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Explaining the Difference between Policy-Based Evidence and Evidence-Based Policy: A Nexus Analysis Approach to Mobilities and Migration

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Abstract

In this policy analysis, we explain the difference between policy-based evidence (PBE) and evidence-based policy (EBP). We argue that better, evidence-based understanding, explanations, and questions can be sought by problematizing the challenging forms of twenty-first century migration and mobilities. We emphasize that this can be done by not confusing PBE with EBP, especially when each is needed as a basis for specific types of action. By focusing on topics often viewed as “unrelated” or confused with one another, we underline the social dynamics that are unfamiliar to many policy actors, professionals, and stakeholders, who rely on scholars for actionable analyses. Our mode of inquiry is based on nexus analysis, and it contrasts and problematizes our recent studies, research in progress related to distinct types of mobilities and migration. The article draws on four disciplines and a more diverse set of perspectives than is the norm in Finland. Because of this, we are able to articulate better the relationship between contemporary migration challenges in Finland and present better policy questions that the mobilities paradigm brings into view.

Keywords: higher education—Europe, migration, mobilities, nexus analysis, policy analysis

¹ The authors are all founding members of the *Migration, Mobilities and Internationalization Research Group* (miGroup), a jointly led initiative of the Finnish Institute for Educational Research (FIER) and the Centre for Applied Language Studies (CALS) at the University of Jyväskylä.

Introduction:

Who Talks about Migration and Mobilities and Who Does Not?

Our journey began in 2016 when we took part in a Finnish sociology conference, the theme of which was “the Future of the Sociological Imagination.” In our presentation, we chose to discuss what was normally missed within the narrow, uncritical, and unproblematic way “immigration” was being approached across Finland. We argued that the focus failed to engage scholarly and policy debate that better explains the relationship between migration and the mobilities paradigm (Urry 2007). Our problematization, following Denzin, stressed the following propositions:

... [t]here are two types of interpreters: people who have actually experienced what has been described, and those who are often ethnographers, or field workers, so-called well-informed experts. These two types (local and scientific) often give different meanings to the same set of thickly described/inscribed experiences. (Denzin 1998, 325)

Denzin’s distinctions were important in 2016 because in popular culture, the media, policy circles, and stakeholder groups, as well as in scholarship, many were focused on the sensationalized reporting of “Europe’s refugee crisis” and frequently conflated all discourses on migration into extremely narrow terms of refugees, asylum seekers, and (im)migration. What went unnoticed by many sociologists of migration whom we met at the conference was the empirically-based framing developed over decades by organizations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), as well as the new generation of studies focused on mobilities. Denzin’s distinction of (1) those experiencing a phenomenon from (2) experts implies two others: (3) persons who are both and (4) persons who are neither (table 1 below). This problematization highlights “who talks about migration and mobilities in Finland?” In terms of nexus analysis (Scollon and Scollon 2004), the mode of inquiry used in this article, these distinctions problematize four distinct historical bodies and perspectives that potentially come together in specific nexuses to act on migration and mobilities.

Initially, our rationale for using nexus analysis was motivated by its potential to problematize issues, topics, and settings that many of our Finnish-based colleagues were missing when it came to the relationship between migration and mobilities. Our purpose was to contrast those who frame discourses and act on “immigration” in Finland with those who do not or cannot. These specifically include people with professional competence(s) regarding migration or mobilities but who often have little or no experience of either topic. We do not claim that any of these points of departure is better or worse. Instead, we argue that relying on a single perspective when all four are important is unlikely to be relevant to

Four points of departure for discourse and action regarding migration and/or complex mobilities	Experience(s) of migration and/or complex mobilities	
Professional competence(s) regarding migration and/or complex mobilities	Persons with professional competence(s) regarding migration and/or complex mobilities and experience(s) of migration or complex mobilities.	Persons with professional competence(s) regarding migration and/or complex mobilities but with no experience(s) of migration or complex mobilities.
	Persons with experience(s) of migration and/or complex mobilities but with no professional competence(s) regarding these topics.	Persons with no professional competence(s) regarding migration and/or complex mobilities and no experience(s) of migration or complex mobilities.

Table 1. Historical Bodies of Discourses. Based on Hoffman (2007, 43), adapted by Hoffman, Habti, Korhonen, and Aarnikoivu (2016).

growing groups that correspond to fundamental qualitative distinctions and the key situations and settings they spotlight. By doing a policy analysis—rather than assuming that the present policy is adequate—we ask: might different types of policy options and alternative courses of action come into view when taking into account the actualities embodied by specialists from three of the four quadrants rather than relying on only one of four potential points of departure? More simply put: who could discuss migration and mobilities but normally does not?

It should be noted that *policy analysis* is distinct from *policy research* that focuses on existing policies, practices, and implications using “evidence” defined in choices that have already been made (Wildavsky 1987). Policy analysis contrasts alternative courses of action and the best evidence for justifying one approach over another. In other words, much policy research involves *policy-based evidence* (PBE). Policy analysis, by contrast, concerns articulating policy options and identifying the best available evidence, often advanced as *evidence-based policy* (EBP).

This article first overviews key background issues and the relevant literature that allows us to use nexus analysis to explain and underline

the need for policy analysis as a process of contrasting alternative courses of action and the evidence supporting them (Wildavsky 1987). Following the literature review, we detail the way in which we have drawn on nexus analysis, as well as define its key features. In our analysis, we provide four concrete, research-based examples (vignettes) from the topics we are each focused on in our respective disciplines: applied language studies, intercultural communication, sociology, and comparative and international higher education studies. Finally, in our discussion and conclusions we advance our claims, in terms of policy analysis of the most relevant distinctions, types of evidence, and focal points we believe could be used to articulate viable alternatives aimed at a constructive, realistic change, based on better questions grounded in multiple perspectives.

Background and Literature Review

Nexus analysis, the mode of inquiry used in this policy analysis, identifies and spotlights significant *discourses in place* (Scollon and Scollon 2004) that shape specific situations. Single discourses often reveal something interesting. However, they fail to explain the set of perspectives we problematized in our introduction, or their relationship. As a necessary first step, we review the most visible discourses in place that concern our topic. The linkages between our work and the key literature, in turn, correspond to the broader *cycles of discourse* (Scollon and Scollon 2004) that form the wider context for our topic. Both discourses in place and cycles of discourse are key focal points in nexus analysis, explained in more detail later in the methodology section.

Internationalization Policy that Misses More than It Reveals

It is not difficult to locate studies in higher education research, for example, which claim to be international but which pay little notice to mainstream scientific debate, theoretical developments, methodologies, or critical inquiry (Kosmützky and Nokkala 2014). While internationalization is a very powerful concept across our analysis, much of it results from “following” fashions (Birnbaum 2000) that are connected to the short attention span of policymakers (Teichler 2004) instead of breaking new scientific ground. Within the established discourses that are focused on internationalization and mobilities (Urry 2007), what explains several challenges is the failure to grasp the key tensions between *established* forms of internationalization and academic mobility (Trondal, Gornitzka, and Gulbrandsen 2003) and *emergent*, complex mobilities (Archer 1995; Urry 2007). Within Finnish society, a critical look at higher education is necessary because much contemporary migration is socially mediated within internationalization discourse (Käyhkö, Bontenbal, and Bogdanoff 2016).

The explanation for this is higher education, which is grounded in liberal ideology and is where normative internationalization and academic mobility has never been seriously critiqued (Pashby 2015). While

mainstream social sciences and humanities made major advances in scholarly inquiry, liberally-driven, neo-colonial framing of internationalization and mobility were never subjected to emancipatory paradigm shifts aiming at social inclusion happening on the same campuses. This lack of scholarly horsepower left higher education specialists ill-prepared for the transnational ideological shift in which neoliberal ideology supplanted liberal ideology. While a few specialists discussed this ideological shift as it was happening, seminal critique (Slaughter and Leslie 1997; Rhoades and Slaughter 2004) was not aimed at internationalization, mobilities, or migration. A few early efforts critiqued the global implications of transnational academic capitalism and international agenda setting (e.g., Currie and Newson 1998; Marginson 2006; Kallo 2009) accounting for the complexities of mobilities and migration (Marginson, Murphy, and Peters 2009; Tremblay 2004; Urry 2007). However, by the time Pusser et al. (2012), Slaughter and Cantwell (2012), Kauppinen (2012), and Cantwell and Kauppinen (2014) got traction on transnational academic capitalism, global higher education had adopted neoliberal new public management.

Amid this largely undetected ideological shift, the central distinction that our analysis brings into focus concerns settings that are inclusive, international, and innovative versus those that are not, particularly regarding contemporary mobilities. These key discourses in place are particularly important because universities in Finland frame much of their current efforts aimed at “immigration,” especially regarding refugees and asylum seekers, in terms of uncritical internationalization policy discourse. Much of this discourse is ill-suited to the acute social challenges highlighted in our four vignettes, presented in the analysis section. In stark contrast to much uncritical, atheoretical, and unproblematized neoliberal higher education policy aimed at internationalization and academic mobility, a new generation of social scientists zoomed in on “the mobility turn” (Urry 2007) over the past decade. Inspired by Urry (2007), this paradigm, as the articles of this special issue highlight, is squarely aimed at the type of complexity that inward-looking social science simply misses.

International Highly Skilled Migration and the “Mobility Turn”

Increasing global mobility² has also accelerated the mobility of highly skilled people³ worldwide (Favell, Feldblum, and Smith 2007). This is a result of the globalization of information, economies, transports, goods,

2 “Migration” and “mobility” as concepts in the current literature on highly skilled people are referred to and used in different ways. The term *migration* usually entails movement from one country or location to another for necessity or with enforcement, while the term *mobility* infers a free and self-initiated movement (Habti and Koikkalainen 2014), often meant for a shorter stay abroad, or it may refer to movement within the European Union.

3 OECD (2008) defines a highly skilled person as someone with either tertiary education or equivalent experience. Conceptually, different definitions and classification of the category of highly skilled person were introduced at national and international levels (see OECD 2008, Lowell 2008). Combining educational level, sector of occupation, and salary threshold is often the strategy used by destination countries to guarantee that the actual qualifications of these migrants will match their migration status (Batalova and Lowell 2007; Cerna 2010).

higher education, and capitals. Mobilities challenge the idea of national borders and nation-states, spotlighting the needs for this workforce (Castells 2000; Xiang 2003; Smith and Favell 2006) and sparking world-wide debates about the “global war for talent” (OECD 2008).

The dynamic nature of the global labor market and economy raises new questions for further research, including the forms and patterns of mobility (OECD 2008). The internationalization of higher education is a major driver of the mobility of professionals, students, and academics, and their cross-border movement (Waters 2008; OECD 2008; Habti 2010, 2014, 2018) for better academic, educational, and employment opportunities (Xiang 2003; Saxenian 2006), or even cultural enrichment (Beaverstock 2005). However, the integration of these groups is not solely structured by the productivity of their knowledge and skills in the labor market, but could be subject to “symbolic struggles” and power relations over recognition, qualifications, and access to state institutions (Weiss 2006; Habti 2014).

Recent research has focused on theoretical and analytical developments linking occupational, socio-economic, socio-cultural, spatial, and life-course dynamics that affect mobility or hyper-mobility for personal, economic, or socio-cultural reasons. This research attends to the interplay between micro-, macro-, and meso-level factors that shape job, career, social, and spatial mobility for the highly skilled, as well as the extent to which they are integrated within receiving societies (Favell, Feldblum, and Smith 2007; Habti 2012; Habti and Elo 2018, 12). Recent research also addresses the life-course perspective (Wingens et al. 2011; Findlay et al. 2015) and the individual life stories and experiences of highly skilled migrants (Habti 2012; Ryan 2015). However, much has been left untouched regarding the multi-faceted nature of highly skilled mobility in a rapidly globalized world (Sheller and Urry 2006). A new theoretical and empirical approach, the “mobility turn” (Hannam, Sheller, and Urry 2006; Cresswell 2010) or “new mobilities paradigm” (Sheller and Urry 2006; Urry 2007) offers a new avenue forward with the literature of the mobilities paradigm by incorporating new ways of theorizing. The mobility turn highlights the overlooked “importance of the systematic movements of people for work and family life, for leisure and pleasure” (Sheller and Urry 2006, 207–8; see this issue’s introduction).

Much of the higher education internationalization discourse is poorly suited to contemporary demographically driven challenges, such as migration in Finland. The mobilities paradigm and associated discourses offer a more robust approach, but are not widely used in the nexuses we focus on in our analysis. One possible reason for the disconnect between these two key discourses in place is a third discourse, which is not new, historically, but which is being experienced as new by some scholars and policy actors in Finland. The disconnect is further explained by the myopic focus on the “migration crisis” in a policy discourse that ignores the recent generations of migrants—already in Finland—who have been arriving in the country

over the past several decades (Jaakkola 2005). While refugee and asylum flows are important, policy analysis can only be done by understanding they are a single focal discourse, not *the* (single) discourse into which all mobilities can be—or should be—placed.

Refugees, Asylum Seekers, the “Migration Crisis,” and “Return”

At the same time when international highly skilled migration benefits corporations, organizations, universities, and national economies (e.g., Harvey 2006), the EU is facing the most complex refugee challenge in its history. In the current situation, policy has aimed to control “floods” and “masses” of refugees and asylum seekers entering the EU. The International Organization for Migration⁴ and supranational actors emphasize “voluntariness” of returns as a policy option but many are mandatory rather than voluntary (Black and Gent 2006; Bradley 2008; Hautaniemi, Juntunen, and Sato 2013). Those who opt for a truly voluntary return within return programs, (specifically, refugees with a permanent-residence permit) confront a decisive question regarding their future: to go or to stay? Returns result in giving up residence permits in exchange for travel expenses and (small) reintegration assistance, in an all-or-nothing decision (Huttunen 2010). These policies do not account for transnational dynamics or consider future developments in the region of return. Eastmond (2006) noted that the returnees from Sweden often adopt a different strategy and organize the return individually, ensuring a back-up plan, and Finlay, Crutcher, and Drummond (2011) explain that highly educated Sudanese refugees were prepared to return with their skills, to help in rebuilding their country, provided they are granted Canadian citizenship before the return.

Returns—voluntary, mandatory, or forced—are regarded as ways to control undesired mobility. This solution is often framed as final, unconcerned with the consequences for the returned, often deported, individuals. Returns have become an integral component of the EU migration policy (Black and Gent 2006; Harvey 2006). Within this highly politicized humanitarian emergency, perspectives from individuals seeking asylum and evidence based on research following them up are increasingly needed to frame both specialists’ and public discourses. People with refugee experience have been forced to leave and they have experienced the loss of control over many aspects of their lives, but, nevertheless, they are individuals with skills, knowledge, and strengths (Correa-Velez, Gifford, and Barnett 2010), having obtained language, social, and networking skills, both en route and in host societies. However, these issues still remain largely unnoticed within the narrative of refugee masses.

Policy-oriented research on forced migration often focuses on macro-level phenomena. We argue that the analysis of individual experiences *could* inform policies and provide further insights to the study of refugees. Intercultural communication, as a field of study, has often the individual in

⁴ See, e.g., http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/avrr_in_the_eu.pdf.

the focus of research, but it has long served the needs of the affluent: business people and their family members, exchange students, and sojourners, and only marginally studied forced migration (Steyn and Grant 2007; Szkudlarek 2010). Refugees' and asylum seekers' restricted mobility and dependence on policymakers' decisions highlights the intertwined questions related to citizenship, human rights, power, and agency at the core of individual refugee experiences. Up until now, these have been of secondary interest in policy making, if noticed at all (Finlay, Crutcher, and Drummond 2011; Kibreab 2003; Muggeridge and Doná 2006).

Having discussed the most prominent discourses in place regarding migration and mobilities, we now move on to discussing nexus analysis in more detail. This is important, as nexus analysis as a mode of inquiry is not widely used in the disciplinary communities that form our key audiences. For that reason, it is important to outline the key features that allow us to make valid claims based on the evidence used in our argument. While policymakers might not always be keenly interested in the ways in which we arrive at our findings, it is critical that we make the methodological and theoretical connection between the problematization of our topic, the findings, and ultimately the policy implications of those findings.

Methodology: Nexus Analysis as a Mode of Inquiry

As a member of a research team,⁵ Korhonen, one of the authors, asserted in 2015 the need for policy analysis across our team's respective areas of expertise during a thesis advising session with co-author Hoffman, Korhonen's dissertation supervisor.⁶ Our experientially grounded hunch was the need for a far more nuanced understanding of the complex relationships cutting across settings where ideas, perspectives, and people are structurally excluded from view as a result of action that can be empirically observed but that most often goes unnoticed in the policy process (Hoffman et al. 2015). In other words, at the outset of our collaboration, we understood that the social dynamics we focus on are not very well understood by the specialists or policymakers within the perspectives we have problematized. Because this is the case, understanding key relationships across our distinct but interrelated topics becomes highly unlikely. Nexus analysis was developed by Scollon and Scollon (2004) in very similar circumstances, which is why we selected its theoretical and methodological premises to guide our analysis. The four different vignettes drawn from our respective fields of interest are outwardly "unconnected" in the minds of many within the types of perspectives we problematize in our introduction. That said, nexus analysis has allowed us to understand salient connections better, in ways that are actionable in terms of policymaking.

⁵ Migration, mobilities and internationalization (miGroup), <https://ktl.jyu.fi/en/research/miGroup>.

⁶ Discussions between Sirpa Korhonen and David M. Hoffman, Jyväskylä, 2015.

Key Terms in Nexus Analysis

In order to test the potential of nexus analysis, it is important to outline its framework and features. To do so, we begin by defining a number of interrelated concepts. First, a *site of engagement* refers to settings in which mediated action is situated in a unique historical moment and material space where distinct practices intersect in real time. When a site of engagement is repeated regularly, it becomes a *nexus of practice*. In turn, the discourses regularly intersecting in these moments and material spaces are called *discourses in place*. There are three main activities that comprise nexus analysis. The first stage, *engaging the nexus of practice*, is the opening stage of the analysis, where analysts place themselves in a specific nexus of practice where they are both accepted and legitimate participants. Once having done so, they identify those *social actions* and *social actors* that are crucial to engaging the social issue in focus. Furthermore, the analyst needs to observe the *interaction order* of practices within the nexus. By interaction order Scollon and Scollon refer to any of the many possible social arrangements with which people form relationships in social interactions. Finally, in the first stage, the analyst determines the most crucial *cycles of discourse*—the histories and futures of different discourses that intersect in a particular nexus of practice (Scollon and Scollon 2004).

To understand the small changes happening in the nexus of practice, the analyst then needs to expand the analysis in both space and time and explore the connections between the past, present, and future discourses. This forms the second stage of nexus analysis, *navigating the nexus of practice*. At this stage, the analyst maps the cycles of people, places, discourses, objects, and concepts that circulate through the *micro-semiotic ecosystem* unique to each nexus. By doing so, the analyst wants to find anticipations, links, as well as their inherent timescales circulating through and within a nexus of practice. Moreover, one has to expand the *circumference* of the analysis from time to time, which means that instead of focusing and “getting stuck” on certain actions and moments, the analyst should “zoom in and out” to see if there are broader discourses that need to be considered when conducting the analysis (Scollon and Scollon 2004).

Last, *changing the nexus of practice* is what nexus analysis ultimately aims to do. By conducting discourse analysis, nexus analysis attempts to accomplish social change instead of merely studying it. “The outcome of a good nexus analysis is not a clear statement upon which further action may be taken. The outcome of a good nexus analysis is the process of questioning which is carried on throughout the project” (Scollon and Scollon 2004, 143–44). However, as is the case with many participative strategies aimed at social change, not everyone accepts the premise of social change as a scholarly objective within institutional, organizational, and professional settings (Scollon and Scollon 2004).

Our analysis hinges on the same type of historical and institutional contextualization as is used in the Scollons' "micro-sociological analysis" (2004). It has close parallels to an interest in identifying the everyday settings and situations that bring a larger picture into view. Like Scollon and Scollon, we are interested in the tensions between "micro-rhythms in the integration of social action at one extreme" (Scollon and Scollon 2004, 68) and the need to study the structural nature of participation in societies' most important institutions set against a challenging and complex geopolitical backdrop. The key link between the work of the Scollons and our work though is that, like them, we find ourselves "deeply embedded in a set of social issues that circulate(d) through virtually every aspect of our lives" (Scollon and Scollon 2004, 70). In other words, we do not have to identify a focal setting to study "outside" the locations where we live and work. The respective vignettes we focus on in our analysis, presented in the next section, are our daily lives.

Finally, those familiar with nexus analysis will recognize that the authors are much more in the beginning of a very long process than near the end. Therefore, we have to draw a sharp distinction between *doing* a full-blown nexus analysis and *drawing on* the theoretical and methodological logic of nexus analysis, in order to illuminate possible paths forward regarding a positive impact on acute social challenges. While outside the direct scope of our policy analysis, this is a very important distinction that we will fully address in the discussion and conclusion of this article.

Analysis: Better Questions Based on Understanding a Bigger Picture

Another key similarity between our work and the work of Scollon and Scollon (2004) is that we are also focusing on several empirically grounded sites of engagement, each outwardly distinct. Holistically, these allow a bigger picture to emerge. While it is possible to approach scholarship and policy on our respective topics "as if" they were unrelated, we argue that the best policy questions will be based on a better understanding of their complex interrelationships. Following Denzin's (1998) distinction (see introduction), these are four vignettes from the research topics each of us has been studying, living, or both for the past several years.

Vignette 1: Early Stage Scholars, Mobility, and the "Gap of Insecurity"

There has been a great deal of research done on academic work/life balance (see, e.g., Cooklin et al. 2014; Fox, Fonseca, and Bao 2011; Ward and Wolf-Wendel 2012). Furthermore, there has been a great amount that has been written about scientific mobility (see, e.g., Ackers 2004; Guth 2008; Veugelers and Van Bouwel 2015) and the internationalization of higher education (see, e.g., Marginson and van der Wende 2007; Kogan and Teichler 2007). However, the relationship between these bodies of knowledge is something that has been less talked or thought about. In her doctoral research, Aarnikoivu (in progress) examines the trajectories of

two groups of doctoral students. To do this, she applies nexus analysis as a general methodological approach. The first group of participants consists of physicists and engineers based at CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research, where Aarnikoivu did insider ethnography (see, e.g., Aarnikoivu 2016; Alvesson 2003) from July 2015 to December 2016. The participants are affiliated with universities in eight different European countries, including Finland. To clarify, the doctoral students at CERN are not typically employed by CERN, but instead they use the CERN facilities in order to carry out their dissertation work. Typically, they either work on grants or are paid by different research groups. The second group consists of doctoral students of applied language studies doing their dissertations at the Centre for Applied Language Studies, University of Jyväskylä, Finland. However, because the work of the second group is still in progress, only the first group will be discussed in this policy analysis.

Although there are several different issues that the doctoral students of the studied group were facing throughout their studies, the complex themes of *mobility*, *temporariness*, and the *gap of insecurity* were the most apparent ones that emerged while Aarnikoivu was navigating the nexus of doctoral studies at CERN. This could be explained by the fact that not only were the participants highly mobile people, having decided to work outside their country of origin, but they were also working in a highly mobile environment where people were continuously moving to or from. As studied earlier, academic mobility is usually connected to uncertainty related to fixed-term employment, which again presents challenges for researchers and their families (e.g., Oliver 2009, 2012). Researchers' family members normally participate in the decision-making regarding mobility (Ackers 2004), which comes up regularly when the contract of one (or both) of the spouses is coming to an end (Oliver 2009, 2012). Oliver (2012) has named this the "gap of insecurity" and points out that, in fact, mobility very often is not a choice but rather "a must" considering one's career advancement.

Based on Aarnikoivu's preliminary analysis, all the participants were generally very content with their current situations, and they were happy to work in such an inspiring scientific environment. However, when they spoke about issues that they were concerned about, they often talked about their families, friends, and the future. Among those participants who were either married, engaged, or even those who had started dating only recently, there was often worry about how the partner would cope outside the country of origin. For example, for a spouse moving to a new country because of a husband's or wife's work, it might be difficult to find a new job. Moreover, creating new social circles was considered to be time-consuming, and it demanded a great deal of effort, especially if there were small children in the family. Many of the participants also expressed their worry for the future—not only in terms of their own careers but also because of the future of their relationships: what will happen after graduation? This was a matter of concern especially for those participants

who were in a relationship with a person they had met while working at CERN—usually a person of a different nationality than themselves.

Although formally doctoral studies typically involve a very narrow range of people (such as the supervisors and thesis examiners), there are a number of other people and networks involved in the process of doing a doctorate: other academics (peers, other colleagues, and research participants), family (parents, siblings, spouse, children), and friends (Hopwood 2010; Mantai and Dowling 2015), who all have an effect on the course of doctoral studies, knowingly or unknowingly (Baker and Lattuca 2010; McAlpine, Jazvac-Martek, and Hopwood 2009). The need to extend the viewpoint beyond the doctoral student/supervisory relationship has already been pointed out by others (e.g., Hopwood 2010; Wright 2003). In the research regarding doctoral studies, however, the aforementioned groups are often referred to as “support.” Although undeniably important for the doctoral journey itself, it is apparent that in the nexus of practice of carrying out doctoral studies the role of family and friends is much more significant than to simply “offer support”: It is *with the help of* but also *because of* these groups that doctoral students make decisions during their studies and especially after they graduate. What Aarnikoivu would, therefore, like to ask is whether all these crucial social actors and their roles are taken into account when making decisions and planning policies regarding doctoral studies—and the early-career research stage—in Finland and elsewhere in Europe.

Vignette 2: The Most Valuable Data Source? The People We Never Bothered to Ask

In order to understand the consequences of migration policies better, it is possible to follow up on returnees with either a refugee or asylum-seeking background—those who have first-hand experience on return within the context of irregular migration. Researchers have tackled several aspects related to returns within irregular migration, and it is encouraging to see that individual voices are gradually becoming more prominent within a field of studies that has commonly focused on macro-level phenomena. Nevertheless, these returnees are often out of the public eye, even though they are the specialists whose experiences could spotlight important lessons for policymakers and organizations as to the effectiveness of present policy and practice. The people we never bothered to ask may well be the most valuable data sources, people who possess evidence-based knowledge of the whole refugee cycle, from the flight from crisis, to being on the move, entering the host country, the challenges entailed in settling in and attempting integration, the actualities of return, and the ever-present dilemmas entailed in remigration or onward migration. These people are not easy to reach, but, once located, they are often more than willing to share their insights, intrigued by the fact that someone cares.

In her on-going doctoral study, Korhonen (in progress) focuses on returns in the context of irregular migration. Specifically, the study looks at

refugees' and asylum seekers' return to their place of origin from Finland, after several years' stay in the host country. Korhonen did her field work for her dissertation in Iraqi Kurdistan (or South Kurdistan) in 2013 to interview returnees from Finland, along with follow-up interviews as long as almost two years after the initial ones.

The evidence from the interview analysis offers insights fundamentally distinct from the way most scholars and policymakers have researched or problematized migration within Finnish society. While many seem content with speculating on the negative sides of migration and what a great deal "we" might lose by letting in small numbers of people in crisis, the focus is on people who came to Finland as refugees but then returned and their perception of inclusion potential within Finnish society's most important institutions, organizations, and communities.

Korhonen's results spotlight key migration issues outside the view of "experts" and actors in the migration debate. Specifically, the current migration policies do not consider the policy implications and consequences on individual lives based on the available data in return and deportation contexts. These data from individuals whose actual experiences are subsumed by media headlines of "masses" and "floods" of migrants are missing from the discourses in place and interaction order that inform the policy cycle. Instead, asylum seekers are seen and treated as "illegals" in the eyes of the authorities but also in everyday discourses informing the action on migration, contradicting the viewpoint of individuals actually caught up in migration. What most discourses in place have in common is an oversimplified view of return migration and a lack of sustainable long-term, evidence-based decision-making. Real-world questions, such as the need for a voluntary returnee to come back to Finland or the EU, are not considered. The *de facto* "one-way return ticket" does not map onto the changing needs of either Finnish society, the geopolitical realities of the regions of origin, nor the obligations of the international community. Instead, returnees give up their residence rights in exchange for return. In a private discussion, a Finnish migration official stated that another option "does not exist," specifically, that "the returnees do not return" (to Finland).⁷

The present policy in many circumstances is "no second chances on European soil." However, the reality of global migration often entails further or remigration, in spite—or because—of "getting-rid-of-policies." Moreover, rigid borders, invisible to "us," control the lives of people with second-tier citizenship and human rights. What is not considered is that migrants who have been deported—or those who returned voluntarily but without additional financial or educational/professional capital—are often seen as "failures" upon return because they have not achieved what they were aiming at and are marginalized in their own communities. The time spent in the host society and its educational institutions benefits

⁷ A telephone conversation on October 27, 2015, followed by an email exchange, with an anonymous official in the Finnish Ministry of the Interior.

neither the returnees nor the host societies. The education received in Finland holds the power to enhance the migrants' position. It is, however, designed for the Finnish context and working life and mostly unsuitable for post-return circumstances.

Vignette 3: Cultural Capital Mobilization of Russian Physicians in the Transition into the Finnish Health Labor Market

Public debates on foreign physicians moving to Finland for employment, especially from non-EU countries, center on the assessment and recognition of their competences and qualifications to practice in healthcare services and ways of managing their labor integration. This process seriously impacts healthcare workers' initial integration stage at different levels (personal, social, socio-economic, and professional) as it necessitates a multi-layered struggle. Russian physicians moving to Finland initially experience a lengthy period of time working as trainees, referred to as the "transition penalty" (see Lochhead 2003), before they receive a license to practice. This affects their career progression and social mobility. The main question is how these physicians gain the credit of recognition and trust when entering the Finnish labor market. In his postdoctoral work, Habti engages these issues: to what extent does the integration process offer a high or low return in their career mobility, or meet the expectations of an employer? How do these physicians then succeed in the transition passage to work using their qualifications in Finland so that their qualifications are acknowledged as valuable cultural capital?

Habti discusses these questions using a relational approach that conceptualizes the value of qualifications of Russian physicians. Because the recognition of qualifications is related to socially constructed and biographically changing spaces (Weiss 2005), his study partly uses Bourdieu's (1986, 1990) conceptual groundwork, which serves as a relevant theoretical instrument that guides Habti's study, namely cultural capital, field, and symbolic capital. Bourdieu asserts that agents are embedded in collectively shared cultural and symbolic practices and that recognition is "traded" in markets and is symbolically logically grounded. As a concept, his cultural capital is based on skills and knowledge accumulated in education and the family (social networks), and it is constrained by state regulations that allow or limit the use of this cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986, 242–43). It embodies relational aspects of different social spaces. *Institutionalized cultural capital* is assessed for recognition depending on specific national (location-specific) contexts (Weiss 2005), using a specific nation-state institutional framework (see Neiterman and Bourgeault 2012) or transnational (globally recognized) contexts. When the value of this capital is known and recognized in different fields (contexts), it turns into *symbolic capital* and plays a role in social reproduction (Bourdieu 1989, 17). Cultural capital depends on the field (Bourdieu 1986, 1990), which is defined as a social space related to joint interests, formed by

shared norms, hierarchic positions, and struggles over the shared forms of capital (social, cultural, economic, symbolic).

The processes of building and mobilizing the components of cultural capital are time-related. These temporal processes, as a transition passage of integration into the labor market, transform this cultural capital. The value of the capital is negotiated when it is used in the labor market with employers or intermediaries in the job market. This process equals to what Bourdieu calls *symbolic struggles*. Otherwise, physicians seek ways in which the consequent loss or weakened symbolic capital does not signify a loss of the professional or social status in working life. Russian physicians have to struggle for their recognition within a hierarchical but symbolically legitimated structure of society because the process of integration and accreditation usually negatively affects career progression and social mobility in their initial career stage.

Using Bourdieu's relational social theory within the life-course approach (see, e.g., Kōu et al. 2015; Wingens et al. 2011), Habti's study aims to describe and analyze the perceptions and practices of these physicians who recount their experiences in establishing themselves in Finland, both in national and local cultural contexts. Habti's study also aims to present aspects that the Russian physicians consider as an integral part of the healthcare workforce. In addition, the study examines the more problematic or ambivalent aspects of establishing professionalism as a migrant from a non-EU, Eastern European country. This allows an understanding of the complex dynamic processes and the different strategies (struggles and negotiations) that govern their professional and organizational integration into the Finnish health services. The research is based on qualitative evidence about the basic questions related to these Russian physicians' integration process in a highly segmented labor market. The analysis is based on twenty-six in-depth semi-structured interviews with Russian physicians (21 F, 5 M) currently living and working in different regions of Finland.

Developing the theoretical and empirical synthesis can serve as a knowledge base for policy-actors, stakeholders, and concerned institutions. This empirical synthesis can also lead to a better, theoretically grounded understanding of the embedded dynamics and characteristics in the migration, integration, and career progression of this unique group in Finland. Understanding these complex dynamics is important when Finnish authorities improve policies and programs that address and target the recruitment and integration of foreign healthcare workers in Finland. In terms of nexus analysis, this vignette spotlights institutional, organizational, and professional nexuses in which the two fundamental policy questions are the following: (1) Are there alternatives to a six-year internship process for fully qualified physicians, including specialists, especially considering the shortage of medical doctors in several Finnish municipalities? (2) Is there a risk that underpaid MDs and specialists might choose

other migration destinations or leave for countries that offer better-paid integration in a fraction of the time?

Vignette 4: Underserved Populations in the Nordic Countries? We Don't Know.

From 2013 to 2015, authors Hoffman and Habti and their colleagues studied scholarly precariousness in Finnish higher education (Hoffman et al. 2015). The research process included presentations regarding key findings for personnel employed in both research institutes in the team's focus. The purpose of the presentations to personnel was peer-to-peer intervention, designed to provide a better understanding of the challenging personnel practices that explained scholarly precariousness. These presentations were given by different combinations of authors at over the course of the research. In addition, the scientific findings were presented by Hoffman in several presentations at international conferences on both migration and higher education studies (e.g., Hoffman et al. 2013; Hoffman et al. 2014; Hoffman 2015). In the latter stages of the study's write-up, Hoffman was asked to publicly comment on the critical approach his team had taken to the topic of equality and unproblematic human resource policies and practices in two research institutes. The site of engagement was a seminar focused on "Equality and Diversity" in the university in which these institutes are located. Several policy actors were present, including the university's director of administration, a representative of the strategic planning unit, the chair of the university's equality committee, a board member of the student union, and an official from the Finnish Ministry of Justice, whose office had recently mandated new measures concerning equality and non-discrimination, based on updated legislation that applied to all organizations in Finland.

The majority of the seminar presentations were by institutional decision-makers and policy actors, reacting to the recent legislation. In the only research-based presentation, Hoffman and the study's co-authors Siekkinen and Stikhin each pointed out research and experienced-based findings that aimed to interrogate critically the legislative and policy-driven discussion that was taking place. In his comments, Hoffman's central point problematized the relationship between three ideas *stated* to be important in the European Union and in national and university policy: internationalization, attractive academic careers, and equality. Drawing from several studies, Hoffman pointed out that the easiest way to gauge the extent to which ideas stated to be important (in policy discourse) are *actually* important (in terms of action) was through the direct observation of publicly available information that ministries and universities routinely make available on their websites (Hoffman and Välimaa 2016).

In terms of *discourses in place*, Hoffman pointed out that all three topics are said to be important in both the university's current strategic plan and its operational agenda. Internationalization was referenced twenty-eight times in the strategic plan and eighteen times in the operational

agenda, attractive academic careers six times and four times respectively, and equality two times and once, respectively. Hoffman then pointed out that the number of people hired by the university to specifically *act* on these topics was eight persons (full-time staff: internationalization) and fourteen persons (full-time staff: human resources). Equality, on the other hand, institutionally and organizationally speaking, was the province of an unpaid committee made up of non-specialists, supported by a student affairs officer whose job description included acting as a secretary for this committee, among other responsibilities.

As an issue of social and public policy, Hoffman pointed out that, structurally speaking, the university did not employ *anyone* whose primary focal responsibilities qualified them to answer, address, or act on the question: *Do all groups located in Finnish society have access to, or are they, in fact, located in, the faculty ranks, student population, or management structure of this university?* More important was the fact that the university employees who might have occasionally considered these types of questions did not appear to be drawing on extensive experience with, or state-of-the-art knowledge of, what the scholarly literature identifies as the single most important issue regarding inclusive universities: the context of the *community served* (Hurtado, Carter, and Kardia 1998; Kahn and Pavlich 2001). This had been confirmed in Hoffman's follow-up work with the university's equality committee, which involved developing a staff/student survey focused on equality. The initial draft of the survey supplied to Hoffman was not meaningfully connected to the state-of-the-art scholarly literature on equality, higher education, and academic work, and it did not account for nor problematize the relationships between access, participation, and career trajectory. Equality was conceptually unproblematized and empirically not operationalized in terms of state-of-the-art scholarly literature, current European Commission (EC) or university policy, or contemporary management and leadership practices.

In terms of nexus analysis, this observation, if generalizable, underlines an awkward situation, in terms of universities around the world preoccupied with recruitment, selection, promotion, and retention of faculty, staff, and management (who in turn select and credential students). Specifically, if asked—by anyone—if Finland's higher education system has underserved groups in our general population, the answer—at this particular university—is: "We don't know." Further, in terms of a focal interaction order essential to nexus analysis, these observations underline *the absence of an institutional or organizational nexus* in which the actors necessary to problematize this type of question could potentially meet. In other words, teaching, research, and policy referencing equality exist. However, this university does not employ specialists who focus on, can articulate, or who routinely act on the relationship between the backgrounded, unfunded, and unstaffed discourse on equality and the foregrounded, well-funded, fully staffed discourse on human resource practices and internationalization.

Discussion

Using the theoretical and methodological logic of nexus analysis, we have now identified and problematized key *discourses in place* and *cycles of discourse* of our respective research topics. They are socially mediated in recurring *interaction order(s)* in the *sites of engagement* each of us has *zoomed in* and *out* of within our respective research. This, in turn, has allowed us to identify discourses that are ignored and the structural absence of interaction between particular groups within sites, characterized by the absence of engagement. Our analysis implies that alternative approaches to policy exist, and it spotlights the sites of engagement in which those alternatives could be articulated if present challenges were adequately problematized and better understood within the nexuses we identify. Further, by using a transdisciplinary mode of inquiry well outside the range in use by most scholars and policymakers focused on unresolved social challenges in Finland, the relationship between mobilities and migration becomes actionable in terms of policy analysis. While the identification of these focal points (above) and articulating their relationship (below) is only an initial step, it underlines the methodological utility of testing the logic of nexus analysis, as well as its potential in areas where it is not widely used, like higher education studies.

Why the Relationship between Mobilities and Migration Matters

The reason we chose to problematize our topic in a scholarly setting—focused on C. Wright Mills's (1959) formulation in his classic work, *The Sociological Imagination*—was because we found little imagination in the research-policy nexus concerning the topics spotlighted in the four vignettes of our analysis. Our problematization spotlights the limitations of many scholars and policy actors brought into view across our topics, especially those who (1) have no direct experience of contemporary mobilities and/or migration and who (2) know nothing of significance of either (Denzin 1998). The research-policy nexus concerning Finland's current social challenges is of crucial importance, as most persons in Finland's general population have no expertise in these areas. This is the case in many countries. However, what is unique to Finland is the lack of imagination, evolving knowledge, and long-term experience on which viable policy could be based. This is important because of the social, economic, and political challenges currently faced by Finnish society in an era of public financial austerity and the stagnation of a challenged private sector. Both of these are complicated by uncertainty and ambivalence about EU cohesion, in general, and migration issues, in particular. Added to all of this are the increased geopolitical tensions along Finland's eastern border. None of these broad challenges was in dispute in 2016–17, as we authored this analysis.

More specific to our topic, Finland has the oldest working-age population in the EU, and as that part of the workforce retires, Finland has never articulated a clear evidence-based approach to the migration and

mobility challenges raised across our four vignettes. The consequence of not understanding these complexities is “push factors” bearing on precisely the people most needed to directly address the challenges faced by Finnish society. Sometimes, as migration studies show, these two groups are the same. This is also not in dispute as these relationships are better understood in countries, communities, and companies competing for precisely the global talent brought into focus by the mobilities paradigm, as well as studies of the internationalization of higher education, both of which cut across the topics advanced as evidence of our argument. This is the backdrop common to the four sets of studies carried out by the authors and the explanation for why we selected a transdisciplinary mode of inquiry, drawing on four different fields of study or disciplines and focusing on what outwardly might appear to be unrelated topics to anyone but specialists.

Lost in Translation—and on Policymakers and Scholars

Our policy analysis illuminates several key distinctions lost on many in the research-policy nexus in Finland, especially those structurally disconnected—as indicated across our analysis—from a population that is changing more rapidly than those who mediate policy. By “lost,” we mean that these distinctions are often unclear, confused, conflated, and used without conceptual precision. In scholarship and policymaking, this lack of theoretical or conceptual grounding renders analysis of data— or “evidence”—meaningless. The most important of these distinctions are as follows:

Policy Research versus Policy Analysis. An example of a good time for conventional policy research is indicated when the researching of issues is not widely contested, such as when universities publish the numbers of bachelor or master’s degrees per year, as defined by the Bologna Process reforms. Those numbers and any action based on them is what we term *policy-based evidence*. Policy analysis, as advanced by Wildavsky (1987), on the other hand, is needed when contrasting alternative approaches to policy issues that are not yet understood, such as the relationship between migration and mobilities in Finland.

In other words, when thinking about degree numbers, the evidence defined by policy exists and is clear. However, when thinking about migration challenges within Finnish society, the lack of compelling evidence across our vignettes spotlights the need for contrasting conceptually problematized, empirically grounded alternatives, within the sites of engagement brought into focus in our vignettes. The policy “trap” that many fall into when dealing with complex topics is confusing *policy assumptions*, which are grounded in clear rationale, with theoretically unproblematized and empirically ungrounded *normative assumptions*. The latter are often only biased assumptions of some variety (cultural, political, religious, and so on) that may—or may not—be backed up by valid data and rigorous analysis. While it can be argued that existing policy needs to be revisited

in terms of considering alternatives, the four vignettes in our analysis are characterized by the unlikelihood that alternatives *were*, *will be*, or *are being* considered. In addition, the evidence base for both scholarship and policymaking is fairly narrow, as indicated in our opening problematization of this field, and remains so in the sites of engagement illuminated across our vignettes.

Getting Traction on Contemporary Contested Complexity. Our analysis puts a spotlight on four key focal points that we regard as essential to gaining better evidence-based understanding of the demographically driven social challenges faced by Finnish society. These include the following:

- Mobilities (Urry 2007), which offers a paradigmatic approach to the era in which we now live. As such, this implicates humankind, in general, as no person on the planet falls outside the scope of this paradigm.
- Migration, which involves well-documented dynamic patterns of human movement within and across the regions and countries of the globe involving millions and which entails complex mobilities.
- The internationalization of higher education, which involves distinct forms of mobilities and sometimes migration.
- The migration of refugees and asylum-seekers, an established focal point of migration studies relevant to several forms of complex mobility.

These distinctions spotlight especially the least mobile, in terms of the most important forms of mobility, specifically social and intergenerational mobility. As we wrote this text, commentators across the political spectrum agreed that both the UK's Brexit vote, as well as the US Presidential Election were "won" by groups whose identity is shaped by a perceived or experienced loss or lack of social mobility, over generations, and who felt threatened from groups, especially "immigrants" and (highly mobile) political elites (Cillizza 2016). The point of our use of the four outlined focal points is that the theory and major concepts in use are needed to contextualize and understand social challenges we are faced with when analyzing our topics, in empirical terms. This becomes even more important when communicating the relevance of our findings to policymakers. The main challenge we encounter across the vignettes is not a lack of appreciation for complexity within specific settings and situations. All persons we have encountered during our research agree that tackling the types of challenges brought into view in our paper are complex. What is absent, however, most often because of *non-interaction* and a *lack of engagement* within specific sites is the fact that *complexity is contested* in very important ways that defy simplification from narrow perspectives. The four key focal points explain, in part, the reasons for contestation, especially when the relation between terms is unclear, confused, or conflated. What remains is whether policymakers detect and

effectively engage contested complexity or remain baffled. Readers will probably have seen this play out in both the UK and the US, as this article is finalized. “Immigration,” the term that caught our eye in the initial conference where we met, is interesting in the sense of a “discourse in place” that clearly mediates action in scholarship, policymaking, and, especially, the media. That said, it is not on our list for the same reason it is not typically used by the International Organization for Migration. Specifically, the term assumes both a single direction and a final result that is not born out in enough cases to make it meaningful regarding the topics our analysis brings into view. What we would propose, based on our argument and evidence, is unremarkable but comes into view with an untypical mode of inquiry: nexus analysis. Specifically, better questions are clearly possible when researchers rely on conceptual precision and better evidence, which by definition means better policies and—ultimately—the positive change hoped for by policymakers and the society they serve.

The single best policy question starkly illuminated by the mobilities paradigm is not “managing the floods of migrants coming to Finland,” but rather “how to keep floods of migrants from leaving Finland.” The moment a highly skilled professional leaves Finland, they enter patterns of mobilities and migration well outside the assumption-laden focus of scholars and policymakers narrowly focused on “immigration.” Even for those migrants arriving in Finland who temporarily enter the “immigrant” discourse in place, it is clear that many never arrive with the intention to stay. Those categorized as citizens or residents with an “immigrant background” may opt, at any time, to move onward, to countries, communities, and companies where it is well understood that they need mobile talent a lot more than mobile talent needs them. Finland, as a society, is not one of these countries. While some small groups might contest that, this defines several unresolved dilemmas and paradoxes faced by policymakers (Hoffman et al. 2015, 2016).

Conclusions

Within the sites of engagement our vignettes are focused on, we detail structural pressure and push factors that underline the stark realities of Finland’s unsustainable dependency ratio as the post-war baby-boom generation retires and gradually fills expensive, publicly funded residential facilities and stretches the limits of a publicly funded healthcare system. The long-term, generational, focal framing of the mobilities paradigm instantly highlights a stark choice for highly skilled mobile talent: “Why stay?” This question is acute within the structural nexuses highlighted across our vignettes. Our analysis of policy outcomes bearing on mobilities and migration in sites within institutions, organizations, and professions ranges from benign misunderstanding of the most important needs of highly skilled mobile professionals (Aarnikoivu); continuous neglect of key issues and dynamics (Korhonen); obstructionist gatekeeping by professional communities (Habti); and the failure to ask critical questions

uniquely suited to higher education (Hoffman.) Over *generations*—a key time-scale missed in neoliberal short-term, top-down, non-inclusive policymaking—the consequences of “getting policy decisions wrong” becomes clear. Regarding the vignettes that are the evidence of our argument, it is worth noting that the people brought into view are focused on long-term consequences of decisions, especially where social mobility is concerned, and the intergenerational mobility of those closest to them. This should come as no surprise to scholars or policymakers. What is more surprising is policy processes that disregard this.

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