Migration, Borders, and Society

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Abstract In recent years, we have learned that forced global migration pose a serious threat to international peace and societal values. Despite the many warnings and refugee crises across the world, most national governments have insufficiently addressed this threat. In this chapter, we try to explain this lack of action. The chapter explores possible explanations such as the denial mindset of “it probably won’t happen here (and if it does, it won’t affect my family and community)”. The chapter focuses on the border management crisis in Sweden in 2015. The Swedish government did not address the situation as a crisis until the refugees, who had been on the Mediterranean Sea and traversing north over the continent for months, ended up in Malmö in the south of Sweden in September 2015. This predictable set of events caused chaos for the unprepared Swedish police and the border and migration authorities who had to handle the situation under conditions of urgency and apparent uncertainty.

Keywords Creeping crisis • Migration • Migration crisis • Swedish migration crisis

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6.1 INTRODUCTION: A CRISIS WAITING TO HAPPEN

In 2020, in the wake of the Turkish military attacks in Northern Syria and the Turkish government's announcement to open its borders with Bulgaria and Greece, warnings of a new migration crisis were alarming European governments. Waves of asylum seekers were forecasted to reach the borders of the European Union (EU). The international media predicted that this creeping crisis was about to materialize, again (Genç, 2020; The Guardian, 2019). The question was whether European countries would be better prepared this time. In 2015, the lack of a joint response had put thousands of refugees and more than half-a-century of achievements of a border-free EU at risk.

In 2012, Italy and Greece had tried to make the EU member states aware of the need to address the emerging problem, but failed. A shipwreck on October 3, 2013, when nearly 400 refugees died on the seas near the Italian island of Lampedusa, did not spur actions of mutual support by European countries not directly affected by the tragedy. It was followed by a second deadly shipwreck on October 11 close to the island. The photo of the Syrian boy Alan Kurdi, who drowned on September 2, 2015 in the Mediterranean Sea, drew the world's attention to the horrible consequences of the crisis but still did not trigger joint European rescue operations or a coordinated refugee reception.

Why did so many governments, despite the massive attention given to the refugee situation and the many precursor events, react so late during the migration crisis of 2015? Why did national authorities not address the transnational crisis when they could have realized that it would manifest itself at their own country's borders in what may be called a *translocal* crisis (Ekengren, 2018)? For instance, the Swedish government did not take action until the refugees ended up in Malmö in the south of Sweden in early September 2015, causing chaos for the unprepared Swedish police and the border and migration authorities.

This leaves us with a puzzle. Why did Sweden not recognize an impending crisis, which clearly manifested itself? After all, the Swedes could see along with everybody else how a large group of refugees was *walking* the continent, making its way up north for a period of months. The failure to spot this creeping crisis would have great repercussions for the functioning of Swedish state and society.

This chapter highlights a paradox associated with this particular creeping crisis (the definition of which is contained in the introduction to this book). It shows a lack of national governmental action despite the often very high

degree of international and societal attention given to the emerging crisis. The chapter analyzes the border management crisis in Sweden in 2015 by recapitulating first how the crisis evolved over time and space, second how it was given attention by international organizations and domestic actors, and third how it for long was insufficiently addressed by Swedish authorities and suddenly turned into an acute crisis. The conclusion of the chapter presents three hypotheses for future research that can help deepen our understanding of why the authorities did not act at an earlier stage.

6.2 A BRIEF HISTORY OF A HUMAN DRAMA

It is hard to establish when exactly the refugee crisis began in Europe. The number of asylum applicants has been on the rise in the EU ever since 2010. The Syrian civil war started in 2011. It has held Europe in its grip since 2012 (Gallagher, 2015). A substantial surge of migrants attempted to enter the EU in 2015. The situation had at this point been mounting for many years. Southern and Southeastern member states, especially Greece and Italy had at times been swamped by refugees arriving by the thousands every day.

The dangerous voyage migrants undertook to cross the Mediterranean and enter the EU drew public awareness in 2013 when migrants died as their ship sank off the coast of the Italian island Lampedusa. Between 2013 and 2014, the numbers of asylum applicants rose from approximately 431,000 to 627,000 (Eurostat, 2017). By the end of 2015, about 1 million migrants had arrived by sea in southern and southeastern Europe, while 34,000 were estimated to have entered into the EU by land. In Greece alone, 821,000 migrants arrived in 2015, followed by Italy that received 150,000 migrants (United Nations Refugee Agency [UNHCR], 2015c, 2017).

In 2013, the southern EU member states asked for Union solidarity, assistance, common policies, and regulations. The result was a split among the EU countries: many recognized a need for stronger EU coordination while others claimed the crisis fell under national responsibility and saw no role for common policies. The main EU policies, such as the scheme for relocation of refugees, soon met resistance and became a failure.¹

¹The relocation policy stipulated that member states should transfer asylum seekers from Italy and Greece to reduce the pressure on these countries (European Commission, 2015, pp. 3–4). When implementing the policy, the Commission noted in its reports that the pace of relocating applicants was suffering due to low political will among member states (European Commission, 2016, p. 2).

It was well known that many of the refugees traveled on directly to richer member states, particularly Germany, the UK, and Sweden. One reason for this was the abandonment of the Dublin regulation. Asylum practices in the EU were before the crisis governed by this regulation, which stipulated that an asylum seeker had to apply for asylum in the member state they first entered. Greece and Italy were therefore legally responsible for the vast majority of the asylum applicants that arrived during the refugee crisis. Since both countries instead began to employ a wave-through policy, the result was a largely uncontrolled flow of migrants across the Union.

In response, member states adopted various national solutions. Several countries (and non-EU states on the migration routes) closed down their borders. Others attempted to host the newly arrived migrants, creating an uneven distribution of people in need. Germany, for example, welcomed approximately 1 million asylum applications in 2015, whereas Sweden received the highest number of applicants per capita (OECD, 2017, p. 2). But it was hardly enough.

The border management crisis became a humanitarian crisis. By the end of 2015, 3771 migrants were either confirmed to have died or gone missing at sea, and the number rose to 5096 in 2016 (UNHCR, 2017). As borders closed down, migrants who had reached the EU became stuck along the migration routes in less than adequate camps. When Macedonia closed its border to Greece, for example, a rising number of migrants became isolated within Greece. With a weak economy and an unemployment rate at 24% (European Parliament, 2016), Greece was badly equipped for dealing with the migrants, giving rise to a dire humanitarian situation.

6.3 A VISIBLE CRISIS: INCREASING ATTENTION AND MOBILIZATION ON THE GROUND

On July 1, 2015, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) warned of an 83% increase in refugees and migrants crossing the Mediterranean from January to June 2015. That meant 137,000 persons compared to 75,000 in the same period 2014. The agency prognosticated that the numbers would continue to soar over the summer months (UNHCR, 2015a, 2015c). UNHCR also drew attention to the limitations in the Greek capacity to receive these refugees and that an increasing number of migrants continued across the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia to and through Hungary (UNHCR, 2015a, 2015c). UNHCR concluded that:

The majority of refugees and migrants coming to southern Europe do so with the intention of travelling onwards. The countries of northern and western Europe, particularly Sweden and Germany, are perceived as offering more effective protection, better support for asylum-seekers, a more welcoming environment, and easier prospects for integration ... The situation remains critical and will require further support, including through joint efforts with the European Union, national governments and NGOs. (UNHCR, 2015b, p. 16)

Two internal imbalances have arisen. The first is an imbalance in arrivals, with Italy and Greece facing the large majority of all seaborne landings. The second is an imbalance in destination. In 2014, Germany and Sweden received 43 per cent of all asylum applications in the EU. This is not sustainable. (UNHCR, 2015b, p. 17)

On September 4, 2015, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, warned the Europeans of a piecemeal approach and national “solutions”:

It is no surprise that, when a system is unbalanced and dysfunctional, everything gets blocked when the pressure mounts. This is a defining moment for the European Union, and it now has no other choice but to mobilize full force around this crisis. The only way to solve this problem is for the Union and all member states to implement a common strategy, based on responsibility, solidarity and trust. (UNHCR, 2015d)

In June 2015, Amnesty International complained about the failures of the international community to support the refugees and the host countries. The organization estimated that the total number of places offered to refugees from Syria was less than 90,000, only 2.2% of the refugees in the main host countries (Amnesty International, 2015, p. 5). It also drew attention to the closing of borders of the European states, leaving the refugees with only one option: the sea voyage across the Mediterranean (Amnesty International, 2015, p. 16).

In early September 2015, the Swedish Red Cross warned of a “refugee catastrophe” and underlined the need for more volunteers to help receive the large number of people who would soon arrive in Sweden (Swedish Red Cross, 2015).

The attention given to the deteriorating refugee situation by international institutions and NGOs stood in sharp contrast to the assessments of

the Swedish authorities. On July 23, 2015, the Swedish Migration Agency predicted a *decrease* in asylum seekers arriving to Sweden based on the analysis that “a growing number of border controls in the EU have made it more difficult to come here” (Magnusson, 2015; *Riksrevisionen*, 2017, p. 2). The agency pointed out that the number of asylum seekers in the spring of 2015 had gone down compared to the same period the year before (*Riksrevisionen*, 2017, p. 2). It concluded that the changed distribution of asylum seekers between the different European countries had made Sweden less attractive as a destination (*Statens Offentliga Utredningar* [SOU], 2017, p. 323).

At the time of the Agency’s July prognosis, the Swedish government was in its final phase of forming the state budget for 2016. In line with the prognosis, this budget proposal did not cover the costs of a potential mass migration of refugees (Magnusson, 2015; SOU, 2017, p. 324).

In the same time period, international and Swedish media reported about alarming numbers of refugees arriving by boat on the Greek islands and predicted that Sweden together with Germany and Italy would probably carry a big load (BBC Trending, 2015; BBC News, 2015; Loewe, 2015; UNHCR, 2015b, p. 16; Horvatovic, 2015; SOU, 2017, p. 2). Representatives of the Migration Agency later recognized July 2015 as the month when it “turned and the number of Syrian asylum seekers began to increase significantly” (Magnusson, 2015). In the beginning of August, the German Agency for migration and refugees estimated the arrival of 450,000 asylum seekers in Germany in the coming months, more than double from the year before. A few days later, the Agency warned German authorities that the prognosticated number was probably an underestimation.

The optimistic July prognosis of the Swedish Migration Agency resulted in the assumption within the Government Offices, Swedish agencies and the vast majority of municipalities that there was no need to prepare for the reception of more migrants than normally is the case. Some municipalities such as Mölndal, Göteborg, and Malmö, however, noticed an increase in the number of unaccompanied children during the summer of 2015 and decided to be more attentive to this challenge (SOU, 2017, p. 324). Representatives of the Malmö municipality later revealed that: “We alerted the Migration Agency already before the holidays. Normally we receive around 40 unaccompanied children per week, but now (summer 2015) 40 per day arrived! And we had no idea of what would come” (Sjögren, 2016).

Soon after the publication of the July prognosis, the Migration Agency received indications that the estimations made in the report were probably inaccurate. In mid-August, the Agency's chief executive appealed to the Swedish public through various media channels to take responsibility for the increasing number of unaccompanied children. The indications of an increasing number of asylum seekers were forwarded to lower levels within the Government Offices but not passed on to the political level. The Swedish Migration Agency did not make a new analysis. The departments receiving the information did not actively assess or act on the information that was brought to their attention (SOU, 2017, p. 324).

On September 2, 2015, the Swedish Red Cross called upon the municipalities, the government, and the EU to take on an increased responsibility and not leave the NGOs and voluntary organizations alone with the humanitarian burden for the refugees (Carlstedt, 2015).

The voluntary help organization within the Malmö "Culture House" (*Kulturhuset Kontrapunkt*) saw the crisis coming. On September 7, some of its members watched on television how refugees walked on the highways of Denmark toward the Swedish border. "We discussed the refugee crisis in the South of Europe the weekend before and knew that it would come also to us" (Sjögren, 2016). They immediately began to transform the Culture House into emergency housing for fleeing people. As one of the volunteers described it: "If we hadn't done that, I am sure Malmö Central station would have been in big chaos already the first evening of their arrival... the citizens made it possible to manage the situation when the authorities were so unprepared" (Sjögren, 2016).

Throughout September, a growing number of Swedish citizens started to mobilize NGOs and civil rights organizations. These included the *Refugees Welcome Movement*, which started as a loose network of activists but quickly became central to welcoming refugees in Sweden, and especially in Malmö to which most refugees came when arriving to Sweden (Weinryb, 2015; Frigyes, 2018, p. 40). *Refugees Welcome Housing Sweden* also began operating in September 2015, as a reaction to the "inhumane way of welcoming individuals that seek asylum" (Refugees Welcome Housing Sweden, 2019), with the purpose of helping refugees to find housing among private Swedish citizens. The slogan among volunteers in the Refugees Welcome movement on one of its many Facebook pages was "This is not a migrant crisis. It is a crisis of resource exploitation. It is a crisis of war. It is a crisis of climate change. It's a crisis of inequality" (Refugees Welcome, 2016).

September was also the month when some Swedish newspapers started to shift focus on the refugees from describing them as victims to pointing out the costs of immigration for Swedish society (Frigyes, 2018, pp. 44–45).

6.4 THE SWEDISH GOVERNMENT RESPONDS

Ever since 2012, Sweden had experienced a significant growth in the number of asylum claims and been among the top five states receiving asylum seekers.² However, it was not until the end of September 2015, that the Swedish government used the term crisis to describe the growing inflow of refugees (Swedish Government, 2015a). Before this, the political discourse of all main political parties, with the exception of the right-wing political party the Sweden Democrats, *Sverigedemokraterna*, emphasized the need to show openness, picturing the situation as an opportunity rather than as a risk or crisis.

In August 2014, the Swedish Prime Minister, Fredrik Reinfeldt, delivered his annual “summer speech.” Reinfeldt described Sweden in terms of a “humanitarian superpower,” emphasizing that:

It is by standing up for our openness and for our ideas that we are doing our very best and generating a long-term [solution] to fight the kind of tendencies of terrorism and sectarianism we now see in our world. What we see now will affect Europe as well as Sweden. Here I would like to address the entire Swedish people. I want to remind you that we are a nation that has stood up and showed openness before when people have endured difficult times. We now have people fleeing in numbers that are similar to the Balkan crisis in the beginning of the 1990s. Now I appeal to the Swedish people for patience, to *open your hearts* to people in stress who fear death threats and are fleeing, fleeing to Europe, fleeing to freedom, fleeing to better conditions. Show that openness. Show that tolerance when it is said that “they are too many”, “it will be complicated”, “it will be difficult”. Show that tolerance and show that we have done it before. We have seen people come from stress, fleeing from oppression, who have arrived to our society, learned the Swedish language, found a job and are now helping to build a better and freer Sweden. (Moderaterna, 2014, authors’ translation, emphasis added)

² Already in 2012, Sweden and Germany received, by far, the greatest number of asylum applications, among them many Syrian applicants. In 2014, Germany received Syrian asylum applications of a number of 41,100, which was over five times the number of 2012 and three-fold the number of 2013. Swedish authorities received 30,750 Syrian asylum claims in 2014, a significant rise from the 16,540 claims made the year before (UNHCR, 2014, p. 13; Ostrand, 2015, pp. 257, 269).

The prime minister's speech has been remembered as the "open your hearts" speech. It shows that Swedish authorities were aware of the growing number of refugees arriving in Sweden but did not speak of the situation in terms of crisis. Instead, the center-right government parties, including the (left-green) parties that were later elected to govern Sweden, expressed a concern over the growing number of barriers created by other European governments and the risk of xenophobia and racism (Moderaterna, 2014; Swedish Government, 2014, 2015a). On August 16, 2015, the new Social Democratic Prime Minister, Stefan Löfven, delivered his annual summer speech and described the mass migration of refugees in similar terms to Reinfeldt:

In the short term it is a great effort for Sweden. We should not pretend something else. But it is an effort we make because we want to help people get away from war and oppression. (Löfven, 2015)

Instead of using the term crisis, Löfven pictured the situation as a manageable struggle if everyone, including the European Union and Swedish municipalities, took responsibility. The prime minister emphasized Sweden's humanitarian support to Syria (Löfven, 2015). It was this attitude of openness that characterized the Swedish migration policy in the eyes of international observers, especially after the Swedish center-right political parties reached an agreement with the Green party on a more liberal migration policy (Bolin, Lidén, & Nyhlén, 2014, p. 329; Bolin, Hinnfors, & Strömbäck, 2016, pp. 200–201).

Shortly after the prime minister's speech, on the morning of September 2, a three-year-old Syrian boy called Alan Kurdi was found dead on a beach in Bodrum, a Turkish seaside resort. Under the hashtag #HumanityWashedAshore, a photograph of the Syrian boy's dead body was spread on social and mass media all over the world. The photo had an enormous impact on the public consciousness. The Swedish population seemed to be largely unaware of the situation until it saw the photo of the three-year-old Syrian boy.

On September 6, 2015, the prime minister Stefan Löfven declared that "my Europe does not build walls." The prime minister urged the European Union to implement a refugee quota and expressed a special gratitude and pride for volunteers and individuals helping refugees (Swedish Government, 2015a). On the same day, September 6, the Swedish Migration Agency upgraded its level of preparedness to a "state of readiness" (*stabsläge*), a

measure that in line with normal procedures is taken when it is concluded that Sweden faces a “threat of major incidents or disasters” (*Riksrevisionen*, 2017, pp. 2–3). In short, the Agency declared that the refugee situation was a crisis that required crisis management action.

6.5 FROM CREEPING CRISIS TO CRISIS

The first time the government used the term crisis was when Prime Minister Löfven in a press release emphasized that: “The most important thing now is that all countries take their responsibility, that we establish orderly procedures [*ordning och reda*] for refugee welcoming, and that we fight the root causes of the international refugee crisis” (Swedish Government, 2015b). Before that day, the government had criticized opposition parties for their calls for “order” that, in its view, would only lead to the wrong priority of measures. The Social Democrats had for long argued that the focus instead should be put on “shelter and school for the children,” considering it “the most important issue” (Magnusson, 2015).

On September 9, the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) on directives from the government released its first national situational report, stating that the situation was strained but the agencies were able to manage it (*Riksrevisionen*, 2017, p. 3). The Government Offices discussed possibilities to create public refugee housing. On September 15, 2015, the Swedish prime minister again associated the situation with the term crisis: “In times of crisis [the right to asylum] is the most essential principle to protect. A person fleeing war and oppression should receive protection in Sweden” (Swedish Government, 2015c).

At the end of September, the number of asylum seekers in Sweden exceeded the number of asylum seekers that had arrived during the Balkan wars. State agencies were able to manage the situation but needed to take preparatory measures in view of a potentially worsening situation. During this time, the Red Cross expressed deep concern for refugees who existed “outside the system” (*Riksrevisionen*, , 2017, p. 4). The Swedish Migration Agency reported that the number of unregistered individuals and unaccompanied children was enormous. On October 2, the municipality of Hässleholm announced that it could no longer guarantee meeting legal requirements in its handling of the children (Health and Social Care Inspectorate [IVA], 2015). In the following months, more than 70 Swedish municipalities would announce similar messages (*Riksrevisionen*, 2017, pp. 4–5).

According to a survey by the opinion institute Ipsos in September 2015, 44% of the Swedish population held the view that Sweden should welcome more refugees. In October, the number had dropped to 26% (Frigyes, 2018, p. 40). Soon after, the prime minister declared that the Swedish Migration Agency was instructed to set up temporary accommodation in the form of tents: “It is an extraordinary situation [which requires] extraordinary efforts and measures” (Canoilas, 2015; Sveriges Radio, 2015). In mid-October, several municipalities reported being overwhelmed. They described huge challenges in securing the life and health of refugees and safeguarding the basic functions of society (*Riksrevisionen*, 2017, pp. 7–8).

During that same period, Swedish media reported that accommodations for refugees and unaccompanied children were set on fire. In the beginning of October, the political opposition parties started to call for the resurrection of border controls, but the Swedish prime minister refused, referring to the Swedish police’s assessment that it was not necessary (Magnusson, 2015). However, this standpoint changed when the Swedish Migration Agency, on November 11, advocated border controls in a letter to the Ministry of Justice. According to the Swedish newspaper *Sydsvenskan*, the Agency later denied having made this request (Magnusson, 2015).

On November 12, the government introduced border controls at the internal border and added 11 billion SEK to the 2015 state budget for handling the refugee crisis (Magnusson, 2015; *Riksrevisionen*, 2017, p. 10). In the beginning of December, *Save the Children International* criticized the government by claiming: “[t]he coordination between different actors is better organized in Yemen than in Sweden. A UN Coordinator is needed in the South of Sweden to strengthen the work for child protection” (Magnusson, 2015).

The number of asylum seekers began to decrease in mid-December. While MSB was still reporting about the challenges facing state agencies and municipalities, the government voted on a new legislative act on the right to adopt special measures in situations of serious threat to the public order and internal security in the country, including identity controls within Swedish borders. On December 15, the Prime Minister declared that “Sweden is beginning to leave the acute refugee crisis behind” (*Riksrevisionen*, 2017, pp. 12–13). A few days later, prime minister Löfven delivered his annual Christmas speech in which he claimed that “I am convinced that we could have managed the refugee crisis in a completely

different way if we had shared the responsibility among EU members”: “the solution exists on the EU level” (Swedish Government, 2015d). He concluded the speech with, “next year, if you are able, do participate a little bit extra in volunteer work. That will be my own new year’s promise. Make it yours” (Swedish Government, 2015d).

6.6 CONCLUSION: TOWARD EXPLAINING BLIND SPOTS

This chapter has shown how the Swedish authorities did not see the refugee crisis coming, despite the high degree of international and societal attention. The knowledge of the crisis was widespread and the precursor events were many and strong, but the government did not act in time. Moreover, our analysis has indicated why the crisis remained a creeping crisis for the Swedish government for such a long time. These factors, or blinders, can now help us to formulate hypotheses for future studies that on a more solid empirical basis can explain how this crisis was initially “missed.”

6.6.1 *Ideological Blinders*

For the Swedish political elite, the migration question was above all a political-ideological issue before September 2015. Sweden had long nurtured its international identity as a “moral superpower” that stands up for the small states, international law, humanitarian aid and the UN system, including the UNHCR and the universal right to seek asylum. Through focusing the debate on how to keep a “welcoming attitude”, the Swedish governments attempted to uphold this identity and create an interpretative prerogative that anticipated a possible alternative threat or crisis narrative by the right-wing political party the Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*) (gathering around 20% of the Swedish voters in the opinion polls at the time).

We hypothesize that the Social Democratic government did not address the situation with concrete measures because any step of preparing for the arrival of the refugees ran the risk of being branded as a shift toward a more restrictive refugee policy by the left-wing factions of the party, left-wing political opponents, and the press. On the other ideological end, operative steps toward a crisis mode could be framed as hypocritical by right-wing parties.

To avoid the xenophobic label, the government did not want to recognize the refugee crisis in other parts of Europe as a crisis for Sweden until

September 2015 when refugees were emerging in Malmö. Until that time, it depicted the situation as a concern for other states. This is despite the fact that other European states, and international and non-governmental organizations, warned about the risk of a major crisis hitting Sweden. It seems as if the Swedish Social Democratic government for long treated the crisis as a “crisis of ideas” rather than a “real” acute crisis.

6.6.2 *A Division Between Internal and External Threats*

The sociologist Anthony Giddens distinguishes between “external risk”, experienced as coming from the outside (from nature: draughts, floods, famines) and “manufactured risk” – created by “the very impact of our developing knowledge upon the world”; he refers to risks that we have very little historical experience of confronting, such as environmental risks connected with global warming (Giddens, 2002, p. 26).

Traditional cultures knew mostly external risks and held the almost fatalistic view that there was not much to do to avoid them. In contrast, the manufactured risk is accompanied by a growing awareness that many of the threats we live with today are the result of our own impact on the planet and consequently make us realize that we can do something about it. This epoch-making transformation of humans into a new geological force has been described as a shift from the Holocene to the Anthropocene (Lewis & Maslin, 2018).

We could hypothesize that the Swedish authorities did not address the threat because they assessed the refugee crisis as an external threat to Sweden that they—in a fatalistic spirit—deemed they could do very little to stop. The government portrayed the situation as “external” by criticizing other European states for closing borders. Through its vague declaratory appeals, the government in practice admitted that it could not do much about this other than criticizing these states and spotlighting their duty to follow international laws and conventions. From an external risk perspective, this fatalism would explain why the government did not address the situation.

The problem with this hypothesis is, however, that there are indications that the government was not fatalistic in the sense that it felt that the crisis would eventually hit Sweden and it could do nothing to stop it. Rather the striking feature was the outright absence of a crisis consciousness and neglect of predictions of the consequences of the refugee streams toward Sweden. In non-committing terms, the government expected the EU

institutions and directly targeted member states to handle the problem. The government's picturing of the crisis as external did not conjure up a fatalistic mood, but created the image that it was improbable that it would reach Sweden. In fact, the government would probably have addressed the crisis through precautionary measures if it had seriously thought that it would reach Swedish borders.

We can reformulate the hypothesis. Perhaps it was the mental map of Swedish officials in "domestic" agencies that made them perceive the refugee crisis as "external" and not of immediate national concern nor within their mandate to solve. The European identity and transnational "we-ness" were not strong enough to turn the warnings and activities of fellow-EU members into a trigger for Swedish actions.

We may hypothesize that the Swedish government simply misjudged what it could do to minimize the manufactured refugee risk. Again, the problem is that there are no indications in our empirical material that the government assessed possible measures that could prepare Sweden for the crisis. Compared to other threats, such as climate change and cyber interconnectedness, where policies of prevention and preparedness are taken to address manufactured risks, the lack of preparation for the 2015 crisis is striking. The problem was not that the government failed to put in place accurate precautionary measures because of its limited experience with this kind of manufactured risk, *but that it did nothing*. To be fair, there was an element of failed risk prognosis. The Swedish authorities relied on the estimates of the Migration Agency of July 2015 of decreasing number of refugees. However, this prognosis was so contradictory to all other predictions across Europe and in Sweden that it is not far-fetched to suspect that the government chose to ground its non-action on this prognosis for ideological and budget reasons.

Our case study has shown the added value of the concept of creeping crisis in relation to, for instance, the risk literature. It helps us to focus on explanations of why governments only partially, or not at all, address evolving threats despite the fact that international and domestic actors draw attention to them. It helps us explain why the Swedish government did not assess the situation as a threat even when it became clear that there was a risk of significant repercussions to the Swedish state and society. Clearly, this lack of action cannot fully be explained by prediction difficulties, or the feeling that nothing can be done to deal with a threat from the external world. The insufficient action had other, more complex causes that need to be further examined more in-depth with the help of the creeping crisis concept.

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