

Name of collection

Exploring how migration changes the places where we live

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Hello. My name is Umet Erel. I'm a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the Open University.

Hi. I'm Jacqui Broadhead. I'm a Senior Researcher at the Center on Migration Policy and Society at the University of Oxford.

Together, we are leading a research project and engagement project which is entitled, Migration Making People, Making Places, creating an inclusive narrative of migration. So what do we actually mean by this? One of the things that we often encounter when we look at migration is that migrants are seen as newcomers who change the character of the places that they come to. And oftentimes, this is seen as something quite negative. It's seen as migrants challenging existing ways of being, existing ways of being neighborly and the locality.

However, what we're interested in is really turning that lens around and asking actually how does migration also make places? So we know, for example, that migrants tend to be very active in small businesses. So when they come into a neighborhood, come into a place, they often open up new businesses, new shops. And in that way, also contribute to regenerating a place, for example.

We also know that migrants are key in building new forms of community. So in my own work, for example, I've been very interested in what we understand by citizenship, and how we understand a community of citizens. And oftentimes there, migrants are seen as either as outsiders to citizenship or just about at the boundaries of citizenship.

However, my own work looks at migrant mothers and how they create new citizens for a multi-ethnic body of citizens, and how that also creates new forms of culture, new forms of sociality, in very simple encounters, for example, in the schoolyard. And very often, what we found is that these create cross-ethnic communities. And that's really important to look at how we can create communities across ethnic

boundaries, and actually look at how this culture and sociality can also create new ways of understanding what citizenship means, what belonging means, what participation means. And what it should mean, really.

Yeah, so in this project, one of the interesting things was working with a whole range of different organizations. Jacqui, can you talk a little bit about that?

Yes, so in this project, we really wanted to take some of the academic research that's been done, both on your work on citizenship and belonging, but also work around what do we mean by integration, and how does it work to like out there. And so it's working with local government, which is where a lot of my research is focused, and also with arts organizations, including the Migration Museum and the total exchange.

And really, we've been very interested in working with local government, because we know from research that most of integration happens at the local level. So we get a lot of migration policy, kind of migration as a hot topic, decisions about the border, decisions about who gets citizenship, who doesn't, or who gets status and who doesn't. Happens at the home office level, national government. But a lot of the impacts within communities, they're within the scope of local government.

So in this project, we have worked with-- I'm working with a number of cities called the inclusive cities, so Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow, Liverpool, London, and Peterborough. And then we also invited along a number of other cities, Birmingham, Manchester, and also the cities that have been supported through the Ministry of Housing community and local governments recent integrated communities green paper to actually start to look at how do we talk about some of this. That's the kind of inclusive narrative bit. But then also what can we do about it.

And then, because we're looking with a kind of broader lens than just around policy, we're also really keen that we wanted to include the Migration Museum. Because they're thinking about, and they have a network of other arts organizations, museums, that are looking at really how do we talk about this? We know that migration is really-- people find it quite difficult to talk about quite often. We know that there's a long history there. Often, it's thought of as quite a new thing, but actually, obviously, there's a long migration history within a lot of our cities.

And cities are a really good place to think about migration, because they're the places that have the highest levels of migration. And they generally have been the places that local government has kind of had to get to grips with this. And the Migration Museum is also thinking about for the future, how do we take our migration, history of our migration story, and think about how that shapes our sense of identity and belonging going into the future. And then I know that organizations through the state exchange have been doing something similar for people as well in communities.

Yes, that's right. Yeah, so we also work with the Who Are We Project, which is a consortium of organizations. We've been working very closely as the Open University with counterpoints arts where we created a week long series of events, exhibitions across arts, academia, and activism. And this is an ongoing project. We've been doing this last year, this year, and next year as well. And where we looked at the question of, who are we, in terms of, what are the boundaries of community? But also what are

the meanings of participation and belonging and citizenship? And how can we look at those questions through the arts, through academia, and also through activism?

These are questions that now really engage everybody and everybody's attention. And each sector, if you will, has a different, useful way of looking at these issues. One of the things that's really helpful working with arts is that it allows us, oftentimes, a more nuanced approach to questions which are otherwise often quite polarized, as you mentioned, otherwise there is, oftentimes, a discourse of either you're for migration, or you're against migration.

However, looking at these questions through arts allows us actually to look at the subtleties and to really develop, perhaps, a much more dynamic conversation that does not lead us into the well-worn paths. So that's been really, really helpful, I think.

And in terms of some of the key themes that have come out of the project so far, obviously, we talked about a strategic narrative of inclusion. And for those, that really involved working with the cities firstly for this topic, as you say, of migration which can be quite polarizing. So we wanted to look at what some of the research was around what do people actually think about migration and integration.

And so there's some research that's been done by an organization called British Future that looks at actually public opinion on migration. And we might think it's very polarized, and 50% for, 50% against. But what we actually find is that there's about 25% of people on either side who are very convinced and generally are very heard from. There's about 50% of people in the middle who don't necessarily have completely fixed views on migration and are heard from a lot less.

And so one of the things is about thinking about, well, how do you shape a message that it's not just for those who have very fixed views, but for people who might be called balancers on migration? So they see some opportunities, but they also see some potential risks. And in particular, they see risks where there's rapid change to their community. And so how do you manage that?

And as mentioned, one of the key themes, I think, is how much of that happens at the local level? So when you're really thinking about the changes that people see to their communities, they're really going to notice that in the work of local government and probably less so in terms of what happens at national government levels. So for example, we know that there's polling that talks about the fact that people are actually very key for the government to invest more in English language lessons. And that's really part of another aspect of what we know about integration, which is that it's a two-way process.

And so support for English language lessons comes both from migrants themselves, who are very keen to learn English and to be able to contribute as quickly as possible, but it also comes from what we might call the host or receiving communities, because they know how important that is in terms of being able to interact and being able to be part of a community.

So we can find within policy areas, where actually, it's local government intervention that will make these things happen. And that's been a really key theme. And also, this

idea of integration as a shared responsibility. So one of the cities that we've been working with, London, recently published their integration strategy. One of the most interesting things about that, I think, is the title- All Of Us. This is a shared responsibility, particularly within cities, that this is something that belongs to all of us. Because it's about the process of making communities. And that's been a really interesting theme that's come throughout the project.

That's really interesting. That theme of creating belonging, creating commonality, is something we also looked at in the Learning Lab on performing belonging. But we looked at it through a slightly different question, if you will. Oftentimes, we talk about these issues. So the examples you gave about policy papers, et cetera, are very much verbal.

So what we did here is we worked together with a theater practitioner, [INAUDIBLE], who facilitated a workshop about how we make belonging in an embodied way, how we create belonging in an embodied way, but also, what could be the obstacles to belonging actually? So we looked at performing belonging, both through participatory theater and also through walking methods.

And that builds on the project, which I've just finished, on participatory arts and social action research, where we looked at how these methods can perhaps give us a different way of creating belonging in a maybe more inclusive way that allows people to look at how dialogue is created, how recognition is created, how commonalities and differences can be recognized, or of course, how that could also be withheld. Even in a very simple situation, for example, a greeting in the neighbourhood that is not being returned can be an experience of recognition withheld. And that can actually challenge community building from migrants or with migrants. So that was a really interesting key theme that we looked at, how we can go beyond the spoken or written word.

Another theme that we looked at was while we are looking at how migration can create people, can create places, where also keen on looking at the obstacles to that. And something that we found was that there are also, of course, a whole lot of practices and policies that prevent people from making a home in a community with people. But also, we looked at this through the symposium of the politics of unbelonging.

And one example of the hostile environment policy that we looked at was a policy called No Recourse to Public Funds, which means that people who are subject to migration control are not allowed. When they come into a situation of crisis, be it unemployment, be it illness, family breakdown, or perhaps domestic violence, normally, people would seek support and assistance through housing support or social services.

However, these people then, in this situation of crisis find that they are not eligible for any of this, and oftentimes are pushed into poverty and destitution through that policy. So this is just one example in which we can see that also policies of unbelonging and perhaps anti-citizenship practices are at play.

So this is something we really need to look at in more depth. Another example that was raised during that symposium on the politics of unbelonging was the example of hate crime. So usually, when we speak of hate crime, we don't really include the experiences of asylum seekers or refugees in that. And this is based on Monish Bhatia's research. And what he found-- or what he argues is that a lot of that hate crime actually is institutionalized.

So we really need to think, if we want to look seriously at the ways in which we can create communities of belonging and participation, we also need to think about how we can challenge the ways in which some people are made to not belong or even, after many years of feeling a strong sense of belonging and participating in the community are being excluded.

And I think there's also such resonance there for what cities can do, where they're sitting in a very different context from national government. And we know that elsewhere, there might be-- we can see cities that maybe will-- for example in the US, Philadelphia recently won a case against the federal court where it had said that they were going to limit the amount of collaboration, for example, between the police and immigration enforcement.

And that's part of a whole kind of suite of activities that they're doing around integration and inclusion. But some of it also includes what happens when the reality of people who are maybe irregular migrants who were here but excluded, but nevertheless, they remain in the city, kind of put up against a hostile environment at the national level, and what can be done at the city level, and the extent to which the city wants to create its own identity as distinct from what's happening at the national level.

But I think this is also where the inclusion of the Migration Museum in the project is really important. Because we can get a sense of history around this. Firstly, that these are not new problems. That these are not new issues. These are things that we've been talking about for an awfully long time. Some of my research looks at the way that New York has created its inclusive identity.

And one of the most powerful images there for me is to see the Ellis Island in the 1980s was derelict. This idea that New York has embraced its migrant heritage forever and a day is not necessarily the case. It might be a bit more complicated than that. And it's an identity that's been fostered so that now the space that has been created within a positive story of migration is a kind of melting pot has allowed it then to develop more inclusive services. So a very comprehensive ESL, English language service, lots of advice, free advice provision for everybody who needs it, and not restricting services on the basis of immigration status through providing an inclusive ID card program. And so we can learn from how we can use migrant-- stories of migration within the city to make our communities going forward, even in a hostile climate.

Yes, absolutely. And we also, of course, heard examples of solidarities. And I think this is why it was really important in this project to bring arts, activism, and academia together. Because what we are experiencing is a time in which issues of migration, issues of belonging and citizenship are contested, are struggled over. And it's really

important that as universities, as researchers, we take part in these discussions and make sure that different groups can actually participate in these discussions.