The Role of Networks in the Development of UK Migration Policy

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This article examines the 'policy networks' that existed between 1997 and 2007 in UK asylum, economic migration and immigrant integration policy. The analysis shows that employers and businesses (together with other state and non-state actors) were part of a tightly organised, ideologically cohesive economic migration 'policy community'. This policy community was crucial to the development of economic migration policy, in contrast to the development of asylum and integration policies. The central argument of this article is that the mainstream interpretation of UK immigration policy change (that change was driven by an elite-led, powerful executive) is correct in tracing the dynamics of *asylum policy* development between 1997 and 2007 under New Labour, but wrong for the development of *immigration policy* as a whole, which was more complex, and where businesses played a key role.

Recent migration literature has been dominated by the question of why migration policies fail (Boswell, 2007) and in particular one of the central puzzles of immigration scholarship – the seeming mismatch, or 'gap' (see Cornelius *et al.*, 2004), between public demands to limit immigration (together with the 'control' rhetoric of politicians) and the reality of an increasing volume of immigration.

Gary Freeman is credited with offering the first comprehensive explanation of this question. He attributes the discrepancy between restrictive migration goals and liberalised migration outcomes by identifying an influential role for interests through an 'organised public' approach. Freeman (1995) identifies that the general public hold views that are generally against more immigration, but public opinion is slow to 'mobilize and crystallize' (p. 884) where benefits are concentrated. As a result, immigration politics is made 'in the context of a dense web of organized groups whose orientations are overwhelmingly admissionist', including employers, ethnic/migrant–advocacy groups and, later, trade unions (Freeman, 1995, p. 888; see also Freeman, 2004). According to Freeman, expansive outcomes are produced in a generally restrictive political climate because of concentrated interests, or what he originally attributes to 'client politics'. This important study triggered an enormous response within the migration literature pointing out various limitations and exceptions to this theory, particularly with regard to the scope of explanation (see Brubaker, 1995).

In the case of British immigration, policy development has been contradictorily described as a process of client politics (Freeman, 1995) and insulated, executive decisions (Statham and Geddes, 2006). Freeman (1994) himself questions the explanations for migration policy gaps in the UK by acknowledging the country as potentially a 'deviant case'. This

aberrance, as Randall Hansen (2000) later points out, is because the UK, unlike other advanced democracies, has successfully reduced the number of immigrants entering the UK and 'secured' its borders (p. 22). Paul Statham and Andrew Geddes approach British exceptionalism by suggesting that policy development results from independent, public elites and not an influential, 'organized public' base. Employing a network analysis approach, they conclude that British immigration policy is an institutionalised field with a relatively weak level of civil society engagement. Consequently, immigration policy is 'determined "top-down" in a relatively autonomous way by political elites' (Statham and Geddes, 2006, p. 266). Similar conclusions can be found in the writings of the majority of commentators on UK migration policy (see, for example, Hammar, 1985; Hansen, 2000; Joppke, 1999).

This explanatory ambiguity underscores the importance of providing fuller descriptions not only of migration policy gaps but especially of migration policy in the UK. Not only is the UK one of the largest immigrant-receiving states in Europe and one of the top ten receiving countries worldwide, limiting the utility of explanations which relegate this case as *sui generis*, but policy makers have been actively engaged in redefining the immigration policy landscape since Labour was first elected in 1997. There have been six parliamentary acts since 1997 and no other social policy area in the UK has been the subject of such legislative activism in the last decade (Somerville *et al.*, 2009).

This study examines the UK as a crucial case to test organised public and independent elite explanations of migration policy making.[1] The single case study allows us to examine the issue in sufficient detail to test the differing explanations. In doing so, we are able to contribute an important analytical position which overcomes explanatory problems in both approaches. Both approaches treat immigration policy in aggregate. However, immigration policy is a comprehensive set of myriad and interlocking rules and regulations that encompass asylum and refugee migration, economic migration and family flows as well as integration requirements.

In broad terms, every immigration system is a composition of legally mandated programmes towards work, family and humanitarian flows which are grafted on over long periods of time. These separate policy areas have distinct interests and as a consequence a 'big picture' view of immigration policy can obfuscate differences. In this article, we take a disaggregated view of immigration policy by examining interest organisation and access across two of these policy areas – asylum and economic migration – and a third sphere or domain, integration policy, between the years 1997 and 2007. The third policy domain (integration) refers to the actors concerned with policies for incorporating (usually permanent) immigrants once they reside in the UK rather than engaging with immigrants 'at the gate'. In choosing these three, we are guided by Edward Laumann and David Knoke (1987, p. 10), who describe a policy domain as a set of actors 'with major concerns, whose preferences and actions on policy events must be taken into account by other domain participants'. The choice of these three domains within immigration policy offers the most distinct three 'groupings' of different actors.

We examine differences in policy networks across these disaggregated spheres of immigration policy and in doing so identify major, 'proactive' (Somerville, 2007) change in

economic migration policy in this ten-year period as a result of an organised and vocal policy community comprising committed state and non-state actors. The 'engine room' of economic migration policy development between 1997 and 2007 was a network of departments, associations, employers, agencies, think tanks and interest groups which coalesced around a single agenda. In contrast, similar 'policy communities' are not found in asylum or integration policy making. As a result, this analysis joins up otherwise opposing conclusions made by Freeman and Statham and Geddes to present a dynamic understanding of UK migration policy in the period of Labour government when Blair was in power. Against Statham and Geddes, we find a determinative role for policy networks in shaping economic migration policy. Toward Freeman (2006), we do not see this influence of networks in asylum or immigrant integration policy arenas. This is consistent with his later amendment of client-determined immigration policy, where he theoretically delimits this explanation to the arena of economic migration policy making. We argue that policy networks are influential to the extent that they enjoy: (1) proximity to policy-maker circles; (2) an availability of interconnected resources; and (3) organisation with respect to their ability to present an ideologically coherent set of preferences with regard to immigration policy outcome.

This article proceeds in three parts. First, we begin by examining these opposing theories of migration policy making, linking in the under-represented literature on policy networks. Second, we turn to the UK by expanding on this disaggregated view of immigration policy making. Since 1997 and the election of the Labour government, migration policy development has proceeded in several directions and across many spheres, undergoing far-reaching reform (Somerville, 2007). Thirdly and finally, we examine the role of policy networks in asylum, economic migration, and immigrant integration policy spheres. For the domain of asylum policy, we find an 'issue network' (Smith, 1993) comprising civil society actors whose influence was slight and who had little impact on migration policy development (Statham and Geddes, 2006). In contrast, the analysis of the two other domains that comprise migration policy – economic migration and integration – reveals that policy networks have had a substantive impact on policy making.

Although we identify the influential role of policy networks in migration policy making, we acknowledge a number of problems in using a policy networks approach, including Keith Dowding's (1995; 2001) contention that they are merely descriptive, problems of abstraction and other limitations to formal models in general. Therefore, we treat the idea of policy networks not as a model or approach but as an explanatory variable among other competing explanations of factors affecting policy change. We employ a qualitative analysis strategy to examine the salience of policy networks across three migration policy spheres through controlled comparison.[2] By exploring policy networks across different immigration fields this article also contributes a more descriptive precision of the process and content of UK immigration policy itself.

This article draws on 40 one-to-one interviews with UK migration policy makers, experts and interest holders involved in the policy-making process, conducted individually by both authors between June and August 2006. These semi-structured, elite-level interviews span four main areas: the legal profession (working in private practice, pro bono human rights

work, asylum appeals work and for the government), business (employer associations and individual employers of both high-skill and low skill–labour), the civil service (typically from the senior cadre and all Grade 7 or above), and parliament (which included Members of Parliament, parliamentary assistants and constituency caseworkers).

Organised Interests and Policy Networks

The study of interest groups – or as they are typically referred to by British scholars, 'pressure groups' – is an enormous field of study. Martin Smith (1993, p. 2) defines pressure groups simply as 'organisations which seek to represent the interests of particular sections of society in order to influence public policy'. These groups are seen as such a crucial part of policy making that Ian Marsh (1986) even describes the contribution of these coalitions of balancing the work of committees and parliament as constituting a 'three-party system'. Despite its popularity across the 1990s (the literature has waned significantly since this heyday), the study of policy networks does not permeate the literature on migration policy.

Freeman's contribution was important precisely because it recognised the importance of an organised public, like civic society organisations, in shaping immigration policy, in contrast to opposing explanations that focus on political parties, ideology, bureaucratic traditions or even classic economic theory. In order to test Statham and Geddes' claim that rejects a significant role for pressure groups, we first review the relevant policy and migration literatures. We look first to the policy network literature to establish some useful definitions which distinguish between groups that bring pressure to bear before joining this up to the migration literature.

Policy Networks and Interest Group Analysis

To avoid conceptual overlap or confusion with related literatures, including civil society or advocacy networks analysis, this article draws on a specific model of interest group/ government relations referred to as 'policy networks' (e.g. John, 2001; Richardson, 2000; Thatcher, 1998). Put simply, policy networks are 'a means of categorising the relationships that exist between [pressure] groups and the government' (Smith, 1993, p. 56). Walter Kickert, Erik-Hans Klijn and Joop Koppenjan (1997, p. 6) define policy networks not just as a set of groups but as '(more or less) stable patterns of social relations between interdependent actors, which take shape around policy problems and/or policy pro-grammes'. It is these relations between government, bureaucracies, pressure/interest groups and other agencies and parties that affect policy outcomes.[3]

Pressure groups make up only one part of a policy network. These groups include civil society organisations, like citizen and service groups (e.g. refugee rights), but also think tanks, research institutes, professional associations and employers' associations. And unlike interest group analysis, where the development of policy is seen in the context of com-peting interest groups, policy networks, it is argued, operate in a pluralistic or fragmented policy environment and are characterised by interdependence and constant 'manoeuvres' to gain resources (Evans, 1999). They are involved in a power relationship that may be a

positive-sum gain, rather than the zero-sum gain of classic interest group analysis.[4] However, it is important to note that both interest group and policy network analyses identify government as the central actor in that exchange relationship. Ultimately, as Smith (1993, p. 2) argues, pressure groups' 'impact on policy depends on the interests of state actors'.

Policy networks can be further delineated based on the type and degree of relationship between interest groups and government (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992; Thatcher, 1998, p. 395). Despite R. A. W. Rhodes' (1996) description of British policy making as a transition from government to governance, where 'self-organizing, intergovernmental networks' have ability in 'authoritatively allocating resources and exercising control and coordination' (p. 652), pressure groups 'continue to depend on the government which has a unique set of resources – force, legitimacy, state bureaucracy, tax-raising powers and legislation – which are unavailable to other actors' (Richards and Smith, 2002, p. 283; see also Marsh *et al.*, 2003). The relationship is asymmetrical but mutual, as the government still depends on other groups for resources and delivery of public services.

Therefore, the typology we focus on here distinguishes between the nature of coordination and resources. Rhodes (1986) categorises coordination differences as extremes on a continuum from large and loosely connected 'issue network[s]' at one end (drawing originally on Heclo, 1978) to small, tightly organised, and close-knit 'policy communit[ies]' (drawing on Richardson and Jordan, 1979; see also Marsh and Rhodes, 1992). The expression 'policy networks' is a generic term that refers to the relationship and coordination between groups and government, while the *degrees* of coordination between groups and government help differentiate between 'issue networks' and 'policy communities'. More coordinated policy networks are more likely to have effective network management and joint policy solutions.

Table 1 offers a comparative view of these differences of coordination. Smith (1993, p. 10) defines policy communities (highly coordinated) and issue networks (low coordination) through a series of propositions: policy communities are 'more likely to develop where the state is dependent on groups for implementation [and] ... where interest groups have

Table 1: Comparing Issue Networks and Policy Communities

	Issue networks	*Policy communities*
Organisation	Loosely connected; large	Tight-knit; limited membership
Resources	Independent; variable distribution	Integrated in exchange relationship; hierarchical distribution
Relationship to the state	Weak or sporadic	Institutionalised; implementers
Issue area	Range of affected interests; low importance	Professional interests dominate; state priority
Ideology	Uncoordinated; conflicting	Shared; consensual

Sources: Marsh, 1998, p. 16; Smith, 1993.

important resources that they can exchange' while issue networks 'will develop in areas of lesser importance to government, or high political controversy, or in new issue areas where interests have not had the time to establish institutionalised relationships'. Policy communities are highly integrated and resource rich, while issue networks may have a high degree of participation but a limited degree of interdependence. Finally, as Smith (1993, p. 63) points out, a key criterion for assessing where a policy network 'falls' on the continuum is the extent to which the various players in a network share the same ideology. A shared set of ideas, ideology and goals is a characteristic of a policy community, with a lack of shared ideology a characteristic of an issue network.

Policy Networks in Migration Studies

In turning to the migration literature, issue networks and policy communities (which we collectively refer to as 'policy networks') have not performed a theoretical role in explaining migration policy outcomes. In fact, the vast majority of commentators on UK migration policy barely mention the possibility that interest groups, or policy networks inclusive of non-state actors, have influenced policy (see for example Hammar, 1985; Hansen, 2000; Joppke, 1999; Spencer, 1997). Instead, the consensus view of the literature is that the key explanatory variable for policy change can be found in the institutional-political elite of Westminster.

Freeman's (1995) connection of interest group theory and migration policy was foundational to contributing a pressure-group perspective to migration policy making. Freeman (1995, p. 883) identifies a converging, expansionary bias in immigration politics where 'policies tend to be more liberal than public opinion and annual intakes larger than is politically optimal'. He attributes this gap to the diffuse costs and concentrated benefits of immigration. The general public does not seem to benefit from immigration but is more likely to experience costs associated with expansionist policies, like jobs or welfare competition. Therefore, Freeman (1995, p. 885) identifies the 'interest group system around immigration issues' to be 'dominated by those groups supportive of larger intakes'. Groups favourable to immigration form a 'bilateral influence in which small and well-organized groups intensely interested in a policy develop close working relationships with those officials responsible for it' (Freeman, 1995, p. 886). This is the client politics of an 'organised public'.

This argument has had a big impact on immigration research. Christian Joppke (1998) amends Freeman's argument of client politics, arguing that liberal states accept 'unwanted immigration' because of a legal process that complements the expansion advocated by an organised public. Freeman (2006) himself later qualifies this argument by disaggregating immigration programmes in Western Europe, looking at client politics as one of four distributional outcomes of cost and benefits. However, the most penetrating test of Freeman's hypothesis in the UK is conducted by Statham and Geddes. Through network analysis, they find that their results 'superficially' support Freeman's (2006, p. 255) contention because civil society – dominated by NGOs – proves to be a source of expansion.

However, NGOs are the only source for expansionism where ethnic minority and pro-migrant lobbies are small and 'business remains surprisingly silent over immigration' (Freeman, 2006, p. 256).

Statham and Geddes (2006) look at asylum as a representative subject of immigration policy making. They argue that asylum policy is a 'highly institutionalised and elite-dominated field' (p. 259) with the state bureaucracy as the strongest and most central node of network analysis. Political parties are the second most influential source of policy while interest groups and NGOs 'generally cooperate strongly and consensually with one another, but have very limited influence' (Statham and Geddes, 2006, p. 264). To summarise, Statham and Geddes identify an organised set of immigration civil society actors, but whose influence is overstated by Freeman and limited by political elites.

We find two problems with this analysis. First, it is questionable whether asylum is a representative area of immigration policy and their choice of actors in the network – largely but not exclusively asylum groups – ignore some important pro-business actors. Furthermore, Statham and Geddes (2006) identify asylum policy as 'dominant' (p. 258), but this is neither incontestable nor methodologically equal to being 'crucial'. We argue that pro-asylum actors are more visible than employer or business groups but are not as close to policy makers and represent only one part of the constellation of immigration policy actors. The (correct) depiction of an insignificant role for policy networks in the asylum policy area does not translate to an insignificant role for policy networks across all immigration policy areas. Examining other areas of immigration, like economic migration, gives a fairer test for an organised public that may have more salient preferences on policies where they identify concentrated benefits than on asylum. In other words, we believe that Statham and Geddes conflate asylum policy with immigration policy. Finally, while Freeman (1995) writes generally about immigration policy, the subtext does not appear to reference asylum politics. He addresses the benefits of expansionary migration of interest to 'labour-intensive industries' (p. 885), an 'unskilled workforce' (p. 885), and the 'natural cycle' of immigration based on economic conditions (p. 886), with only passing references to 'abuse' (p. 889). If anything, Freeman looks to 'cracking down on illegal migration' and 'dealing forcibly with asylum claims' as evidence of 'how far ... European states have come from the client politics before 1973' (p. 893). On the issue of asylum, Statham and Geddes are, in fact, in agreement with Freeman.

Immigration is not a monolithic arrangement of policies. First, different aspects of immigration policy affect different populations; a highly skilled migrant is unaffected by the appeals process of an asylum seeker. Therefore, we would anticipate different benefits and costs across different policy domains. More importantly, the actors in each of these domains do not necessarily overlap. NGOs and employer organisations may have interests in some policies and not others. As a result, it is more analytically useful to break down migration policy into at least three components or policy domains: asylum, economic migration and integration. (There have been a number of suggested 'types' of immigration policy; see, for example, Freeman [2006].)

The next section of this article looks at each of these migration policy arenas to consider the role of policy networks in determining policy outcome.

Migration Policy Changes under New Labour

In the decade between May 1997 and 2007, British immigration policy has undergone a staggering transformation. Reform has included the delivery of a more restrictive asylum settlement, a greater emphasis on security of borders combined with an effort to reduce illegal immigration, a shift from a multicultural 'race relations model' to a positive definition of citizenship and a 'civic integration model' (Joppke, 2007), and a new approach to economic migration through a more liberal settlement and more recently through the development of a points-based system (Somerville, 2007; Spencer, 2008). However, painting this change with a broad brush-stroke conceals the varying degrees and variegated directions of change among complementary immigration policies.

In its first year in government, New Labour launched the *Fairer, Faster and Firmer* White Paper promising a 'comprehensive, integrated strategy' for immigration, including the modernisation of controls, streamlining of asylum and the promotion of national citizenship (Home Office, 1998). Economic migration policies, which – unlike asylum and control – were not even a part of the 1997 Labour party manifesto, have been liberalised to allow for more skilled workers to enter and settle in the UK while increased restrictions have been placed on asylum policy. Security measures have expanded while an integration agenda has evolved in new, unprecedented ways to address challenges of immigrant-related diversity, stepping outside the UK's traditional institutional approach based on race relations. These changes point to both expansion and restriction in immigration policy, underscoring the analytical imperative of disaggregating policy domains.

The boundaries between different migration policy areas are not artificial; fissures between 'who we admit to the UK and why' and 'who we allow to stay and why' draw clear lines between economic intake, asylum obligations and rules for permanent residence and citizenship. These words, part of the 2005 departmental plan *Controlling our Borders: Making Migration Work for Britain* (Home Office, 2005b), also make clear that migration policy encompasses multiple entry gates, from immigration to settlement and citizenship.

Asylum, economic migration and immigrant integration are all under the umbrella of migration, but there is enough 'separateness' that merits systematic comparison with regard to the role of policy networks.

Asylum Policy: An Issue Network

The development of asylum policy in this period correlates strongly with characteristics of an issue network. We found that the players involved in pressuring or lobbying on asylum policy had much in common: they were from outside government; they lacked resources (and thus had little to 'exchange'); they were less stable; and perhaps most importantly of all, they did not share the same ideological world view. Statham and Geddes (2006) agree, finding a 'relatively weak pro-migrant lobby, which finds limited support from interest groups ... [and operates] in a political context that is strongly dominated by the state' (p. 265).

The government 'node' in the asylum policy network was disproportionately powerful. Unlike the economic migration network, the only other government department outside the Home Office with a concrete interest in asylum policy was the Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA) – which before June 2003 was the Lord Chancellor's Department (LCD), and since 2007 has been called the Ministry of Justice (MOJ). The DCA was not a major Cabinet player and was dwarfed in size, budget and political influence by the Home Office.[5] The power of the Home Office as the major resource in the 'asylum policy' network was unrivalled, which contrasts with the 'economic migration' network.

There was, however, an unusual additional layer above the Home Office. The Prime Minister's Office played an unusually active role in developing asylum policy while Tony Blair was in power, and particularly from 2001 to 2007. The prime minister (particularly in public comments) can and did 'bounce' his home secretary into action but more typically, political advisers in Number 10 directly inputted into the Home Office policy-making apparatus.

Surrounding this central government were a range of scattered actors. The first 'group' of actors we identified was the refugee charity sector. There are over 800 refugee community organisations in the UK (Somerville, 2007), but few are involved in direct advocacy and fewer still in ongoing policy development and influence. The majority of actors, while having a clear stake in the development of asylum policy, were peripheral, occasionally 'flitting' into the orbit of asylum policy but rarely staying. A more influential role is typically restricted to organisations with national presence, such as the Refugee Council and Refugee Action, both of which receive state funding, or major charities or agencies with a strong 'refugee programme', such as Amnesty International or Oxfam. However, capacity issues or more pressing funding priorities or conflicts have typically stymied action even among those at the national level, leaving action severely under-resourced.

A second group comprised children's charities, which included all the groups under the auspices of the Refugee Children's Consortia (RCC). However, they rarely raised their heads 'above the parapet', not least because active support of asylum seekers might have threatened their funding base, but also because the children's charities had some limited success for their narrow agenda.

The third node was a sub-set of the legal profession, with actors such as the Refugee Legal Centre, the Immigration Law Practitioner's Association's (ILPA) asylum sub-committee, and the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI). The policy influence role for such groups largely depends on pro bono work and private contributions, and consequently marshalled few resources.

All three groups comprised actors well versed in campaigning (behind-the-scenes lobbying, public campaigning and litigation strategies). They also worked together reasonably effectively, for example in cooperating over responses to legislative bills or in formulating general positions through networks such as the Asylum Rights Campaign (ARC). Furthermore, they established formal dialogue with government, such as the stakeholder group on asylum policy that met with senior civil servants in the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND, now the UK Borders Agency or UKBA).

Therefore, these three groups partially satisfy two criteria of effective policy networks: proximity (though not necessarily with insider access) and resource coordination (albeit limited resources). They do however lack, strikingly, a shared ideology. There is a gulf in the perception of the issue, the goals to be achieved and the policy action to be taken, between those in and out of government.

In precis, the qualitative evidence implies that the overweening power of the Home Office dominated asylum policy development from 1997 to 2007. This closely echoes Statham and Geddes' (2006, p. 265) description of a dominant state and political elite leading policy in a restrictive direction.

Economic Migration: A Policy Community

In contrast to asylum policy, our analysis of businesses and private sector interests indicates that they were part of a policy network with characteristics that strongly correlated to a policy community, and were instrumental to the development of UK economic migration policy.

The economic migration policy community throughout this period rested on five 'nodes', comprising individual businesses and employers, legal associations, committee/lobbying groups, think tanks and, most important, the government.

The first node in this network was individual businesses, mostly represented via employer associations. Businesses that pushed the government for a more liberal position included major insurance companies, major oil and energy companies (notably BP and Shell), accountancy firms and financial companies working in the City of London financial markets (for high-skilled labour). There was pressure from low-cost airlines, major supermarket firms, recruitment agencies and hotel and catering industries for low-skilled labour. While individual companies have made lobbying approaches to ministers and governments they are typically brought together in employer associations (both general and sector specific).

These associations have been active in debate and policy development, both formally and informally (for example business member-only organisations, such as the Westminster Forum, have lobbied government ministers on migration issues in private fora). These employers' associations were also all pro-immigration. This is typified in the pro-labour market immigration stance adopted by the major employers' association and policy 'insider', the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), as well as a similar stance adopted by the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) (see for example FSB, 2006; Institute of Directors, 2007). Sector-specific industry associations were also pro-immigration: for example the British Hospitality Association (hotels and catering), the Association of Labour Providers (gangmasters) and the National Farmers' Union (farming businesses). We see these organised interests accessing policy makers in direct ways, advocating pro-expansionary positions consistent with Freeman's prediction.

The legal profession represented the second node in the economic migration 'policy community' and was crucial to channelling the voices and interests of its clients (major

businesses). The legal–business lobby, like the employer lobby, argued for a liberalisation of commercial immigration. It was often represented by the Immigration Law Practitioners' Association's Business and Employment sub-committee – the pre-eminent legal voice in the economic migration policy community in this period.

Chaired by Phillip Trott of Bates, Wells and Braithwaite and including members from a series of leading law firms, such as Cameron McKenna, Fox Williams, Kingsley Napley and Luqmani Thompson, the committee (and the legal profession it represented) was important in a number of ways. First, government was reliant on a degree of cooperation with lawyers to deliver policy measures, such as liberalising and working up work permits, which reduced government control of the policy network. Second, lawyers were practised at the legal procedures conducted within parliament and understood the drafting of legislation and the regulations and codes used in its formulation. Third, lawyers were part of a largely cohesive profession. The importance of this legal–business network in developing the content of UK migration policy cannot be underestimated. It had input at the parliamentary stage, the drafting of programme stage and in the implementation phase. For example, a powerful illustration of the importance of its role was in the creation of the first 'points' scheme for economic migrants. The legal–business actors had a hands-on role in the development of the scheme, called the Highly Skilled Migrants Programme (HSMP), when it was introduced in the UK in 2001 (Somerville, 2007). When the HSMP was originally conceived, policy makers envisaged a scheme in which a high-skilled applicant would gain a certain number of points which would then allow him or her to come to the UK with up to twenty 'unpointed' people (the idea being to attract small, high-value companies such as IT ventures). It was the legal–business actors in the policy network that pointed out the inherent dangers of fraud in such an approach and did much to outline and develop the system as it is now formulated.[6]

The third key node was the influential coterie of think tanks and research organisations with links to the Labour government or 'progressive' centre-left politics, which typically advocate expansionist positions. In particular, the Institute for Public Policy Research (ippr) pushed the positives of labour immigration and broader citizenship rights associated with economic migrants from the mid-1990s onwards. They were also instrumental in informing an evidence-based approach and placing it on politically fertile ground (Corry, 1996; Spencer, 1994). Other think tanks, such as Demos, were also pro economic immigration.

A number of think tanks and research organisations were *not* members of the economic migration network. These include organisations that typically oppose large immigration flows, notably MigrationWatch, Civitas and the Optimum Population Trust. These think tanks were excluded from the economic migration policy community because their policy recommendations bore an almost Malthusian quality (placing them outside the ideological status quo) and because of politics (while think tanks generally have charitable status, they are strongly orientated to certain political positions). Thus they were not represented on advisory bodies or generally consulted by civil servants developing policy. Instead, they followed a 'classic outsider group strategy' (Marsh *et al.*, 2001, p. 184), using media outlets such as the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express* and *Daily Telegraph*, and lobbying opposition (Conservative) MPs.

Moving inward toward the state bureaucracy as the central actor, the fourth node of the economic migration policy community 'map' was the member-only groups and committees that existed to advise or lobby the government. These existed at both formal and informal levels. The formal level included groups such as the Illegal Working Steering Group (IWSG). Originally set up by Beverly Hughes in November 2002, the IWSG was made up of major retailers, supermarkets, associations representing labour agencies and the hotel industry as well as invited members with relevant expertise. The IWSG advised on illegal working provisions but the agenda was wide-ranging and allowed important access, as it was chaired by the Minister of Immigration. Recently created bodies advising the government continue this trend. The Migration Impact Forum (MIF) and the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC), with the presence of the CBI in the former and business representation and economic scholars in the latter, are good examples.

The fifth and final node was the most important: the government. Crucially, in the economic migration policy community, government was not confined to just the Home Office but included the Treasury, the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department of Trade and Industry (as was), together with the Bank of England. Of course, a number of other departments had an interest. For example the Department for Education and Skills (now the Department for Children, Families and Schools and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills), where the work permit system originated in its former incarnation of the Department for Education and Employment, had an interest in the impact on skill levels; the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, now the Department for Communities and Local Government, had an interest in planning needs, particularly for housing; the Department of Health had an interest in foreign labour; and so on. However, the Treasury, led by the then chancellor, Gordon Brown, was by far the most powerful of these players. Moreover, the Department for Work and Pensions shared a close political link with the Treasury in this period (or perhaps more accurately was subservient to the Treasury).

Given the central role played by the Treasury, changes in the macroeconomic management of the economy under Labour should not be dissociated from changes to migration policy. While there was no 'hard-fought battle', the government – as the key player in the network – was not found in a single department but in a set of departments, one of which was the all-powerful Treasury, which helped ensure that the Home Office moved policy in a particularly liberal direction.

In summary, we see a significant policy community influencing economic migration policy. Unlike the asylum policy network, the economic migration network was made up of more equal players, who worked closely together. There were direct – often solicited – opportunities for consultation as well as a dependency for implementation. There was also a high degree of interdependence with regard to resources, as a result of a policy community group's ability to articulate labour demands and implement policy. Business interests were especially crucial to the development of policy. Such a view is hardly unique; Sarah Spencer (2002; see also 2003) identifies employers as forthright in pushing for policies to attract the 'brightest and best', but identifying business interests as part of a major web of an expansionary policy community provides decisive evidence against dominant explanations

of migration policy that tend to overlook players outside government institutions and leadership (for example Hammar, 1985; Hansen, 2000; Joppke, 1999; Statham and Geddes, 2006).

Integration Policy: An Issue Network with a Weak Core

Finally, it is important to look at the policy networks surrounding immigrant integration policy. Immigrant integration is not traditionally an area of focus for immigration policy makers, but has evolved to a significant dimension of migration strategy. In this spirit, it is also useful to note that integration was not initially a cornerstone of New Labour migration reform.

Immigrant integration efforts initially began only with regard to refugee needs. Labour promoted a coherent vision and strategy on refugee integration, accepted by government and, largely, the voluntary sector. Government strategies in 2000 (Home Office, 2000) and 2005 (Home Office, 2005a) were broadly welcomed. Moreover, NGOs supported the government-sponsored National Refugee Integration Forum (NRIF), set up to inform and consult with the Home Office on refugee integration. This led to tangible progress, such as the introduction of the Sunrise caseworker programme. And while refugee integration through the NRIF was abolished without warning in October 2006, exemplifying the ever present, disproportionate power of the Home Office, the early successes of refugee integration would serve as a springboard to later immigrant integration projects.

The development of an integration agenda with regard to traditional (i.e. economic, family unification) immigration is a far messier story. It is difficult to place integration policy on a continuum between a policy community and an issue network, in part owing to the fact that the 'core' was shared between departments in government at the national level *and* between national and local government. In fact, there are three strands of integration-related policy that experts label as 'immigrant integration': citizenship (community), cohesion and race relations.

First, there are the programmes that promote civic skills, language acquisition and country knowledge through a citizenship agenda. Decisions shaping this path of integration for newcomers, spouses and applicants seeking settlement in addition to citizenship were largely relegated to a small branch of the Home Office, the then-titled Immigration and Nationality Directorate's Social Policy Unit. The second strand of immigrant integration is the community cohesion agenda. Initially located in the Home Office, it was moved to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in May 2006. While national government has responsibility for policy, implementation and needs assessment fell to local officials. Thirdly, there are policies of integration that overlap with race relations. Race relations informs the traditional integration approach in Great Britain; it fomented a multicultural model of integration and laws that ensure protection against racial discrimination and hate crimes, and led to the establishment of the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), a 'quango' that was funded by the government, but possessed autonomy over its work and independence over its funding regime.[7] However, the CRE was never a major

player in integration as it is defined by the Home Office remit, specifically the promotion of an 'active citizenship'. Of these three sets of integration policies, only the immigrant integration agenda under citizenship should be considered part of migration policy.

Policies on community cohesion (simply defined as connecting existing ethnic minority communities to other groups in society) and immigrant integration (incorporating new-comers into society) were both initially located in the Home Office, but grew from distinctly different roots. Community cohesion became a real concern after the northern riots of 2001. Programmes promoting cohesion were originally located in the Home Office because they were seen as linked to problems with civil disobedience and crime. The then home secretary David Blunkett's integration agenda for citizenship applicants, and the desire to promote citizenship for permanent residents, was discussed before the northern riots as a way of improving labour market skills and social integration. This strand proceeded in parallel to Ted Cantle's community cohesion project, but they were not always in close dialogue. The concern for cohesion was addressing exclusion while the concern for citizenship was addressing problems of language acquisition (Interview with S. Spencer, 7 August 2007).

In looking at the development of civic integration, policy formation was highly collabo-rative between experts and implementers on a member-only advisory board and govern-ment. Consultation with expert groups led to the development of dual paths to citizenship, one for proficient English speakers (a citizenship test, including knowledge of 'Life in the UK') and one for beginners (citizenship curriculum in English for Speakers of Other Languages [ESOL] classes).

Through much of the period under study, the Home Office was supposedly the most important 'node' in this aspect of immigrant integration policy. However, much of the expert analysis, policy recommendations and policy development came from the Advisory Board on Naturalisation and Integration (ABNI), the non-departmental public body that dealt with citizenship and evolved out of a similar membership as the government-appointed 'Life in the UK' Advisory Group. While ABNI, steered by Sir Bernard Crick, nominally reported to the Social Policy Unit, the government typically did not go against the recommendations of ABNI as its members were viewed as 'experts' on what was a relatively new policy issue for the Home Office (Interview with C. Hedges, 13 July 2006).[8] For example, ABNI coordinated the efforts of LLU+ and the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) in the designing of the citizenship test, assessed the content of the study guide and piloted the Citizenship curriculum for ESOL teachers.[9]

In looking at the development of community cohesion, however, we see a crucial role played by local government, which was often removed from the national policy network. Recall that the promotion of community cohesion was originally located in a Home Office unit, which was later merged with the Faiths Unit within the Home Office before being moved to DCLG. Local government was left to provide the services to (often new) migrant communities in their localities. In local government, where consultation arrangements to meet the needs of communities (including minority communities) were already deeply embedded, coalitions of NGOs and voluntary sector organisations formed further 'nodes'.

The third strand referred to race relations. Decisions taken by the CRE were – in reality – politically attuned to the government's agenda but at the same time the government did not circumvent the CRE in developing integration policy. The CRE advocated a 'whole society' approach in this period and the new integration agenda took shape in DCLG by moving the Cohesion and Faiths Unit from the Home Office and the equality agenda from the Department of Trade and Industry, which worked with CRE to implement anti-discriminatory practices, including race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, as well as religion and belief.

In precis, the integration policy network was segmented. Unlike asylum and economic migration, we see a division among government departments as well as individual and uncoordinated connections made by non-departmental actors. If the early stages of integration policy can be described as highly elite determined (contained within the Home Office and its appointed expert group, ABNI), the contemporary structure of integration is more variegated, with segmentation across departments. Government remains at the centre of this limited policy network. The development of integration policy under the umbrella of migration required a process of negotiation between interdepartmental players, indicating competition for resources (even between traditional immigrant and refugee integration programmes) and a weak policy network. We also see quangos taking a leading role in shaping and implementing policy. Taking a 'wide lens' view of integration policy reveals a larger network spanning local and national government, unlike the networks for asylum and economic migration, which were focused almost exclusively on the national level. This confirms that policies for immigrant integration were broad, and were not simply led by Cabinet government and parliamentary elites.

Resources and Coordination of Objectives

This comparative analysis of the migration policy networks indicates different interfaces with civil society and a less elite-led political view of policy development than appears in previous academic interpretations (for example Hansen, 2000; Joppke, 1999). To reiterate, it appears that for asylum policy there is a weakly coordinated civil society and strong national single department-dominated network; for economic migration there is a strong role for a range of actors, including employers and their representatives, albeit one still dominated at the national level; and for integration there is a state-dominated network but one that is diffuse. But why do some areas of immigration policy exhibit more successful policy networks than others? Assuming that the proximity to policy makers is equal, as each group operates through the same institutional designs of political opportunity structures, why do we witness a significant policy community regarding economic migration and not asylum or integration?

Economic migration was able to establish an effective policy community, while asylum and integration experienced variably effective interest networks, because economic policy participants and stakeholders benefited from an *availability of resources*, which allowed relationships to develop on a more even footing, and a *high degree of ideological coordination*. Integration is perhaps the most obvious area where we see issue networks instead of policy

communities. Active players were either borne from government or linked through a quasi-NGO status to specific departments and issue areas. Policies were elite driven, down to many interviewers placing great import on particular personalities, namely David Blunkett, Bernard Crick and Ted Cantle. Resources were uncoordinated where there existed integration, cohesion and race equality tracks, with separate agendas, budgets, advocates and implementers.

Asylum policy also takes the shape of an issue network rather than a policy community because there is no agreed world view. There is a genuine ideological divide between the government and civil society on the causes of asylum seeking, the 'pull' and 'push' factors and whether claimants are genuine or not. This ideological gulf is supported by the debates over 'evidence' in policy making. The evidence used to develop asylum policy in the period 1997–2007 was deeply contested. Civil society regularly stated that certain questions were not asked, such as the fundamental question of *why* asylum applicants were seeking refuge in the UK. The commissioners of research in the Home Office were often accused of narrowing the scope of research, delaying publications or releasing only executive summary findings. For researchers and NGOs, salt was added to the wounds when policy ignored even the limited findings that were released (see for example Robinson and Segrott, 2002). However, civil society was also fractured ideologically. For example, some groups outside government had presented measures more in tune with Labour's view of asylum. The think tank Demos followed Labour thinking on extraterritorial processing, for example, in their publication *People Flow* (Veenkamp *et al.*, 2003). Furthermore, resources within the asylum policy network were limited, while most asylum groups lacked national presence and hence coordination.

In contrast, the economic migration policy network was characterised by universal support for a liberal, market ideology and the need to respond to increasing economic globalisation. 'New Labour' ideology, which strongly supports the market provided that it is coupled with 'social justice' (Ellison and Pierson, 2003) and a belief in both the 'knowledge economy' and coming to an accommodation with the consequences of globalisation (Timmins, 2001), supported the liberalisation of economic migration.

This was reflected in the evidence commissioned by policy makers. The government research agenda focused for the first time on the economics of migration in the late 1990s.[10] The findings of the major government research projects strongly supported the theoretical supposition that migration brought economic benefits. Empirical justification for the positive effects of economic migration accelerated policy development towards its liberalisation (see for example, the joint Home Office/Cabinet Office publication *Migration: An Economic and Social Analysis* [Home Office, 2001]). Before such a major research programme was launched in the late 1990s, economic migration policy was based on very little evidence.

There was a further powerful reinforcing consensus supporting liberalised economic migration: the fact it was shared internationally, particularly in Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries. Theories of international policy transfer (Dolowitz, 1997; Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996) have not traditionally been seen as

important in migration policy development. However in the case of UK economic migration policy, there were unambiguous debts to Canadian, New Zealand and Australian migration policies. One concrete example of policy transfer was the creation of the original UK points-based programme (the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme or HSMP), which is particularly reminiscent of the Australian model (Home Office, 2006). Indeed, the immigration minister Liam Byrne explicitly referenced the Australian system in a debate in the House of Commons on the same subject, suggesting that 'like the system in Australia, the points system is designed to apply to those people who seek to come to this country either to work or to study' (*Hansard*, 30 April 2007, col. 1221).

The contrast between the availability of resources and ideologies represented in the asylum and integration networks and the economic migration policy community is acute. The former policy networks have no shared ideology, with disagreement between government and civil society and internal civil society fractures. Resources were uncoordinated, particularly in immigrant integration, where nodes were highly disconnected. In contrast, the economic migration policy community is cohesive with little or no dissent over policy directions. Resources are successfully coordinated across nodes.

Conclusion

This article has argued that a disaggregated view of migration policy is a more accurate lens to interpret change. Looking at the policy changes in the UK under New Labour in the period between 1997 and 2007, we identify areas where both elite-led and organised public interpretations hold true. Economic migration resembled a policy community that included civil society actors, especially around 2001–02, and rather than policy change being an elite-led political–institutional affair, the driver was a wide set of interested parties. Asylum policy, in contrast, resembled an issue network dominated by a single department in government (the Home Office). Civil society actors consequently had less influence. Integration policy blossomed from one department to several, with low degrees of coordination. The policy network for integration, which defies easy categorisation, was diffuse, across local and national government.

The variation that comes from taking a more analytically complex view of immigration policy joins up otherwise opposing perspectives by recognising that if borders can simultaneously open (for economic migration) and close (for asylum) then different processes and actors might play a role in determining those opposing outcomes. There is support for Freeman's position that employers with pro-expansionary interests have a key role in policy development, but there is also evidence to back up Statham and Geddes' view that restriction can take place in elite corridors, especially with reference to asylum policy. Single cases like the UK are complex and rich with variation, and further within-case analysis will only develop a greater understanding of these sometimes opposing but certainly interdependent policy networks.

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Notes

1 A crucial case is defined as one 'that *must closely fit a* theory if one is to have confidence in the theory's validity, or, conversely, *must not fit* equally well any rule contrary to that proposed' (Eckstein, 1975, p. 118, emphases in original).

2 Concurring with Statham and Geddes' (2006, p. 258) observation that it is 'not logistically possible' to interview and conduct systematic network analysis across the migration policy arenas, we draw paired comparisons based on elite-level interviews.

3 Marsh and Rhodes (1992) even describe this linkage as resource dependency, where structure – not actor agency – gives policy networks meaning.

4 Marsh (1998, p. 16) points out that issue networks, as opposed to policy communities, also demonstrate a degree of zero-sum power: 'Unequal power' reflects 'unequal resources and unequal access'.

5 The Ministry of Justice is considerably bigger but its recent creation (it was announced on 9 March 2007) renders it irrelevant for the purposes of the ten-year period of study.

6 The changes in November 2006 to HSMP went against the wishes of the network and caused friction, including threats of legal challenge, and then a successful judicial review. This illustrates how networks change over time.

7 In October 2007, the Commission for Racial Equality was replaced by a non-departmental public body with a broader remit, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC).

8 CRE had an observer status at ABNI; it was generally uninvolved in civic integration.

9 The most significant areas of disagreement between the Home Office and ABNI were budgetary, specifically to make English language classes free by removing the five-year residency requirement in England and an immigrant mentoring scheme that never came to fruition.

10 The other research programmes were illegal immigration and asylum.

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