Research–Policy Dialogues on Migrant Integration in Europe

The Impact of Politicization

Han Entzinger and Peter Scholten

The social sciences have played an important role in shaping public understanding of processes of immigrant integration in Europe, and often also in shaping governmental policies. The reverse, however, is also the case: policy-makers play a role in shaping the production of knowledge. Policy-makers, including politicians, may solicit the knowledge they wish to have in many ways and with differing degrees of openness. Although major differences exist between European countries in the way relations between policy and research on immigrant integration have evolved, many of these countries have witnessed a substantial increase in the body of scientifiically based knowledge on immigrant integration. At the same time, in many countries public authorities seem to have become less interested in making use of the assembled knowledge. Politicians and policy-makers often use scientific research for symbolic rather than instrumental purposes (see Chapter 2 in this volume; Boswell 2009; Scholten and Timmermans 2010). Clearly, in parallel with the increasing politicization of the field, the belief in rational societal steering with the help of academic expertise has yielded to a growing cynicism about the validity of research and the credibility of researchers—a phenomenon confined neither to the field of migrant integration, nor to Europe. At the same time, researchers in academia seem progressively more disenchanted about the policy orientation of research on immigrant integration and the lack of theoretical development of this research field. They see this as an effect of the intense contacts between researchers and policy-makers that have existed in several countries.
This chapter aims to develop deeper insights into how research and policy-making in the field of migrant integration have developed over time, and how their relationship functions under the present conditions of strong politicization of the issue in Europe. We define politicization as the phenomenon whereby, in the process of decision-making, political arguments and considerations gain precedence over other arguments, particularly scientifically based arguments. The discussion in this chapter is based on a comparative research project carried out between 2011 and 2014 under the auspices of IMISCOE, the largest European network of migration research institutes. The project, named Science–Society Dialogues on Migration and Integration in Europe (DIAMINT), was coordinated by the authors of this chapter at Erasmus University Rotterdam, and funded by the Volkswagen Foundation in Hannover. Seven EU member states (Austria, Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, and the United Kingdom) plus the European Union, as such, were involved in the study, to which research teams in each of the participating countries contributed.

**Conceptualizing Research–Policy Dialogues**

In the DIAMINT project, research–policy dialogues are defined broadly as all forms of interaction between researchers and policy-makers in the domain of immigrant integration. The term ‘dialogues’ reflects the reciprocal nature of research–policy relations; we are not just looking at how research is used in policy-making, but also how the policy context and the dialogues influence research in terms of size, orientation, and content. We distinguish three aspects of research–policy dialogues. First, we explore and analyze the dialogue structures. These are the formal and the informal arrangements that have been created or have come into existence through which knowledge itself, decisions on knowledge production, and the relevance of knowledge for policy are communicated and exchanged. Second, we look at cultures and practices of knowledge utilization in policy processes (knowledge utilization). Here, we take the perspective of policy-makers or the process of policy-making and analyse what role has been assigned to researchers and what function attributed to knowledge and research. Third, taking the perspective of researchers, we look at cultures of knowledge production in the field of migration research itself. Figure 3.1 shows the three aspects of research–policy dialogues and how these are interconnected. In the next section, we will elaborate on all three elements—and also their interrelationships—and further develop the major hypotheses that have guided us throughout the project.

Prior to the DIAMINT project, these three aspects of research–policy dialogues had been dealt with separately in the migration literature.
A considerable number of scholars have written on research–policy structures and their various channels of communication, such as research institutes, advisory bodies, expert committees and more informal networks (Bommes and Morawska 2005; Florence and Martiniello 2005; Geddes 2005; Penninx 2005; Thränhardt and Bommes 2010; Scholten 2011). Christina Boswell (2009, and see also Chapter 2 in this volume) has focused on knowledge utilization. The impact of policy on migration research has been treated by various other scholars, such as Favell (2003); Penninx (2005); Vasta and Vuddamalay (2006); and Thränhardt and Bommes (2010). However, the interconnections between these three aspects were not dealt with. The key objective of the DIAMINT project was to bring together these literatures and explore how the relations between these three aspects could be conceptualized and analysed empirically.

**Dialogue Structures**

Our first key question here is how research–policy dialogues are structured. How are dialogues organized, in what venues do they take place, what types of actors are involved, what type of knowledge is communicated, and what issues are discussed?

In the sociology of sciences and in policy sciences, a number of ideal models of research–policy structures have been defined (Hoppe 2005; Scholten 2011). The enlightenment model (‘speaking truth to power’) is perhaps the one that comes closest to the typical ideal image of the role that scientific research should have in policy-making. The enlightenment model postulates sharp
boundaries between research and policy, and assumes that scientific knowledge will eventually ‘creep’ into the policy-making process, thus (indirectly) determining how policy-makers interpret and act upon policy problems. In contrast to the sharp boundaries of the enlightenment model, Hoppe (2005) formulates a technocratic model of research–policy relations, where researchers (‘experts’) are more directly involved in policy-making. In a technocracy, researchers do more than just provide knowledge; they also frame policy problems and develop solutions; they come much closer to taking on the role of policy-makers themselves.

Whereas both the enlightenment and the technocratic models assume that research–policy relations should be structured to give research a primary role in policy-making, alternative approaches such as the engineering model and the bureaucratic model firmly believe in the primacy of politics in policy-making. The latter two models assume that research provides input to policy-making and political decision-making, while recognizing that the outcomes of policy-making are also determined by other considerations, including values, norms, and power. In the bureaucratic model, research is supposed to provide data (‘facts’) that are required by policy-makers to develop policies and to reach decisions. This model assumes a sharp Weberian fact–value dichotomy between research and politics. The engineering model, by contrast, allows researchers a more far-reaching role in policy-making, while assuming, however, that politics keeps its primacy and is at liberty to select (‘pick-and-choose’) those strands of expertise that it sees fit.

Although these models are primarily based on the function that research and knowledge may have for policy and policy-making, they may also be used as heuristic devices for mapping differences between forms of dialogues, or even for comparing types of research–policy dialogues between countries. Several studies have already indicated that significant differences exist between countries in terms of such structures, as well as in their degrees of institutionalization. Scholten, for instance, found that the Dutch research–policy nexus was strongly institutionalized between 1980 and 1992, implying a very significant influence of research on policy-making (in the logic of the technocratic model) (Scholten 2011). The French research–policy nexus, by contrast, involved more informal and personal networks between researchers and policy-makers, with a much stronger primacy for politics (the bureaucratic model).

Knowledge Utilization

The second aspect of research–policy dialogues focuses specifically on the question of how knowledge is utilized in policy-making. As explained in her 2009 book and in Chapter 2 in this volume, Christina Boswell distinguishes
between different types of practices of knowledge utilization. The most basic type involves the *instrumental* utilization of knowledge and expertise, where research outcomes are directly taken as input for policy-making. It is this type of knowledge utilization that is assumed in the notion of ‘evidence-based policy-making’. In addition to the instrumental use of knowledge, Boswell distinguishes two *symbolic* types of knowledge utilization. Rather than being used as input for decision-making, knowledge can be used to provide authority to policies that have already been decided by *substantiating* these through relevant (and supportive) knowledge and expertise. Besides substantiating policy decisions, research can also be used for the plain *legitimization* of policies and policy institutions. This legitimizing function of research and expertise does not refer to substantive research findings themselves, but to the mere symbolic act of having knowledge and expertise to claim authority over a particular policy domain or policy issue.

**Knowledge Production**

The third aspect focuses on the relationship between knowledge production and the structures of research–policy dialogues: how does knowledge production influence such dialogues and, vice versa, how do dialogues affect migrant integration research itself? Research–policy dialogues can create opportunity structures for specific researchers, research programmes, and institutes to emerge and influence policy-making (Penninx 1988; Jasanoff 2005; Entzinger and Scholten 2014). In the longer run, however, there may also be a significant influence in the opposite direction. Strongly institutionalized relations with policy-making institutions may affect the structural characteristics of migration research as a research field; for example, the extent of consensus or fragmentation. The strongly institutionalized relationship between research and policy-making in the Netherlands and Sweden in the 1980s, for instance, provided a dominant position for specific dialogue structures and their participants—such as the Advisory Commission on Minorities Research (ACOM) and the Expert Group for Immigration Research (EIFO), respectively—and thereby created a ‘consensus’ in migration research in that period (Hammar 2004; Penninx 2005; see also Chapter 9 in this volume). In contrast, recent studies show that the rapid politicization of this domain has created much more diverse opportunity structures, thus facilitating the fragmentation of the migration research field (Bommes and Morawska 2005; Scholten et al. 2015).

Beyond such effects on the structure of the research field (which have received relatively little attention so far), various scholars have pointed to more substantive impacts on ‘knowledge production’, recognizable in methodological, theoretical, and disciplinary developments. Thränhardt and
Bommes (2010), for example, claim that research–policy dialogues have hampered the theoretical development of migration research. They argue that migration research uses the nation-state as a ‘constitutive frame’. This has hampered the rise of a more critical approach to the role of the nation-state and has stressed ‘the social importance’ of solving integration as a problem of the nation, rather than conceptualizing and theorizing immigration and integration from a more scientific perspective (Favell 2003; Thränhardt and Bommes 2010: 30). Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002: 301–2) refer to comparable biases in migration research, coining the term ‘methodological nationalism’. In their view, ‘nation-state building processes have fundamentally shaped the ways immigration has been perceived and received. These perceptions have in turn influenced social science theory and methodology and, more specifically, discourse on immigration and integration’. The strong orientation on integration within the nation-state has (co)produced specific national models of integration.

Partly as a reaction to the tendencies of migration research to confine itself within a national framing, there has been an undeniable upsurge of international comparative studies in the field of migration and integration, especially since the mid-2000s. Emerging international research networks such as IMISCOE have triggered this, but it has also been supported strongly by policies of the EU’s Directorate-General Research and Innovation (for instance, through the Framework Programmes and Horizon 2020) and other EU funds (the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and its predecessors, as well as the European Social Fund). This new direction of research has, in turn, led to more explicit criticisms of national models of integration, and to the rise of transnationalist and post-nationalist perspectives on immigrant integration.

The Effects of Politicization: Three Hypotheses

Migrant integration has clearly evolved into a highly politicized topic throughout Europe since the early 2000s. This also has implications for research–policy dialogues (Scholten and Verbeek 2014). In the DIAMINT project, we seek to theorize the impact of politicization on research–policy dialogues, developing and examining a number of hypotheses, based on more generic literature from the sociology of sciences (Scholten et al. 2015).

Our first hypothesis is that the politicization of migrant integration would contribute to a de-institutionalization of existing research–policy dialogues. Dialogues will become less direct, more open to diverse participants and more ad hoc. By contrast, institutional relations will persist in places with a relatively low level of politicization.
Our second hypothesis focuses on knowledge utilization. While instrumental knowledge utilization involves the direct use of knowledge in policy formulation and political decision-making—as in ‘evidence-based policy-making’—symbolic knowledge utilization refers to more indirect functions of knowledge for policy-makers, either to substantiate policy choices that have already been decided or to legitimize policy actors. Following Boswell’s analysis of knowledge utilization in the UK, Germany, and the EU, we expect that politicization generates more symbolic forms of knowledge utilization (Boswell 2009).

The third hypothesis refers to the effect of research–policy dialogues on developments within the field of migration research itself. Trends such as the de-institutionalization of research–policy dialogues and the internationalization of academia challenge the container view of ‘national models of integration’, and can be expected to contribute to academic fragmentation, or diversification in terms of knowledge paradigms (see also Favell 2003; Thränhardt and Bommes 2010).

In the following sections, we assess the evidence for each of the three hypotheses on the basis of the data collected in the DIAMINT project. Each research team participating in this project collected original material through a systematic study of relevant policy documents and literature, particularly those published since the year 2000. Furthermore, in each country in-depth interviews were held with twenty to thirty stakeholders and experts. All activities were based on a commonly based research outline and used the same methodology. The research teams held regular meetings to exchange experiences and to discuss and interpret the outcomes. The remainder of this chapter gives a presentation of some of the most important findings of the project and attempts to draw parallels between the DIAMINT project and the main research questions that lie at the basis of this book (see also Table 3.1.).

Changing Structures of Research–Policy Dialogues?

Our first hypothesis dealt with the relationship between the politicization of migrant integration and the de-institutionalization of research–policy dialogue structures. We have found mixed evidence when comparing the findings from the various cases. Generally speaking, we have found evidence of changes in the institutional set-up of research–policy dialogues, rather than a clear de-institutionalization of dialogue structures. Politicization appears to change, rather than impede, research–policy dialogues. Interestingly, in some cases we have found that institutionalization followed after a period of politicization, as in Germany and Austria.
Only in the Netherlands, Italy, and Denmark have we found modest direct evidence in favour of the original de-institutionalization hypothesis. In the Netherlands, the strongly institutionalized technocratic research–policy nexus that had been built around the Ethnic Minorities policy was dismantled in the 1990s and 2000s, in a context of increasing politicization. However, this de-institutionalization was also spurred by developments within the research community. Furthermore, it led to a re-institutionalization of a different type of nexus, of a more bureaucratic nature, that focused not so much on conceptual research but rather on data-driven studies, carried out by the Social and Cultural Planning Office (SCP) and Netherlands Statistics (CBS), two government agencies. In Italy, attempts were made to institutionalize research–policy dialogues in the 1990s, particularly by setting up a Commission on the Integration of Migrants. Given the politicization of migration at that time, the Commission did not have a great impact and was dismantled. In

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis I</th>
<th>Hypothesis II</th>
<th>Hypothesis III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>De-institutionalization of research–policy dialogues</td>
<td>More symbolic knowledge utilization</td>
<td>Diversification of knowledge paradigms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Institutionalization follows politicization in the late 2000s</td>
<td>Substantiating knowledge utilization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Modest de-institutionalization since the 2000s</td>
<td>From instrumental to legitimizing knowledge utilization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Institutionalization follows politicization in the 2000s</td>
<td>Instrumental as well as legitimizing knowledge utilization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Failed attempt to institutionalize in the 1990s</td>
<td>Substantiating knowledge utilization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Change of institutional nexus from technocracy to bureaucracy</td>
<td>From instrumental to legitimizing knowledge utilization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>First efforts to institutionalize dialogues in 2000s in response to EU efforts</td>
<td>Legitimating knowledge utilization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>Periodic attempts at institutionalization tend to fail</td>
<td>Especially substantiating knowledge utilization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Union</td>
<td>Institutionalization because of politicization (research as ‘politics by other means’)</td>
<td>From legitimizing to substantiating knowledge utilization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 Summary of findings on the development of research–policy dialogues on migrant integration in the context of politicization

*a This table is adapted from Scholten and Verbeek (2014).
Denmark, researchers were directly involved in the genesis of policies in the 1980s and 1990s, but less so thereafter. However, as in the Dutch case, a certain re-institutionalization of research–policy dialogues also took place in Denmark, although it was different in character.

We have found that in various cases—Germany being the most prominent example—the politicization of migrant integration may have spurred the establishment of research–policy dialogues, rather than impeding them. In contrast to, for example, the Dutch case, the development of migration research in Germany followed a more autonomous path with very limited dialogue between researchers and policy-makers, especially at an institutional level. The politicization of migrant integration at the end of the 1990s and in the early 2000s provided various opportunities for researchers to become more actively engaged in policy-making and in political debate. This led to the establishment of various ‘boundary organizations’, such as the Council for Migration and the Expert Council for Migration and Integration (SVR) (Entzinger and Scholten 2014). The Austrian case, reflecting to some extent the German experience, even reveals evidence of efforts to institutionalize research–policy relations in the aftermath of politicization. In Austria, at the end of the 2000s, the grand coalition between the Social Democrats (SPÖ) and the People’s Party (ÖVP) involved researchers and research-based commissions as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other stakeholders in formulating a National Action Plan for Integration (NAPI). At the same time, more informal dialogue structures emerged in Austria, outside institutional channels.

The more bureaucratic dialogue structure that emerged in the Netherlands in the late 1990s—with a preference for statistics-driven research oriented towards specific government policy priorities—also emerged in other countries. In Germany, the Federal Institute for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) performs a role in policy-making that is very similar to that of the Dutch SCP. They play a key role by producing data that help to legitimize national policies, promote policy learning, and monitor and identify areas for policy intervention at the national, regional, and local levels. Similarly, in Denmark the Ministry of Refugees, Immigration and Integration Affairs has developed in-house research facilities, bringing together knowledge and information that are important for policy coordination (see Bak Jørgensen 2011).

One case that clearly defies the hypothesis on politicization and de-institutionalization of research–policy dialogues is that of the EU, which is distinctive for two reasons. The first reason concerns timing: the EU entered this policy area rather late, at a moment when politicization of the issue was thriving in much of Europe. In this respect, it resembles the situation in Poland, where the emergence of a policy could not lead to any form of de-institutionalization for the simple reason that no relevant institutions had
yet been set up. A second reason is that the EU’s position is completely different from that of national governments. In the absence of direct competencies in the field of migrant integration, mobilizing research has proved to be one of the few strategies the EU possesses to influence policies in this domain. A selective mobilization of research has provided a tool for the soft-governance of migrant integration in a European setting (see Geddes and Scholten 2014). In particular, this has led to a number of comparative studies of migrant integration policies aiming to facilitate ‘horizontal policy learning’ between European countries. It has also led to more systematic efforts to measure integration policies so as to monitor compliance with EU policy frameworks (for example, the Migrant Integration Policy Index, MIPEX).

What stands out in the national cases in terms of dialogue structures is the central role of ad hoc and, often, government-sponsored commissions at critical junctures in the policy process. In Germany, Italy, the UK, and the Netherlands, such commissions were put in place in the aftermath of focusing events in order to create a temporary platform for research–policy dialogues. Such commissions, however, are often highly selective in opening up to researchers and in their knowledge claims (cf. Chapters 7 and 9 in this volume). This suggests that creating ad hoc commissions should be seen as a political reflex in the face of immediate and intractable policy controversies, rather than as an effort to engage in critical reflection based on research. Furthermore, although their public profile was often high, the policy impact of the work of these commissions was not always very direct. In fact, commissions in the UK (for example, the Community Cohesion Review Team, led by Ted Cantle), the Netherlands (the Temporary Parliamentary Investigative Commission on Integration Policy, led by Stef Blok) and, to a lesser degree, also Germany (the Commission on Immigration, led by Rita Süssmuth) show how easily the knowledge claims selected by these commissions can lead to public controversy and to contestation of the commissions’ authority.

Towards a More Symbolic Knowledge Utilization?

Our comparative analysis provides strong support for the second hypothesis on the increasingly symbolic character of knowledge utilization. It shows that politicization does not impede knowledge utilization but, rather, changes its nature. All national cases show that the use of knowledge became increasingly symbolic in the 2000s. This includes forms of substantiating knowledge utilization, where research is used to support policy choices that have already been decided, as well as forms of legitimizing use, where research is used to boost the authority of specific policy actors.
Some of the cases, such as the British case in the 1950s and the Dutch case in the 1980s, do indeed show how research initially provided a direct stimulus for policy development, thus accounting for instrumental forms of knowledge utilization. This was also the case in Sweden, which, however, was not included as a case study in DIAMINT (Hammar 2004). The other countries studied do not provide such clear evidence: generally, we have found only incidental cases where individual academics may have had an impact on policy development at key moments, as did the Vesselbo report in Denmark.

Most of the cases examined reveal intriguing examples of symbolic knowledge utilization. In the originally more instrumental cases of the Netherlands and the UK, the use of knowledge claims clearly became more selective around the year 2000, aimed at substantiating policies formulated in the political arena. In the UK, for example, research was utilized (at least partly) to substantiate the Community Cohesion frame that emerged in politics after the ‘mill town riots’ of 2001. In the Netherlands, research–policy dialogues virtually came to a halt after a largely unforeseen rise of populism (Pim Fortuyn, and later Geert Wilders) in the 2000s, with government only selectively using outcomes of carefully commissioned research for purposes of policy monitoring. Similarly, in Austria, there is broad consensus over the selective use of knowledge, mainly driven by the development of in-house research facilities at the Ministry of the Interior. In Denmark, the state supported the Academy for Immigration Studies (AMID), thus legitimizing its policy position. However, it hardly ever drew on the findings and recommendations of AMID studies.

In some cases, politicization has also contributed to a growing contestation of research at large. This applies in particular to the case of Italy, traditionally characterized by a certain distrust of social-scientific knowledge. To some extent, it also applies to the Dutch case, where the credibility of migration scholars involved in policy-making in the 1980s and 1990s was openly put on the line in the 2000s; they were blamed for introducing a multiculturalist bias into Dutch policies. This reinforced a mode of ‘articulation politics’ characterized by clear political primacy, an orientation towards popular—if not populist—views and distrust, especially of research on a conceptual level (Caponio et al. 2014).

Knowledge Production: Beyond National Models of Integration

Our third hypothesis, on the diversification of knowledge claims and the rise of knowledge conflicts, finds partial support in our comparative analysis. We observe a decreasing relevance for researchers of so-called national models of integration in the various cases that have been examined. However, this seems
to be related not just to politicization and changing research–policy dialogues in these national settings, but also to broader developments, such as the growing involvement of both the EU and local authorities, and the internationalization of the migrant integration research community.

Whereas research in Austria, Germany, and Italy was fragmented even before the issue had become more politicized, the Dutch and British cases show a more gradual fragmentation. Before politicization, migration scholarship in these countries was characterized by a relative consensus within their respective national contexts, leading to distinct ‘national models of integration’: the Dutch Ethnic Minorities model and the British Race Relations model. Following politicization, which occurred much earlier in the UK than elsewhere, these models became fragmented and contested. Both the UK and the Netherlands also reveal many instances of knowledge conflicts amongst scholars. In other countries—for example, in Germany—migration scholarship has always been more fragmented, possibly even because of the absence of an institutional relationship to policy that could have sustained a single national model of integration. However, it is fair to say that in Germany, but also in other countries—such as Austria and Italy—knowledge claims have meanwhile become even more diversified, also along disciplinary lines. The EU case, again, appears to be different, due to its recent genesis: there was simply no pre-existing unity against which a possible fragmentation could have taken place. Research initiated and supported by the EU has always had a special, comparative character.

Conclusions

Our analysis has revealed profound changes in the dialogue structures associated with the research–policy nexus in the domain of migrant integration, rather than a clear de-institutionalization of these dialogues, as we had initially expected. On the one hand, we have found that dialogue structures have become more ad hoc, often established in response to distinct political events or to specific problems. On the other hand, we have also found that politicization has not thwarted all efforts to develop more institutionalized structures of dialogue between producers and users of knowledge. ‘Going technical’ or mobilizing specific types of research should not always be seen as a tactic of depoliticization; it can also represent a strategy of ‘politics by different means’.

Additionally, we have found that, in all the countries studied in the DIAMINT project, research–policy dialogues have gradually become more open. Although it is difficult to establish a clear relationship with politicization here, we can speak of a gradual evolution from ‘research–policy dialogues’ to broader ‘science–society dialogues’. In all the countries analysed, several new actors
have emerged as participants in these dialogues. In the British case, this can be illustrated by comparing the composition of three independent commissions created to advise the government at different moments since the 2000s. The membership of these commissions not only consisted of academics, but also included expert practitioners in areas such as law, health, local government, education, and journalism (Boswell and Hunter 2014). In the Netherlands, the role of ‘public intellectuals’ in research–policy dialogues has increased noticeably; relevant names here are Paul Scheffer and (the late) Jaap Dronkers. From the Italian case, it becomes apparent how important (primarily faith-based) NGOs can be in providing knowledge to policy-makers. The Austrian case study documents a central role for social partners alongside the very dominant Ministry of the Interior. In Austria, NGOs have been largely excluded from research–policy dialogues. In Germany, by contrast, civil society initiatives, such as the Academies, have been very open to diverse actors, playing an important stabilizing role in research–policy dialogues on issues such as nationality legislation and Islam. In all cases, the DIAMINT project has shown that the media should be conceptualized both as a platform for research–policy dialogues and as an important participant in such dialogues.

In the rational model of governance, knowledge utilization has traditionally been assumed as being direct and instrumental. Our analysis provides clear evidence that more symbolic forms of knowledge utilization prevail in almost all cases. Knowledge is being used primarily not in an instrumental manner but, rather, to legitimate government institutions or to substantiate government policies. Generally speaking, this has become more visible as migrant integration has been more politicized.

Finally, our analysis has revealed a sharp increase in both the quantity and diversity of knowledge production and knowledge dissemination over the past two to three decades in all cases examined. This makes it more complicated than in the past to identify or to construct a distinct research–policy nexus. Nowadays, many centres for knowledge production exist. This has facilitated a more selective use of knowledge claims within specific policy settings. It also signals, however, the maturing of migrant integration as a research area, in which room has developed both for more policy-oriented and for more theory-oriented schools. Migrant integration has come of age as an academic field of study.

Lessons from DIAMINT

At first glance, the volume of which this chapter is part uses an approach that is somewhat different from what we did in the DIAMINT project. Like DIAMINT, it deals with the interface between scientific research and policymaking or, as we called it, knowledge production and knowledge utilization.
This volume, however, seems to leave more space than we did for the role of public debates in affecting and shaping the dialogue. The interface in DIAMINT was defined more narrowly, since it was limited to ‘dialogue structures’, at least initially. As DIAMINT progressed, however, we found that this approach was too narrow. In reality, many more ways of communicating exist, both formal and informal. With the rise of migrant integration on the public and the political agenda, which has gone hand in hand with the politicization of the issue, such alternative ways have become much more apparent.

In DIAMINT, we came to the conclusion that our original approach of ‘research–policy dialogues’ had been broadened gradually to what we then labelled ‘science-society dialogues’: a diversification of methods of mutual influencing. We have noticed a clear increase in contestation of evidence-based research outcomes in the public debate. Donald Trump’s presidency of the United States has familiarized us all with ‘alternative facts’ and ‘post-truths’ but, in fact, many older examples exist—also in the field of immigrant integration—of scientifically based knowledge being publicly contested, and therefore not taken seriously by politicians. There is a link between this phenomenon and the recent rise of populism in several European countries. It is not without reason that many populist movements and political parties give immigration a prominent place in their manifestoes.

In DIAMINT we also found that the media can play an effective role when the gap between researchers and policy-makers widens. They enable researchers to reach out to policy-makers and politicians, particularly when more direct opportunities for contact do not—or no longer—exist. The media also influence the public debate, a phenomenon that policy-makers are equally aware of, of course, and which they also use themselves. As a consequence, the debate on a sensitive issue such as migrant integration has broadened and no longer takes place in closed-shop settings, as was often the case in the early years of immigration. A similar role can be attributed to NGOs. DIAMINT has shown that, throughout Europe, NGOs play a much more prominent role than in the early days when it comes to providing policy advice. Sometimes, such advice is based on scientific research: NGOs also carry out research themselves, or may commission research to academic experts. Advice, however, may also be based on different considerations, such as the interests of specific communities, or political or ideological views. With the rise in prominence of migrant integration, it is only natural that such interests have gained more influence on policy-making. Facts and opinions are not always separated in the arena of the public debate; this is how democracy works. Scientists will have to live with this; however, they should never lose sight of their own responsibilities, which is to produce evidence-based facts and insights that help us understand how society really works.
Notes

1. IMISCOE began as an EU-funded Network of Excellence (2004–2009) and has continued since then as an independent consortium of research institutes in Europe, which in 2018 number forty (see www.imiscoe.org).
2. The full report of the study was published as Scholten et al. (2015).
3. All findings mentioned in the following sections can be traced back to Scholten et al. (2015), unless otherwise stated.

References


