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Editorial: Ideational aspects of migration and integration policy, politics and governance

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Editorial on the Research Topic
Ideational aspects of migration and integration policy, politics and governance

Introducing ideations

Political studies of migration and integration are an evolving field. The subject matter is contextual and politically loaded, political discussions, policy-making, and governance are empirically diverse. This special issue seeks to develop a theoretical perspective for this diversity and to contextualize it empirically by focusing on the ideational dimension of politics, policy, and governance. Here, we discuss the basic concepts and approaches and introduce the other articles.

The term ideation means the formation or conception of ideas or concepts. It refers to the process or act of constructing a particular thought, idea, or image. More broadly, it characterizes the ways the ideas emerge and influence practices. Speech acts, policies, and administrative measures can be seen as based on ideations and can be understood and interpreted via ideations. Similarly, the institutions can be seen as condensed ideations, sets or sediments of ideas, rules and practices.

The relevance of ideations has been recognized by the "ideational turn" in political studies (Blyth, 1997; Schmidt, 2008; Béland and Cox, 2011; Fischer and Gottweis, 2012), where ideational capacities are seen as a mix of a priori conceptual preferences, normative ideals, political beliefs, and policy interpretations. The cognitivist perspective centers on agency and views ideas as subjective beliefs that function as shortcuts in making decisions (Jervis, 2006), explaining institutional change and policymaking through the actors' interpretation of policy based on their normative ideas (Rein and Schon, 1994; Fischer and Gottweis, 2012). In contrast, the approaches focused on structural constraints outline the role of ideas in constructing ideational policy paradigms (Hall, 1993), normative legitimacy frames (Jobert, 1989; March and Olsen, 1989), and shaping actors' preferences (Hay, 2011). Here, the institutionalized ideational configurations shape the beliefs and behavior of actors. The ideas are seen as a set of relatively stable norms within which policy-makers, policy implementers, and policy subjects interpret problems and solutions.

Constructivist or discursive institutionalism (Blyth, 2001; Schmidt, 2008, 2015; Hay, 2011) combines the agency- and structure-focused perspectives by approaching actors as constrained by institutionalized ideas, while still having significant agency in shaping the

policy outcome. The institutions are seen both as structures and constructs internal to the agents themselves; the interests and ideas are understood as subjective, not objective or material; and the norms are understood as dynamic constructs and not static structures. Ideas are conveyed and exchanged in the interactive process both in terms of "coordinative discourse" among policy actors and "communicative discourse" between policy actors and the public (Schmidt, 2008).

The worldviews and ideologies provide political foundations but often remain at a rather general level, being assemblages of both general and particular contradictory beliefs and propositions. Policies usually need more elaboration and are presented as being founded on principled beliefs that are backed up with arguments, narratives, and causal stories together creating the justification for politics (Stone, 2012). Policy designs are influenced by the policy paradigms and program ideas that are composed of a set of cognitive background assumptions limiting the range of alternatives that policy-making elites are likely to perceive as useful and worth considering (Howlett, 2019). The affective dimension of ideations—soundbites, spin, blaming, securitization, etc.—is used to generate immediate communicative effects (Koch-Baumgarten and Voltmer, 2010; Brants and Voltmer, 2011; Hood, 2011; Surová, 2022).

Ideations in political process

Ideations emerge at various of stages of the political and governing process. (Carmel, 2021, p. 5) treat the politics of migration as the political relations of power that are played out between formal institutions and informal exchanges among social actors, and are revealed in institutional authority, rulemaking and brute force, resistance, and contestation. In the contestation over the membership in a polity the strategies and technologies of citizenship are aimed at constructing the insiders or citizens and the various outsiders (Isin, 2002). In the politics of citizenship, diverse understandings of insiders and outsiders are put forward and debated, and some regulation adopted and implemented.

The politics of policymaking (see, e.g., Stone, 2012; Kalev, 2023) is aimed at getting a policy through by developing a sufficiently convincing narrative and building up an advocacy coalition (Zittoun, 2014). The general public, actively engaged actors and decision-makers all need to be convinced so the argumentation needs to come in variations. The politics of policymaking is oriented to agenda-setting and control, based on the interactions of actors over policy images and structured by policy venues. Some actors seek to foster a policy agenda; others oppose it (Baumgartner and Jones, 2009). The formulation, development, and implementation of policies is also sending signals to citizens and other actors. These signals have a wider impact by creating and justifying categories through labeling, stereotyping, securitization, highlighting and stigmatization, shaping winners and losers and generating public policy target groups (Ingram and Schneider, 2006).

The crucial point of interaction in policy implementation and, more, broadly, governing is usually the street level where street-level bureaucrats personally interact with people in the target and possibly stakeholder groups exercising some level of discretion

(Lipsky, 2010). However, the politicians also need to have sufficient support among the citizens who are important stakeholders in the process. In addition to the dominant approach, there are usually several alternative approaches making possible different political strategies, contestations, and coalitions.

An overarching concept is the migration regime (see, e.g., Pott et al., 2018; Eule et al., 2019; Money and Lockhart, 2021) that regulates the ways to move and settle. Integration is primarily discussed as practices and policies rather than a regime (see, e.g., Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016), as it is processual, interactive, and at least partly open-ended and largely influenced by non-state actors, contexts, and processes. Migration governance can be seen as governing practices for simplifying, classifying, and regularizing the diversity of migration and migrants, through general rules of action, thus determining which people are governed in which places, and in which ways. It resides in highly structured and unequal relationships of power but is also subject to political contestation, contingent and often contradictory actions of multiple actors (Carmel, 2021).

Citizenship is an important dimension of migration and integration. Citizenship regimes can be defined as institutional arrangements, rules, and understandings that guide and shape policy decisions and expenditures of states (Paquet et al., 2018). The status of being a citizen can be viewed as the desired end of migration and integration, and there are several other statuses for temporary and less engaged people that can also be viewed as the steps toward full legal citizenship. Citizenship as a practical agency refers to embeddedness, autonomy, and readiness to act as a full citizen (Kalev and Jakobson, 2020). But citizenship can be also used for non-liberal practices, inequities, discrimination, and subordination of certain groups of people. Migration significantly affects discourse on citizenship and laws on citizenship (Surová, 2020).

Studying ideations

The special issue encompasses five articles with integration and migration as the common themes. Each paper analyses in depth the various aspects of ideations from different perspectives and on different levels of analysis.

The article "*The Genealogy of Integrationism: Ideational foundations of the politics of immigrant integration*" by Dodevska examines "the idea of (migrant) integration" i.e., the ontological and political rationales behind the idea that migrants need to "integrate into society" in the Northern Euro-Atlantic academic and governmental settings of the past two centuries. Integrationism refers to the idea of social order, however, the "integrated society" based on shared values and objectives can be oppressive toward the others, who "need" to be "regulated" by the migration and citizenship regimes. Dodevska concludes that we are currently witnessing "scientification of integration governance" and "the politicization of integration research" that could strengthen the hegemonic model of integration. On the other hand, "evidence-based policy" normalizes and depoliticizes integration processes.

Two original research articles by Manser-Egli "*Respecting the values of the constitution: Integration in the community of value(s)*" and King-Savic "Who Belongs to the Swiss Body Politique—A

Diaspora Perspective" examine integration in Switzerland at a different period and unit of analysis.

Manser-Egli investigates the "Swiss Self" i.e., how constitutional liberal values are manifested in the integration regime, perceived by street-level bureaucrats, and applied toward immigrants. His study shows that integrational practices based on liberal values and principles include culturalized, migranticised and even securitized approaches to others and represent culturally assimilating policies. The respect for the values of the country's constitution which serves as an official legal condition for immigration and naturalization "re/produces the social imaginary of society as a community of value(s), which in turn legitimizes aggressive integrationism". Manser-Egli sees these values as "an empty signifier" that can be loaded with any cultural content while maintaining liberal boundary.

In contrast, King-Savic focuses on the "Others" in Switzerland as her unit of analysis are non-citizen immigrants from the former Yugoslavia. The focus is how these immigrants as subjects of integration perceive the society into which they "need" to integrate. King-Savic has looked into the micro-level of integration to see how the immigrants position themselves toward the "Swiss Body Politique" and narrate their identities toward the Swiss society. According to her, respondents adopted two strategies toward integration into the wider society: on one side they try to "disappear" within the Swiss society, while on the other side, they negotiate a "positive essentialist frame" to stand for their rights and in opposition to exclusionary practices of integration.

Similarly to Manser-Egli, Marej in her study "*Ideations of social sustainability? Concepts and cleavages of cohesion in Germany*" analyses the ideational foundations of integration governance but in Germany. She explores the ideations of "constitutional patriotism" and "Leitkultur" as foundations for integration, but as insufficient for a socially sustainable society. These formerly opposing positions converge and the republican elements gain influence with the tendency to individualize, paternalise, and depoliticize integration. According to Marej, the shared cognitive and emotional ideations are intended to ensure support for democracy, but the extent to which these policies themselves exhibit undemocratic tendencies must be critically observed.

From a rather different perspective, Klasche argues for adopting a relational approach and de-problematization of the governance of migration crisis in the article "*The Role of ideations in de-problematizing migration crises (and other wicked problems)*". Klasche argues that the "European Migrant Crisis" consisted of more than just a humanitarian or security crisis, being also constituted by the geopolitical crises and crises of political institutions. A relational approach using the concept of "wicked problems" helps to grasp these diverse aspects and to stop de-problematizing the issue by problematizing it adequately.

As we can see from the articles, ideations offer an optic that enables us to bridge and jointly discuss the different subfields of migration and integration politics, policy and governance without losing the context and internal diversity. This perspective develops a basis to analyze the underlying concepts, arguments, assumptions, and other elements of political ideas across the subfields, and to link these to political contestations, policy making, governance, and regime practices.

The positionality of actor-grounded perspectives of the (meta)governor, migrants, and citizens (full members of a polity) seem to be of key relevance in navigating the complexity of ideations. What is perceived as relevant and practical by the policy maker and implementer may be seen as improper and misguided by the migrant and vice versa, while citizens may have different understandings. Being better informed of different perspectives and rationales may help to solve some puzzles, misunderstandings, as well as non-functioning policy and administrative measures, which, in turn, can lead to academic and practical innovation in policymaking.

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