

'Original Thinking', LGA, 19th Oct 2018 – notes from afternoon sessions

Workshop 1: Growing and changing

Phoebe Griffith, IPPR

- Local government been given a raw deal in terms of dealing with the pressures of migration. But local government needs to shout louder about how the issue is a local issue rather than it just being seen as a home office responsibility.
- Opportunity for councils to ask more of employers. Often they are making plans that require migration and have a role of attracting migration, but don't link up with services and local authorities in terms of services or cohesion.

Discussion points

- Challenges of anticipating and managing population changes. Mention of pressures on social care and other services linked to this.
- Need to measure, track and compare cohesion across areas. The challenges of getting data, especially from partners from those working in insight roles. Mention of Hounslow's Community Resilience as a potential tool as well as LGInform as having metrics that could be used.
- Importance of staff and the dynamics of some boroughs where staff live in the borough. Comparison of Islington where staff can't afford to live in the Borough with less affluent Borough's where staff want to live in more affluent places.
- The role of the nighttime economy in Growing and Changing areas in creating spaces for integration and mixing.
- The need to find establish and measure what local impacts are due to migration specifically rather than other changes (cuts/services/demographics) etc.
- The importance of resourcing the development of social networks. Examples include community communicators, social prescribing and community networkers.
- Some pressures due to services will be detected by different agencies in an area - for example GP services might notice increases in uptake. Sharing this insight in a coordinated way will help all partners plan and consider.

Workshop 2: Parallel lives

Jamiesha Majevalia, The Challenge

- An emphasis that myth-busting, while not always helpful on the bigger picture questions, can help prevent smaller cultural misunderstandings. For example, Nepalese Gurka communities in Aldershot like to walk early in the morning for cultural reasons; it was helpful for the local community to understand the origins of this, and that it was a benign activity.
- A focus on the role of contact theory ([secondary transfer](#), [inter-group contact](#)), as a practical application. This could sometimes comprise steps as simple as giving people t-shirts to wear, or could be more intensive – e.g. shared oral history. The important thing was to understand this is a slow, cumulative process, which can be sped-up by interventions, but not bypassed.
- The role of trust of authorities, and the need to understand that trust of landlords, the police or the system more generally varies across different minority groups. Hence

councils sometimes need to work harder to identify needs, with certain minority communities less forthcoming.

Discussion points

- Places with more parallel lives migration can need more simple forms of basic contact to begin with – compared to melting pot areas. Steps like a shared cup of tea or a plate of samosas are sometimes necessary before more advanced types of civic cooperation.
- Less perception/ understanding of the ‘other’ in parallel lives areas. The level of cultural difference between the two parallel lives communities is also an important thing to be aware of.
- Tendency of people from all backgrounds to cluster together makes cycles hard to break. The oldest parts of the community are often the hardest to reach, so be aware of intergenerational tensions within communities.
- The need for authorities and the police to make groups more aware of rights and responsibilities. Often people can feel judged or misunderstand the system. Authorities need to acquire the skills to understand communities different backgrounds and experiences.
- There is potentially a different form of ‘parallel lives’ emerging in inner London areas, as groups become economically segregated while living alongside each other. This needs to be tackled and strategies must be developed.
- The need to make decisions about different social norms: do we accept the norm and change the service, or challenge the norm and seek to change the behaviour.
- Use spaces which people congregate and use. Find ways for the work of the voluntary sectors from different communities to cut across cultures. And focus on young people, rather than community leaders, who are often self-appointed.
- Reach of to settled and pre-existing communities – especially more deprived groups within that – as much as to the new communities.

Workshop 3: Newly diversifying

Eric Kaufmann, Birkbeck University

- Education is more decisive than income in terms of attitudes to migration and integration.
- In the US in 1970 those with degrees were distributed evenly throughout the country. Now those with degrees are concentrated in metropolitan areas. This can go some way to explaining the polarisation of support for populism.
- 30% of two-person households split their votes in the EU referendum.

Discussion points

- Major discussion about the role of education in cohesion, and the importance of understanding generational splits.
- The question of cause and effect was raised. Is it education or lack of high paid jobs? Many areas with cohesion issues are denuded of high paid jobs. So a solution in the longer term may be to strive for greater investment in these areas to provide higher paid jobs, then people with higher levels of education will be attracted and lead to a more diverse community.
- Even in areas with rapid change, cohesion issues melt away if there is stability for 10 years. So you need a message that reassures those who are anxious about change.

- Only 20% have local concerns about immigration. Whereas over 70% have concerns about immigration nationally. It is therefore a question of the national narrative than a more localised one.
- The example of Rugby was raised where there is a long-established migrant community. It is important to consider the role of established migrant groups in accepting or rejecting change.
- Cohesion challenges didn't start with Brexit – danger that is taken as a benchmark. With that said, several participants from eastern Europe cited their personal experiences of an increase in hostility towards them during and after the referendum.