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INTRODUCTION

There are three parts to this lecture. First, I shall consider the question, 'What is conceptualisation?' I shall make the point that to conceptualise something is to construct it rather than to define or describe it and that the metaphorical language we use to talk about migration carries with it certain implications for the way we think about, and therefore act towards, migrants. We therefore need to become self-conscious about our use of this language. Second, I shall ask 'What is forced migration?' Here, I shall talk about the conceptual and practical difficulties involved in separating out forced from unforced migrants. I shall make the point that while there are pressing reasons to make this analytic, or conceptual distinction, it is not one that can easily be made in practice. The best way out of this difficulty, I suggest, is always to think of forced migrants as 'ordinary people', or 'purposive actors', embedded in particular social, political and historical situations. Finally, I shall consider the main categorical distinctions that have emerged over the years within the broader category of forced migrants. These distinctions, like the term 'forced migrant' itself, are artefacts of policy concerns, rather than of empirical observation and sociological analysis. I shall suggest that this raises problems, both for the practical relevance of research and for the dialogue between policy makers and advocates in the field of forced migration.

WHAT IS 'CONCEPTUALISATION'? [1]

When we talk about conceptualising something, we are talking about constructing it as an object of knowledge, not about describing something which is already out there. A concept is a mental representation which stands for, or represents something in the external world, such as a table. We need concepts in order to think about the world, to make sense of it, to interpret it and to act in relation to it. You can't think with a table: you can only think with the concept or representation of a table.

Concepts are systematically related - they form a conceptual map. The concept of table is not one of a random collection of concepts we carry about in our heads. It is part of a system of concepts, a conceptual map, which relates different concepts together through difference and similarity - table, desk, chair, etc. One result of this is that we are to some extent constrained, even imprisoned, by our conceptual maps - we tend to absorb new information

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[1] The first part of this section leans heavily on Hall, 1997.

into them in such a way as to limit the amount of 're-drawing' we have to do. They are aids - essential aids - but also constraints to our thinking.

There must be some sharing of conceptual maps in order to make common understanding and collective action possible. And there must be linguistic sharing - a sharing of linguistic practices. I suppose its unlikely that any two individuals will have identical conceptual maps - make exactly the same sense of the world - but there must be some overlap. This is part of what we mean when we talk about people belonging to the same culture, whether institutional or national. We mean, or assume, that they share a broadly similar conceptual map, that they make sense of the world in a broadly similar way..

Meaning, then, is not something which is fixed, given, out there in nature: it is the result of our social and cultural conventions - we make it, construct it. So when we talk about the conceptualisation of forced migration, we are not talking about defining it or describing it, as though all we have to do is look hard enough and we'll find it, see what it is. We are talking about something much more fundamental: we are talking about producing or constructing it as an object of knowledge. Forced migration is not something we discover but something we make.

To say that forced migration is the product of the mental process of conceptualisation does not mean, of course, that it is not something in the real world. After all, a table is clearly in the real world, but we still need a concept of it to be able to think and talk about it. The difference is that, in the case of concepts like table and chair, the relationship between concept and thing is pretty direct and unproblematic: we can see, touch, feel the things the concepts refer to. But not so in the case of other concepts, like war, love, friendship - and migration. These are relatively abstract and obscure things, and this means that we tend to have to talk about them, or represent them, by means of other concepts which *are* easily, or more directly, knowable. In other words, we represent them *metaphorically*, and (here is the most important point) without realising we are doing this. The last point is crucial because it explains why the way we act in the world is so powerfully determined by the way we conceptualise it.

There's a very interesting book by the linguist George Lakoff and the philosopher Mark Johnson called *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) which, as the title implies, is all about the

impact metaphor has on our daily lives. We could define speaking metaphorically as using a relatively known thing to speak about a relatively unknown thing. Lakoff and Johnson make three particularly important points about our use of metaphors in everyday speech. First, this is not something we do now and again, but something we do all the time. Second, we *have* to do it in order to be able to think and communicate at all. And third, most of the time, we speak metaphorically without realizing we are doing so. The fact that we are unselfconscious about the 'metaphors we live by' is crucial, because it explains their power to determine, or influence, the way we act in relation to the objective events and processes the metaphors represent.

Let me illustrate this with a concept that is notoriously abstract and difficult to pin down - time. St Augustine of Hippo is famous for having remarked that he knew what time was, provided nobody asked him. Whether he made this remark or not, and whatever he meant by it, we can take it to mean, not that time doesn't exist as an objective event in nature, but that there are different ways of conceptualising it, different metaphors that can be used to make it knowable. If I say 'I'm running out of time', or ask 'How much time have I got left?' I'm representing time as a quantity - something you can have too little or too much of. Something that can be bought and sold, something that can be guarded, protected or given away. We don't think *twice* about talking about time in this way - in fact we don't even think once about it. We take it for granted. And yet it is metaphorical.

Now what is the most pervasive metaphor we use in talking about forced, or indeed any kind of migration? Like the metaphors we use for time, it is a 'substance' metaphor. And the substance is liquid. We speak of flows, streams, waves and trickles of migrants. We speak of 'asylum capacity'. We speak of dams and of sluice gates, we speak of being flooded, inundated and swamped (well, some do). This metaphorical language of migration is obviously not innocent, by which I mean three things.

First, it is not the language of migrants themselves, but of their hosts, or potential hosts. The language of migration, in other words, is spoken from a sedentary, or state-centric perspective. It is the language *we* use to talk about *them*, even if we, or our ancestors, were also migrants once.

Second, the metaphorical language of migration requires us to think of it as some kind of natural event, an inexorable process with its own logic and force. As something which we didn't bring about but something which we ignore at our peril. As something that we cannot easily prevent but which threatens to overwhelm us. And as something we must therefore defend ourselves against, dam the stream, divert it, put up barriers to it - preferably keep it as far away from us as possible.

Third, the metaphors we use to talk about migration require us to think of migrants as an undifferentiated mass - as molecules in a liquid. It de-personalises, even de-humanises the people we are talking about. And this makes it easier for us to see them as a threat, even as enemies. In one of the films in the Summer School film list (*Passport Control*), immigration officers at Heathrow are referred to, apparently innocently, unselfconsciously and even admiringly, by means of a military metaphor: they are 'Britain's front line'.

You should not conclude that I am saying that we should stop using metaphors to talk about something like time or migration - we can't. If you want to understand the world, and particularly if you want to understand its more abstract and complex qualities, then you have to use metaphors, as Lakoff and Johnston have taught us. But, as they have also taught us (and this, in my view, is the chief value of their book), 'when you take an intellectual ride on a metaphor, it is important that you know when to get off' (Hannerz, 2002, p. 6). Knowing when to get off the metaphor, of course, means recognising that you are riding on one in the first place. In other words, talk about migratory flows, by all means, but recognise it as a metaphor and recognise that it helps us to think of the people involved as identical units, in a homogeneous mass, and get off the metaphor before it is too late.

Conceptualising time as a quantity is not necessary – it is a conceptualisation that derives from a particular cultural context: it is context specific. There have been in the past, and there are today, many other cultural contexts in which time is not conceptualised, made meaningful and known in this way. Take, for example, a group of people I have spent many years working amongst as an anthropologist in Ethiopia, the Mursi. When I first lived amongst them I was frequently exasperated by their apparent inability to agree about the date - to say what day of the month it was, and what month of the year. Imagine asking someone what the date is and being told adamantly that it's the 8th of July, only to be told equally adamantly by

someone else later on that it is the 9th of August. For us, with our view of time as a quantity, a system of time measurement that does not result in agreement about the measurement of that quantity would be useless. It took me some time to realise that the opposite is true for the Mursi: disagreement is built in to the Mursi system of time reckoning because disagreeing about the date is their way of retrospectively keeping the solar year in step with the lunar year. So when I came to write an article about Mursi time reckoning I called it 'Agreeing to Disagree' (Turton and Ruggles, 1979).

The problem St Augustine had in answering the question 'what is time' was that you cannot answer the question by looking harder at, or examining more closely, the physical world. What you have to do is compare different ways in which time has been conceptualised. This will help you to avoid taking for granted whatever specific conceptualisation you may have been brought up with, or become familiar with, and to realise that it is not a matter of which conceptualisation is the correct one – they are all context specific. It all depends on what they are used for, what they are good for, how well they enable people in a particular cultural or institutional context to achieve their objectives and satisfy their needs.

Various conceptualisations of forced migration will be presented in the course of the Summer School – conceptualisations we have called the 'legal institutional', the 'social development' and the 'political economy conceptualisations. The point is not to judge between them in an absolute sense. This would be pointless, since they are each the product of a different institutional context, and they have different uses and purposes. The point is to compare them, so that we can come to a better understanding of the material reality they are conceptualisations of. The issue is not whether they are right, but what they are good for.

There arises from this an important point, especially for this audience, consisting as it does of people who are all interested in forced migration, but who come from different institutional backgrounds - policy, practice, advocacy, and academic. Conceptualisations of migration, and forced migration, which are helpful in one of these contexts may not be helpful in another - indeed, they may be downright unhelpful. So how are we to ensure that those who inhabit these different institutional worlds are able to talk constructively to each other? And how can those who conduct research on forced migration have a constructive and positive impact on the formulation of policy in this area? I shall return to this knotty issue at the end of

the lecture.

WHAT IS FORCED MIGRATION?

So far, everything I have said applies as much to migration in general as it does to *forced* migration in particular. But this lecture is about conceptualising *forced* migration. So we must now consider what's involved in separating out a sub-category of forced migrants from the general category of migrants. But first, why do we need to make this distinction at all? There are at least three, mutually compatible but not equally persuasive ways of answering this question.

One answer would be to point out that forced migrants have a distinctive experience and distinctive needs. This was one of the main rationales for the establishment of the field of refugee studies. (See, for example, Stein, 1981). If there is a problem with this approach it is that, by emphasising the common experience and common needs of forced migrants, we risk seeing them as a homogeneous mass of needy and passive victims. The truth is that there is no such thing as the 'Refugee Experience' (the title given by Stein to his article), and there is therefore no such thing as 'the refugee voice': there are only the experiences, and the voices, of refugees.

> ...there is no intrinsic paradigmatic refugee figure to be at once recognised and registered regardless of historical contingencies. Instead....there are a thousand multifarious refugee experiences and a thousand refugee figures whose meanings and identities are negotiated in the process of displacement in time and place. (Soguk, *1999*, p. 4,)

A UNHCR document quoted by Soguk, appears to go even further:

> Behind the phenomena of moving lie deeper and often interrelated patterns of political, economic, ethnic, environmental, or human rights pressures which are further complicated by the interplay between domestic and international factors....there are as many reasons for moving as there are migrants. (UNHCR, 1993, p. 13)

A second way of answering the question would be to focus on the sheer number of forced migrants in the world today, which has been estimated at between 100 and 200 million (Castles, 2003, p. 15). This phenomenon is a product of wider processes of social and economic change, processes that are normally referred to as 'globalisation' and which appear to be creating an ever increasing North-South divide in living standards, human security, and access to justice and human rights protection. It follows that forced migration, including the

'migration industry' of people trafficking and smuggling, can provide a kind of window on these processes, a way of examining and understanding them.

A third way of answering the question, and one which I personally find most persuasive, is to focus, not on the needs or numbers of forced migrants but on ourselves, not on 'them' but on 'us'. From this point of view, the reason for separating out forced migrants from the wider category of migrants is that *forced migrants* make a special claim on our concern. They require us to consider issues of membership, citizenship and democratic liberalism. They require us to ask what our responsibilities are to the stranger in distress, the stranger amongst us, on our doorstep, who is seeking a better life for himself or herself and for his or her children, and the stranger halfway around the world who is brought into our homes by satellite TV channels. They require us, in other words, to consider who *we* are - what is or should be *our* moral community and, ultimately, what it means to be human.

For these reasons, and especially the last two, forced migration is a phenomenon of increasing significance in today's world of cross-border flows (of trade, investment and information as well as of people) and transnational networks; a world in which the difference between the rich and the poor can increasingly be seen as a difference between the rich minority, who are able to travel freely about this 'space of flows', as Manuel Castells has called it (1996: Chapter 6) and the poor majority who are prepared to take tremendous risks in order to escape the 'the discomforts of localised existence' (Bauman, 1998, p. 2). Those 'discomforts', of course, can include anything from threats to life and liberty to lack of educational and employment opportunities. From this point of view, the consideration of forced migration leads us, ultimately, to consider the gap between rich and poor countries, and to the question of how far rich countries are prepared to go to close that gap, by means of development aid, trade reform and, crucially, by the liberalisation of migration policies.

So forced migration is a phenomenon that it is certainly worth focusing on. But when we try to separate out a class of forced migrants from migrants in general, we are faced with a problem which is at once methodological and ethical. The methodological problem is that it proves impossible to apply the term forced migration to the real world in a way that enables us to separate out a discrete class of migrants. It turns out, on closer inspection, that *most* migrants make their decision to migrate in response to a complex set of external constraints

and predisposing events. Of course, those constraints and events vary in their salience, significance and impact, but there are elements of both compulsion and choice, it seems, in the decision making of most migrants. In order to deal with the fuzzy boundaries between forced and unforced migration, therefore, we have to resort to the familiar device of the continuum.

Two authors who have done this for us - presented schemas for fitting different types of migration into a single framework - are Anthony Richmond (1994, p. 59) and Nick Van Hear (1998, p. 44). Richmond has what looks, at first sight, like a fearsomely complicated matrix in which he places all kind of migratory movements in relation to various axes. He distinguishes between 'proactive' and 'reactive' migration, the two opposite ends of a continuum. At the reactive end you have the victims of the African slave trade and at the proactive end you have tourists and retirees. He also tries to catch the reality that the causes of migration are political as well as economic, it being just as difficult to make categorical distinctions between the political and the economic causes and conditions of migration as it is to make categorical distinctions between proactive and reactive migrants. Famine, for example, is a political as well as an economic phenomenon. As Amartya Sen famously demonstrated (1981), those who starve in a famine do so because they have insufficient *entitlement* to food, a political issue, not because there is insufficient food available.

Van Hear has an equally challenging matrix, with one axis running from voluntary (meaning more choice, more options) to involuntary (meaning less choice, less options). Along the other axis he has five kinds of movement - inward, outward, return, onward and staying put. At the involuntary end of his continuum he has refugees, people displaced by natural disasters and by development projects, the point being that such people have relatively few choices and relatively few options.

Both these schemes - and Van Hear acknowledges his indebtedness to Richmond - are thoughtful and ingenious attempts to capture or encapsulate, the 'reality' of the 'real world': to impose order on a jumble of experience, to fit it all together in an orderly and exhaustive fashion that will enable us to think about and understand the causes and consequences of the phenomena in question. But this is where the ethical problem arises.

By trying to separate out categories of migrants along a continuum of choice - free at

one end and entirely closed at the other - these schemes are in danger of ignoring the most important quality of all migrants and indeed of all human beings: their agency. Richmond's choice of 'proactive' versus 'reactive' migration makes this very clear: he is classifying people as those with agency and those without agency, forced migrants being those with little or no agency. But we know from studies that have been made of, for example, the behaviour of people in concentration and labour camps, that even in the most constrained of circumstances, human beings struggle to maintain some area of individual decision making - and those who succeed in this are those who survive best. Also, even at the most 'reactive' or 'involuntary' end of the continuum, people probably have a lot more choice than we might think - or that this model allows us to think. They may have choices not only about whether but also about when, where and how to move which cannot be encompassed by continua of this kind.

This brings us back to the dehumanising effect of the language of forced migration, a language that suggests that forced migrants have little or no scope for independent rational decision making; that they are simply passive victims of circumstances, carried along in flows, streams and waves, like identical modules in a liquid. This dehumanising effect of the *language* of forced migration is carried though into the *practice* of states and international organisations in the way they respond to, and try to control and manage, forced migration. This combination of language and practice is what Foucault called a discourse, or *discursive formation*, which generates meaning and produces knowledge. This particular discourse of forced migration helps to make it possible for states, governments and the publics of host countries, especially rich Northern ones, to respond to forced migrants not as individual human beings, people like us, embedded in contingent social and historical circumstances, but as anonymous and dehumanised masses. As people who are members neither of our civil not our moral community.

Here I should like to interject a few comments about the awkwardness of the term 'forced migrant' itself. I shall suggest in the next part of the lecture how we got landed with this term, but the point I want to make here is that it raises some conceptual difficulties which we ought to be aware of. The term 'forced migration' implies that there is such a thing as 'unforced migration', though one hardly ever comes across this usage. What we usually find instead is 'voluntary migration', with forced migration being treated as synonymous with 'involuntary migration'. This is the terminology used by Van Hear, for example, in his

representation of the continuum. Strictly speaking, though, 'involuntary' is not the correct English word to oppose to 'voluntary'. The correct word is 'compulsory'. Attendance at this lecture could be meaningfully described as compulsory or voluntary, but it would be meaningless to describe it as 'involuntary'. An act is involuntary when it is done without thinking, without deliberation, as when I let out a cry of pain after dropping something on my foot.

If it is meaningless to talk about involuntary human migration, this is because, to migrate, when applied to human beings, implies at least *some* degree of agency, of independent will. To migrate is something we *do*, not something that is done *to* us. You can move people and displace people, but you can't 'migrate' them. 'To migrate', in other words, is an intransitive verb. How then does 'compulsory migration' sound? It does not sound as odd as involuntary migration, but it still sounds odd to me, and for the same reason: the verb 'to migrate' implies *some* degree of human agency while compulsion implies a lack of choice, a lack of any alternative. The best examples I can think of that might fit this description are the African slave trade and state-sponsored resettlement due to a development project - a dam, for example. But is it not stretching the meaning of 'migration' rather far to apply it to either of these cases, and for the reason I have just given?

I do not conclude from all this that we should throw out the term 'forced migrant' and replace it with something else. It is probably the best term available. But we should be aware of the conceptual difficulties it raises and not assume that it refers to a clearly discriminable class of events. It is a useful shorthand term - what Wittgenstein called an 'odd job word' - which cannot be defined analytically but which allows us to bring together a whole range of overlapping ideas and events which don't have any single characteristic in common but which are connected to each other like the members of a family - they have 'family likenesses'. 'Some of them have the same nose, others the same eyebrows and others again the same way of walking; and these likenesses overlap' (Wittgenstein, 1969, p. 17, quoted in A. Kenny, 1973, p. 153).

Second, and most important, while we should be interested in the factors that limit choice and the ways in which individuals, households and groups make decisions in the light of those limiting factors, we should not lump people together into categories, according to the

extent of choice open to them. Different forced migrants, however they are categorised, have different areas of choice, different alternatives, available to them, depending not just on external constraining factors but also on such factors as their sex, age, wealth, connections, networks etc. This means that we have to understand the point of view and experiences of the people making the decision to move. We have to emphasise their embeddedness in a particular social, political and historical situation. We have to see them as agents, however limited, in a physical sense, their room for manoeuvre may be.

What I am arguing here, then, is that we should be focusing on forced migrants as 'purposive actors' - as ordinary people. And this for both a practical and a moral reason. The practical reason is that this is how migratory processes actually work: through acts of individual, household and group decision making - decisions about whether to move, when to move and where to move. In the field of refugee studies I think there has been a relative dearth of work focusing on this sort of decision-making. Research and teaching in refugee studies has tended to focus on public policy and private need - that is, on policy issues on the one hand and on the needs - physical and psychological - of forced migrants on the other. But not on their active decision making: how they reach the decision to leave; what information is available to them when they make the decision; the way in which their journey is financed, the degree to which it is planned with a specific destination in mind; the extent to which they had prior contact with that country etc. etc.

The moral reason for focusing on forced migrants as purposive actors or 'ordinary people' is that by emphasising what Soguk calls (speaking of refugees) 'their capacity for agency against all odds' (p. 5), we increase our imaginative ability to identify with the suffering stranger - to see him or her as potentially one of us, as a potential member of our moral community. Put differently, the more we are able to see the forced migrant as an ordinary person, with whom, therefore, we can identify, the more difficult it becomes to ignore his or her plight: to be a bystander.

CATEGORIES OF FORCED MIGRANTS

My main point in this section is that the distinctions we make within the wider category of forced migrants are an artefact of policy concerns rather than of empirical observation and scientific enquiry. It would be interesting to know exactly when the term forced migrant itself

first entered into use in policy and academic circles, but this must have been fairly recently. For it must have been a response to the narrowing down of the range of attribution of the term refugee to a legally defined category through the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. It then became necessary to treat the term 'refugee' which, in the language of everyday speech can mean anyone who has been forced to leave his or her home, as the name of a much narrower category of people, with special rights in international law and with a special call on the assistance of the international community. The term 'forced migrant' therefore came into existence as the name of the wider class, from which the legal category of 'refugee' had been 'extracted'.

When creating a legal category, of course, it is very important to be clear about its limits, about the membership criteria to be used. The refugee definition provided in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol is, of course, the main standard of refugee status today. This definition provides two main criteria: persecution and 'alienage'. The refugee is a person who has crossed an international border because of a 'well-founded fear of being persecuted' in his or her state of origin.

But no sooner had the concept refugee been confined to this legal box, than it began trying to jump out of it. First you had the broader definitions introduced at the regional level to take account of changed circumstances - mass refugee flows resulting from internal wars and wars of colonial liberation in the 1960s and 70s. The 1969 OAU Convention and the 1984 Cartagena Declaration for the Central American region. These regional instruments incorporated the earlier definitions but added as causes of refugee flight 'external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order....' (OAU Convention) and 'generalised violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order...' (Cartagena Declaration).

Then you had the introduction of the concept of 'internally displaced person' who are 'of concern' to the UNHCR, even though they have not crossed an international border, because they are in a 'refugee like' situation - i.e., they have moved because of war, violence and/ or human rights violations and are outside the protection of their own governments, even if within its borders. The generally accepted definition of IDPs., however, does not include

development displacees (forced resettlers) nor disaster displacees, since these are technically still under the protection of their own governments and therefore not in a 'refugee like situation'.

Then you have the new category of 'asylum seekers', people who have made a claim for asylum but whose cases have not yet been determined. This category has emerged in response to the growing difficulty of making clear distinctions between people who are moving for political as opposed to economic reasons, since political upheavals usually go hand in hand with violent conflict, economic distress and human rights abuses. Asylum seekers are, not surprisingly, found mainly in Northern countries, where they are assumed by governments and public alike to be economic migrants using the asylum procedure to circumvent immigration controls. When the number of asylum applications in W Europe began to rise in the early 1980s, partly no doubt because of the closing down of the migration channel, the immediate response of states was to introduce so-called 'restrictive asylum practices' - visa restrictions, carrier sanctions, safe third country and safe country of origin concepts, narrower interpretations of the 1951 Convention. These restrictions were successfully evaded by a large numbers of migrants using transnational social networks, new transport and communication technologies and people smugglers.

It does not, of course, mean that asylum seekers are not 'genuine' just because they use migrant networks to make their way into Western Europe, nor because they make use of the services of people smugglers. What it does mean is that it has become increasingly difficult, in practice, to separate out refugees from economic migrants, and yet such a separation is seen by governments as an essential condition of an effective asylum and immigration policy. Nor is this just a European issue. The Afghan refugee crisis of the past twenty years, for example, has been superimposed on a history of seasonal economic migration, within the Central Asian region and beyond, going back hundreds of years (Turton and Marsden, 2002, pp. 52-53).

CONCLUSION

The language we use to discriminate between different categories of forced migrants is flawed, from a scientific point of view, because it is based on *ad hoc* responses to a series of policy concerns. This presents a particular problem for those who wish to see the study of forced migration make a positive impact on the design and implementation of policy.

Empirical research, as opposed to mere random observation, cannot proceed except in the light of general propositions which, among other things, identify the phenomena to be investigated and group them into meaningful categories. These categories must, in turn be open to refinement and revision in the light of particular observation. This condition cannot be met, however, by categories which are designed to meet the needs of practical politics rather than of scientific enquiry. This presents a number of challenges to those involved in the study of forced migration and in the design and implementation of policies intended to improve the situation of forced migrants.

First, we need to encourage research that aims to understand the situation of forced migrants at the local level, as purposive actors, embedded in particular social and historical circumstances. Second, we need to recognise that such research will inevitably call into question the adequacy and usefulness of existing conceptualisations of forced migrants. And third, we need to recognise that it is by the questioning of taken for granted assumptions that research can have its most beneficial impact on policy and practice.

As I indicated at the beginning of this lecture, when talking about conceptual maps, every discourse must have some basic minimum level of internal coherence. Otherwise, it loses its ability to make the world meaningful and therefore knowable. One indication that the current discourse of forced migration lacks this basic minimum of internal coherence is the gulf that seems to have opened up between the way in which policy makers conceptualise forced migration and the way in which it is conceptualised by advocates and activists. Thus, the debate on asylum in Europe has become polarised between policy makers who are treating asylum more as a loophole to be closed than a right to be protected and asylum advocates and human rights groups who tend to present, at least in their public utterances, all asylum seekers as people whose behaviour is determined solely by the need to escape from immediate danger. In other words, the two sides appear to be talking past each other, rather than communicating by means of a set of shared meanings. In these circumstances, it is difficult to see how advocacy can be effective.

Let me sum up. I said first that the process of conceptualisation is not just one of describing and defining, nor even one of taking up a particular position or adopting a particular perspective: it is a process by which we make the world meaningful and therefore

knowable. So the way we talk about forced migration and the way we act towards it are intimately linked: language and practice form a discourse which constructs forced migration for us.

Second I talked about the problems involved in separating out forced migrants from migrants in general. I said that there are good reasons for trying to do this - not so much because forced migrants have a special, common set of experiences and needs, but because they pose a problem for us of response: how do we respond to the stranger in distress? This question is fundamental to who we think we are, what we think a human being is, and what we consider to be the requirements for membership of our political and moral community.

But there is a methodological and ethical problem with trying to make this separation. I suggested that the way to deal with both problems is to focus on individual and group decision-making and not to lump people together into categories according to the degree or amount of choice open to them. I suggested that if we treat people as 'purposive actors', making choices in whatever and however constrained the circumstances, then we increase our capacity to see them as fellow sufferers.

And third, I talked about the problems involved in trying to separate out a legally defined category - refugees - from other categories of forced migrants. I suggested that it is becoming increasingly difficult to do this in a coherent way and that the 'discourse' that is being built up around such distinctions - between refugees, IDPs, asylum seekers, and economic migrants - is looking increasingly inadequate. If the discourse of forced migration is failing in its fundamental purpose – to make possible the communication of shared meanings – then one indication of this may be the tendency of policy makers and activists to talk past each other, while all the time claiming to represent the best interests of forced migrants.

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