Living the weathers and other stories

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Aims

Looking at the experiences of people who live in Yorkshire and Humber and who were granted refugee protection at some point in their life in the UK, the aim of the research was to contribute to existing research surrounding the broad term of ‘integration’.

Methodology

The project began in January 2019 with Brexit and ended in December 2020 because of a pandemic. For this reason, researchers carried out 51 semi-structured interviews, half of what they originally planned. The research was caried out with researchers from Migration Yorkshire and peer 7 researchers. The interviews were conducted with people that identified along 2 genders, male (61%) and woman (39%), of various age groups (the youngest being 13 and the oldest 64), from 23 different countries and that resided in 9 local authority areas in Yorkshire and Humber. Most commonly they arrived through the asylum process and had a diverse range of professional backgrounds.

Key issues

This report aims to contribute to existing research surrounding the broad term of ‘integration’. It identified two ways in which people may feel settled: ‘practical settled-ness’ and ‘emotional settled-ness’. The latter, which according to the report is often overlooked, is about what makes people feel emotionally at ease, and where they feel so. In order to look at the emotional aspect of integration, the report suggests that we need to take into account the experiences, practices and connections people have in other places and in other times, that go beyond the UK context, and beyond present day. This will enable considering individuals’ past lives, present connections and aspirations - their relationships, skills, knowledge, education, hopes for a good life - more attentively, while contextualising these with present experiences in the UK and with the integration process.

The report has three main sections:

1. ‘Living the weathers, integration and social relationships’ suggests that people who arrived in the UK from other geopolitical contexts simultaneously lived a variety of weathers: the UK weather, as well as other weathers – those of the places where they spent much of their lives. What this means is that research participants always had connections to other places, and other people, ‘and things of all kinds’, and that their experiences cannot be considered merely in terms of loves in the UK.
2. ‘On being a refugee’ complicates the ‘refugee category’ and brings to the reader’s attention how the legal categories associated with ‘refugees’ shape day-to-day lives as experienced by the people they label and speak of. The report suggests that being placed in the refugee category impacts everyday practices, opportunities, engagements, self-esteem and sense of belonging. While the legal category may potentially generate opportunities, allowing people to start a new life in a new country, people who are called refugees can also see themselves as unable to resume their lives. As a consequence, they may feel stuck.

3. ‘Settlement strategies’ identifies some specific places that are significant for people’s day-to-day lives. The places that were most commonly mentioned by research participants were those that enabled engagement in positive activities that could be seen as settlement strategies for starting life in a new country. What made people feel more settled, or more ‘at home’ in the new country, was facilitated in and through a specific place (e.g. a community centre, a workplace, or a library) which provided access to people’s needs and wants, and maximised four key ‘feelings’: security, familiarity, community and a sense of possibility or hope. The report grouped places into three categories, according to the particular activities they enable: know-how places; places of familiarity; and hope-enabling places.

Conclusion

Instead of recommendations and conclusions this report has a few response pieces by people working in the migration sector which aim to pose questions and pose some reflections.

Recommendations

Instead of recommendations and conclusions this report includes response pieces by people working in the migration sector which aim to pose questions and pose some reflections.

Web Link
https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/research/living-weathers-and-other-stories
Migrant Group
Asylum seekers
Refugees
Topic

Community and society
Community cohesion
Integration
Migration
Place
Yorkshire & Humber - region-wide
Year
2021
Resource Type
Report
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