Globalisation, labour markets and communities in contemporary Britain

YHRMP ID
37
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Aims

This study investigates local experiences of, and responses to, globalisation. The report examines the different forms and modes of connection that globalisation produces. Through interviews and focus groups with people in three UK communities [north-east Lincolnshire, Greater Glasgow and west London/'Heathrow Village'], this study examines experiences of, and responses to, globalisation in the aftermath of the recession. The report is part of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation publications.

Methodology

The research employed a qualitative methodology, based upon interviews and focus groups with workers, young people, representatives of community groups, local authorities, trade unions and interest groups. The fieldwork was undertaken over a 3 month period between June and September 2010. The research consists of 3 case studies that were selected to represent 3 forms of connection: north-east Lincolnshire – a ‘defensively connected’ place, Greater Glasgow – ‘disconnected’ communities and west London around the so-called ‘Heathrow Village’ – an ‘outwardly connected’ place.

Key issues

The study addresses 3 key themes: uneven impacts of globalisation, globalisation and local labour markets, and community cohesion. The research highlights that globalisation has an uneven impact on localities, not only between different areas, but also within them. The report explains: the concept of globalisation; the relationship between globalisation, the UK policy framework and inequality; the uneven impacts of globalisation, connection and empowerment in labour markets, and community negotiations of globalisation. It concludes with main findings from the research and some implications for policy and practice.

Conclusions

The report concludes that it is necessary to rethink the way in which global processes interact with, and are related to, local

issues and experiences. Researchers and policy-makers need to focus more on understanding and addressing the positive and negative impacts that key global processes such as information and communication technologies [ICTs], subcontracting and labour migration have on UK communities. Conventional understandings of globalisation assume that increased connection to global processes creates opportunity and empowerment for individuals and communities. However, some forms of global connection, particularly where they increase competition and insecurity in local labour markets, are associated with disempowerment and marginalisation. There are also considerable discrepancies between different people's understanding of the impact and experiences of globalisation. The study identifies a number of implications for policy and practice.

Web Link
Globalisation, labour markets and communities in contemporary Britain [link to ...
Migrant Group
EU migrants
Non-EU migrants
Topic
Migration
Labour conditions
Migrant workers
Public perceptions
Place
UK - inc. Yorkshire & Humber element
Year

2011
Resource Type
Report
Publisher
Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Source URL: *https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/research-entry/globalisation-labour-markets-and-communities-contemporary-britain*