Assembling – Not Reinventing – the Wheel. New Developments in the Field of Migration Policy Indices

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Abstract

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This special section focuses on the analysis of migration policy and on how to measure the nature of these policies. It aims to take stock of previous studies and build on this knowledge to propose paths for further development. The term 'migration policy' refers to a wide range of policy areas related to migration, such as: immigration/admission; integration; citizenship acquisition; and emigration/diaspora.

Over the last twenty years, many researchers have undertaken systematic comparisons of migration policies (Bjerre et al. 2015; Gest et al. 2014). They have developed sets of indicators to analyse trends and differences in migration policies, including policies on admission, citizenship acquisition, and integration. Various special issues have already aimed at taking stock of what has been done in this research field and tried to define new directions. The articles in Vink and Helbling (2013) have focused on conceptualization and measurement issues and asked to what extent it is possible to establish typologies of policy regimes and to compare citizenship and integration policies. Helbling and Michalowski (2017) brought together researchers who work on citizenship and immigration policies, two fields that have developed mostly independently of each other. Their contributions illustrate how policy indices allow us investigate the causes and effects of migration and citizenship policies. Finally, the special issue organized by Filindra and Wallace Goodman (2019) took up similar issues and discussed questions of conceptualization, measurement, drivers of policy enactments and policy effects.

Despite these developments over the last decade, gaps remain in the topics addressed, geographical scope, methodology, sustainability of these assessments, etc. (Bjerre et al. 2015; Scipioni and Urso 2018). Therefore, there is a need to take stock of what has been done and the gaps that remain in the field and to reflect upon possibilities for

further development. This special section gives an overview of the future of the analysis of migration, integration and citizenship policy frameworks through the critical and analytical review of previous projects and new insights that build on this existing knowledge. In this regard, the contribution of this special section is twofold.

First, articles provide an analysis of the state of the art of the field by illustrating the main achievements, remaining gaps, and future directions of research. The special section takes stock of previous projects by critically analysing them and encompassing different topics under migration policy (e.g. access to nationality, emigration and diaspora, immigration and integration, and forced migration).

Second, this special section illustrates possible ways to further develop the field by building on previous projects and undertakings. In this regard, the articles that are part of this special section illustrate how certain gaps in this literature are currently closed, such as widening the geographical scope of the analysis, covering policy fields that have been (partly) neglected so far, carrying out theoretically informed combination of different indexes and/or sub-fields, and updating and building on existing indexes and datasets.

The structure of this special section is as follows. The first article features a broad literature review to frame the field and critically analyze previous projects and undertakings. Solano and Huddleston analyse the geographical, thematic and temporal coverage of existing indexes. Their analysis of the 67 existing indexes shows that indexes disproportionally focus on immigration policy, mainly admission and citizenship, in OECD and particularly Western European countries, with limited opportunities for longitudinal analysis of policy change. Their findings reveal that migration policy has been mainly conceptualized in indexes as a contemporary

phenomenon that mainly concerns Western countries that have become major destination countries.

The three articles that follow take a further step by illustrating concrete paths of development and building on previous knowledge to advance the field. Schmid introduces the Citizenship Regime Inclusiveness Index (CITRIX), which measures the inclusiveness of regulations for immigrants' access to citizenship across 23 OECD countries from 1980 to 2019. The author provides an example on how to successfully update and build on existing projects, by combining information from different indexes to produce new knowledge and advance the field. The analysis of CITRIX reveals that liberalization of citizenship policies is more limited, and long-term convergence more pronounced, than often assumed.

Pasetti and Conte address integration policy for refugees and beneficiaries of international protection, in contrast to existing indexes that have mainly focused on admission policies for them. By illustrating the national integration evaluation mechanism (NIEM) set of indicators, the authors show that EU member states perform better in putting laws onto paper, while they are less effective in translating favourable normative frameworks into consistent and effective arrays of policies.

Finally, Pedroza and Palop-García provide an example of how to widen the thematic and geographical coverage of the field by going beyond Western countries and analysing emigration/diaspora policies. The authors introduce the Emigrant Policies Index (EMIX), which analyses emigration and diaspora policies for 14 Latin America and the Caribbean countries in two different years (2015 and 2017). They show that emigrant policies have remained stable over time despite the fact that some of the countries included in the sample have undergone important political changes and amended their migration policies. Nonetheless, the specific analysis of different dimensions of emigrant policy reveals that some, such as citizenship and home administration, are more stable than others, such as cultural policies or policies that regulate external political competition.

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