claim.

By politicisation, we are referring to (a) greater salience of an issue, generally measured by the level of attention devoted to the issue relative to others; and (b) a high level of contestation over appropriate policy responses (or even over the nature of the problem). Now immigration has been a highly salient policy issues in most European host countries, at least since the 1990s. The salience of particular aspects of immigration may ebb and flow, or it may shift between sub-issues – for example between asylum, labour migration, integration, and so on. And this salience indubitably generates demand from the media and politicians engaged in debate for resources that will underpin rival preferences. In this sense, we might expect salience to generate an especially strong demand for substantiating knowledge, as a means of bolstering policy preferences.

However, patterns of knowledge utilisation in politically salient areas may also depend on a second factor: the nature of political contestation. Here we need to distinguish between different axes of contestation: arguments revolving around rival knowledge claims, interests, or values. These are clearly ideal typical categories (in most cases argumentation involves a complex mix of the three); but different weightings of the three may influence what mode of settlement is considered

appropriate or authoritative. Thus where disputes revolve explicitly around different interests or values, we might expect participants in the debate to prioritise a democratic mode of settlement. The views of each participants will count equally – each is equally qualified to give her or his (non-expert) assessment. Many areas of immigration policy meet this description, including debates over multiculturalism and diversity, citizenship, or distributive aspects of asylum policy.

However, in other areas participants might favour a technocratic mode of legitimisation: the assumption that expert or scientific claims should be authoritative in settling a dispute. This has often been the case in the area of labour migration, where contestation often involves invoking economic arguments about the fiscal or labour market impacts of immigration. As we saw earlier, the commitment to such a mode of settlement is often largely ritualistic, with rival knowledge claims being marshalled to support different value or interest-based preferences. Hence the observation that knowledge was often used symbolically in political contestation over immigration policy. However, technocratic modes of settlement clearly require protagonists to mobilise knowledge claims; while democratic modes of settlement imply no such requirement, indeed knowledge claims may be criticised as overly technical, elitist or undemocratic.

This distinction can help us understand variations in patterns of knowledge deployment, both as a function of political salience, and as a function of modes of settlement. Thus, for example, in ‘technocratic’ eras of research-policy relations – the UK in the 1950s, or the Netherlands in the 1980s – we see a low degree of salience. There may well have been the potential for contestation at the level of societal values and interests, but in a largely ‘clientelist’ or elite-driven setting, these were suppressed as an object of public political debate. Where issues become politically salient, we can

see examples of either technocratic or democratic modes of settlement, and correspondingly different patterns of research utilisation. For example, a low degree of research utilisation in German debates on labour migration in the early 2000s, compared to a higher degree in UK debates over the same period (Boswell 2009b). The comparisons I have chosen are of course cross-national; but the variable of political salience and mode of settlement lend themselves just as well to cross-sectoral comparisons. And indeed, a cross-sectoral comparison between immigration and one or more less salient policy issues might well unearth some interesting features of the use of knowledge in political debate. This type of comparison has been conducted to compare patterns of monitoring in immigration, defence procurement and climate change policy, the latter two representing cases of less politicised areas (see Boswell and Rodrigues, forthcoming). Such a comparison could be extended to explore patterns of knowledge utilisation across similar policy areas.

#### Resource dependence and cultures of knowledge utilisation

Finally, we turn to cultural factors that might influence patterns of knowledge utilisation. In this case we are emphatically *not* discussing cross-national differences in policy styles, traditions or paradigms. Rather, the aim is to unpack different sectoral expectations about the appropriate role or use of knowledge in political debate and policy-making.

One way of thinking about this is in terms of the networks or communities operating in different sectors. These have been variously characterised as epistemic



communities (Haas 1992), advocacy coalitions (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 2006), or policy or governance networks (Rhodes and Marsh 1992). On these accounts, policy sectors are empirically identifiable through observing constellations of actors and their relationships or dependencies. Taking the case of network theory, for example, some accounts see networks as a set of interpersonal relationships between political actors that shape policy outcomes (Heclo and Wildavsky 1974; Wilks and Wright 1987). Others introduce an explanatory element, emphasising resource dependencies as a determinant of network power configurations and thus policy outcomes (Benson 1982; Rhodes and Marsh 1992).

We can build on this idea of resource-dependence to develop a number of expectations about knowledge utilisation in different sectors. Resource-dependence theory emerged in the 1970s as a way of theorising of the relationship between organisations and their environments. The theory posits that organisations need to enter into transactions with groups in their environment in order to generate resources and services they need to maintain themselves (Aldrich and Pfeffer 1976; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978). We can assume that different sectors are characterised by distinct patterns of resource dependency. This in turn can affect strategies of knowledge utilisation.

More precisely, we can distinguish between sectoral environments dominated by more political organisations or groups; and those dependent on more technical peer organisations or groups who scrutinise the organisations performance, such as watchdogs, regulators, auditors, specialised interest or professional groups. It seems reasonable to assume that an organisation's strategy for leveraging credibility or resources will vary depending on which of these actors is more influential. For example, sectors dominated by more technical actors will generate a number of

expectations about what constitutes legitimate or authoritative grounds for favouring and justifying particular policies: they may encourage organisations to marshal evidence and data to support policies. Such sectors would typically include, for example, environmental policy, defence procurement or biomedicine.

By contrast, sectors dominated by political actors may favour more accessible or intuitively compelling ‘lay’ narratives about appropriate policy responses. For example, major reforms to school education, counter-terrorism measures, EU treaty change or immigration policy reform may well need to be justified in terms that appeal to popular framings of policy problems. In short, different configurations of resource-dependency in particular sectors might produce more or less ‘technical’ or ‘populist’ cultures of knowledge utilisation.

Immigration policy is likely to be classified at the more populist end of this spectrum. While there may be more technical or expert actors exerting influence over home affairs and interior ministries, these frequently pale into significance beside the strong political pressures emanating from government, parliament and the mass media. The UK Home Office is a case in point. Its typical style of presenting and justifying policy decisions tends to be accessible (arguably populist), responding to popular lay constructions of policy problems. This implies a limited role for expert knowledge claims, which are not generally seen as authoritative in bestowing legitimacy on policy decisions.

Some combination of these four different dimensions – uncertainty, monitoring, politicisation and resource-dependence – might provide a basis for developing an explanatory typology of policy sectors and patterns of knowledge utilisation. The dimensions might variously explain (a) the general disposition to make use of knowledge, (b) the function of knowledge (instrumental, substantiating, legitimising), and (c) the institutionalised structure of research-policy relations. At the very least, they can yield hypotheses that could be usefully explored through cross-sectoral analysis, comparing immigration policy with other sectors characterised by more or less uncertainty, reliability and frequency of monitoring, politicisation, and distinct configurations of resource-dependence.

### 3. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the epistemic turn in immigration policy, reviewing the growing number of contributions that examine the relationship between research and policy, as well as the uses and functions of research in political debate and policy-making on immigration. The chapter suggested that useful as these studies are, they suffer from an excessive focus on cross-national and diachronic variation. In order to explain the particular features of knowledge utilisation in immigration policy, I argued for the importance of comparative analysis, which compares immigration with other policy issues or sectors. It is high time for migration researchers to break out of their migration studies ghetto. Cross-sectoral or cross-issue comparison would not only help to inform and develop theory-building on the factors shaping patterns of knowledge exchange and utilisation. It would also place immigration scholars in a better position to contribute to theory-building in policy studies more generally.

Staying within the one field of immigration/integration runs the risk of producing findings that are only relevant to this policy area.

This chapter suggested some routes for developing such cross-sectoral comparison, identifying attributes of different sectors that might produce distinct patterns of knowledge utilisation. Some of these might be combined to produce classificatory or explanatory typologies. As with any attempt at categorisation, they depict overly neat, simplified and idealised types, belying the more messy empirical reality. But they offer at least a starting point for developing hypothesis which might help make sense of the particular case of research use in immigration policy. And, importantly, they provide a basis for connecting immigration policy analysis to the broader field of comparative policy analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> There has also been a trend in the diversification of knowledge sources, encompassing in particular forms of ethical reasoning, as well as 'lay' knowledge (for example from patients, service users, and so on). However, this development has yet to be picked up by scholars in this field – thus I won't deal with it in this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that there is no generally accepted definition of 'policy sector'. Most scholars would agree on the empirical proposition that systems for organizing allocation and regulation are increasingly differentiated into functionally specialized areas, which are characterized by distinct policies, programmes and organizational configurations (see Scott and Meyer 1991). The jury is out, however, on the forces driving this differentiation, and thus the precise criteria for delineating different sectors.

**Table 1**                      **Technology and knowledge problems in policy sectors**

Variability of stimuli	High	Technical/professional	Scientific/risk
	Low	Routine	Craft
		Analysable	Non-analysable

*Analysability*