COMPAS Breakfast Briefing Summary

What is the relationship between new migration and community change?

Migration is presumed to be a major driver of change at the neighbourhood level. What is the evidence?

This briefing explores current understanding and evidence about the neighbourhood changes associated with new migration. Particular attention is focused on community challenges and lessons learnt about managing these changes.

What are the local effects of new migration?

There is a wealth of evidence about the experiences of migrants arriving in the UK. Considerable attention has also been paid to the impacts of migration, with a particular focus on economic and labour market consequences. Yet, research has been largely silent on the interplay between migration and community change. Migration is experienced differently in different places and is affecting different locations in distinct ways, but little effort has been put into describing and explaining this variable geography.

A small number of studies have sought to address this gap in knowledge[1]. They have revealed variability, contradiction and ambiguity in the local effects of new migration. Two key themes have dominated discussion:

- *the importance of context* - poor places can represent an unfavourable arrival context for new migrants and have adverse effects on their well-being. Living in close proximity to people with a shared heritage or background can help limit these challenges. Context is also important when considering the potential for migration to reshape places. For example, the arrival of new migrants is more likely to put a strain on local services that are already overstretched. Conversely, the potential for the arrival of new migrants to have a positive effect will depend upon the local context. For example, in some situations their arrival might fill shortages in the labour market and underpin the sustainability of local services, such as schools.

- *the importance of composition* - diverse places with a history of migration appear better able to adapt to new migration, to be more inclusive and to foster a positive integration experience for migrants. This finding is consistent with analysis pointing to the positive impact on interethnic relations of living in a more diverse environment. It also appears to confirm the intergroup contact hypothesis, which asserts that under the right conditions intercultural encounters can facilitate greater appreciation and understanding of diversity and difference and promote positive social interactions. However, it is important not to overstate the importance of such encounters. Intercultural contact does not always translate into progressive and long-term social relations and can in certain circumstances reinforce prejudices and exacerbate tensions.

[1]Cheong, Edwards, Goulbourne and Solomos (2007), Immigration, social cohesion and social capital: A critical review. Critical Social Policy, 27, 1, 24-49.; Glick Schiller, N. and Caglar, A. (2009) Towards a comparative theory of locality in migration studies: Migrant incorporation and city scale. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 35, 2, 177-202; Hickman M, Crowley H, Mai N, 2008 Immigration and social cohesion in the UK. The rhythms and realities of everyday life. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation. IPPR (2007) The Reception and integration of new migrant communities. London: CRE; Kesten, J., Cochrane, Mohan, G. and Neal, S. (2011) Multiculture and community in new city spaces. Journal of Intercultural Studies, 32, 2, 133-150; Netto (2011), Identity Negotiation, Pathways to Housing and "place": The experience of Refugees in Glasgow. Housing, Theory and Society, 28, 2, 123-143; Phillips, D., Athwal, B., Harrison, M., Robinson, D, Bashir, N. and Atkinson, J. (2010) Neighbourhood, Community and Housing in Bradford: building understanding between new and settled groups. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation; Robinson, D., Reeve, K. and Casey, R. (2007) The Housing Pathways of New Immigrants. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation; White, A (2011) Polish Families and migration since EU accession. Bristol: Policy Press.

Explaining variations in the local effects of new migration

Evidence points to the importance of social and material context and the compositional nature of places as key factors informing local experiences and effects new migration. Efforts to conceptualise these place-specific outcomes have focused on the generation of neighbourhood archetypes. In summary, at one extreme are more cosmopolitan places, which have a recent history of different cultures meeting, colliding and negotiating a social settlement, where there is an increased likelihood of new migrants receiving a more positive reception. At the other extreme are more parochial places, which have a more limited recent history of accommodating ethnic diversity, where there is a heightened likelihood of negative reactions to new migration.

These models point to some of the ways in which the nature of the local community into which migrants arrive might inform their experiences of incorporation into UK society and determine the impact of their arrival. However, they are descriptive, rather than analytical tools. Their limitations are all too evident when faced with the challenge of understanding and explaining experiences and outcomes in places that fall between the two archetypes. This is an important point because rarely, in practice, is it possible to make a straightforward distinction between places that 'work' in terms of interethnic relations and those that do not.

Managing change - promoting community relations

There is little doubt that the arrival of strangers and exposure to different cultures can be perceived as a threat to the existing sense of place and identity. How should we respond to this disruption and promote positive encounters? Most academic writings on this topic remain in the realm of rhetoric. However, there is the opportunity to learn from various local initiatives developed, often under the auspices of the community cohesion agenda, in response to local challenges posed by new migration.

These initiatives are premised on the notion that positive encounters can facilitate intercultural understanding, but these interactions cannot be left to chance and need to be actively nurtured. Developed in response to a combination of local challenges posed by new migration, priorities have included community development; promoting understanding between new and longer standing residents; improving the responsiveness of local services to the changing profile of local need; supporting the integration of new residents; and managing tensions.

There would appear to be lots we could learn from these initiatives about managing challenges raised by new migration. However, a recent review[2] found that interventions have rarely been subject to any form of evaluation. Information about local initiatives typically takes the form of short vignettes, which describe but make no effort to evaluate the effectiveness or efficiency of interventions. There is little or no evidence of attempts to examine the context, inputs, strategies or methodologies of initiatives. Nor has much effort been put into assessing the outputs and associated costs and benefits of the numerous activities targeted at meeting the challenges raised by new migration. Specific initiatives are referred to as examples of good practice, but no evidence is presented to substantiate these claims.

Conclusion

Government and the media regularly make the case that migration poses a threat to cohesion by weakening the sense of community and increasing competition for scarce public resources and employment opportunities. There is little doubt that new migration has the potential to drive changes at the neighbourhood level, but we currently know little about these neighbourhood effects. What evidence is available suggests that the changes driven by new migration are more complex and variegated than commonly presumed. What works in terms of managing these changes remains unclear and requires urgent attention.

An AHRC Scoping Paper entitled *'New Migration, Neighbourhood Effects and Community Change'* by David Robinson and Aimee Walshaw can be downloaded at: **http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/ FundingOpportunities/Documents/CC%20 scoping%20studies/Robinson.pdf**

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[2]Phillips, D., Athwal, B., Harrison, M., Robinson, D., Bashir, N. and Atkinson, J. (2010) Neighbourhood, Community and Housing in Bradford: building understanding between new and settled groups.