Planning for migrant integration and inclusion in smaller municipalities

Lessons from a Berlin/Oxford knowledge exchange

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Whilst there is growing interest in the role of the local level in integration and inclusion, this has often focussed on larger cities with those considered to be 'super-diverse' more likely to engage in Europe wide networks to share best practice and influence policy.

This growing gap between 'cosmopolitan' cities and smaller cities and towns is the focus of this project, which brings together researchers, policy makers and practitioners from the UK and Germany.

The project aims to identify the needs, opportunities and traps of the urban governance of migration, inclusion, and cohesion and to find ways for smaller cities and towns to develop their own strategies in this field. It draws on comparative expertise from both research, policy and practice in the UK and Germany.

This policy briefing looks at:

- Understanding the research base on integration in smaller cities and towns

- Contrasting policy frameworks in the UK and Germany

- Examples of practice

- Key findings and lessons

Summary

- Whilst towns face significant integration challenges, they often lack the resources and capacity to proactively respond

- Integration policy frameworks, whilst often tailored to cities, do apply to towns and smaller cities. However there are distinctive aspects to integration policy making in towns related to:

  - Tailoring narratives of inclusion and diversity to the local context

  - The importance of the public realm, outdoor spaces and high streets, migrant economies to integration planning in towns

  - The potential for more effective community contact approaches in towns and smaller cities

  - The outsized role of political support and advocacy, including the central role of Mayors (in particular in the German context of multi-level governance)

- There is a clear role for greater peer based learning and networking between towns and between the projects within the towns and across the country

- The contrasting policy frameworks in the UK and Germany allow for important learning and sharing

1.   Understanding the research base on integration in smaller cities and towns[1]

Research on integration and inclusion has seen an increased focus on the local level (Caponio and Borkert 2010), however, much of this research has focussed on larger cities. This risks a 'case bias' (Caponio 2019) towards only looking at the policy challenges and contexts of cities who engage on integration, to the exclusion of those who don't have the resources or political will to engage. The implications of multi-level governance of integration and the respective knowledge exchange in facilitating social change and policy framing at the city level remain under researched (Broadhead 2020, Scholten and Penninx 2016).

When examining this dynamic, towns can be roughly divided into those taking a proactive approach and others who are more reactive when it comes to the governance of migration and integration. This is both down to the strategic aims of the cities as well

1   This briefing specifically covers research presented as part of the workshop series, rather than attempting to cover the full research base for this topic.

as the ways in which their governance structures support and/or constrain policy making and practice in this area (Hillmann and Samers 2021.)

Both the UK and Germany have reasons to be interested in better understanding the integration context for smaller cities and towns. In Germany, (Glorius et al., 2020) , the resettlement of refugees from 2015 onwards involved a large number of rural regions and smaller towns, with limited previous engagement on this issue. In the UK, there has been a strong and growing focus on towns – including as part of the 'levelling up' agenda of the current UK government following the December 2019 election.

It is important to note the lack of clarity about what counts as a 'town' – ranging from smaller cities to those not much larger than a village. Partly this is due to towns sometimes being defined by what they are not (cities), rather than by their own, positive characteristics. Research by Hope not Hate (as outlined below) aims to break down and better understand 'towns' in this context. For example, there is a significant difference between a larger town of 100,000 residents and a town of 10,000 people. Similar research (Gareis & Milbert, 2020) sets out a cluster analysis of German towns. Until 2008, net migration was decreasing in small and medium sized towns in Germany, but after this point has generally increased. The research found that the smaller the town the lower the immigration rate and the further from an urban centre, the lower the levels of migration. However, due to the smaller populations even relatively small increases can result in changes to social structures and have a profound impact.

Milbert concludes that there is a lack of statistics and data on in- and out-migration in small and medium sized towns, which is a problem. Similarly, the growth of large cities affects small and medium sized towns in the suburban area as well as more rural areas. This rapid growth of small, suburban towns impacts on social cohesion.

Whilst towns are sometimes defined in opposition to cities, it is important that the 'town label' is not a catchall for places that are seen as being 'not cosmopolitan', instead recognising the wide variety and heterogeneity of 'towns,' as outlined in the typologies developed below. As Beetz et al (2018) outline in the German context, 'if small towns (Kleinstädte) attract attention, then they are often subsumed into rural areas or considered as part of an undifferentiated category of small and medium–sized towns. Small towns are also frequently presented as the counterpart to large cities, which are associated with either positive or negative characteristics. The stereotypical representations of small towns – e.g. as compact, comfortable or cramped – have remained surprisingly unchanged since the end of the 19th century.'

The Research Project "Future for Refugees in Regions in Germany (2018–2020)" looked at the characteristics of integration in smaller towns through research in 32 rural municipalities. Glorius reports that the research found some important characteristics of integration practice in these communities, notably

- The lack of infrastructure for integration and the long distances needed to travel to access provision. This is matched by a high reliance on external investment, notably (often temporary) project funding, to build integration infrastructure

- The low numbers of migrant networks can make them more isolated and predominantly reliant on volunteers. However, this is contrasted with the strength of community connections by these local associations – where they are present, they have very strong links to the local community

- The role of the mayor was crucial in shaping public discourse and opinion. Similarly, this role was important in accessing the external resources necessary to run integration programmes efficiently. There is emerging evidence that a clear positioning of mayors in favour of cultural diversity prevented populistic tendencies (Hillmann, forthcoming)

- Smaller municipalities feel like they lack agency to influence policy at the national level – in part due to their lower resources and the lack of capacity to integrate into international peer learning

- Low levels of diversity may make the local population more reluctant to embrace innovative approaches to social change

The research found both advantages and disadvantages to integration practices in smaller communities, 'our results support arguments from research literature for faster social inclusion in rural areas due to greater nearness, but also obstacles toward the integration of foreigners due to a higher homogeneity of rural neighbourhoods and only few experiences of positive everyday contact with foreigners among rural residents.' (Glorius et al. 2020).

Contrasting policy frameworks in the UK and Germany on integration

This project shared experiences on integration in smaller cities and towns in the UK and Germany. However, it is important to note the differing policy contexts in which the two countries operate on integration.

The UK has a much more centralised system of governance overall than Germany. Whilst integration policy is devolved, UK local authorities operate within a highly centralized unitary state and must take national legislation and directives on migration into account. Germany's federal structure and devolution allows more freedom for municipalities to devise their own policy (Hackett, 2017). On the flip side, there is actually very little of a policy framework on integration in the UK (Broadhead, 2020) contrasted with the longstanding National Action Plan and resourcing for integration in Germany.[2] By contrast the UK has a longer standing Equalities agenda and framework, focussed on anti–discrimination work while Germany has focussed more on migrant integration.

As outlined below, alongside these differences in governance frameworks and the powers, duties and resources available,

there is a significant contrast in how integration policy–making and service delivery are organised in the respective countries. Whilst there is no natural home for integration in UK local authorities, it is often included within work on Equalities, Community Cohesion or Community Safety (Broadhead, 2020). Responsibility in Germany is often held by dedicated 'integration officers' supported through federal funding. However, there is also wider policy read across, with an increase in links between urban planning and integration (Bendel et al 2019) – something rarely seen in the UK.

Whilst there is no national policy framework on integration in the UK – it is important to note that the devolved administrations have established their own frameworks (notably the New Scots[3] framework.) At a regional level, in Germany sixteen *Länder* (or regional governments) play a significant role in the integration measures adopted in individual localities. While the federal state has the main responsibility to develop the overall framework, it is the *Länder* that formulates and implements policies on housing, health, education, language, vocational training, and labour market integration, especially for asylum seekers (Hillmann & Toğral Koca, 2021). However, most Länder introduced integration policy only after 2015 and in many Länder integration policies continue to be voluntary and highly variable with a low degree of national systematisation. Formal attempts at networks (such as the IQ–network inspired by European funding (ESF)) provides some infrastructure, though with biases towards certain regions and often fragmented. Apart from the finding that local policies were fragmented and projects were not connected to each other, our study made visible the underlaying administrative structure of the two countries. Germany set up a capillary administrative system that was partly able to govern the situation of "crisis" provoked by the many newcomers, the UK–system relied on a more fragmentary network of civil society, local organising and some local government and devolved administration intervention.

Alongside official policies and infrastructure, much innovation and action occur as a result of discrete initiatives from a wide range of partners. Platforms such as the Humboldt Viadrina Governance Platform, allow for exchange between the public sector, civil society and the business sector. Many different forms of networks for sharing lessons have emerged; those that are politically led, community and NGO led and developed in partnership with independent philanthropy. Involving the UK and Germany these include, Solidarity Cities, Safe Harbour Cities, Cities of Sanctuary, the Mayors Migration Council and Inclusive Cities. It is notable that many of these focus on cities and that towns may find it harder to mobilise within these environments. Though, within the safe harbour cities alliance some smaller towns like Rottenburg (42.000 inhabitants) are very active.

Examples of integration practice from the UK and Germany

Welcoming International[4] and the World–Open Cities and Communities Project[5], Germany
David Lubell, Welcoming International and Claudia Walther, Bertelsmann Stiftung

Welcoming International is a coalition of initiatives advancing inclusion in localities worldwide, which builds on the work of Welcoming America.

There are 4 key principles for integration and inclusion in smaller towns based on the learning from the programme. Whilst these principles also apply, in many cases to all areas, they are particularly important for smaller communities.

1. Importance of building partnerships and facilitating contact – where resources are more limited in smaller towns, change will only happen through multi–sector partnerships to facilitate. 'Welcome to Shelbyville', Tennessee provides a good example of how well facilitated contact multi–sector collaboration can promote inclusion and integration in a rural setting including the importance of 'meeting people where they are'

2. Utilise locally crafted messages and communications which are based on shared values and engaging a broad range of stakeholders, including the business community – as a way of building political will and capital, including in more conservative areas

3. Demonstrate the benefits to all residents – not only focussed on newcomer communities

4. Engage migrants and refugees themselves to ensure that these voices are included

The model also looks at the importance of multi–sector planning process – including longer term, through the development of Welcoming Standards or Frameworks to support smaller municipalities. In smaller areas a regional approach may also be helpful, in particular where resourcing for messaging and communications can be more difficult to identify – operating not only at a single town level, but in several municipalities working in partnership.

The Weltoffene Kommune (World–Open Communities Project) in Germany is a founder member of Welcoming International, inspired by the work of Welcoming America and aiming to support cities and communities of different size in their approach to integration and inclusion through a self–assessment programme. Whilst initiatives are run and funded by private foundations, they intersect with state–run projects. In particular, the project aimed to broaden the scope of integration practice in towns beyond refugee groups

2   https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/governance/germany

3   https://www.gov.scot/publications/new-scots-refugee-integration-strategy-2018-2022/

4   https://welcominginternational.org/

5   https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/de/unsere-projekte/weltoffene-kommune

and thus follows a more general trend of designing projects for the overall population in smaller towns, as a basis for democratization. The self–assessment model uses a survey to look at where a local authority is at on its integration efforts and the self check helps to develop local integration efforts, acting as a foundation for local action. The scheme has developed a pyramid model of standards with 7 areas of action each with criteria and indicators, feeding into an overall vision.

After this initial self–assessment, a multi–stakeholder workshop brings together meeting representatives from public sector, civil society, labour office and migrants themselves. This then feeds into a programme of dialogue events in specific areas of action depending on priorities of local area.

The programme initially started in 10 pilot areas, has expanded to another 20 and will eventually expand to 40 areas. It includes all regions in Germany and aims to have communities supported in almost all the states, as well as a balance between cities and towns and political leadership (including those with more and less experience of inclusion and integration as well as in relation to political affiliation.)

The overall aim is to evaluate this pilot project and eventually roll out the programme to all municipalities in Germany.

There are a number of core lessons from the project:

- The pivotal importance of political leadership, in particular in the role of the mayor. Projects very rarely succeed without this support and it is a key success factor. The Open cities and communities project works with integration officers, but political support is key

- The need to tailor projects to the local context with no one size fits all solution

- The crucial importance of involving stakeholders including migrant organisations and local communities. This is important not only to build trust and to increase the range of opinions but also to avoid overly positive views of existing practice

- The importance of strategic communications and narrative and including these within planning on integration, including building on local histories and identities where these are positive and challenging and identifying new narratives where they are more negative

Municipal Integration and Development Initiative
Malisa Zobel, HUMBOLDT–VIADRINA Governance Platform

The Municipal Integration and Development Initiative (MIDI) proposes ideas and concrete steps to decentralize refugee and asylum policy in the European Union by building more strongly on the role of municipalities – linking integration policy more strongly with migration policy making. Circa 600 European municipalities have emphasized their continued commitment to receive and welcome migrants and refugees. These municipalities increasingly also organize themselves transnationally in networks, such as the safe harbour alliance, solidarity cities, fearless cities or cities must act.

MIDI engages in transnational networking activities and local capacity building. Three elements are key to build more strongly on municipalities:

1.   Direct funding of municipalities via a European fund

MIDI states that European municipalities that receive refugees on a voluntary basis should be directly reimbursed the reception and integration costs and get an additional amount for their own municipal development. This would provide local authorities with more leeway to carry out projects that serve the whole community and help changing the narrative away from burden sharing towards a joint municipal development that benefits all residents

2.   A Matching Mechanism for voluntary municipal reception

MIDI proposes a matching mechanism between refugees and municipalities in order to better match the skills of refugees with the places in which they are resettled. To avoid municipalities cherry–picking specific skill sets or characteristics matching would be based on limited criteria, strictly respecting anti–discrimination law, building choice for refugees into the system and exempting vulnerable groups

3.   Municipal Development Councils

The reception and integration of refugees can pose a challenge for many municipalities, especially if they are smaller and have not had a lot of experience with migration. Nevertheless, it can offer great opportunities, especially in times of population loss and demographic decline. Ensuring broad participation of all relevant local stakeholders is key to increase acceptance and strengthen community building. Municipal Development Councils are based on this principle.[6] These Councils consist of the city's three main stakeholder groups plus scientific advice, including politics and administration, civil society, private sector and science with an advisory function aiming to co–create recommendations for the further development of the community

In this context, recommendations may include suggestions on whether and how refugee reception can be part of long term local development strategies and how inclusion and participation of the novel residents can be best ensured. By involving the important different stakeholder groups at the local level, the recommendation for additional reception builds on a broad basis of legitimacy. Furthermore, it enables, responsibility sharing, as many different actors are involved. By deciding what to do with the additional funds, the whole municipality turns towards a development perspective in which the reception and integration of refugees is an essential part of the development process and a constant dynamic of change of the city. These Municipal Development Councils can also support the municipality's application for additional reception and further EU funding.

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6   https://www.governance–platform.org/documents/bericht_kommunale–entwicklungsbeiraete_workshopreihe_2019_2020/

Hopeful Towns[7], Hope not Hate UK
Rosie Carter and Chris Clarke, Hope not Hate

Hopeful Towns is a project from anti–fascist organisations Hope not Hate which aims to better understand what makes a place confident, optimistic and open, and to help towns across England and Wales to fulfil their potential. The aim is to identify and mitigate root causes of hate and to stop divisive narratives from taking hold in the first place. The project also aims to promote policies which champion the value of towns, and stress that every town matters.

The project builds upon work on public attitudes, using segmentation research at a small scale (super output areas of c.300 households) to identify geographic patterns. The research found that:

- Generally places further away from cities showed higher levels of hostility to migration, change and multiculturalism

- There isn't a single explanation for hostility to migrants in towns, but is clear that there is a challenge for some towns

- Deprivation is an important factor, but there are a significant number of areas which are affluent and culturally conservative and hostile to immigration. By contrast, in city centres there are places which are liberal in relation to attitudes to migration, despite high levels of deprivation

- A lot of places with hostility to migration had low levels of diversity — though there are areas which are non–diverse, and very white, which have liberal attitudes towards migration

The research focusses on resilience and cohesion. Resilience is defined as the extent to which a place is confident, welcoming and optimistic; how well it can adapt to change; how much trust there is in decision makers and outsiders; how positive people are around racial and cultural difference; how well are people able to withstand demographic changes without escalation; how able they are to make use of innovative strategies to overcome a situation of crisis. This idea of resilience also offered a good way of capturing how welcoming a town might be of change – beyond the usual measures of integration and cohesion.

The research identified 14 characteristics which could amplify hostility to migration and identified clusters of towns who shared these characteristics. Whilst none of these on their own would prompt an area to be hostile to migration, a combination might increase the likelihood. This included:

- Towns experiencing population decline, house price decline and an ageing population. In these towns questions about towns' future amongst residents leads to broader anxiety about change

- Towns with strong national identity and places which had high levels of voting for Brexit or strong English/Welsh identity tended to see change through a national lens and find migration more culturally upsetting

- Towns experiencing rapid change, including places which had big population increases on the edge of big cities. This rapid flux can create tensions between new and existing residents

The research recommended:

- A more joined up approach for peer learning and sharing of best practice between towns

- Targeted policies for clusters of towns with similar attributes

- Development of an 'every town counts' ethos, where towns have parity in policy discussions and development

Hopeful Towns aims to build a leadership networks to allow for this better dialogue.

Promoting citizen engagement in towns, Germany
Michael Tetzlaff, Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

Social cohesion is a key priorities for the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, which requires a holistic approach, as demonstrated through the Engagierte Städte–Network. The programme is run as a combination of state–based action with support from private foundations (including Bertelsmann, Körber–Stiftung, Bosch–Stiftung, Joachim–Herz–Stiftung, Breuninger Stiftung, auridis, BBE and regional players such as Staatskanzlei Rheinland Pfalz, Deutscher Städte– und Gemeindebund, Deutscher Städtetag.)

The programme was founded in 2015 and aims to create cooperation between different actors at the local level; civil society, politicians, local administration and the business community in order to create a society of solidarity and diversity in which all citizens are welcome to take part. The programme includes 73 smaller and medium sized towns across Germany, with an aim to increase this number. These new forms of collaboration are based on equal cooperation between stakeholders based on the identified need to reorganise at the local level so that a new urban ecosystem can be created.

In practice, the programme operates as a learning initiative empowering local citizens on the one hand, on the other developing high quality cross sectoral partnerships where trust and change in enabled. There is a clear focus on learning from each other, through regular regional national meetings, partnerships and workshops where knowledge can be conveyed and shared.

7   https://www.hopefultowns.co.uk/

After 5 years of support in the programme, there is evidence of success with civil society, businesses, town councils and citizens cooperating in achieving a common goal, with people from different sectors, walks of life and opinions coming together to build bridges, identify challenges in their towns and cities and work towards a common goal. A number of initiatives have arisen from the programme such as:

- Schwerte (a town in North Rhine–Westphalia) introduced guidelines for a 'city of active engagement,' citizens are the experts when it comes to their neighbourhood and town and their expertise is the basis of all actions, focussing on citizen engagement and empowerment across the city

- Refugees in one participating towns set up a city magazine titled *No Borders* in order to give the refugee population a voice

Communities up Close[8]
Lucy Mort, Institute for Public Policy Research and Kate James, Migration Yorkshire

Communities Up Close was a research project conducted in Yorkshire and Humber aiming to understand neighbourhood experiences of change and migration. The qualitative element of the research used 10 different neighbourhoods chosen according to their experience of change in migrant population relative to the local population in recent years, including a number of large and small towns and semi–rural areas as well. The researchers conducted focus groups with residents and interviews with stakeholders engaging with local communities, speaking to over 300 people.

The project developed a typology for comparing and contrasting different types of places, which could act as a tool for pairing similar places so that they can learn from one another and share experiences. Five neighbourhood types were identified; cosmopolitan centres, superdiverse districts, diverse suburbs, dynamic districts, tight–knit towns.

Two of these were particularly pertinent:

Dynamic districts

- neighbourhoods in cities or large towns, close to the city centre, characterised by experience of recent demographic and economic change

- Experience of poverty and economic decline with high streets really struggling

- Migration has increased as a result of low cost housing, job opportunities and travel connections to city centres and as a result areas are becoming more diverse. However, there is less familiarity with migration and diversity and residents are often sceptical about increases in migration

- There are often concerns about local areas linked to crime, anti–social behaviour and environmental issues

Tight knit towns

- Smaller towns and rural communities with low level of ethnic diversity and limited histories of migration

- Long histories of industry but decline in recent decades, often former mining towns

- Part of small communities grounded in family and neighbourhood ties

- Migration quite a challenge with hostility to migrant communities, including those who had found employment. Some of these areas had seen large increases in central and eastern European migrants in recent years, though some residents were open to the change, but some are more sceptical

The core findings of the research were that:

- Smaller towns and cities had greater integration challenges and required a great deal extra support and investment

- Heritage of place and local identity are very important for shaping how people viewed the area and migration to the area

- In particular, industrial heritage was very important in shaping perceptions, combined with a narrative of loss, sometimes such narratives were used to exclude migrants and suggest that they don't belong

- These attitudes were strongly linked to economic wellbeing and industrial decline, alongside the rise in low paid and precarious work leading to in work poverty and perceptions of migrants as receiving preferential treatment and undercutting wages

- Broader changes locally related to housing, crime and safety, green spaces and declining high streets impacted how people viewed migration. The loss of local shops and markets was noted and the increase in foreign–owned shops had mixed responses, with some people appreciating the services provided

Views of migration and integration

- There was little discussion around asylum seekers and refugees, people largely spoke about immigrants from central and eastern Europe when talking about recent immigration

- People generally had mixed views on migration, seeing both benefits and challenges

- Social media was commonly referred to as a source for spreading fake news about migrants and new arrivals

- English language was an important issue in judging how well people got on with each other for both host communities and migrants, people wanted the opportunity to be able to say hello and be friendly with neighbours

- Having the time, energy and money to participate in community activities identified as another obstacle to integration, but generally there was a desire for more inter–community contact

This qualitative research was complemented by a representative opinion poll of 2,049 respondents across Yorkshire and Humber conducted in July 2020[9]. The poll found that whilst opinion on migration was overall in line with national opinion, those in villages and towns were less likely to be positive than those in cities. However, there was contrast between small towns and large towns, with more positive attitudes to migration in small towns than in large ones.

People's views on impact of migration on local communities were also less positive, with only a third of respondents feeling it was positive at local level, and 27 percent saying it was negative. It is possible that people see there are economic benefits of migration at national level, but the same not really visible on the local level, and the local economic context was very important in how communities respond to migration. In contrast to respondents' views overall, in city centres 59 percent of people saw a positive impact from migration.

One question allowed people to provide a free text response: 'What is the impact of migration on your local community?

The most commonly mentioned negative impacts were on local services and resources (such as healthcare, schools, housing); employment and crime. There was greater concern in villages and towns about the impact on services and resources than there was in cities.

The most commonly perceived positive impact related to employment and the local economy; key workers, people fulfilling important roles, and spending money in local areas. This was particularly important in towns and villages (accounting for 40% of comments) as opposed in in cities where diversity was the most commonly seen positive impact (40% in cities, contrasted with 27% in towns and villages.)

Recommendations from the research with a particular focus on smaller towns and communities

- A real focus on investing in English language support

- Facilitating meaningful social contact

- Engaging employers on integration

- Mechanisms for more inclusive decision making

- Tensions and discrimination need to be addressed

- Ensuring that the 'levelling up' agenda in the UK includes integration issues and provides greater powers and investment

Migration Yorkshire has taken the findings of this research forward through a series of events and peer learning sessions with local authorities

Case examples from towns and smaller cities in the UK and Germany

Cottbus
Stefanie Kaygusuz, Head of the unit on education and integration, Cottbus

Cottbus ranks as the second city in the southeast of the land Brandenburg. Its resident population shrank after re–unification, but with the inflow of refugees since 2015 the town hosts again over 100.000 inhabitants. Most migrants come from Syria, Poland, Vietnam, Afghanistan. The goals of established action for integration were:

- Creation and stabilization of a consulting structure that is accessible for everyone

- Education as a point of entrance into the society and integration in the labour market as central

- Increasing individual participation in local activities as well as in the housing and health sector

The institutional approach to integration and migration is that integration is not a one–way ticket, it is a generational process that needs support. The process must be transparent and structured through dialogue, with participation of civil society as well as adequate opportunities for such participation. What is needed, is peaceful and respectful coexistence among the different groups of residents.

There are a number of challenges to integration in Cottbus, including the necessity to see migration as a normal process and therefore to view integration as a pro–active responsibility which will take time. Other specific challenges include a growth in radical right wing organising, specific needs in relation to the inclusion of women and in relation to educational levels of migrants.

The town decided in favour of talking and communicating on the issue of migration, saying this would be 'half the way of the battle'. Institutional representatives focus on the building of contacts between people. A next step should be to work with residents about the positive impacts of migration, for example in relation to economic gain and population growth and the reasons why migration is necessary to allow for urban development. A central hurdle to reach this, is the weakness in local data and communication as well as over bureaucratisation, when smaller municipalities would prefer more latitude to be able to react to needs as they appear.

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9   https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/?page=newsview&itemid=436

Understanding the role of the mayors in the region of Brandenburg
Felicitas Hillmann

Mayors in eight towns in Brandenburg were interviewed and asked about their role during the arrival of the many refugees in the years 2015 – 2017, about their cooperation with civil society actors and their attempts to handle right-wing, populist aggressions. The Land Brandenburg is a special case as the share of migrant population among the total population was around 3% and thus very low compared to the national average. The most relevant findings were that[10]:

• The reactions of the local population to the arrival of migrants only made visible what was already present: either the dangers of shrinking of towns and the residents' fears of globalisation and rapid change became more visible

• Mayors had to deal with multi-level governance, on one hand they had to connect to the local setting, but at the same time they had to skip to the national or county level and connect with European players, meaning that they had to adjust their relationship with formal regulations of the county but also the informal practices of civil society. Sometimes competences were not clearly regulated, and they were confronted with a fragmented field of regulations

• They had to communicate that migration had arrived in their towns also, that it was not a far-away-issue, but real.

• Some said that they encountered much enthusiasm and people were instigating welcome initiatives. In rare cases such initiatives were used to delegate responsibilities or to address topics that were politically difficult

• Generally, former local experiences of migration eased civil engagement, sometimes initiatives took up the networks that had been established since the 1990s

• There was a generational bias: in many towns it was the elderly, who had experienced themselves the consequences of the war and had been refugees, and the youth that engaged for the new inhabitants. The middle-aged population classes often missed out in this field

• Social media acted as an accelerator for populist movements. The threshold of what could be said openly was lowered and there were aggressions against public figures, as well as reported hate speech

• The presence of educational, academic institutions helped to establish networks quickly and mobilise

The study was too small to allow for more generalized findings, but a major feature was, that in many towns the in-migration had led to a renewal of parts of the institutional setting as migration and integration officers were installed. It found some cases in which the integration officers had received their degrees in migration studies or intercultural training. These officers were able to implement new strategies for urban regeneration and sometimes also contribute to starting to open up an institutional setting that was perceived by actors in civil society as petrified.

Barnsley
Jayne Wise, Barnsley Council

Barnsley is a town of c.241,000 residents in the county of Yorkshire. It is the 39th most deprived local authority in the UK, 10th for skills, education and training, 18th for employment and 49th for income. Barnsley's history related strongly to its identity as a coal mining town and the town has, in some ways, struggled to redefine itself since the loss of this industry in the 1980s.

Whilst there isn't a strong history of migration in the town, there has been rapid increase in migration in a relatively short space of time (from c.1% to c.5% of population.) Whilst this is a relatively small % change, it has created a lot of challenges as there is very limited infrastructure to manage the change at the early stages to achieve the types of initiatives often cited elsewhere.

The local authority is using the research outlined in this paper to inform its work in a number of ways including:

• Increasing workforce diversity within the local authority itself in order to improve representation and decision making

• Ensuring that migration and integration policy are aligned with economic policy. For example, the local authority wishes to incentivise business to establish itself in Barnsley, but needs to improve its use of levers such as the Social Value Act in order to ensure that this matches its integration ambitions and that it is able to plan for new migrant communities who are attracted to the town as a consequence of this investment and the implications of this for integration

• Funds were secured from the (central government's) Controlling Migration Fund. These have been used to improve housing, ESOL and welcoming. This investment has then led to mainstream funding from the Local Authority itself – aiming to increase the infrastructure for this work within the council

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10   A detailed presentation of the research, its methodology and its results is forthcoming. A detailed summary can be read here: https://urbanesland.toposmagazine.com/client_articles/diversity-as-an-opportunity

Luton

Nicola Monk, Luton Council

Luton is a large town of c.214,000 in the south east of England. It is a super diverse area with 55% of the population from an ethnic minority background and with significant inward migration over the last 10 years. It has a number of 'uni-diverse' areas with well-established populations dating back to the 1950s (for example from Pakistani or Bangladeshi backgrounds) as well as areas of much newer migration. It has a young population (including 11,000 students,) a transient population and workforce (with between 30–50% population churn), high levels of population density and over a quarter of households living in poverty.

Luton is developing its Stronger Communities framework and has developed its practice in the following areas:

• Development of a cohesion atlas to better understand the demography of Luton in order to inform community planning[11]

• Working to change the narrative to wider messages of economic prosperity and development, including through a Many Voices, One Town campaign

• The programme also wishes to empower residents and improve governance and leadership at the municipal level – through initiatives such as participatory budgeting, volunteering, and developing civic pride

The aims of the programme are

• the development of stronger communities and democratic participation in a policy continuum, through a whole systems approach

• the development of strong political leadership

• to better understand the profile of the locality and to horizon scan in a globalized context

• Effective partnership working – strong community governance arrangements and new dynamic networks

• Communication and participation – developing the narrative, dialogue and conversations that work locally

Key Findings, lessons and recommendations

The central question of the learning exchange was to understand and conceptualise integration in smaller towns and cities. In what ways is it distinctive and where are there commonalities?

In the first instance, many of the integration models and frameworks do apply as much to smaller cities and towns as to cities. There does not seem to be the need for a completely distinctive approach to migrant integration and inclusion for towns. In fact, there seems to be a significant level of crossover that would benefit from greater sharing and learning between towns and cities – generating learning from each other. It is not the case that the needs of cities and towns need to be placed in false opposition to each other.

However, there are a number of areas in which we do find distinctive areas for towns:

Resources, capacity and infrastructure

A core theme across the board was the lack of dedicated resources, capacity and infrastructure for integration work in smaller towns and cities, Sometimes this was due to the (relatively) small migrant populations, meaning that it was not perceived as a policy priority.

These questions of infrastructure manifested themselves in a number of ways:

• The potentially outsized role for local politicians (in particular local leaders and Mayors) in providing leadership on this issue in combination with a strong civil society (Hillmann, forthcoming)

• Lack of funding, information and capacity within local government itself

• Lack of wider civil society infrastructure to allow for horizontal governance – including community engagement

• Questions as to the role of other funding sources (such as independent philanthropy) in supporting work at the local level

• Difficulties in smaller towns and cities in having the necessary capacity to participate effectively in conversations at national and international level and the sense, therefore that the voice of towns and smaller cities is not well represented within these discussions

Planning for integration

The typologies identified in this report attempt to support local authorities and highlight the importance of data to understand the demographics of the town and to use this in planning. This is particularly important for smaller towns who are unlikely to have the resources to support the provision of this type of information independently.

Policy frameworks as developed by Weltoffene Commune, Engagierte Städte (Germany) and Inclusive Cities (UK)[12]

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11   http://www.thecampaigncompany.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/TCC-Cohesion-ATLAS.pdf

12   https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/2019/inclusive-cities-framework/

can provide a basis for action planning on integration at the local level, regardless of the size of municipality, though with adaptations based on the local context.

Finally, in keeping with the lack of resources and capacity identified above, dedicated opportunities for peer learning, for example through the Hopeful Towns Network can support sharing of best practice and learning between towns.

Alongside these questions of governance and organisation, there are a number of areas in which the substance of integration policy making and practice may be distinctive:

Narratives of inclusion

As the Communities up Close research identifies, public opinion on integration and migration is distinctive in towns and smaller cities. In keeping with the diversity of these towns, it is not that all towns can be grouped together in these views (for example the research shows significant differences between larger and smaller towns), but simply to note that any emerging work on defining new narratives of inclusion at the local level, needs to take into account this diversity.

One prevalent example relates to loss of identity in the face of population and industrial decline. Whilst by no means a universal story, there is a vital piece of work to forge new identities and to understand how local government may be involved in defining and embedding these narratives in these circumstances. Whilst there is sometimes a deficit model in how some of these questions are presented – they can also be presented as positive attributes of inclusivity with ideas of neighbourliness, friendliness and closeness becoming an asset in the development of integration practices.

Another important point in the definition of narratives is an understanding of demographics of new communities. Much integration work is focussed on refugee communities. In the German case, this is obviously as a consequence of the events of 2015 which has acted as a catalyst for integration policy. However, this can also skew policy making and narrative work away from broader migrant communities.

Areas of integration policy and service delivery distinctive to towns and smaller cities

Many common areas of integration policy (provision of language support, contact, provision of information and advice etc) are not necessarily distinctive to towns and smaller cities. However, there are a number of areas which seem to be distinctive:

- Public spaces and the public realm appear to be a more important concern for those in towns and smaller cities than in larger cities and therefore this may be a more important concern for these municipalities and form a more significant part of planning in these areas.

This includes a particular importance for 'anchor' institutions, whether these be public sector organisations such as educational institutions or other community actors such as arts organisations, sports clubs or community assets such as pubs. This means that the German incorporation of urban planning within integration policy making may be a particularly useful approach for towns and smaller cities

- As outlined above, contact strategies, whilst common to all integration work, may be more effective in smaller communities, though with the caveat that there may be a higher risk of exclusion of groups within tight knit communities. Proactive work to encourage bridging forms of community contact may become especially important in this context

- The linking of integration policy making to economic strategies may be particularly important in smaller towns and cities. Whilst inclusive growth agendas have become a feature of city strategy making, there are a number of distinctive aspects for towns and smaller cities:

   – The importance of high streets and migrant economies (linked to the questions of the public realm outlined above

   – The uneven distribution of economic benefits – whereby people live in one area, but work in another and therefore the potential economic benefits of migration are not felt in the areas which experience the commensurate effects of that migration

The COVID 19 pandemic[13]

This project began before the COVID 19 pandemic and therefore this is not a primary focus of this paper. However, there are a number of important areas in which the policy areas outlined above might be impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic:

- The disproportionate toll of COVID 19 on migrant communities (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2021, Migration Exchange 2020) and the exacerbation of existing inequalities (Bruzelius and Ratzmann 2020)

- Some temporary changes towards greater inclusion (for example in Germany in relation to housing provision

- The increased role of local government in public health, local intelligence and planning and the potential for learning from this (in particular in the context of the UK and Germany)

- Inevitable restrictions to work on community contact and the increasing importance of digital communications, and as a consequence, the outsized importance of digital divides to contact work and integration policy making

13   A series of policy briefs exploring the impact of Covid 19 on the integration policy context in the UK can be found here: https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/project/inclusive-cities-covid-19-research-and-policy-briefings/

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