

Centre for  
Urban & Regional  
Development Studies

**CURDS**



# Work, Migration and Development: Central European Migrants and the Economic Life of Cities and Communities

Alison Stenning et al



# Local and Regional Impacts of A8 Migration

- 2005/6 research – ODPM-funded
- Stenning, A. *et al.* (2006) *Assessing the Local and Regional Impacts of International Migration*. London: Department for Communities and Local Government.
  - analyses of international migration tend to focus on macro-level flows and impacts at the national and international scales or to study individual migrants and their communities
  - the ‘missing’ local scale in migration studies and analyses: issues for cities and regions
  - migration, global cities and ‘urban competitiveness’ – especially London
  - beyond the global city: the diverse geography of A8 migration
- <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/curds/research/projects/project/1285>

- at the local and regional scale, policy and practical responses to A8 migration have been largely reactive and piecemeal
- many respondents had little real sense of the numbers or geography – moreover, WRS data will become less and less useful for locating and monitoring A8 nationals
- it is important to respond to demographics at a local level, recognising not only national differences but other cleavages amongst these migrants
- labour market issues are structured at a scale beyond the cities themselves
- need to expand on national labour market analyses to explore in detail the labour market impacts in a range of different labour markets, setting analyses of A8 migration into grounded accounts of urban and regional economic change
- relatively little attention has been paid at the local and regional scale to the impacts in the spheres of service provision and labour markets of A8 migration on indigenous populations, especially more marginal populations
- a lack of awareness amongst local and regional policy makers of the potential economic contribution of these migrant groups

- now very familiar concerns which have recurred in recent reports and media debates:
  - poor quality of the data
  - apparent spatial mismatch between the benefits and costs of migration
  - more general weakness on understanding the role of migrants and migration *in particular places*
- in the more recent debates regarding the accession of Bulgaria and Romania, these geographical patterns attracted policy attention right from the start:
  - “The Department of Communities and Local Government will audit local areas and work to meet ‘isolated and specific pressures’, Mr Reid said.” (UK to limit EU entrants’ working rights, *The Guardian*, October 24, 2006)
- inherently geographical concerns, resting on a sensitivity to geographical difference and to the varying scales of the regulation – in the broadest sense of the word – of migrant work

# In this paper...

- shift from 'impacts' to something broader, a consideration of the work we expect migrants to do

AND

- connect more critically the sending and receiving spaces – the cities and regions of east and west

# Work, Migration and Development

- links between work, migration and development – at international, national and regional scales – are complex and extensive
- but, at the heart, is the migrant as an *economic contributor*
  - remittances: ‘new development mantra’
  - fiscal contribution: from Migrationwatch to TUC
- centring the economic contribution migrants are expected to make

# Work, Migration and Development

- echoes through a range of debates:
  - post-war migration and economic development (e.g. European Volunteer Worker schemes)
  - global cities
  - creativity and diversity
- in some ways, this is not new: the migrant as ‘labouring body’
- BUT this is not just about the migrant as worker, but also about more contemporary discursive associations of work with community, responsibility and citizenship

# Work, Migration and Development

- Habib Rahman (Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants): “We welcome the minister’s acknowledgement of migrants’ economic contribution. However the minister needs to recognise that migration can never just be a cash cow for ‘UK PLC.’” (BBC News, 17.10.07)
- the migrant – along with the job seeker, the single mother, the ‘workless’ – is drawn into a discursive field which values “active citizenship, individual responsibilities to community, and especially participation in paid work” and rests on an “expectation that people will play their part in society” (Worley, 2005)
- migrant rights to citizenship – and popular acknowledgement of these rights – are conferred by economic contribution
- “the scheme devised by the UK, the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS), attempts to knit together the issues of employment, legal residence and access to social benefits for A8 migrants” (Currie, 2006) – and media debates too...

- want to return to focusing on the playing out – and contestation – of these ideas within debates over regional development and to do this from two perspectives – **from cities and regions in the east and from cities and regions in the west**
- rests on two research projects
  - everyday economies of households in two central European cities
  - articulations between urban and regional development and migration in peripheral UK regions, most especially the NE
- in exploring some issues about the work that migrants are expected to do in these two contexts – their sending and receiving regions – the aim is *to begin to* pull out some of the contradictions and tensions

# Migration and Urban Economies in ECE

- longstanding connection between emigration and economic development in ECE/Poland
  - ‘za chlebem’ migrations of 100 years ago
  - work placements and state socialism
- ‘contribution’ at individual, household, community scale – and beyond?
- multiple motivations, modalities and temporalities of post-accession migration
- BUT evidence of individualism: that younger people are using periods of work overseas to achieve financial independence with a view to investing their savings in property or in creating a small business

# Migration and Urban Economies in ECE

But...

“Taking employment abroad reduces the pain of lack of cash of families in on low income and provides much needed inflow of remittances to family and local budgets. Łukowski (2004) estimates that for a small town the total value of remittances to family budgets may be comparable to a budget of the entire town and around two third of income from employment generated locally. Even if his estimate is quite optimistic, clearly the remittances from migration is very substantial and plays vital role in sustaining local economies.” (Kupiszewski, 2004)

# Migration and Urban Economies in ECE

- Polska B: brings us back to migration and development
- not just remittances but structural economic concerns
- regional and national campaigns to encourage migrants to return
- and to attract migrants from Ukraine, Russia and beyond
  - “We have noticed severe discrepancies in our labour market. Around 800,000 Polish workers have left to work in other countries in the EU” (Minister for Labour and Social Policy Anna Kalata)
- predictions of Polish/ECE growth...

# ECE Migration and Urban Development in the UK

- in contrast to the results of our research in the immediate post-accession period, local authorities are now beginning to discuss A8 migration and see it as the salvation of local population concerns and as part of an urban renaissance:
  - Fresh Talent Scotland: bolster the dynamism and cosmopolitanism of Scottish life and the economy, that the A8 nationals can stimulate the economy, resulting in expansion and more jobs for everyone
  - “Migrant workers have brought Boston back to life”, says one local businessman (The Independent on Sunday, 4.11.07)
  - “As far as we’re concerned it isn’t an issue. We [Methyr Tydfil] have lost more than 10,000 residents in the past two decades and we want to revive and regenerate the town. Immigrants can be part of the solution” (The Sunday Times, 4.11.07)

# ECE Migration and Urban Development in the UK: The North East Example

- “The size and demography of our labour force means that in order to generate a step change, we should be looking to attract more skilled workers into the region from elsewhere.” (Regional Economic Strategy, 2006)
- “a greater imperative for the North East to attract in and retain its skilled workers, entrepreneurs and leaders to create a vibrant, globally competitive economy...Positive action in this respect is therefore vital” (Regional Economic Strategy, 2006)
- very quickly becomes a ‘talent attraction and retention strategy’ – which raises concerns about other migrants and broader social justice issues (this is about what migrants can do for us, not what we can do for migrants...)

# ECE Migration and Urban Development in the UK

- and...
- we don't know how long migrants are staying and we don't know if they want to 'integrate'
- in many cities and regions, the nature of the local labour market raises concerns about the impact of migrant labour on regional skills/workforce development
- speed of labour market development/migration and market-led nature limit regulatory development and potential for intervention
- fragmented and weak institutional structures unlikely to provide a framework for more positive scenarios

# Work, Migration and Development: Central European Migrants and the Economic Life of Cities and Communities

- predicated on particular subjectivities and expectations: the economic contributor
- migration becomes a means of avoiding difficult labour market/development issues (skills and workforce development in the UK; unemployment and wages in PL)
  - “migration is no panacea for development” (de Haas, 2005)
- policy articulations E & W: what happens if the Polish government succeeds in attracting the Poles home?
  - “Do Poles ... come here because they love Britain’s climate and its charming people or do they come here to work?” (Ashley Seager, The Guardian, 12.11.07)