What Counts?

Data Priorities and Practices in Migration and Displacement Research in the European Union and in relation to the Global Compacts

The external EU border wall at Szeged, Hungary. Source: Authors

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Introduction: The Global Migration Conversations and ReSOMA

The Brussels event held on 29th April 2019 was the eighth in a series of Global Migration Conversations that were organised in 2018 and 2019 in locations including Nairobi, Delhi, Barcelona, Thessaloniki, New York, Beirut, Glasgow and Brussels by the London International Development Centre Migration Leadership Team (LIDC-MLT).[1] This team was formed to develop a shared strategy for supporting migration and displacement-related research by the UK's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). The Global Migration Conversations adopt an inclusive, consultative approach to assessing the scope, achievements and challenges of the existing portfolio of migration research to identify strategic opportunities and priorities for further research and to highlight best practice in impact. Findings will feed into a range of outputs, including a web-based tool and a report identifying areas of research to prioritise; best practice examples of pathways to knowledge exchange and impact; a toolkit featuring inspiring case studies for collaborative working; and platforms for communication to bridge research, policy, and public engagement.

The Brussels conversation focused on the ethics, politics and practicalities of migration data and knowledge production and exchange in relation to migration, asylum and displacement. It was held in partnership with the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), the Research Social Platform on Migration and Asylum (ReSOMA)[2] project network and Vrije Universiteit Brussels. The workshop sought to build bridges between UK Research and Innovation's funded research and Horizon 2020 EU funded projects in the area of migration and asylum.

The day featured three interactive panels involving policy makers, funders, researchers, NGOs and migrant community organisations, academia, government, civil society and law, providing a forum to take stock of and learn from research on migration and asylum emerging in local, European and global contexts. The main themes of this discussion are summarised in Part 1 of this report. The Brussels-based event also paid specific attention in a fourth panel to the EU's contribution to global debates on asylum, migration and displacement, shedding light on the EU's engagement with the two UN Global Compacts, one on refugees and another one for safe, orderly and regular migration. This discussion is summarised in Part 2 of this report.

The event took place under Chatham House rules. As such, all references are generalised. The observations provided in this report do not seek to be exhaustive, but rather to identify some key themes which serve as a record of the discussion and which will feed into a broader global migration research agenda which is being developed by the LIDC-MLT. The full outputs of this process will be published later in 2019. Reports from the other Global Migration Conversations can be found on the project website.[3]

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[1] https://www.soas.ac.uk/lidc-mlt/
[2] http://www.resoma.eu/
[3] https://www.soas.ac.uk/lidc-mlt/

Part 1: Overview of the Brussels Migration Conversation (Informed by Panels 1, 2 and 3)

Migration data

A key discussion point concerned what data actually *are* with regards to migration and, in a context where multiple forms of data exist, what the priorities for data collection and sharing should be. While in recent years we have the emergence of a range of online databases related to migration, these have focused primarily on statistical data and, to a slightly lesser extent, case law (e.g. European database on asylum law[4], the IOM Missing Migrants data portal[5] and the IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix[6]). Some online repositories collate qualitative data on certain priority topics (such as children and youth, see also the Refugee Response Index, Asylum Information Database[7]), however quantitative and qualitative data sources remain for the most part unintegrated. The type of data we are collecting is also important. As one participant pointed out, we have gone from discussing numbers of dead migrants as a policy inductor – how did this dehumanizing shift occur?

> *The IOM Missing Migrants data portal is in itself an indicator of the lack of safe channels but how is that feeding into policy? These are also indicators, we need to tie these things together more.'*
> .   – NGO participant

Participants were keen going forwards to see the merging of these data portals so that researchers and also members of the public could access data in a more comprehensive way. IOM has an important role in coordinating data around migration, and participants were also pleased to see issues of data collection being central to the Global Migration Compact. Some areas were identified where statistical data were poor in Europe including on detention and statelessness.

The need for interaction between numbers and narratives

There was a sense among various participants that while easily accessible statistics were an important priority for informing policymaking and the public debate on migration, without stories to frame them they are less useful. Numbers are important for documenting support needs but they can also be used to discriminate against migrants. One example given here was a census conducted of the Calais refugee camp where civil society, migrant activists and lawyers worked together to show the scale of the needs. However, NGOs reported they are sometimes wary of sharing data for fear of harm that may befall their

[4] https://www.asylumlawdatabase.eu/en
[5] https://missingmigrants.iom.int
[6] https://www.globaldtm.info/
[7] https://daraint.org/2017/01/25/5420/refugee-response-index-rri/
http://www.asylumineurope.org/

clients. However, they recognized that if they do not share this data they cannot get the funding for their programmes. 'How do we document undocumented migrants and prove the case for support but without compromising their safety?' asked one NGO worker: 'it's a Catch 22'. There are several examples collated by CEPS and PICUM of best practice firewall agreements in this context in relation to data sharing between civil society groups and local government. Some of these examples, it was pointed out, were shaped by practices in Canada, thus demonstrating the need for global comparative research, including at the city level.

> *'I am a Syrian refugee. I have had 3 rejections for housing from 5 landlords. People don't realize the scale of this issue – I need to be able to prove that housing discrimination happens to my people.'*
> *- Civil society participant*

Numbers fail to talk to the public in the way that stories do and they can divert attention from a person- and human rights-focused agenda. We need to use numbers to contextualize stories, and vice versa but both are important. In a worst-case scenario, de-contextualized numbers can be used to create alarm about migration and dehumanize people affected by migration.

Concerns on the use of migration data

Participants pointed out that all too often statistics on migration are employed in a way that fails to recognize their contested nature. Documenting and recording migration flows, especially irregular migrant flows, is inherently difficult and numbers in this area often need to be interpreted with caution. It was pointed out that data are often contested in relation to migrants' identities whether it concerns their age, nationality or reason for moving. The question of which data count and are reliable is incredibly political and based on Western models of administration, that fails to account for the different ways in which knowledge is collected and understood in different country of origin contexts. This culture of disbelief serves to marginalize people and has the effect of compromising asylum claims for, as one lawyer explained, 'without evidence to back it up, a story is seen as just a story'. Meanwhile, identity documents from sub-Saharan Africa are often not recognized as evidence in asylum cases. Sometimes unaccompanied minors simply do not know their age because birthdays are not recorded as part of their cultural tradition and this can count against them. In other cases, the very idea of being assigned a national identity can be confusing for people coming from certain regions which they understand to be outside of the nation-state frame, e.g. tribal identities and diaspora identities such as Kurdish. More could be done to understand how different identities are understood and recorded in different countries and cultures and to adapt European migration and asylum bureaucracies accordingly. Anthropology here is important in understanding longer-term trends, such as the role of migration as a rite of passage. We need, as one participant put it, 'slow' as well as 'fast' research.

> *'The question of migration is essentially a very difficult one:*
> *"Who are you"?'* - Lawyer

Other concerns were raised about the various ways in which knowledge is created in relation to asylum appellants and inconsistency of practices across Europe. These relate, for example, to various forms of ethically and factually dubious age assessment processes (including in some European countries genital examinations, x-rays etc.). There is an intrinsic sense of uncertainty in migration research, commented one researcher, but we seem obsessed with ideas of truth and fake news. 'We cannot solve the complexity and uncertainty with evidence on migration as it is intrinsic – to try to do so sets up yet another false dichotomy: true and false; us and them...'.

A final worry related to data concern is what happens to datasets once research projects are finished? The ESRC's online data repository was hailed as a good practice example of ensuring longevity of data use. However, more resources are required for the labour intensive process of preparing data for depositing and making it accessible to others. Again, this is a job in and of itself.

> *'It's important to have stories and testimonies. Perhaps it's a strange thing to say as a demographer, but we don't need more numbers. Numbers are not the most important thing when we talk about migration. Numbers are used not to explore and understand, but to convince.'*   - Researcher

Working together – the need for collaboration

In a context where migration research is 'mushrooming', the need for collaboration and data sharing is key, commented one policy maker present at the Conversation, 'the more synergies and sophistication of the data, the better it is.' At the top level, big organizations are working together more and more, as with the World Bank-UNHCR data portal on migration and the new coordination role of IOM globally as the UN migration organization.

While participants generally felt that there had been an improvement in recent years in partnership working and that there are more resources available for forging and maintaining networks, key questions remain in terms of how we coordinate and build the partnerships to build more strategic data sharing. The IMISCOE network and online portal was mentioned as good practice here. More could nevertheless be done in Europe and more globally, it was felt, to work across quantitative and qualitative data sources and show how these can be used together in effective ways. This may require better coordination between different actors since often individuals with the skills to interpret quantitative and qualitative data are not the same. The need for more investment in effective inter-disciplinary and cross-sectoral working (including across the arts and social sciences and across quantitative and qualitative domains) has been a recurrent theme of the migration conversations. Online portals and physical networks require intense resources over long periods of time. The European Commission funded ReSOMA network is an example of a

successful initiative that seeks to pool knowledge among a range of actors to shape policy and public debate on migration in Europe. In their advocacy, they draw on a range of data brought to the table by their members including testimonies, case studies and statistics.

In Europe, strategic litigation is a field where multi-actor teams have worked successfully together to shape policy and practice. It is not enough for one actor to work in this context; without numbers, stories are written off as non-generalizable and without stories, numbers do not make a compelling case for change. Beyond strategic cases however, which are often headed by NGOs, lawyers hold a huge wealth of resources related to migration which is often overlooked by researchers. This leads to repetition and individuals being questioned by multiple people asking the same questions. It was nevertheless also pointed out that lawyers might only gather a certain type of knowledge and version of a 'story'.

> *'We aren't very good at communicating with people who feel very differently about us - this is a whole new set of skills we need to develop.'*
> - Researcher

There is a place for drawing more effectively on secondary data that have already been gathered and conducting desk based research, however researchers also need to be wary of taking any form of knowledge at face value and always duly interrogate sources. More generally, commented one NGO participant, we need to do away with the whole idea of 'one truth' to be uncovered. In reality, migrants' stories and trajectories are, as for all of us, contextual and fluid. Their needs similarly change over time. This requires more longitudinal research and understanding of migrants' experiences to ensure continuity of care of people on the move. This could include more effective mechanisms for collating what were termed 'microdata' or 'operational research' - knowledge about the local context in which civil society organizations, local authorities and lawyers work.

In focusing on the situation in countries of origin we need not just to work with other migration scholars but reach out to those working in such fields as economics and agriculture. The IOM, for example, could work more closely with the UN Food and Agricultural Organization to understand certain trends.

> *'Who a migrant is, or how visible certain types of migrant are is constantly shifting. Five years ago, a British person in Brussels probably thought of themselves not as a migrant but as an internationalist. Now, for many people, they are a migrant. Who gets to decide who is counted as a migrant and who is not?'*
> - Policy maker

Who are we talking about when we talk about migration?

A key theme concerned who we are talking about when we talk about migration knowledge. Migration research does not just require us to count migrants and document their experiences, but also how migration shapes communities. This includes family members left behind and communities who are receiving migrants. We need to understand better on the ground in countries of departure who are the 'would be' and 'wouldn't be' migrants – those who leave and those who stay. There is a lack of scientific research in certain countries of origin and more could be done to support academic centres and strengthen partnerships here so that we understand migration as part of a cycle of departures, non-departures and returns, rather than seeing it as something linear and one-directional that happens 'to Europe' as is the dominant frame.

Moreover, the very term migrant is used in a variety of forms – we need to agree on common terminology for e.g. first and second generation categories of migrants. Moreover, the question of race and how it is understood in relation to migrant categories in Europe is a poorly understood phenomenon.

Dissemination of knowledge

Participants discussed the fact that research on migration has a range of audiences including policy makers, civil society practitioners, media, the public and migrants themselves, however often it is more successful at reaching certain audiences over others. There is a perception that Brussels can be somewhat of a 'bubble' where knowledge is shared among a small group of actors including think tanks, the Commission and INGOs and it is rarely more widely disseminated. This was seen to be largely because of the speed at which policy change happens at the European level and high proportion of policy relevant knowledge production in the city. Moreover, the EU often concentrates funding on specific policy goals without capacity for wider dissemination. The arts, it was pointed out, are under-resourced in research production around migration and there is a limited amount of collaboration between social science researchers and artists on migration knowledge production. Again, this was seen to be largely due to the fact that art collaborations are considered to be more time and cost intensive. In organizing this migration conversation, we faced some resistance in the very idea of bringing researchers and artists working on migration together. We were told by more than one participant that the two spheres didn't engage with one another. At the conversation, there was nevertheless a keen desire by some parties to engage more with the arts, especially on questions of telling nuanced stories, moving beyond the focus of numbers and shaping public opinion. One participant pointed out that nobody ever really engages with local media, for example, and yet we know that it is in many ways more effective at reaching people than national news.

One policy maker was keen to point out that they were also a receptive audience for different forms of knowledge visualization and dissemination, pointing out that it can also be easier to speak to and convince a government representative through creative means such as film and art rather than 'just another report'. Reports nevertheless remain useful as

records and participants were keen to stress that while there is a welcome increased focus on alternative means of communicating knowledge, we should not yet do away with them.

> *'Who reads all of the reports? We should focus more on communicating to the public in general which are the stories and where is the problem so that we can confront fake news'.*
>
> - Practitioner

One example of positive practice in this regard was a recent Save the Children report on children returned to Afghanistan. The study included statistical and qualitative analysis and presented its results in a range of visual and non-visual forms. As was the case with the image of Aylan Kurdi, the three-year old child whose body washed up on a beach in Turkey, it was pointed out that a picture can paint a thousand words and can often galvanize action more effectively than other forms of data or policy. Importantly, as has been raised at past Migration Conversations, participants pointed out that effective dissemination usually requires collaborative working since researchers are usually not best placed to know how to strategically position their work for impact. This is especially the case in such a complex organizational and multi-actor field as international migration. 'Being a knowledge broker is a job in itself', commented one participant, but it's not always clear who is expected to fund this crucial role. NGOs are often expected to do it for free.

The use and misuse of migration data in policy

The link between public opinion, 'fake news', media and policy change is poorly understood. As was raised at the Barcelona IMISCOE Migration conversation, participants were keen to see more scrutiny and better understanding of the policymaking cycle and process in itself rather than just blindly feeding into it. 'We need to disentangle evidence-based policy and policy-based evidence', said one participant.

> *We have tons of behavioral studies of migrants but they are not the only actors in migration. Why don't we put this behavioral lens on policy makers and ask, how do they process the information we've given them cognitively and reach certain conclusions about migration? Researchers should develop more empathy for situations in which policy makers find themselves.*
>
> – Policy maker

One important issue raised was how documenting migrants' rights abuses in certain cases can lead to the censoring or shutting down of operations by national governments or the withdrawal of funding, especially where it comes from the government. One example given

was how access to a detention facility for an NGO and a legal firm was suspended after they documented publically abuses occurring inside.

A related issue raised, also raised at past conversations, concerned the fact that political context may make certain knowledge redundant in terms of impact, regardless of how compelling it is. An example given was the EU's failure to act on compelling evidence of torture in Libya, despite a coordinated effort to document and disseminate knowledge of the topic. Despite the documenting of the widespread criminalization of humanitarian assistance to asylum seekers by CEPS and other actors, the Commission is also loathe to act. One civil society representative commented in relation to the human rights abuses being experienced by refugee children in Greece that we need to be more strategic and long-term in our advocacy: 'the information is public but no one is doing anything. Evidence is not enough.'

ReSOMA occupies an important space in Brussels in identifying strategic opportunities for bringing existing evidence out of the cupboard and before the Commission. One participant described their strategic approach as like 'acupuncture' – targeting pragmatic change.

> *'Politicians and policy makers will only read 2 pages or watch a 1 minute video. we need to target knowledge: short, sharp interventions.'*
> -   NGO participant

The law is an important tool in breaking through this wall by bringing evidence before a court, commented several participants. However, experience shows that even successful litigation can fail to transform into practice, as has been the case in recent denunciations against Hungary's treatment of migrants.

Importantly, it was stressed that shaping policy was not the only way to use research for impact. By promoting co-produced research agendas, researchers can ensure that their work has a direct useful impact on affected communities.

Echoing past migration conversation events, academics were also encouraged not to lose sight of the value of non-policy relevant research. 'There is a limit to how policy agendas and academia should be matched', commented one participant, 'researchers should do what they do best – research! And funders need to make this kind of funding available.' Policy relevant research has a short shelf life. In this space, PhD students who are well trained in theory have an important role in conducting rigorous independent inquiries that stand the test of time. The IMISCOE young scholars network is a useful forum for dissemination of this new academic work.

Identified knowledge gaps

A range of knowledge gaps was raised over the course of the conversation. Various reasons were posited for why certain topics are more ignored, including poor access to the field because of insecurity (e.g. in Libyan desert); certain issues being off the formal policy agenda and therefore less likely to attract funding, especially from the EU (e.g. the gendered experiences of men on the move); political controversy (e.g. sexual health, racism); and minority voices not being heard (e.g. statelessness and those left behind who are impacted by migration). The following gaps were identified during the conversation:

- The situation in precarious contexts e.g. migrants in the Libyan desert, return migrants to fragile states e.g. Afghanistan
- Stories of human flourishing among migrant populations
- Understanding how identity is documented and understood in different countries of origin
- Public opinion and hostility – database on public opinion on migration
- Narrative and stories – how they are produced and how they are used
- Integration and 'creating a bond between migrants and the host society'
- Housing and access to social and economic rights
- Lack of longitudinal research
- Potential migrants – why do some people not move?
- Situation in the countries of origin and better understanding of various reasons for refugees' flight that fall outside of the 1951 Convention, including climate change and desertification, family violence, agricultural and economic policies
- The migration policy-making cycle and impact of public opinion – collaborations with institutional management studies
- Ongoing resourcing of partnership working, coordination, data sharing and networks among European states and in Brussels
- Risks faced by researchers working in dangerous contexts including censorship and how to protect them
- Investment in co-production and migrant and refugee-led initiatives
- The nexus between statelessness and migration
- Better statistical data on people in detention across Europe
- Investment in comparative and anthropological research

> *'EU policy is less and less evidence based.'*
> - INGO participant

Part 2: Focus on the Global Compacts (Informed by Panel 4)

The rationale of this panel

The final panel of the workshop was organized in the context of the ReSOMA project. It explored the role of evidence and data in the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) adopted by United Nations (UN) member states in December 2018. The two Compacts underline the need to collect and utilize reliable, comparable and timely data as a basis for evidence-based policies and for effective monitoring and implementation. They also envisage the adoption of a multi-stakeholder approach, which foresees the involvement of a broad set of actors – including independent civil society organisations, local communities and refugees themselves – in ensuring monitoring and accountability towards the achievement of the Compacts' objectives. This panel also provided feedback to a recent ReSOMA policy options brief on the GCR[8] and informed the upcoming work on the GCM in this project.

As the attention of relevant stakeholders has now turned to the implementation and effective monitoring of the Compacts, the panel focused on the following main questions:

a) How can data and evidence be used for implementing the GCR and GCM?
b) What forms of collaboration among states, international organizations and other relevant stakeholders are envisaged to foster evidence-based policy responses?
c) How to respect in this process the independence of both scholars and civil society and their larger role in upholding the democratic rule of law?

The importance of data and evidence in relation to the Compacts

There was general agreement among participants on the importance of data and evidence for ensuring successful implementation of the two Global Compacts. It was underlined that Compacts are non-binding instruments so that developing an evidence-based framework based on a set of common indicators for monitoring progress is of paramount importance. A speaker also reminded the group that the current international refugee regime does not include binding commitments on states when it comes to burden-sharing and supporting the main countries hosting refugees, which is the key gap that the GCR is trying to address. Even less regulated is the governance of international migration, where the only legal instrument - The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families - is not ratified by any of the EU Member States and nor major countries of destination in the Global North, though importantly it has been

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[8] See:
http://www.resoma.eu/sites/resoma/resoma/files/policy_brief/pdf/POB%20GCR_Responsibility%20Sharing_0.pdf

ratified by major destination countries including Mexico, Egypt, Argentina, Libya, Turkey and Colombia. Therefore, the GCM as a non-binding instrument is an attempt to agree globally on common principles and approaches in devising migration policies at the regional or national level.

Uneven developments among the two Compacts

The discussion then shifted to assessing the state of play in establishing a monitoring framework for the two Global Compacts. In this regard, it was underlined that much more progress in this area has been achieved in the case of the GCR than the GCM. For the GCR, the UNHCR took a leading role in the process, in line with the commitment included in the Compact to develop a set of indicators ahead of the first Global Refugee Forum in 2019. UNHCR's efforts were welcomed as an important step in designing a robust monitoring framework and ensuring accountability towards achieving the Compact's objectives.

Participants also reflected on the reasons for this uneven progress in the two Compacts. First, it was recognized that while the GCR is structured around four key objectives, the GCM counts 23 objectives, which makes it much more difficult to develop a comprehensive monitoring framework. Furthermore, participants underlined political motivations to explain limited progress under the GCM: the latter addresses several sensitive issues on which member states are reluctant to allow for a thorough monitoring of their policies and legal frameworks. Moreover, even the process of building indicators is not politically neutral. The choice of methodologies used to collect data or the decision to give priority to specific indicators may be controversial from the perspectives of states and likely to require extensive consultation.

The importance of political will to improve upon existing policies was underlined in the case of refugee policies. Support from states in East Africa allowed to achieve progress in the implementation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) in the region over the past years. This experience underlines the potential of data and evidence in enlarging the space to pursue refugee inclusion and self-reliance – for example through the experience of the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat. Thus, the implementation of the GCR can count on a set of already-developed initiatives in key areas of intervention, which is going to facilitate progress towards achieving the objectives.

Towards improving monitoring of the Compacts

The discussion also identified a number of proposals for improving upon the current state of play, focusing in particular on the role that civil society could play in supporting effective and independent monitoring of the Global Compacts.

One participant, in the context of the discussion for drafting indicators for the GCR, underlined three priorities for GCR indicators:
>   1) indicators should be aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
>   2) they should be outcome, not output, focused; and
>   3) they should fully include refugees (and IDPs) in national systems, statistics and development plans.

According to the same panelist, some key lessons from the SDG process can be learned for the development of GCR indicators. Specifically, in line with the SDG agenda, the GCR monitoring framework should propose concrete, time-bound and refugee-specific targets to achieve both the SDGs and GCR objectives. The GCR provides a great opportunity to build on some of the progress made and fill some of the gaps in data collection, so as to accelerate progress in reaching the SDGs by ensuring outcomes for refugees are fully captured by data collected. Furthermore, to ensure that the most is made of this opportunity, the GCR monitoring framework should provide guidance on how each country could develop national targets for refugees in the medium term, in line with SDG targets set for their own populations. Data collected towards national targets could then be aggregated across all countries to show global progress.

Participants underlined the need to shift from outputs monitoring towards better assessments of impacts. Therefore, current focus on quantitative data should be complemented with qualitative data that is aiming at monitoring the impact of policy initiatives undertaken in the framework of the Compacts. Currently, quantitative data focus only on a limited number of issues and aspects of outputs (i.e. number of trainings organized, number of participants), which does not allow linking these interventions with actual changes on the ground. Quantitative evidence would also improve understanding of key societal phenomena related to migration and refugee mobility and subsequently could lead to better decision-making.

The participants called for shedding light on aspects that are not accounted for in currently available data by expanding the network of stakeholders feeding in such evidence and data. For example, refugee and migrant community organizations, refugee-led organizations, women migrant and refugee organizations, as well as individual experts with refugee and migrant background are new potential stakeholders. They should be better involved in relevant policy debates and reform processes, concerning their communities. In addition, it is also crucial to improve collaboration with and among various stakeholders, including public institutions, private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). A representative from civil society underlined that the GCM provides for improving current evidence on some key issues of concern, through increased collaboration among stakeholders. However, such cooperation may entail some personal or sensitive data and therefore can only happen under the principle of clear separation of respective mandates, known as 'firewalls'.

Within the scope of the newly formed UN Migration Network, one of the proposed working sessions would be to undertake a global mapping of 'firewalls'. Firewalls are designed to ensure that immigration enforcement authorities are not able to access information concerning the immigration status of individuals who seek assistance or services at, for example, medical facilities, schools, and other social service institutions, or NGOs.

The role of civil society in monitoring the Compacts

Another key issue that emerged during the discussion is the role of civil society in ensuring independent monitoring of the two global compacts. Civil society can complement and

cover issues that may not be included in the official evaluation framework. In the case of the GCR, for example, key issues to be monitored include asylum seekers' access to protection, reception conditions, and refugees' access to social and economic rights in their hosting countries.

In the area of migration, civil society is advocating states to systematically monitor and report the number of children under immigration detention. Such data is lacking or is not adequate.

The civil society therefore should have better access to data on children in immigration detention, best interest assessments and determination procedures in order to uphold the best interest of the child. Such information is also crucial for evidence-based policy making, documenting good practices (including alternatives to detention) and providing recommendations for law, policy and practice to prevent and significantly reduce the number of children deprived of liberty.

Assessing the policy coherence of the Compacts

A final cross-cutting issue touched upon is the role of data and evidence in monitoring and assessing policy coherence when implementing the Compacts. In particular, a participant underlined the case of some recent policy developments at the EU level that are not in line with the objectives included in the GCM. The Recast Return Directive released by the Commission in September 2018, includes a set of provisions, such as expanding the ground for detention of individuals who are subject to a return procedure, lowering of their procedural safeguards, as well as a focus on forced instead that voluntary return, which stand at odds with the rights-based approach of the GCM.

In addition, it was reported that the fact that the Commission's proposal on the Recast Return Directive was not accompanied by an impact assessment was recognized as particularly problematic in relation to the objective of fostering evidence-based policy making, stressed by the Compacts and EU's own Better Regulation Guidelines. Along the same lines, the proposal for a revised European Border and Coast Guard Agency (EBCG), presented by the Commission in September 2018, included a provision on the possibility for the EBCG to coordinate or organize return operations from a third country. It also lacked evidence and was equally problematic in light of the commitment to uphold international human rights standards of migrants included in the GCM.

Participants also questioned the coherence of current EU policies with the objectives of the GCR. It was underlined, for example, that policy initiatives which aim to prevent or restrict mobility of migrants and refugees in East Africa (including through the provision of financial incentives to countries in the region in exchange for their efforts in the field of migration management) may negatively impact refugees' access to protection and durable solutions.

Conclusions related to the Compacts

In conclusion, participants underlined the role of civil society actors in monitoring and assessing the role and contribution of the EU and its member states in ways that are loyal to

the Compacts principles and objectives, including respect of relevant fundamental rights standards. In line with this objective, the process of implementation of the two Compacts should also serve to shed lights on gaps and contested issues in existing migration and asylum policies implemented by the EU and its Member States.

General Conclusion

This report has identified a range of promising practices in data production and knowledge creation and exchange in Europe on the topic of migration and displacement and has identified some important gaps. We have explored how the migration research landscape is responding to a range of shifting dynamics in policy at the local, national and global level, including through the Global Compacts and also new mandate of the IOM as the UN's Migration Organization. The Brussels conversation was relatively policy and law focused compared to previous events; however, the point was also raised of the importance of non-policy relevant research and for investment by funders in networking and dissemination activities in the policy and non-policy spheres. A range of new networks and online portals for coordinated action were welcomed by participants but time will tell how these shape the landscape in practice.

Among spaces for future exploration participants identified working more closely with the arts to address public perceptions around migration and space for co-produced research agendas aimed to shape practice and directly involve affected communities. We saw that the discussions of migration affect more than just migrants – it includes sending and host societies as well as wider political debates – and the research landscape needs to respond to this, including working in countries of origin with those who stay and return as well as with host communities. Meanwhile, it is important to note that despite efforts by the organizers to reach out, refugees' voices in particular were largely absent from the Brussels migration conversation and more could be done to resource their inclusion in such spaces going forward.

Global Migration and Asylum Conversation Brussels: Data, Research and Policy

Programme

Monday, 29th April 2019, 8:30 – 18:00
CEPS, Place du Congrès 1, 1000 Bruxelles, Belgium

9.00 – 9.15 Introduction: The Global Migration Conversations and the Aims and Objectives of the Day

9.15 – 10.45 Panel 1: Data, Knowledge Exchange and Change from the Bottom Upwards

In this panel, speakers will consider the challenges of conducting and using research 'from the bottom up', in particular at the city and localized level. The discussion will explore the role of big data, statistical data, visual data mapping, case studies, strategic legal and qualitative evidence, as well as data collected increasingly by the private sector and knowledge produced across the humanities and citizens' actions. Speakers will reflect on the following questions:

(i)   What type of data are you collecting, how and why?
(ii)   What data are lacking and how could researchers, activists and other stakeholders help to plug these gaps?
(iii)   How can we maximize data sharing and collaboration between migration and asylum agencies? NGOs and researchers and what are the ethical challenges around this, especially at the local level?
(iv)   How do local level data and policy debates feed into the national and international discussions?

10.45 – 11.00 Coffee Break

11.00 – 12.30 Panel 2: Using Research (and Other Means) to Shape Policy, Practice and Law in Europe

Evidence-based policy making and practice is not just about getting the right data, but feeding it into the right stage of the policy cycle and to the right people and fora at the national and regional level. Getting to grips with this process has been identified in past migration conversations as a particular barrier to research impact. In this panel, speakers will discuss some ways they have used research to feed into shaping policy, practice and law on migration and asylum in Europe. The will consider:

(i)   What is your experience of using evidence to shape policy, practice and law on migration and asylum at the national and/or European level?
(ii)   What is useful practically to you in making academic research accessible and making the most of research to inform your work?
(iii)   In addition to evidence, what others factors come into play in creating research impact?

(iv) How does research interact with institutional strategies and policy priorities, including among funding agencies and governments?

Each speaker will talk for around 5-7 minutes before opening the discussion up to the floor for an informal discussion and Q&A hosted by the Chair.

12.30 – 13.30 Lunch Break

13.30 – 15.00 Panel 3: Europe and Global Migration Research and Knowledge Exchange
In this panel, participants will discuss how the migration and displacement debate in Europe feeds into the wider global debate with transnational feedback loops between national and international policy makers. Among other questions, speakers will consider:
(i) How are you currently operating in relation to knowledge gathering and exchange at the global level?
(ii) How are you working in partnership with others and how do you see your role in relation to other work in the field? What are some of the barriers to and opportunities for global collaborations?
(iii) What are the particularities of European migration research in relation to the international debate on migration?
(iv) What can migration researchers and practitioners in Europe learn from other regions in tackling the opportunities and challenges of migration and displacement?

Each speaker will talk for around 5-7 minutes before opening the discussion up to the floor for an informal discussion and Q&A hosted by the chair

15.00 – 15.15 Coffee Break

15.15 – 16.45 Panel 4: Evidence and the Global Compacts
This panel, organized in the context of the ReSOMA project, will explore challenges and opportunities for evidence-based policy making on asylum and migration at the global level, asking, primarily, what kind of data and evidence is needed when implementing the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM). Both Compacts underline the role of data and evidence in supporting the development of policy responses and measuring their impact. In light of that objective, the panel will focus on the following main questions:
(v) How can data and evidence be used for implementing the GCR and GCM?
(vi) How can data collection on relevant migration and refugee issues be improved? What are the main gaps to be filled?
(vii) What forms of collaboration among states, international organizations and other relevant stakeholders are envisaged to foster evidence-based policy responses?
(viii) How to respect in this process the independence of both scholars and civil society and their larger role in upholding the democratic rule of law?

16.45 – 17.00 Closing session: reflections on the day and synergies with past global migration conversations