

Introduction

Simone Delorenzi

Geographical mobility has always been an important means for people to achieve social mobility: many move to improve their conditions and to obtain better life chances, for themselves and their children. This is true both of international and internal migration, as attested by the relative shift in population away from de-industrialised areas and the increasing concentration of population in the south-east of England.

The population flows that these mobile individuals and families create are linked to wider economic and industrial trends. But their need to move – and their capacity to do so – depends significantly on their position within society. The benefits that a person gains from moving, say, to an area with better employment opportunities vary widely depending on where they come from, the conditions in which they migrate and their individual characteristics. Those who live in highly deprived areas face significant barriers to moving to places with better opportunities. And immigrants trying to integrate within their new environment have to overcome further barriers, whether linguistic, economic, social, cultural or again – if they end up in a deprived area – physical.

The aim of this book is to explore some of the complex links between social and geographical mobility or rather, as often happens, lack of mobility. The interest in this set of issues comes from a wider perspective set by ippr's programme of Social Mobility and Life Chances Forums and the successive themes that they have explored since 2003 (it is the papers from the November 2005 Forum, which took place at HM Treasury, that make up this book). Initial events assessed the extent of social and intergenerational mobility in the UK and explored the factors that facilitate or inhibit it (Delorenzi *et al* 2005). This confirmed the wide academic consensus that individual and family characteristics are what matter most for people's life chances. In turn, this was reflected in the focus of previous Forums on education and early years policies.

This book takes up the challenge of looking at some of the issues relating to the fact that individuals belong to different groups – whether defined by where they live or by where they come from. It seeks to ascertain the role and impact both of place and ethnicity in individuals' life chances, and the degree to which these create, or remove, barriers to social mobility. It also seeks to examine some of the numerous policies that have sought to tackle deprivation and/or unequal life chances, through targeting specific communities defined either by their geographical location, their ethnicity or both. Hence, the policies explored range from area regeneration and housing to the integration of immigrants.

To enjoy the support that can ultimately determine their success, all policies need to be explained and based on a degree of political and popular consensus. In recent years, policies relating to immigrant integration and diversity have upheld a special position. Not only are they more likely to be subject to public and political scrutiny, they have also been depicted as the ultimate test for the welfare state, in a debate around the idea that increasing diversity might undermine solidarity and the willingness of people to pay for a large welfare state.

This debate is important in relation to social mobility, because the welfare state is considered as one of the main tools for creating more equal opportunities for all. Ultimately, it shows that integrating minority ethnic groups is also important in creating a society that makes sure everyone has equal opportunities.

The immediate backdrop to the November 2005 Social Mobility and Life Chances Forum (whose papers form this book) provided a stark illustration of its key themes and how they interrelate. The riots in France in November 2005, which culminated in two weeks of vandalism, cars being set alight and confrontations with the police in most main French cities, laid bare the segregation that many minority ethnic groups experience in disadvantaged suburbs.

The situation showed the shortcomings of the French model of integration of its minorities. But it also echoed events in the United States and UK during previous months: the plight suffered by the predominantly poor black victims of Hurricane Katrina in August and, in October, the inter-community riots in Lozells, one of Birmingham's most disadvantaged areas, fuelled by feelings that Asians were taking advantage of Afro-Caribbeans. Both these situations showed the risks posed by similar juxtaposition of socio-economic disadvantage and ethnic differences.

This book aims to provide a contribution to the debate that these events have generated and that are likely to retain their saliency in the next few years. This introduction gives an overview of the main arguments developed in the later chapters and also reflects contributions not included in this collection and the discussions that took place during the Forum.

Equal life chances and place

In the UK as in most countries, there are wide socio-economic disparities between different locations – from the regional level to that of individual wards. Wider national and international trends affect different areas in different ways, and the fate of the more disadvantaged areas, as a result of economic and social factors, public order or equity, has concerned policymakers for many decades. But which affects social mobility and life chances more: place or individual and family characteristics? The research presented at the Forum shows that the evidence for the impact of place is significant

in some areas, and this certainly leaves space for devising policies that tackle geographical disadvantage.

Both Alan Berube, from a US perspective (Chapter 1), and Stephen Machin, who presented the Gibbons *et al* paper at the Forum (Chapter 2), agree that individual and family characteristics have a greater impact on outcomes than neighbourhood characteristics do. Individuals living in areas of concentrated disadvantage have worse outcomes in education, employment, health and involvement in crime.

But, statistically, most of these factors can be explained through their individual characteristics, including low parental educational attainment and income. Their outcomes are not very different from those of individuals with similar characteristics living in better-off areas. This still leaves space for 'area effects', such as peer pressure and poverty of aspirations. These additional factors might not be adequately captured by statistical analysis – largely because they are the aggregate of individuals who come to live in the same place for the very reason that they share these characteristics to start with.

Experiments carried out in the United States also showed mixed evidence of cause. A number of programmes have aimed to move people living in extreme deprivation from inner cities into more affluent or mixed neighbourhoods. Those who took the chance to move out obtained better outcomes overall. But Alan Berube notes that these effects may have been exaggerated by the very high levels of deprivation initially suffered, and the impact of discrimination and segregation on neighbourhoods dominated by African-Americans.

Both these aspects are rarely found in the UK, where there is less ethnic segregation and a higher number of moderately deprived areas, with only a few very highly deprived areas. As a result, simply moving people out is unlikely to have the same impact. However, a closer look at the dynamics between place and life chances using different measures – economic activity and employment, education, health and crime – shows that areas and neighbourhoods do come into play, and may have a role in helping policymakers.

Economic activity and employment

There is clear evidence of substantial and persistent spatial differentials in unemployment, economic inactivity and other dimensions of economic activity (Buck 2005). However, this is likely to be due primarily to compositional effects. For example, in the housing market, people from similar backgrounds are sorted through their purchasing power or tastes. These factors are more prevalent than contextual effects, where the employment prospects of individuals in deprived areas may be lower than those of similar individuals in better-off areas. There are regions where the spatial pat-

tern of job loss, due to industrial restructuring, has led to structural unemployment. But this does not explain why small pockets of unemployment persist in areas or wards that are right next to booming areas.

However, qualitative research shows that it is indeed more difficult for people in deprived neighbourhoods to find employment. People in these areas tend to have more limited access to information, support and connections into the labour market (Buck 2005). Even when not insuperable, physical distance, isolation and lack of confidence may create a perception that few opportunities are available. Discrimination based on place of residence may also hinder employment. Some might be tempted to migrate to areas with more opportunities. But the cost of housing and the lack of national labour market information makes moving a significantly more risky option for those without qualifications than it is for graduates, who tend to move easily across the country to adjust to labour market demand.

All these real and perceived barriers are largely down to individual characteristics rather than a neighbourhood effect, and people from these neighbourhoods might well carry the barriers with them even if they are given the opportunity to move to different areas. But the issues still need to be addressed, in places where these difficulties are concentrated in one location, and it makes sense to tackle them at an area level – for example, by improving local employment services.

Another reason why area effects may not show up in statistical analysis is that those who do manage to improve their situation and increase their income tend to move out of deprived areas. They are then replaced by people with similar initial profiles and create a zero-sum game where people move in and out of some areas, without fundamentally changing its composition. This suggests that policies could create a virtuous circle by seeking to fight some of the more negative effects of neighbourhood deprivation through improving public services and retaining higher-income households.

Gibbons *et al* in their chapter suggest that the solution to employment differentials may lie less in trying to move low-skill jobs to deprived regions than in fostering greater economic integration, through seeking the high value-added economic activity usually associated with well educated labour. This is because in today's service economy, the spending power of well educated workers generates jobs for those with fewer skills. This does not preclude helping those who want to move out of their deprived areas. More portable forms of housing benefit for these families would increase their mobility and their capacity to adapt to changing circumstances and economic conditions.

Education

In Chapter 3, Ruth Lupton presents a similarly mixed picture on the evi-

dence of neighbourhood effects on education. It is widely acknowledged that there are major disparities between schools in different types of areas. Neighbourhood has been shown to have some impact – for example, on test scores for four- to five-year-olds. Overall, neighbourhood effects are real, but are, again, always less influential than individual and household effects. However, there is abundant qualitative evidence that peer groups have an influence on attainment and that poor labour market prospects affect aspirations, as do the availability of alternatives to education, such as paid labour, crime and drug dealing.

Neighbourhoods are particularly important in the way they influence the quality and effectiveness of schools – for example, by affecting teacher recruitment and retention. This may explain why poor neighbourhoods tend to have poor schools. This is important, because schools probably account for between eight and 15 per cent of attainment differentials. Thus, raising the quality of schooling in deprived areas can be expected to yield benefits and should be a priority, acknowledging that schools in poor areas perform a somewhat different role than in better-off areas, for example in socialisation.

Part of the neighbourhood effect may be due to the composition of schools. Admissions systems based on proximity to where pupils live, or ‘catchment area’, mean that children from low-income families tend to attend schools and classes with a majority of other children from low-income families, and this may affect their general attitude to schooling. The average pupil attainment in a school decreases rapidly as the proportion of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds increases.

These types of compositional effects might be offset by different organisational models, along with more resources for schools in poor neighbourhoods. Even if placing children from poor backgrounds in better schools may not have a direct impact on their attainment, fighting segregation may be a valuable aim, if we are to achieve the type of economic integration mentioned earlier. Schools are one of the main factors influencing where the young parents who can afford to choose decide to live. So ensuring good and relatively mixed schools in all areas should bring wider benefits.

Crime and health

Crime and health are two areas in which there is more significant evidence of area effects on life chances. Crime, and the fear of crime, are highly concentrated in particular areas (Bottoms 2005). The crime rates in areas of deprivation reflect the poor educational achievement and lack of economic opportunities experienced in those areas. There is modest evidence of the effects of neighbourhood and peer groups, which are particularly significant for girls, although more mixed for boys.

However, the most significant area effects appear to be on health. It is well known that life expectancy at birth is considerably lower in some areas of the UK than others. The experiments reviewed in Alan Berube's chapter in US cities also show clear evidence of improved physical and, importantly, mental health for people moving away from deprived areas.

Individual characteristics continue to dominate, and account for about 90 per cent of the influence on health outcomes (Mitchell 2005). But an individual's health and behaviour may well depend on what kind of area they live in – for example, through pollution, climate, crime, the quality of housing and the sheer stress associated with living in a disadvantaged neighbourhood.

The evidence suggests that wealth and income are ultimately the strongest factors in influencing outcomes in crime and health alike, so that policies that target economic activity, employment and education appear crucial. At the same time, improving social mobility and equalising life chances is also linked to other aims, such as improving conditions for the most disadvantaged. Even if there are no measurable outcomes in terms of social mobility, improving the quality of life for those who live in areas that are high in crime, pollution or poor quality facilities is important for social justice. It may also help retain those with higher incomes, thereby having a beneficial effect on neighbourhoods.

Thus, there is a strong case for area-based policies. This may not be based on direct evidence of any impact on improved social mobility. But it derives from the aims of social justice – reducing segregation and improving community cohesion – which are no less desirable. These are all factors that, in the longer term, create the possibility of moving towards a more equal society. In the meantime, we need policies that have a combined focus on both individuals and the areas or communities in which they live.

Migration and social mobility

It is easier to isolate the impact of ethnicity, rather than place, on the inter-generational mobility of individuals. But this impact shows itself in complex, and sometimes opposite, ways for different categories of migrants and minority ethnic groups. Recent research that breaks down the life chances for different categories opens up new ways of understanding what mechanisms are at play here.

In Chapter 4, Lucinda Platt shows that, if ethnicity is important in explaining the life chances of individuals, what their migrant parents bring with them is no less crucial. First-generation migrants who hold educational qualifications and come from higher social classes usually experience downward mobility when they settle in the UK. But their children are more likely to improve their position in society than their white British peers.

However, the patterns of transition between the social class of the parents and that of their children are highly differentiated by ethnic group. The ability of privilege to maintain itself across generations is stronger for some groups (white migrants, non-migrants and Indians) than for others (Caribbeans and Pakistanis).

Recent ippr research, presented at the Social Mobility and Life Chances Forum, also alerts us to the fact that immigrants can hardly be considered one homogeneous category (Kyambi 2005). Mapping of new immigrant communities who have arrived in the UK since 1990 shows that their trajectories differ widely according to country of birth. Variations in unemployment rates are striking. They range from almost non-existent among new immigrants born in Finland, Mauritius, Canada and Japan to rates that grossly exceed the UK rate – particularly for those born in Angola, Algeria, Iran and Iraq. Circumstances related to overall employment rates and the conditions of their arrival in the UK, particularly for asylum seekers, play a big part in explaining these differences.

Interestingly, given the overall theme of this book, there are also striking regional disparities, with large and persistent variations in the employment gap. Possible explanations range from the fact that different categories of immigrants settle in different regions to the regional variations in barriers to employment. The high proportion of high-earning immigrants in regions other than London indicates a capacity for all regions to attract and benefit from these potential employees. This hints at interesting ways of tackling area differentials.

The findings from these recent strands of research suggest that integration policy has an important role to play, and needs to be more differentiated – in particular, paying more attention to new immigrants and their socio-economic outcomes. The ippr report (Kyambi 2005) also recommended further investigation into how the proliferation of immigrant diversity affects service delivery, inter-community relations and cohesion. These issues are explored in the third part of this book.

Diversity, solidarity and the welfare state

In recent years, there has been increasing interest in a debate originating from the United States on the impact of ethnic and racial diversity on social cohesion and the willingness of people to contribute to the welfare state. In an increasingly diverse society, so the argument goes, people are less willing to pay for services that they see as benefiting disproportionately immigrant or ethnically different communities (Alesina and La Ferrara 2003). In the UK, this perceived tension between diversity and solidarity (both major themes for European parties of the progressive centre and left) has been dubbed the 'progressive dilemma' (Goodhart 2004). However, the

evidence presented in this book provides a strong rebuttal for this argument.

Introducing a North American perspective, Keith Banting (in Chapter 5) explores the two dimensions of this potential trade-off between support for the welfare state and accommodation of ethnic diversity. He does this by referring both to the *de facto* increase in heterogeneity, triggered by immigration, and to the multicultural policies that some countries use to recognise their minority ethnic groups.

Banting examines the proposition that growing levels of ethnic diversity, or the adoption of multicultural policies, have eroded support for the welfare state, and finds that international comparisons do not support this premise. He particularly emphasises Canada as a counter-narrative, arguing that the distinctive US history in 'race relations' means that all countries may not necessarily be following the US path.

The difficulties in transposing an analysis of the role of diversity across countries is exemplified in this book by the different terms used to describe this diversity. Where our North American authors talk about 'race' and 'African-Americans', British and European authors use the words 'ethnicity', 'black British' or break them down according to their countries of origins, for example. These concepts not only have opposite degrees of social acceptability – or political correctness – in different countries, but they also cover slightly different realities, forged by specific histories of immigration, national formation and segregation. These need to be born in mind when trying to compare attitudes towards diversity across countries.

In his analysis of European trends, Peter Taylor-Gooby questions the idea that the welfare state has irremediably been weakened in recent years, or that all welfare spending is geared towards minority ethnic groups at the bottom (Chapter 6). Immigration has undoubtedly increased from the early 1990s. But a number of factors appear more significant in explaining challenges to European welfare states, including the slowdown in economic growth and an ageing population. Taylor-Gooby also reserves a special role for the changing power relations between political movements.

Historically, the presence of social democratic, socialist and liberal parties in government has been the decisive factor in explaining the creation and scale of welfare states in Europe as compared with the United States. It is also the weakening of these movements that best explains challenges to welfare spending that have taken place since the 1980s, along with the strength of neo-liberal ideology. In many countries, conservative parties have given space to right-wing populism, blaming the social crisis on both immigration and the political establishment, largely associated with the welfare state (Cuperus 2003).

This is a somewhat unnatural alliance. Simply rolling back welfare spending is most likely to hit those whose situation has deteriorated in the past couple of decades. At the same time, the concerns of the disadvantaged parts of the population need to be addressed and established parties need

to reflect on their failure to adequately represent them. Politics can create and sustain an understanding across ethnic groups and the progressive centre and left have a crucial role to play in making the case for solidarity and the welfare state. This challenge is manifold, but part of it has to do with integration policy.

In Chapter 7, Rinus Penninx provides a useful example, describing the way Dutch integration policy has evolved over the past 30 years. The Netherlands has long been considered a model in terms of integration, but has been particularly hit by the rise of populist far-right movements and the highly symbolic murders of one of their leaders, Pim Fortuyn, and the filmmaker Theo van Gogh. Integration policy has evolved from the 'welfare state' model of the 1980s (also later characterised as 'multiculturalist') through to a 'republican' model, emphasising civic integration courses, and on towards the more authoritarian and 'assimilationist' policies of the new millennium. Discourse has seen a parallel change, from a depoliticisation of immigration issues to increasing references to an 'asylum crisis', which has accompanied the rise of the populist movements.

However, despite the rhetoric, many of the earlier instruments of integration are still up and working – particularly at the local level. As a result, a mixed model of integration is currently in place, meshing many elements of the initial welfare state and republican models, accompanied by a more authoritarian discourse and tone.

These are issues that all western countries currently have to grapple with, whatever their past integration record, and whichever type of policies they have favoured. It is also likely that they will all have to move towards a mixed set of policies. Keith Banting argues in his chapter that the European debate opposing assimilation of minority ethnic groups and multiculturalism may be missing the point. The countries with the largest immigrant communities – Canada and Australia – pursue both strategies, combining language courses, teaching of the country's history and the recognition of diversity. Active welfare strategies that facilitate inclusion in the labour market and the economy are also a necessary part of the equation.

Integration policies are an important part of a country's national identity. They tend to be defined centrally, through what can often turn out to be a highly charged debate, in which different political forces may seek to hijack the diversity question to further their own ends. However, ultimately, it is at the local level that integration succeeds or fails. There is a strong argument for devising policies that bring together the two dimensions explored in this book – area deprivation and ethnic segregation – and that address both these issues together. These strategies would need to focus on locally based community cohesion in order to facilitate trust and reciprocity between the majority and minority communities.

Removing barriers to mobility

Individual characteristics remain the most significant in explaining people's social mobility and life chances. Evidence showing the impact of belonging to specific communities – defined geographically or by ethnicity – is more mixed. The impact is very clear in the case of some minority ethnic groups, but harder to disentangle on some measures of area disadvantage.

In one respect this is unsurprising. Social mobility is mainly seen as an individualistic concern anyway: if we all moved up, nobody would see their relative situation improve. But belonging to groups is an integral part of human life, usually for very positive reasons, and it is an aspect that the research and policies relating to social mobility need to take into account. When this membership creates barriers to social mobility, it may not be desirable or feasible simply to expect individuals to abandon their associations. Any policies can only work if they take this membership fully into account. Further research is needed not only on the impact of belonging to particular places or ethnic groups, but also on the interactions between the two.

The term 'integration' is usually used to refer to minority ethnic groups. But the area-based research presented here shows that the need to fight segregation may be equally relevant for disadvantaged groups – particularly with regard to housing and education. Improving the quality of life of those who live in deprived communities is of equal importance, and may create the conditions of future more equal life chances. Public services have a particular role to play in this regard, and there is a strong case for arguing that services in deprived communities should be further improved. It is still too often the case that schools or early years facilities that serve poor communities are themselves at the poorer end of the scale. Further research is required on the way public services could be made more responsive to the particular, sometimes disadvantaged, communities that they cater for.

Targeting resources at specific categories of people can be contentious, particularly when they are defined as 'alien' – a term that can be attributed to members of the white British so-called 'underclass' as much as to newly arrived asylum seekers and second-generation immigrants. Hence rhetoric, and the way in which public spending is justified and explained, has a vital role. Political leaders must take up the challenge showing the gains to be made from a more inclusive and supportive society, while at the same time recognising the challenges posed by diversity.

References

- Alesina A and La Ferrara E (2003) 'Ethnic diversity and economic performance', unpublished paper, available at: <http://post.economics.harvard.edu/faculty/alesina/papers/jelrevisionsnov21.pdf>
- Bottoms A (2005) 'Place, crime and disorder', presentation at the Social Mobility and Life Chances Forum: Removing barriers to mobility, HM Treasury, London, 14 November 2005
- Buck N (2005) 'Place and economic activity: key issues from the area effects debate', presentation at the Social Mobility and Life Chances Forum: Removing barriers to mobility, HM Treasury, London, 14 November 2005
- Cuperus R (2003) 'The populist deficiency of European social democracy', London: Policy Network, available at: www.progressive-governance.net/php/article.php?aid=92&sid=10
- Delorenzi S, Reed J, Robinson P (2005) *Maintaining Momentum: Promoting social mobility and life chances from early years to adulthood*, London: ippr
- Goodhart D (2004) 'Too diverse?', *Prospect*, no 95, February 2004
- Kyambi S (2005) *Beyond Black and White: Mapping new immigrant communities*, London: ippr
- Mitchell R (2005) 'Place and health', presentation at the Social Mobility and Life Chances Forum: Removing barriers to mobility, HM Treasury, London, 14 November 2005