

Institution: University of Edinburgh		
Unit of Assessment: 19 (Politics and International Relations)		
Title of case study: Building Immigration Policy Capacity after Brexit		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2006 - 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Professor Christina Boswell	Professor of Politics	2006-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2016 - 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Boswell's research on immigration policy and the role of expert knowledge in policymaking generated two main forms of impact. First, it played a key role in building policy capacity in Scotland, through catalysing and leading two initiatives that transformed the evidence base for immigration policy: a new Scottish Government Expert Advisory Group on Migration and Population, and a new think tank, Migration Policy Scotland. Second, her research helped reframe immigration policy goals in Scotland and the UK, by setting out policy options for immigration after Brexit, and shifting the UK Government's position on the role of immigration in mitigating population decline in Scotland.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>Boswell's research has analysed the role of expert knowledge, ideas and institutions in framing political debate and policymaking on immigration.</p> <p>First, with support from an EU Marie Curie Excellence Grant (EUR974k, based in UoE 2006-8), Boswell analysed the political uses of expert knowledge in immigration policymaking (3.1, 3.2). She developed an original theory that distinguished between the instrumental, substantiating and legitimising functions of knowledge in policymaking. In contrast to predominant accounts that assume that knowledge is deployed to improve policy efficacy, Boswell showed how knowledge is frequently used to signal the competence of organisations, and to bolster contested claims. Of particular significance were her findings on the conditions under which knowledge is used for these respective functions, with key variables including: (i) 'mode of legitimisation' (whether policymakers derive legitimacy through 'talk' or 'action'); and (ii) 'mode of settlement' (whether contestation is settled through 'technocratic' or 'democratic' styles of deliberation). The theory was developed and refined through rich empirical analysis of how immigration bureaucracies in the UK, Germany and European Commission have made use of knowledge since the early 1990s, the era of 'evidence-based policy'. The monograph from this project was awarded the American Political Science Association 2020 award for best book of the decade on ideas, knowledge and governance.</p> <p>Second, from 2007 to 2018, Boswell carried out extensive comparative analysis of how immigration is framed in different EU countries, through three ESRC grants (<i>Migration Policy and Narratives of Steering</i> seminar series; and <i>The Politics of Monitoring and Seeing 'Illegal' Immigrants</i> standard grants). This research analysed the ways in which expert knowledge has been marshalled in public debates in the UK and Germany since the 1960s (3.1, 3.3) and the role of public philosophies in framing immigration policy debates (3.4). These contributions elucidated the factors shaping how immigration issues were constructed across national contexts and over time (3.3, 3.4, 3.5), including how and why immigration has been framed as a labour market, demographic, human rights, or security issue, at different junctures and in</p>		

respective polities. The analysis also demonstrated the role of political elites and experts in shaping discourse through their selective mobilisation of powerful public philosophies (3.3, 3.4, 3.5), implying there is considerable scope for political leaders to influence how the issue is framed. This body of work provided the basis for applied research on the challenges of immigration in the UK in light of Brexit, including comparative analysis of varying policy options designed to meet labour market, demographic and social goals (3.6).

3. References to the research

- 3.1** Boswell, C (2009), *The Political Uses of Expert Knowledge: Immigration Policy and Social Research*, Cambridge; Cambridge University Press (Can be supplied by HEI on request). DOI: [10.1017/CBO9780511581120](https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511581120)
- 3.2** Hunter, A and C Boswell (2015), 'Comparing the Political Functions of Independent Commissions: The Case of UK Migrant Integration Policy', *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis*, 17 (1), 10-25. DOI: [10.1080/13876988.2014.896117](https://doi.org/10.1080/13876988.2014.896117)
- 3.3** Boswell, C (2009), 'Knowledge, Legitimation and the Politics of Risk: The Functions of Research in Public Debates on Migration', *Political Studies*, 51 (1), 165-186. DOI: [10.1111/j.1467-9248.2008.00729.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2008.00729.x)
- 3.4** Boswell, C and J Hampshire (2017), 'Ideas and Agency in Immigration Policy: A Discursive Institutional Approach', *European Journal of Political Research*, 56 (1), 133-150. DOI: [10.1111/1475-6765.12170](https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12170)
- 3.5** Boswell, C (2007), 'Theorizing Migration: Is There a Third Way?', *International Migration Review*, 41 (1), 75-100. DOI: [10.1111/j.1747-7379.2007.00057.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2007.00057.x)
- 3.6** Kyambi, S, R Kay, C Boswell, K Taggart and H Porteous (2018), 'Choices Ahead: Approaches to Lower Skilled Labour Migration after Brexit', *Centre on Constitutional Change* (70 pages). https://web.archive.org/web/20210128155816/https://www.centreonconstitutionalchange.ac.uk/sites/default/files/migrated/papers/choices_ahead_june2018_0.pdf

4. Details of the impact

The UK Government makes policy on immigration for the whole of the UK, but the Brexit referendum has energised debates about whether a distinctive approach is needed for Scotland. After identifying and raising awareness of a serious gap in the Scottish Government's analytical and policy-making capacity, Boswell transformed policy capacity in government and civil society, and shaped the debate on immigration in Scotland and the UK.

Transforming Policy Capacity in Government

In 2016-17, as Chair of the *Working Group on Migration and Diversity* at the Royal Society of Edinburgh, Boswell hosted a series of discussions with Scottish Government officials, making the case for more institutionalised expertise to bolster its influence in UK-wide debates, proposing an advisory board to provide expertise and evidence. The Expert Advisory Group on Migration and Population (EAGMP) was formally launched by the Minister for Europe, Migration and International Development in October 2018 to consider the impact of migration on Scotland's communities, economy and public services. Boswell was appointed as the EAGMP Chair and, working with Ministers and senior officials, she '*actively shaped the role, remit and composition of the group*' (5.1).

In contrast to the UK-level Migration Advisory Committee's narrower economic focus, a fundamental goal of the EAGMP was to reframe migration policy to accommodate demographic and social (as well as fiscal and labour market) considerations. In four reports published between February 2019 – September 2020, the EAGMP presented a radically different approach to understanding the dynamics and impacts of migration and demonstrated how immigration policy goals could be framed to address Scotland's social, economic and demographic goals (5.2). Its first report, in particular, was widely acclaimed by parliamentarians as providing robust evidence of the potential damage to Scotland's economy and society of ending freedom of movement of EU workers (5.3a). It was reported in every major national and regional broadsheet in Scotland, including a Leader comment in the Times, as well as the Sun (circulation: 1432423),

Daily Record (circulation: 124034) and Metro (circulation: 1473632) (5.3b). Building on the EAGMP's analyses, First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, launched a policy document in January 2020 setting out the Scottish Government's approach to migration. Entitled *Migration: Helping Scotland Prosper*, it affirmed that the EAGMP's work:

"showed how future UK Government migration policy changes are likely to affect Scotland. This analysis helped inform the Scottish Government's proposals for a tailored approach to migration policy for Scotland" (p.28; 5.4).

This 94-page document cited the EAGMP 22 times and underlined throughout the extent to which the group had a critical role in informing and shaping government policy. The report explicitly relied upon the EAGMP's comparative analysis of regional immigration schemes (p.18; p.32; p.64-5; p.75; p.79-85), its evaluations of current expected changes to UK immigration policy (p.15; p.28-9; p.41) including the impact of a salary threshold on the Scottish labour market (p.58), its understanding of rural depopulation and the potential of migration policy to address this challenge (p.14; p.31-32), and distinctive approaches to immigration selection criteria (p.86). The Head of the Population and Migration Division in the Scottish Government reported that the EAGMP's analyses '*helped challenge and shape policy thinking for migration in Scotland*' (5.1). The Minister for Europe, Migration and International Development confirmed that the EAGMP's work '*has been incredibly valuable to the Scottish Government to inform our policy development... (and) has provided a wealth of information for us to learn from*' (5.5).

Strengthening the knowledge base in civil society: Migration Policy Scotland

Boswell collaborated closely with migration policy analyst Sarah Kyambi to launch Migration Policy Scotland (MPS), a new think tank to support civil society's capacity to set the migration policy agenda and to scrutinise public policy. This emerged from co-produced applied research supported by two ESRC Impact Accelerator grants, leading to co-authored reports exploring the impact of Brexit on migration in Scotland (see 3.6). MPS was set up to address "*a sizeable gap in the third sector landscape in Scotland on migration policy*", with Boswell playing a "*pivotal*" role in its creation (5.6). She advised and steered the scoping report to provide a well-evidenced case of the need for migration policy capacity, helped it secure funding, including highly competitive core funding (GBP70,000) from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, and as Chair of its Board of Trustees, helped enhance its reputation for policy-relevant analysis. The Director testified that Boswell had been "*a cornerstone in developing the ideas and initiatives leading to this point*" (5.6).

In partnership with MPS, Boswell supported employer groups and unions to develop responses and strategy, including in a series of policy workshops and publications to inform their understanding of, and ability to engage with, migration policy. A key partner has been the National Farmers Union Scotland (NFUS), which commented that the new think tank had provided insights "*that will significantly help underpin the policy thinking of the NFUS on migration matters*". Scottish Care, a representative body of the independent care sector, noted that one of MPS's events offered "*alternative ways of thinking (that) will inform evidence that we now submit to governments*" (5.7).

Reframing Immigration Policy Goals in Scotland

Boswell's research also influenced the content of policy debates on migration policy in Scotland and the UK, by setting out compelling evidence and options for an approach that could accommodate regional variations. She co-authored reports whose findings were disseminated in high-profile public presentations (including in the House of Commons, at the SNP Conference and the Royal Society of Edinburgh), and in her expert testimony to parliamentary committees in the House of Commons, the House of Lords and the Scottish Parliament. She led over 20 discussions with Scottish and UK Government officials, including high-level First Minister/ministerial meetings.

This engagement has significantly enhanced understanding of the options for regional immigration policy amongst parliamentarians and officials. The Commons Scottish Affairs committee report, *Immigration and Scotland*, cited Boswell 7 times, and her evidence directly influenced 5 of its recommendations, including its support for reforms to Tier 2 restrictions,

reintroduction of post-study work visas, and consideration of regional approaches to migration (5.8). Her evidence to the Lords EU committee on the regional impact of restricting free movement rights after Brexit was extensively cited in its report, *Brexit: Devolution*, and echoed in its conclusion that “*the specific labour market and demographic needs of the devolved nations should be accommodated in the context of Brexit*” (p.78; 5.8).

Boswell’s analyses also influenced UK-level policy debate on the role of immigration in addressing depopulation. Analysis in the first EAGMP report directly led the Migration Advisory Committee, the independent non-departmental public body that advises the UK Government on migration, to propose a pilot programme in Scotland to address depopulation in rural/remote areas (5.9a). The pilot scheme was subsequently endorsed by the then Home Secretary, Sajid Javid, in July 2019 (5.9b), marking a significant policy shift. As noted by the Deputy Director and Head of Policy Division with the UK Government in Scotland, when giving evidence to the Scottish Parliament in 2020, “*the Scottish Government’s analysis of the demographic challenges that Scotland faces builds on Christina Boswell’s very useful report, which fed into the MAC’s proposal on a rural pilot*” (5.10).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1 Testimonial: Head of Population and Migration Division, Scottish Government Directorate for External Affairs, 18 December 2020

5.2 Expert Advisory Group on Migration and Population Reports:

- a) ‘UK Immigration Policy after Leaving the EU: Impacts on Scotland’s Economy, Population and Society’ (February 2019).
<https://web.archive.org/web/20210128151345/https://www.gov.scot/publications/uk-immigration-policy-leaving-eu-impacts-scotlands-economy-population-society/>. ISBN: 9781787815599
- b) ‘Immigration Policy and Demographic Change in Scotland: Learning from Australia, Canada and Continental Europe’ (November 2019).
<https://web.archive.org/web/20210128151744/https://www.gov.scot/publications/immigration-policy-demographic-change-scotland-learning-australia-canada-continental-europe/> ISBN: 9781787815599
- c) ‘UK immigration policy after leaving the EU: impacts on Scotland’s economy, population and society - July 2020 update’.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20210128152042/https://www.gov.scot/publications/uk-immigration-policy-leaving-eu-impacts-scotlands-economy-population-society-july-2020-update/> ISBN: 9781839608360
- d) ‘Internal migration in Scotland and the UK: trends and policy lessons’ (Sept 2020).
<https://web.archive.org/web/20210128152210/https://www.gov.scot/publications/internal-migration-scotland-uk-trends-policy-lessons/> ISBN: 9781839609473

5.3 Reaction to Expert Advisory Group Report

- a) European Union Exit (Impact of United Kingdom Immigration Policy). Ministerial statement and MSP responses on publication of 1st EAG report, Meeting of the Scottish Parliament 28 February 2019.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20201112222618/https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentary-business/report.aspx?r=11964&i=108218>
- b) Collated press coverage of EAG’s first report.

5.4 Scottish Government, (2020), *Migration: Helping Scotland Prosper*.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20210128152557/https://www.gov.scot/publications/migration-helping-scotland-prosper/> ISBN 9781839603150

5.5 Testimonial: Ben Macpherson MSP, Minister for Europe, Migration and International Development, 27 January 2020

5.6 Testimonial, Director, Migration Policy Scotland, 25 January 2021

5.7 Stakeholder Engagement Feedback, 25 July 2019.

5.8 UK Parliament Committee Reports

- House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee (2018) ‘Immigration and Scotland’ (citing Boswell testimony, pg. 9, 15, 21, 23, 26, 27, 30).

<http://web.archive.org/web/20201130181058/https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmselect/488/488.pdf>

- House of Lords European Union Committee (2017) 'Brexit: Devolution' (Boswell cited pg. 40, 43, 44)

<http://web.archive.org/web/20200119091504/https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201719/ldselect/ldselect/9/9.pdf>

5.9 MAC/Home Office Policy on Remote Rural Pilots

- a) **Migration Advisory Committee**, *Full Review of the Shortage Occupation List* (2019), p.334-35,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20201116182822/https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/full-review-of-the-shortage-occupation-list-may-2019>

- b) **Sajid Javid MP (then Home Secretary)**, *Statement on Immigration*, 23 July 2019.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200930025804/https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2019-07-23/HCWS1803>

5.10 Deputy Director and Head of Policy Division with the UK Government in Scotland (2020), Evidence to the Scottish Parliament Culture, Europe and External Affairs Committee.

<http://web.archive.org/web/20200819212533/http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=12560&mode=pdf>