

Executive Summary

Migration and Settlement in Glasgow: Factors Influencing Migrant Choice

Key Points

- This executive summary is based on a masters dissertation of the same title; developed collaboratively by Glasgow City Council and the University of Glasgow.
- This study looked at migration and settlement in the city of Glasgow from the eight Central and East European states that joined the European Union in 2004.
- Migration is an extremely complex and intricate phenomenon which is demonstrated by the wide ranging and developing literature on the subject and the empirical evidence presented in this study.
- Many factors encourage people to leave a particular place but in deciding their new location chance plays a large role.
- Long-term settlement is particularly affected by: the continuation of promising and stable employment, the prospect of having children and standard of living.

Background

Aims and Method

This study had two key aims. Firstly, to explore how migrants decide where to relocate to and, secondly, what factors encourage or discourage migrants from then settling long-term. This research focused specifically on migrants from the eight Central and East European accession countries¹ that joined the European Union in 2004 (known as the A8). There were two stages to carrying out this research. The first involved desk research of migration theory and relevant studies that have been carried out concerning migration from the A8 and studies pertaining to migration and settlement in the UK, Scotland and Glasgow. The second stage was the field work. This involved interviewing six migrants from A8 countries who now live in Glasgow. The interviews were semi-structured, meaning that there was a basic set of questions that would raise particular discussion points that could then be explored fluidly as relevant areas of interest became apparent. In total six participants were interviewed from five of the A8 states: the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia. All of the participants were female, aged between 23 and 30 and educated to at least degree level.

This research topic was created collaboratively between the University of Glasgow and Glasgow City Council. The council has been looking at the possibility of developing a migration strategy with the assistance of the COSLA migration toolkit and this research contributes to this process.

¹ Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Theory

The academic literature on international migration has greatly evolved over the last fifty years. Earlier theories of international migration focused exclusively on economic questions. The most predominant of such theories is neoclassical theory which argues that migrants are effectively market players who invest in migration; weighing up the cost of relocating with the benefit of receiving a higher salary in a new location. Following this other theorists attempted to move away from the sphere of economics, looking at systemic and institutional factors that would lead to migration. These theories are known as the historical-institutional approach and world systems theory, both of which have their roots in Marxist ideas of international relations; arguing that imbalances in wealth and power lead people to migrate and as a result tend to focus on examples of the mass migration of labour. Migration systems theory then began to move the study of migration into an interdisciplinary field, incorporating ideas of economics, sociology, anthropology, geography and others. This is largely a regionalised theory that looks at instances where two or more countries regularly exchange migrants. It concentrates on the importance of family and community in motivating a person to migrate, incorporating a wide range of possible factors. The regionalisation of the theory makes it particularly useful for understanding migration where prior links exist between countries. These links tend to be strong trade relations or a history of colonialism and can therefore be used to understand migration to the UK from the Caribbean or South Asia and other similar examples. This highlights just how complicated a phenomenon migration is; as many of the theories have only been able to effectively cover a particular aspect of migration or a particular migratory process.

Transnational theory is the most prevalent and up-to-date theory at present. It emphasises the importance of globalisation, freedom of movement and the advancement of technology to argue that migration is a complex process where people can move regularly and often; maintaining strong social and cultural links in multiple countries. This theory ties in well with this study, as all of the participants found it easy to stay in regular communication with family abroad and could relatively cheaply and easily travel to see them if they wished to. It is, however, extremely important not to over emphasise the ease of travel and communication as, whilst it is true for many migrants, it reflects an aspect of their socio-economic position: that they are reasonably affluent and well educated as these are the requirements of utilising technology and travel to maintain these strong links, it cannot be held as true for all migrant groups. One of the first pieces of work that led to the development of transnational theory was on deterritorialisation. This is the idea that technology has allowed people to move between countries so easily that it is bringing about a process where borders and traditional territory has less significance than it once did. This is particularly useful when considering the European Union; the free movement of people and goods across the borders of the member states of the EU very clearly points to deterritorialisation and forms a large part of the basis for understanding contemporary migration within Europe. Such ideas have led researchers to consider whether this ease and regularity of movement allows people to truly settle in one location and therefore, just how they conceptualise ideas such as where home is for them. This concept has been labelled as super-diversity and is often used in particular with reference to the UK. This is the notion that people can now have complex and diverse identities based on multiple homes and cultures; it is no longer as simple as considering someone a migrant from a particular place now living in the UK, they could be a migrant from a particular place now living in the UK with strong ties all over the world all contributing to a unique identity.

Relevant Studies

In considering other studies that have been carried out in relation to the UK, Scotland and Glasgow, the work at present is still relatively sparse. There is a decent amount of data on the numbers of migrants moving into the UK but their motivations for moving and what encourages long-term settlement have not been fully explored. Some studies have been carried out within Scotland on working migrants' experiences with employment which do raise some important indicators in what may facilitate long-term settlement but these can only be used as pointers and are not directly concerned with migrant choice or long-term settlement. Research carried out by the Office of the Chief Researcher for the Scottish Government does highlight some factors as to why people migrate to the UK and Scotland. Three reasons are identified as to why people move to the UK: seeking employment, to study and accompanying or joining family members. In terms of Scotland there were two key reasons motivating migrants to relocate here: employment and study. These factors tie in well with the evidence that will be presented below but as will be demonstrated such simplistic motivators risk underestimating just how complex migration truly is.

Findings

Migrant Destination Choice

Chance

One of the most striking aspects of the interviews was the role of chance in determining a migration destination. This does overlap with other factors such as seeking employment but it is still extremely important in its own right. For example, Respondent 1, in this study, began looking to migrate as she wanted to leave her home city of Prague after separating from her boyfriend. She heard of someone who was creating a business to move second-hand British clothing to the Czech Republic for sale. By then applying for this job she ended up in Glasgow but had no prior knowledge of the city and stated that she did not even know where it was. Another example of where chance played a crucial role was with Respondent 6. Her sister was supposed to be coming to the UK from Lithuania on a work placement but one week before her flight she broke her arm and was unable to travel. As flights and accommodation had already been paid for Respondent 6 took the opportunity to travel to the UK for a couple of months, from this experience she decided that she liked living here, moved to Glasgow after receiving a scholarship and then helped her parents and sister all relocate permanently to Scotland.

Employment

Employment is an important factor in considering many migrations. However, within this study, it was never the sole reason for someone to relocate: as was demonstrated above with Respondent 1 who moved because of employment but her initial motivation was simply to leave Prague. Respondent 5 was another who fits in with the employment category. She initially went to London to visit some friends from Poland who had moved there, she was offered a job that was substantially better paid than her job in Poland and as a result relocated. However, when it came to moving to Glasgow, the participant wanted to try and seek out family that she had lost touch with who lived in Scotland, she was then able to apply for a transfer to

Glasgow and has since remained in the city. Thus, seeking employment is important in both encouraging and facilitating migration but the reasons and motivations for selecting a particular location are often complex and diverse.

Study

Students moving to Scotland in order to study had clearer motivations and less of the decision process relied as much on chance. One of the primary motivations for choosing Scotland as a location to study was the fact that European Union students have their fees paid for them by the Scottish government, creating a clear financial incentive to study here. Of the six participants interviewed two specifically came to study and both of them had previously visited Scotland, one on a work placement in Edinburgh and the other to Glasgow to visit the campus of Glasgow University. Both had positive experiences of Scotland and decided that they wanted to study here.

Moving with a partner

Two participants moved to Scotland with partners who were seeking employment, which does tie in well with the theme of employment. However, as it was not the primary motivation of the participants it is important to consider it separately. This highlights the importance of relationships between people in making decisions to migrate. Both Respondent 4 and Respondent 6 moved to Glasgow with their partners. However, by the time it came to interview them for the study they had both separated from their partners and had continued to live and work in Glasgow, with Respondent 4 meeting a Scottish man who she was engaged to at the time of the interviews and beginning to start a family and Respondent 6 moving her family from Lithuania to Scotland. This clearly demonstrates again just how complex the issue of migration really is and again displays how important it is not to trivialise decisions to migrate by considering them in simple terms such as seeking employment or similar. It is essential to understand these intricate relationships in order to fully understand why people select certain locations to move to and a large factor that is emerging is that often they do not necessarily select a location but a combination of factors draw migrants to a particular area.

Long-term settlement

First Impressions

Respondents were asked their first impressions of arriving in the city to evaluate if there was a correlation with how long they then intended to remain. From the answers it did appear that poor first impressions of the city led to ambiguity as to whether they would then remain in Glasgow and positive first impressions created more certainty. For example, Respondent 1's first impressions of the city were somewhat negative: "It was firstly the greyness of the city because coming from Prague over here it kind of really felt like coming from Prague to Ostrava - which is a post-industrial city ... so that was just like a shock of a lack of colours". This respondent also stated that city appeared very small and stated it felt more like a large town. In contrast to this Respondent 2 stated:

"I thought it was really big and the houses all looked a bit the same but that's because of the West End, apart from that I really liked the University I thought that was quite nice, I liked the people, people were really nice as well, really nice especially at first, I felt a big difference, everyone was really kind and helpful because

if I got lost or something, everyone could tell I was a foreigner so they were really trying to help me.”

Respondent 1 appeared the most likely to leave the city and Respondent 2 was very keen to pursue employment within the city once she had graduated from university. This would suggest that there is a link between first impressions of the city and likelihood of long-term settlement.

This area would require a more longitudinal study to fully explore just how much impact first impressions have on long-term settlement. In terms of how expectations of Glasgow met the realities of arriving in the city: this was difficult to determine. Most of the migrants had no expectations of Glasgow at all as it was largely chance that brought them to the city. Other participants had previously visited Glasgow (to see the university) and as such their expectations had already been met with reality.

Home

How the migrants conceptualised the idea of home was an important and interesting factor. The research demonstrated that the migrants were able to hold multiple ideas of what ‘home’ meant for them, which ties in very strongly with transnational theory. They could keep in easy communication with family in different parts of the world and could travel to see them relatively often. This meant that most of the migrants did consider Glasgow to be home but they could equally hold on to very strong ideas of home in their original countries. To illustrate this, the majority of participants still referred to their country of origin as ‘home’ when discussing it but Respondent 3 stated that she “felt a bit lost” when she returned to Poland. Similarly, Respondent 1 stated that resettling in a different location from Glasgow would be no easy task, even if it was to be moving back to the Czech Republic. However, Respondent 6 appeared to have almost entirely accepted Scotland as her home, having moved her immediate family over from Lithuania and did not appear to particularly feel the need to return to Lithuania at all. This displays, that transnational theory is relevant in considering these ideas of home, as participants did appear to be in two minds about where home really was. However, as was demonstrated, it is important not to over emphasise this process as the participants did appear to feel an overall stronger connection with Scotland and Glasgow.

Family

Family was an extremely important issue for all of the migrants – in particular when considering if they would like to begin families in Glasgow. Overall, the respondents were not enthusiastic about raising children in the city but this was not necessarily a reflection on Glasgow, rather a reflection on city life for a child.

Education

Related to this was the idea of education for children. The respondents who had begun to think about the possibility of children were all against the idea of their children going to Scottish schools. There were two principal problems they saw with the Scottish education system. Firstly, they did not like the idea that where you live determines which school you attend as this could negatively impact the child at a very early age if they happened to live in an area where the schooling system was weaker than elsewhere. Secondly, the participants thought that too much time was spent in primary schools on activities like art and drama and not enough time on more traditional forms of education. These participants all thought that the education

system was stronger in their original countries and appeared to be one of the most likely factors in encouraging them to leave Scotland. However, all of the participants were perfectly happy with the idea of their children eventually going to Scottish universities they just did not necessarily want to raise children exclusively within Scotland and Glasgow.

Employment

Alongside education, the continuation of employment was the most important factor that emerged in determining whether or not the participants wished to remain in Glasgow. All of the participants effectively said that so long as their employment prospects remained positive in Glasgow then they were happy to continue living and working here. Many also highlighted the fact that they do not have an understanding of the employment market anywhere else and so they were reluctant to relocate without a firm job offer. Importantly, all of the participants stated that they would probably relocate if a better job was offered to them but this meant almost anywhere in the world and they were not actively seeking employment elsewhere.

Standard of Living

It was generally believed by the participants that the standard of living possible in Scotland was higher than that of their original countries. The main areas identified that they thought were superior were: salary and healthcare. Higher salaries in the UK allowed the participants to afford more than they could in their original countries. For example, one participant remarked that it was now possible for her to save money to go on holidays, another that she could afford to live alone and own a car. These were important motivators in determining how long they would like to remain in the UK for. Healthcare was an important issue but one that came with contrasting views. It was accepted that free healthcare was an advantage over living in many other parts of the world; however, due to the process of receiving healthcare in this country it was also thought that they were not necessarily receiving the treatment they needed. This was because, in a country where you pay for healthcare you can go to a doctor or a specialist and pay to have relevant scans and tests to discover what might be causing problems. Having to interact with a GP in this country first meant that they thought they were not being treated properly as they were not instantly sent for such scans and tests and felt GPs were more likely to send them away with minimal help.

Conclusion

Migration is an extremely intricate and complex process that cannot easily be summarised by one or two factors. The theory of migration has evolved in such a way that very clearly demonstrates this. People relocate for a variety of reasons, their initial decision to want to move may well be related to wanting a new job, to leave a particular place or to seek education but what actually brings them to one particular place appears to depend largely on chance.

In considering long-term settlement there are three factors that particularly stand out. The most likely factor to encourage people to settle long-term is a higher standard of living. If their quality of life in Glasgow is higher than they expect they could receive elsewhere it would appear that people are happy to settle in the long-term. Education of children came across as the most likely factor to drive migrants to leave, concern that the education system in Scotland would hamper their children's

development was an extremely important factor for all of the participants. Employment affected long-term settlement in both regards. If stable and good employment would continue for the migrants in Glasgow they were willing to remain here, if they had a substantially superior offer elsewhere, they would likely relocate.