

<b>Institution:</b> University of Warwick		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> C19 – Politics and International Studies		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Amplifying Migratory Voices: Holding Policy-Makers to Account and Improving Public Understanding of the European 'Migration Crisis'		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2015 – 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name:</b> Professor Vicki Squire	<b>Roles:</b> Professor of International Politics	<b>Period employed by submitting HEI:</b> Since September 2012
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> September 2015 – December 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Professor Vicki Squire's research on the European 'migration crisis' has played a pivotal role in amplifying migratory voices and highlighting the largely overlooked claims of people on the move. Forefronting the testimonies of those most immediately affected by migration policies – refugees and migrants themselves – the research has achieved <b>policy impact</b> by holding key decision-makers to account for the human costs of policies and informing the advocacy work of international organisations and NGOs. It has also had <b>societal impact</b>, improving public understandings of precarious migratory journeys directly as well as indirectly through the work of various educational, artistic and media organisations. The <b>therapeutic benefits</b> of the research are also significant, for those interviewed and for wider groups affected by precarious migration.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>In 2015, Squire was awarded a Leverhulme Research Fellowship and an ESRC Urgency Grant to research the experiences of people migrating to the European Union (EU) in precarious conditions. Her work shows how the European Commission's 2015 flagship 'Agenda on Migration' advanced a mode of 'crisis politics' and sought to prevent large-scale unauthorised arrivals to the EU [3.1]. Squire's research highlights the harmful effects of the resulting intensification of deterrent measures, while advancing a series of alternative policy proposals. It does so on the basis of a unique 'counter-archive' of migratory testimonies, which reflects Squire's consistent emphasis on the importance of engaging people on the move in debates about migration [3.2].</p> <p>Squire's research on migration, border security, humanitarianism, asylum and refugee protection spans more than a decade and covers the UK [3.3], Balkans, Mexico and the US [3.4]. Her work is distinctive in emphasising how the claims-making [3.5] and political agency of those migrating under precarious conditions [3.6] is embedded in 'intersecting drivers of flight' cumulating across the entire migratory journey [3.2]. Squire was awarded ESRC funding to lead one of the largest projects on migration across the Mediterranean during 2015-16, Crossing the Mediterranean Sea by Boat. Her team carried out 257 in-depth qualitative interviews with a total of 277 people who had made – or who had contemplated making – the dangerous journey. Interviews were carried out along the 'central' and 'eastern' Mediterranean routes, at three island locations in 2015 (Kos, Malta, Sicily) and four urban locations during 2016 (Athens, Berlin, Istanbul, Rome).</p> <p>Squire's research forefronts the human costs of deterrent measures, which deny safe passage to those escaping violence and exploitation. A man escaping war and statelessness in Syria describes his journey as 'littered with corpses'; another talks of a smuggler who 'took our money and threw us at the border'; a woman travelling with her children recounts a gruelling situation of imprisonment <i>en route</i>. Yet, crucially, the research points to how migratory testimonies 'speak back' to policy-makers from positions of precarity. As a Syrian woman in Athens makes clear: 'You opened the door to illegal migration. You're saying that you want legal migration but it's the opposite...I'm talking about the European countries. You opened the door to human trafficking'. Despite the intractability of deterrent policies, Squire's research has increased awareness of the harms of deterrent policies across policy communities in the EU and UK. It has provided new insights to groups lobbying for more humane policies, while improving public understanding of why many people migrating demand the right to 'come legally' (Syrian man, Kos) and to have 'equal rights' to free movement (Nigerian woman, Rome).</p>		
<p><b>3. References to the research</b></p> <p><b>3.1</b> <i>Europe's Migration Crisis: Border Deaths and Human Dignity</i> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 244pp.</p>		

- 3.2** *Crossing the Mediterranean Sea by Boat* (report), [www.warwick.ac.uk/crossingthemed](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/crossingthemed) (2017), with A. Dimitriadis, M. Pisani, N. Perkowski, **D. Stevens** and **N. Vaughan-Williams**.
- 3.3** 'The 'Minor' Politics of Rightful Presence: Justice and Relationality in City of Sanctuary', *International Political Sociology*, 7:1 (2013), pp. 59-74, with J. Darling.
- 3.4** *Post/Humanitarian Border Politics Between Mexico and the US: People, Places, Things* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 114pp.
- 3.5** 'Hidden Geographies of the 'Mediterranean Migration Crisis', *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space* (online publication 23 June 2020), [doi.org/10.1177/2399654420935904](https://doi.org/10.1177/2399654420935904).
- 3.6** 'Unauthorised Migration beyond Structure/Agency? Acts, Interventions, Effects', *Politics*, 37:3 (2017), pp. 254-272.

#### **4. Details of the impact**

'We just want our voice to be heard in the world. We want safety. And we want them to treat people like they are humans and not animals.' This is the impassioned response of a Syrian woman in Kos when asked what message she wished to convey to EU policy-makers. By documenting the claims as well as the harms experienced by people migrating across the Mediterranean during 2015-16, Squire's research has benefitted migrants and refugees by holding policy-makers to account for the human costs of deterrent policies. This is evident in the use of the research by (A) EU and UK policy communities and (B) international and non-governmental organisations lobbying for a more humane response. Squire's work has also benefitted people on the move by improving public understanding of migratory experiences. This is evident in the use of the research by (C) multiple public audiences and by a range of educational, artistic and media organisations. The therapeutic benefits of the research for those migrating is emphasised by the research participants directly: 'I want our message to reach the whole world. We are not coming here to beg! We are coming to work hard and raise our children. We are not coming to be humiliated. I want us to reach a better level...What more can I say?' (Syrian woman, Athens).

#### **A – Policy impact: holding policy-makers to account for the human costs of deterrent policies**

Squire's work has played a key role in advancing awareness within EU and UK policy-making communities of the harms perpetuated by deterrent migration policies. The detailed project report [3.2] was disseminated along with a series of policy briefs at policy events in Brussels (2016, 2017), Athens (2016) and Malta (2017) [5.1]. Squire briefed UK MPs, members of the House of Lords and civil servants at the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Science and Policy in 2015 [5.1, 5.2a]. In 2017, she provided expert advice to representatives from the European Commission and EU staff at the joint training day on migration and security for the European Commission Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO) and Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME) [5.2b]. Research findings and policy recommendations were delivered to UK civil servants from the Home Office and the Department for International Development (DFID) in 2019. Squire also provided expert commentary on the experiences of women migrating at a UK House of Lords cross-party event and two expert lectures on migration, security and anti-smuggling for the Slovak Republic Interior Ministry European Migration Network training programme, again in 2019. She held a series of tailored consultations with representatives from DG DEVCO, DG HOME, the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC), DFID Migration and Modern Slavery Department, and the President of Malta, amongst others.

Despite the apparent intractability of deterrent migration policies, Squire's research has contributed toward two key changes in the policy sphere. First, it has advanced appreciation of the importance of synchronous qualitative research within the process of policy development, specifically with regard to the use of migratory testimonies. Corinne André, Coordinator of the European Commission's Centre of Expertise on Migration (DG NEAR), explains: 'Your use of evidence from field work highlighted very clearly to us the importance of collecting and evaluating evidence from experts as an essential exercise of policy-making'. Peter Bosch, Adviser to the Deputy Director-General, JRC, describes the research as being 'of great interest and relevance to us' and explains that while the Commission 'is developing its activities in the migration area, with, in a first phase, a strong focus on the quantitative dimension', the report 'brings in a valuable contribution from the qualitative side' and 'helps us to better grasp the complexities of

contemporary migration'. The importance of the testimonies is also emphasised by [Text removed for publication]: 'In offering a ground-level view of the attitudes and beliefs of people who have attempted to cross the Mediterranean, the project has advanced awareness of the experiences and decisions of [people] migrating...contribut[ing] to policy discussions in this country'. Her Excellency Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, then President of Malta, describes the research as 'groundbreaking in its engagement of migratory testimonies and in its recognition of the need for migrants and refugees to be directly involved as stakeholders...in debates about migration policies'. Furthermore: 'The project not only provides a compelling body of evidence regarding the need for a safeguarding of the rights of vulnerable groups, but its ethos of taking individual stories seriously also represents a crucial step toward a positive change in the engagement of refugees and migrants within the spheres of policy and research' [5.3].

The second way in which Squire's research has affected change in the policy sphere relates to the substantive evidence it provides regarding the harmful consequences of deterrence. Squire's written submissions on the negative impact of policies on adults and unaccompanied minors were cited by the UK House of Commons Home Affairs Committee [5.4a] and House of Lords European Union Committee in 2016 [5.4b]. Corinne André (DG NEAR) describes the research as 'rais[ing] important insights into the ways that policies can perpetuate precariousness of people on the move', while Emanuela C. Del Re, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation in Italy, highlights the work as 'evidence of the importance of creating safe and legal routes for precarious migrants'. Del Re commends the project as 'stand[ing] out as one of the first to document what many sub-Saharan Africans are facing in Libya' and as demonstrating 'a need to extend safe passage from Libya'. Emphasising that 'the Italian Government has been exploring this as part of the Humanitarian Corridors initiative', Del Re describes Squire's research as 'an important resource that I will continue to draw upon' in promoting 'safe passage' [5.3].

## **B – Policy Impact: informing organisations lobbying for more humane migration policies**

Beyond directly holding policy-makers to account for the harmful effects of deterrent policy, Squire's research has also indirectly influenced policy communities by contributing to the work of organisations lobbying for more humane migration policies. Squire held a series of consultations with representatives from international organisations (IOs) such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR), the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). She engaged frequently with regional NGOs such as Federazione delle Chiese Evangeliche (FCEI) in Italy, which has supported over 2,000 people to reach the EU safely via Humanitarian Corridors since 2015. In addition, Squire's research was cited in reports such as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees' (UNHCR) January-June 2017 edition of 'Desperate Journeys' [5.5a] and its 2019 appeal 'Routes Toward the Mediterranean' [5.5b].

In documenting the 'human costs and harmful impacts of deterrent migration policies on people migrating', Squire's research is described by Anne Bathily, former Senior Policy Officer for ECRE and Independent Expert for UNHCR, as 'having shed light on the enormity of the task to reverse current trends of the movement of people fleeing conflict and seeking protection'. 'As such', she says, 'it has provided additional impetus to NGOs lobbying for a more humane approach to migration' and has been 'widely shared...to evidence...advocacy work'. Similarly, Apostolos Veizis, Director of Medical Operational Support, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) Greece, describes the research as 'highly influential for Civil Society Organizations in Greece and across Europe, because it has provided new insights into the devastating conditions for people migrating and the harsh realities for those arriving to Europe since 2015'. Patricia Blijden of the Integra Foundation (Platform of Human Rights Organisations Malta) also describes the research as playing 'a pivotal role' in their advocacy work, and as 'invaluable...in understanding the needs and experiences of people on the move and how our services might respond' [5.3].

Federico Soda, then Director of the Coordination Office for the Mediterranean, IOM, praises the 'very clear and important distinction between the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes' within the research and the helpful new 'concept of "intersecting drivers of flight"'. Laurence Hart, current Director, confirms the ongoing significance of the analysis, while Pia Oberoi, Adviser on Migration and Human Rights, UNOHCHR, commends the 'original and important framework for analysing the "intersecting drivers of flight"', which 'helps us make clear sense of the complexities

of contemporary migration'. Veronika Bilger, Head of Research at the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, says: 'we at ICMPD have used the research results to advocate for a "whole-of-migration-journey" approach that goes beyond the prevailing snapshot perspectives, also with regard to related policy-making'. She explains how Squire's outputs 'are not only used in ICMPD's training activities but have also informed a series of empirical studies'. Similarly, Duncan Breen, Communications and Advocacy Officer, UNHCR, describes Squire's work as 'very valuable for our organisation's internal use', informing their efforts to 'build a shared understanding amongst all our colleagues working at different locations along the route' [5.3].

'[T]hanks to one of the findings in your report, and your willingness to discuss further afterwards', Breen (UNHCR) notes, 'we were alerted to a dynamic in which some people who end up crossing the Mediterranean actually had no intention to do so right up to the time they are made to board a boat at the Libyan coast'. Breen describes how the research has served as 'an important source for us...in trying to challenge a perception...that people crossing the Mediterranean from Libya all intended to do so at the time they departed from their country of origin'. Anne Bathily (ECRE) also expresses appreciation of the 'unique insights' arising from Squire's 'willingness to provide analysis of the ways in which family reunification policies impacted on people making journeys'. The research is described by Apostolos Veizis (MSF) as 'powerfully highlight[ing] the harmful effects of restrictive policies', 'providing vital evidence about the situation on the ground' and 'playing a key role exposing the complicity of EU policies in migrant deaths and vulnerabilities'. On this basis, Veizis explains how he has drawn on Squire's 'analysis of the dangers of deterrent policies in order to challenge EU authorities' failure to facilitate search and rescue and to advocate for improved reception conditions' [5.3]. Similarly, Patricia Blijden (Integra Foundation) describes the project's evidence base as 'crucial to our efforts to draw attention to human rights violations in Libya, the dangerous evolution of smuggling operations and the involvement of militia, and ultimately, the need to maintain search and rescue operations in the central Mediterranean' [5.3].

Paolo Naso, Coordinator of Mediterranean Hope Refugee and Migrant Programme, FCEI Italy, describes Squire's work as 'of great interest to us...because it powerfully documents the need for safe and legal passage from Libya and other countries along the central route'. He elaborates: 'The evidence from your report has supported FCEI's call for the provision of humanitarian corridors as a coordinated European initiative, and for the expansion of corridors across the central Mediterranean route.' Noting that the humanitarian corridors initiative has 'good support from the Italian government as well as from various MEPs' on the basis of 'evidence of the harms people face along fragmented migratory routes, including your own', Naso points to the 'vital' role of Squire's research for NGOs seeking to hold governments to account by lobbying for more humane policies [5.3]. Central to this evidence base are migratory testimonies, described by Stefan Kessler, Director of the Jesuit Refugee Service in Germany as 'a particularly powerful way to document both the dangers that people experience in migrating, as well as the enormous resilience many migrants and protection-seekers must have in order to overcome all the hurdles and difficulties along their journey'. Veronica Bilger (ICMPD) describes the project as 'unmatched in its commitment to ensuring the personal narratives of people migrating form part of the debate surrounding migration', and as 'influential in forcing us to look at the very individual level'. Pia Oberoi (UNOHCR) similarly commends the report on the basis that it 'very importantly brings to the forefront the voices and policy experiences of the rights-holders themselves' [5.3].

### **C – Societal impact: improving public understanding of precarious migratory experiences**

Recognising that policy-makers often claim to be 'held hostage' by the opinion of their electorates, Squire has drawn on migratory testimonies to inform local, national and international audiences of the human costs of deterrent migration policies. She has published 23 articles in multiple media outlets and has undertaken interviews with a range of TV and radio outlets, including in-depth interviews with flagship programmes such as BBC World Service Newsday (audience 454,000) and ABC The World (50,000). She has been interviewed by a range of leading newspapers such as *The Guardian* (130,484), *Financial Times* (166,663), *Times of Malta* (35,000), *Kathimerini* (Greece) (14,190) and *Kristeligt Dagblad* (Denmark) (26,000), and her research has been reported by BBC News online (31,000,000) [5.6]. In 2017, Squire's team launched an openly accessible online interactive map of twenty migration journeys, embedded with extracts of the migratory testimonies (>4,700 users/>6,800 sessions) [5.7]. This was hosted as part of an art exhibition at Tate Modern in London in 2017 (5,234 visitors) and as part of a month-long exhibition at the Library



of Birmingham in 2019 (launch >80). Four of the stories have been adapted as an animation film with audio for a major exhibition on refugees at London's Imperial War Museum, launched in September 2020. The exhibition also features a newly commissioned artwork, inspired by the visuals of journeys from the map and including audios of the testimonies to 'powerfully depict journeys by boat' (artist Indre Šerpytytė). Iris Veysey, Curator at Imperial War Museum London, describes Squire's research as 'a vital component of the exhibition narrative', offering 'fantastic personal insights into migratory journeys' and inspiring 'empathy, understanding, and personal engagement, which is crucial in helping people make sense of displacement' [5.8, 5.3].

Squire's research has been used by a range of higher, further and secondary education organisations in local, national and international settings. Andrew Knox, a teacher at an international school in Nepal, describes the interactive map as 'a wonderful resource in building empathy towards people who have been forced to leave their homes, because it is based on real experiences and firsthand narratives of migration'. Describing a simulation exercise he developed from the map with Year 12 pupils, Knox says that 'your research has provided an invaluable learning opportunity to my students, which I am sure they will continue to utilise in the future' [5.3]. The educational benefits of Squire's research are also highlighted by Swaranjit Kaur, ESOL teacher of Young Learners and Adults at a further education college in Birmingham. Explaining how she used the map for students with refugee backgrounds, she describes how the research enabled her students 'an opportunity to talk about their personal journeys and what had happened to them on their long journeys to the UK'. She emphasises that prior to this they had not talked 'in detail of their journey and struggle as it makes them feel quite exposed and vulnerable, unsure of how they will be perceived by others'. Engaging with the map, Kaur says, 'took away the sense of exposure' so 'they were more trusting...and willing to share the details of their struggles' [5.3].

The therapeutic benefits of Squire's research are emphasised by artist Bern O'Donoghue, who collaborated with Squire at a public workshop in Leamington Spa in 2019 (>135 visitors). She 'witnessed firsthand the powerful impact of [the] research on audiences, including those who have experienced displacement themselves', and recalls a Syrian woman who was 'visibly moved by the testimonies' and who 'explained how important it is to her as a survivor that the real stories of Syrian refugees are understood more widely' [5.3]. Workshop participants wrote postcards to their MPs demanding a change to migration policies based on their engagement with the research. These postcards describe the research as 'powerfully highlighting' the human costs of deterrent policies, and include calls for 'safe passage', 'support with search and rescue' and provision of opportunities for 'people to migrate with dignity', amongst others [5.8].

In sum, Squire's research has benefitted people on the move by changing migration policy debates as well as public understandings of precarious migratory experiences. It has persistently held policy-makers to account for the human costs of deterrence and has been pivotal in advancing the case for a more humane response to migration, in particular by demonstrating the need for safe and legal routes from Libya. Consistently amplifying the voices of people on the move in the debate surrounding migration, the research attests to the claim of a man from Ethiopia who was interviewed for the research in Malta and who says: 'Nobody is more expert than us. I lived it [my life on the move] for nine years, and somebody come in Europe and sit in Norwegian parliament and says that he knows better than me about migration...I don't think so. I don't think so.'

## **5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

**5.1** Policy briefings and evidence statements on findings of ESRC Urgency Grant project.

**5.2 a)** Evidence of All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Science and Policy, 2015; **b)** Evidence of EC Working Group session, 2017.

**5.3** Corroborating testimonials.

**5.4 a)** Report of the UK House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2016; **b)** Report of the House of Lords European Union Committee, 2016.

**5.5 a)** United Nations High Commission for Refugees' (UNHCR) January-June 2017 edition of 'Desperate Journeys'; **b)** UNHC Appeal, 'Routes Toward the Mediterranean', 2019.

**5.6** List of media engagement, including news articles, op-eds and press interviews.

**5.7** Interactive digital map.

**5.8** Details of public events, artist collaborations and audience feedback.