Intercultural tensions in multicultural societies: local governance, multiculturalism, and active citizenship. The case of the Arab-Muslim diaspora: UK case study

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Aims

The report examines the notion of community cohesion as it is understood by residents, particularly those whose origins are from the Yemen. The report derives from a United Kingdom case study as part of an international comparative research programme funded by an Australian Research Council Discovery

Grant.

Methodology

As well as a review of relevant policy documents and literature, the study included 5 interviews with Council employees. In addition, a short telephone interview was conducted with a member of Local Government Yorkshire and Humber, representing local authorities in the region. Thirteen interviews were undertaken with representatives of the voluntary, community and faith [VCF] sector and 2 with local academics knowledgeable in this field. A survey was undertaken with 100 residents from January to March 2010. Around half of the respondents were recruited in public places in the city centre and about 10 were conducted with professionals through contacts in their workplace. Around 40 were conducted on the street, in cafes and through door knocking in three localities. The resulting respondent profile included: 24% Muslim, 25% born outside the UK, 50% men and 47% were aged 21-35.

Key issues

There has been a shift away from multicultural policies in the UK as a consequence of attention to a set of key new policy domains: equalities community cohesion and community involvement. Issues which were identified as barriers to integration included: lack of English; lack of access to employment; racism and discrimination and difficulties forming meaningful relationships with British people. The role of informal

social networks and entrepreneurs were seen as significant in shaping integration. Partnerships between the local authority and third sector organisations were characterised as mainly existing through umbrella bodies or in personal relationships between community leaders and councillors. Recent anti-terrorism legislation, restrictions on migration, reduction in funding for English language tuition and the recent Prevent programme have undermined the potential for creating equality and multicultural respect.

Conclusions

Faith is seen as a key issue in managing cultural relations especially post 9/11 and faith organisations have now assumed an important role for both established and new minority group members in terms of protecting their interests. Faith, especially Islam [given the focus of the Prevent agenda] has received negative media attention, such as the issue of the wearing of the veil by some Muslim women. The centrality of community cohesion and the Prevent agenda highlight the enhanced role of communications, that of managing perceptions, the effects of negative media portrayals, improving the council's relationships with community groups and all residents by promoting successes and gains in relation to diversity and equality. In the City, this approach to managing perceptions is seen as central to managing community tensions.

Migrant Group
Non-EU migrants

Topic
Community and society
Community cohesion
Integration
Yemeni
Place
Yorkshire & Humber - region-wide
Year
2012
Resource Type
Report
How to get a copy of the research

Please contact Gary Craig (gary.craig@galtres8.co.uk) or Hannah Lewis (h.j.lewis@sheffield.ac.uk) for a copy of the report summary and for applications to view the full report.

Extra Information

An associated article and blog are also available:

Lewis, H., & Craig, G. (2014). ‘Multiculturalism is never talked about’: community cohesion and local policy contradictions in England, *Policy & Politics*, *42*(1), 21-38. Retrieved Jan 31, 2023, from https://bristoluniversitypressdigital.com/view/journals/pp/42/1/article-p21.xml

https://policyandpoliticsblog.com/2014/02/10/gary-craig-and-hannah-lewis-wonder-why-multiculturalism-is-never-talked-about/

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