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Demographic "Megatrends" and Their Implications

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This article describes five trends in the demography of migration movements that are presented as megatrends for their striking similarity across countries and regions in Europe, if not globally. The trends — diversification of origins, majority-minority societies, the dimension of age, generational sedimentation, and the diversification of migration itself — will have a deep impact on the ways migration is conceived in most European countries — and thus on European, national and local policies around migration, but also on the focus of attention of Migration Studies as an academic discipline.

Introduction

Migration has become one of the mega-topics of the political debate worldwide. In Europe, it brought right-wing populist parties into parliaments and even into governments, although their political agenda does usually not go much beyond being "against migration". It produced or highlighted deep differences not only between old versus new EU-member states, Balkan and Mediterranean countries versus the preferred final destinations of many migrants further North, but also within mainstream parties and even within the Left and the Right. The situation along and on the Mediterranean Sea is deeply disturbing both politically and ethically: the continuing high number of people dying every month in the attempt to cross the water, the situation especially in Libyan, but also Greek and Bosnian refugee camps, the odysseys of ships with refugees on board trying to find a port that lets them in, and — last, but not least — the incapacity of the EU to offer joint rational and pragmatic solutions or, at least, to organise a way to find them. At the same time, by contrast, especially at the local level civic support for refugees and the attitudes of mayors and municipal officials have been very frequently positive and pragmatic — rather surprisingly, one could say, if we consider the effort and work it means for some local communities to deal with such a large influx of people.

Since the emblematic "Summer of Migration" in 2015, migration has become almost synonymous to refugees in the European debate . Even more so, the arrival of refugees is not presented primarily as a problem of resources (financial and infrastructure), but as a supposed threat to European and national culture and community — which narrows the focus of attention on migration even more to those countries and cultures of origin which are supposed to be "the most different" and "other". Thus, talking about migration in Europe is neither about Germans in Amsterdam and Zurich, Israelis in Berlin, or Lithuanians in northern Norway nor about international students or company leaders. This is even more puzzling when looking more closely at the contrast between, on the one side, the political uproar that is produced around the influx of refugees and undocumented migrants

in numbers that between 2014 and 2016 were high in comparison to previous years, but not in absolute and demographic terms, and, on the other side, some wider demographic developments in most parts of Western and Northern Europe that are going widely unnoticed, although they will have a deep impact on how these societies see themselves — especially with regard to the still strong and dominant ethnic elements in many current self-definitions of nationhood.

In this article, I identify the five main features of demographic development and discuss their implications for the societies at-large, but also for Migration Studies. I call them megatrends, because they seem to be almost omnipresent across countries and cities. My main focus is on Western German cities, but also on those other mainly Western and Northern European countries with around half a century of experience with immigration from former colonies, labour migration in the so-called guest workers scheme, and several waves of refugees from different parts of the world. The selection of examples may look arbitrary and, in a way, it is: many of the presented illustrative numbers were found by coincidence or hidden on back pages in local reports, or depended on what was available on municipal homepages. Moreover, there are hardly any common standards as regards the selection of numbers and the contexts in which they are presented.

"Migration background" has become quite a regular item in city statistics, but it does not follow one single definition, even less so when looking at different countries. In the German case, for example, the Federal Bureau for Statistics uses a different methodology and dataset — the micro-census — than most of the regional and municipal statistics that work with data from population registers; this can lead to different numbers even for one city, and also the regularity of updating presented statistical information varies a lot across cities. In short: it was not possible to obtain more comprehensive data on more cities within the available time and resources, especially for the European comparison, and to conduct calculations that would make the data directly comparable. The following descriptions of trends are thus still open and awaiting more solid and robust data to test their actual prevalence and find out more about possible differences, variations and scales to which they apply in different settings.

Megatrend 1: Diversification of Origins

As Steven Vertovec described ten years ago and coined as super-diversity: the number of origin countries and nationalities in almost any given city in western and northern Europe has strongly increased, while, at the same time, the vast majority of them are representing only a very small proportion of the total population. This is not only or mainly a result of a continuous accumulation of countries of origin, but also reflects global trends of increased mobility. To give just a few random examples from available German city statistics:

- In Stuttgart, a city of 700 thousand inhabitants, only in 2014 newly arrived immigrants came from 149 different countries.
- In Hamburg, a city of 1.8 million inhabitants and an official share of migration background of 32 per cent, the three most important countries of origin — Turkey, Poland, and Afghanistan — together make up about ten per cent of the total population, but more than half of all inhabitants with a migration background belong to groups that are all smaller than 1 per cent of the total population — including immigrants from Syria that have been very much at the focus of political debate for the past three years and now form the seventh largest origin group in the city.
- In Frankfurt/Main, there are foreign citizens with 177 different nationalities officially registered. The vast majority of these origin groups are numerically very tiny: the smallest 120 of them together represent not more than 5.7 per cent of the total immigrant population.

This tendency represents a challenge especially for cultural politics directed towards immigrant groups. Multiculturalist policies, as they came up in the late 1980s especially in the UK and the Netherlands, but also in Frankfurt, support immigrant and ethnic (or racial) minorities' self-organisation and give them a voice in local affairs. This is, at least, a logistical challenge when dealing with a myriad of organisations of minuscule national or ethnic origin groups. It is also a challenge for first language or mother tongue instruction in schools when there are 30 or more languages within a single school.

Additionally, this is a challenge for migration or integration research interested in the differences between origin groups: most groups are simply too small to be addressed with standard methods of sampling and statistics. And it puts into question the almost taken for granted presumption of ethno-national group belonging as a main explaining factor in some powerful traditions of migration research and, of course, in political discourses around integration.

Megatrend 2: Majority-Minority Societies

London and Amsterdam are likely to have been the first European metropoles in which the population of non-immigrant and non-ethnic or visible minority background lost its numeric majority around 2012 and 2013. Since then, other big cities, such as Paris, Brussels, Vienna, and Frankfurt/Main, have followed. But, actually, some smaller places might have reached the tipping point even earlier: In Germany, it is Offenbach, a city of 130 thousand inhabitants in the vicinity of Frankfurt/Main that is leading the ranks with 61 per cent population of "migrant background". Other medium-sized cities follow, mostly places with continued significant industrial production, such as big automobile factories.

In London, the category losing its numeric majority is called the "British Whites", in Amsterdam it is the "Dutch". The frequently used German term "German majority society" explicitly expresses not only the expectation that this group would represent a numeric majority, but also the "norm" to which immigrants are expected to adapt. However, the quite common term in conservative political discourse, *Leitkultur* ("guiding or leading culture"), shows the virtual impossibility to pin this down to specific nameable elements because the term and idea of such a norm neglects (a) the social and cultural diversity within the so-called majority society, and (b) the fact that the degree to which members of this "majority society" themselves actually fulfil certain requirements is never scrutinised.

Describing the tipping point of a city as a whole is emblematic and interesting mainly in symbolic terms. There is, of course, no reason why reaching the tipping point would make any practical difference or produce a new "feeling" when living in such a city. This is partly due to the fact that we are talking about a development that has been on its way for quite a while: All these cities have known neighbourhoods and areas with a population composed by a majority of minorities for many years or even decades: in Hamburg, for example, while the total percentage of immigrant population is only 32 per cent, there are many neighbourhoods in which more than half of the inhabitants are of immigrant background — the highest shares being more than 70 per cent. But even in these neighbourhoods, no single ethnic descent represents more than one third of the population — i.e. just the same share as the population without an immigrant family history. This is another important element of the term used above to denominate this megatrend: in none of these cities there is an ethnic or minority group that would be even close to becoming a new majority.

But what makes the tipping point interesting is the question whether and why it should be the former majority that continues defining the norm. Look, for example, at school classes in which not more than three or four out of 25 pupils are of ethnic German origin — it is difficult to imagine them representing automatically some sort of cultural standard for all their non-German peers, even those who are native-born themselves. It is very interesting to observe, how these pupils share cultural references of quite diverse origins, but also stick to German as their common vernacular.

Megatrend 3: Diversification is (mainly) a Question of Age

This is another strikingly common feature in all German and other European cities that were examined for this article: the younger the age cohorts, the higher is the share of those of immigrant background:

- As stated above, the total share of immigrant origin in Hamburg is 32 per cent, but for children and youth it is 50 per cent; in the most diverse neighbourhoods more than 90 per cent of the minors of age have a migration background.
- In Amsterdam, at the end of 2017, the share of migration background was 61 per cent in the age group 0 to 19, while in the total population it was slightly above 50 per cent.
- In Vienna, in 2012, the total share of migrant background was still slightly below 50 per cent, but in the age group 0 to 9 it was already above 60 per cent. The tipping age in that year was at around 40.

This is not to say that diversification would be limited to youth. In Vienna, but also in other majority-minority cities we looked at, the share of immigrant population even among old people is surprisingly high: more than 30 per cent in the age group 75 and older. In Amsterdam, this share is 53 per cent for the adults between 40 and 60; in the age group 60+ it goes down to the still remarkable 38 per cent. And although the trend of (super)-diversification generally started in working-class areas, it is increasingly spreading into middle-class neighbourhoods too — again with the youth leading the way.

Megatrend 4: More "Generational Sedimentation" Than Immigration

There are more and more countries of origin, but actually, by far the largest share of

the young people with a so-called "migration background" is native-born: they are second or third generation. In Sindelfingen, a medium-size industrial city near Stuttgart with a total share of 52 per cent immigrant population, almost 90 per cent of the youth with migration background were born in Germany. By comparison, this only applies to 36 per cent for the age group 18 to 40 and 6 per cent of those older than that. In Vienna, about 70 per cent of the youth of immigrant background is native-born. There is, of course, also a statistical logic behind this: within the category of migration background, the younger they are, the more likely children were born at the place where they currently live, while adults, especially in the older age groups have a much higher "biographical chance" to have migrated themselves at some moment. By contrast, the large influx of refugee families in 2015 and 2016 does not show a major effect even in most recent statistics: although Hamburg, for example, accepted comparatively large numbers of Syrian refugees in 2015 and 2016, Syrian nationals represent only 2.2 per cent of all registered inhabitants of immigrant origin.

While in classical immigration countries the native-born children of immigrants are normally considered as nationals, European statistical reports rarely distinguish between first and second/third generation when using "migration background" as a statistical category. An exception here is the most recent Integration and Diversity Monitor in Vienna in emphasising that 68 per cent of the city's population is native-born and only 27 per cent had non-Austrian citizenship — which adds an important piece of information to the fact that half of the Viennese population statistically figures as having a migration background.

Megatrend 5: Migration Never Stops, But It is Diversifying

This aspect is almost too trivial to be worth explicitly mentioning: migration has always been there in most different forms, and there is no reason why this fact should change — quite on the contrary. But migration very frequently has been represented in political and media discourses as well as in a good part of Migration Studies in very restricted terms: as unidirectional and stable, and focusing only at national border-crossing movements of individuals. Only recently, more temporary forms of migration have become more visible: "guest workers" moving back to their countries of origin upon retirement, but continuously visiting their grandchildren (and doctors) in the country of immigration; young people consecutively studying and/or working in several different countries after finishing high school; "love migration" of both spouses and sex workers; highly specialised professionals moving around on a global scale; transnational families with members spread over several countries, if not continents — to mention just a few examples.

Very little attention is also given to internal movements of people within one country, despite the fact that these movements can be quite significant. To mention again some German examples: dynamic prosperous cities, such as the above-mentioned cities of Hamburg or Sindelfingen, have an annual population turnover of around 10 per cent, i.e. one in ten inhabitants moves away and is replaced by someone else. In the most mobile age-group between finishing formal education and starting a family, this share goes even up to one out of four. This means that in statistical terms every ten years the entire population of the city is being renewed! Since quite a lot of people stay longer than ten years, this number shows that there must be quite a large proportion of the population that is very mobile — among them many immigrants. Statistics do not allow following individual biographies in this regard, but for example in the city of Offenbach the average fluctuation rate of non-German citizens over the past eight years was three to four times higher than among German nationals.

The megatrend here is that mobility is becoming normal even among those growing up in small villages or rural areas that are distant from main traffic lines or bigger cities. And people are moving to — potentially — almost any other place in the world. There is a broad range of globally effective factors that make a future decrease of global mobility highly unlikely. It is therefore also most unlikely that harsh protection measures at the outer borders of the European Union will ever have a significant effect on the flows of people across these borders. They definitely increase the costs — in terms of both money and the death toll — but will not prevent people from all over the world coming to Europe.

Conclusions

The above-described megatrends will (and should) have profound consequences on both the migration and integration policies on the European, national and even on the local level and on Migration Studies. Presenting migration almost automatically as a symptom and cause for crisis prevents politicians and journalists from addressing the actual

causality behind social problems, some of which *might* be related to migration. The so-called "refugee crisis", for example, was, above all, a crisis of the state infrastructure in dealing with newly arrived people — and put the finger on unsolved general social issues. The lack of accommodation facilities, for example, was heavily intensified by a general lack of affordable housing as a result of neo-liberal policies over the past 25 years in many European cities. In many places, civil society and non-state institutional actors stepped in where the public administration was overstrained and, in the best cases, the challenges were met together.

But even in the discourse of mainstream parties in most European countries migration appears almost exclusively as a threat to the supposed cultural unity and social cohesion of the nation. This discourse is so dominant that it can hardly be a surprise that its profiteers have been extreme nationalist, xenophobic, and anti-European political parties. Even more troubling is probably the fact that this discourse also carries a high risk of alienating growing sections of the population from the democratic system: on one hand, it fosters feelings of exclusion among individuals of migration background, feelings not only felt by immigrants, but also by their native-born children and even their grandchildren. What effects might it have for democracy, if this is true for a clear numeric majority in the younger ages? On the other hand, the members of the so-called "majority society" might also justifiably develop feelings of alienation when their everyday life experiences of increasing cultural and ethnic diversity in their neighbourhoods is not recognised in the political discourse and in the media, but presented predominantly in negative terms and as a form of anomaly. Again: what are the potential mid- and long-term effects on democracy of this dissociation between the political discourse and local social realities?

All this is not only relevant for those cities in Western Europe that already are majority minority-societies or those at the verge of this. The globally effective factors at play here do also affect the eastern and south-eastern European cities that still have comparatively low levels of immigrant population, including the eastern parts of Germany. There are no indications that immigration will not be a growing force also in these regions. Our analysis of the situation in the two largest East German cities Leipzig and Dresden even shows that many important developments, including diversification and gentrification in former working-class areas that in western cities took half a century to arrive at their current state, are happening in these cities within a much shorter period of time and under considerably less favourable economic conditions. This can be a relevant "stress factor", especially in a general political climate that is so seemingly unanimously anti-immigrant.

For Migration Studies, these demographic developments should encourage yet another round of critical reflection on the still prevailing methodological nationalisms in the study of migration, which look particularly at movements across national borders and focus mainly on ethno-national origin groups, as two sides of the same medal. In my view, Migration Studies has to broaden the scope and examine migration and mobility in all their transnational and global complexities. Especially globally comparative perspectives could lead to a more fundamental and universal understanding of migration movements as an omnipresent feature of the human condition in the past, the present and the future.

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Transit

MIGRATION INSTITUTE OF FINLAND

POLITICS OF MIGRATION

THE GOVERNANCE OF INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY OF PEOPLE

October 22, 2018

Tampere

Seminar: Politics of Migration

The Governance of the International Mobility of People

International migration and its governance are hot topics among politicians, researchers and the general public throughout Europe. Who should be able to cross the borders of nations states, when, on what grounds? Who should be allowed to stay?

The keynote speakers are **Prof. Andrew Geddes** (Migration Policy Centre, European University Institute) and **Prof. Ruben Andersson** (International Migration Institute, University of Oxford).

The seminar will be held on Oct. 22 in Tampere from 10 am to 4 pm at Vapriikki auditorium and is organized by TRANSIT - Research Centre on Transnationalism and Transformation and the Migration Institute of Finland.