

Globalisation, labour markets and communities in contemporary Britain

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An investigation into local people's and communities' understandings of globalisation.

Conventional approaches to globalisation assume that increased global connections are a source of opportunity and empowerment. Drawing upon interviews and focus groups with people in three UK communities, this study examines experiences of, and responses to, globalisation in the aftermath of the recession. Departing from established 'top-down' understandings, it assesses the local impacts of globalisation and investigates the different forms of connection that exist between communities and global processes. This provides some important new insights into the relationships between global connections, labour markets and communities.

The report addresses three key themes:

- the uneven impacts of globalisation within and between localities;
- the role of globalisation in shaping local labour markets; and
- the effects of globalisation on community relations.

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Executive summary

This study investigates local experiences of, and responses to, globalisation. We challenge orthodox 'top-down' approaches to understanding the impact of globalisation on communities. By contrast, the report adopts a 'bottom-up' approach, which emphasises the everyday effects of global processes on local communities.

The project examines the different forms and modes of connection that globalisation produces. It focuses on three case studies that were selected to represent three forms of connection:

- **Outward connection:** the 'Heathrow Village' in west London represents an outwardly connected community, located adjacent to a major international transport hub and associated with a long history of migration to the area. An industrial dispute at airline caterer Gate Gourmet in 2005 brought to the fore the tensions of living and working in a global hub.
- **Defensive connection:** a wave of unofficial strikes in the engineering construction industry in 2009 was sparked at the Lindsey oil refinery in north-east Lincolnshire in response to the use of low-paid migrant workers. Striking workers in the region mobilised defensive forms of connection to protect their jobs against processes of labour market deregulation.
- **Disconnection:** in Greater Glasgow, young unemployed people can be understood as being disconnected and excluded from wider society by processes of deindustrialisation related to globalisation. Their experiences of welfare delivery and searching for work in a changing economy and shrinking labour market are the focus of this case study.

The empirical findings are divided into the three themes that structure the report: uneven impacts of globalisation, globalisation and local labour markets, and community cohesion. We conclude that it is necessary to rethink the way in which global processes interact with, and are related to, local issues and experiences. We identify a number of implications for policy and practice in the light of this finding.

Uneven impacts of globalisation

Globalisation is traditionally understood as an external force that impacts on local areas in a relatively uniform way. Communities are seen as passive and homogeneous receivers of global impacts. Our research demonstrates that this does not reflect reality:

- Globalisation has an uneven impact on localities, not only between different areas, but also within them. All three case studies showed how global processes such as migration and labour market deregulation are experienced differentially, with some individuals and groups in an area benefiting from globalisation while others in the same area are disadvantaged or excluded.
- Much of the unevenness that is evident within localities has been shaped by contemporary and historical processes associated with globalisation, with contemporary dynamics impacting on existing socio-economic and cultural inequalities from earlier historical contexts.

- Inequalities that already exist within and between places risk being exacerbated by the recession, as the impacts of globalisation are intensified.

Labour market connection and disconnection

One particularly important area in which globalisation has affected people's daily lives is through access to the labour market and employment (Diamond, 2010). Our findings show some of the ways in which globalisation is understood and experienced through people's engagements with labour markets:

- Many respondents were closely connected to the globalisation of labour through processes of subcontracting and labour migration, and felt threatened and disempowered by the effects of these processes on their working conditions, job security and pay.
- Efforts to collectively counteract or resist these experiences were galvanised and strengthened by common experiences and histories, themselves produced partly through global patterns of migration or technological advancement. Workers creatively mobilised their connections to other places to 'scale up' their disputes and wield greater power. Where this 'scaling up' was possible, the connectedness of markets arguably made workers' actions more effective.
- Although workers at Gate Gourmet and the Lindsey refinery were able to force concessions from employers, they were ultimately unable to fundamentally transform the conditions that produced their situation.
- Unemployed young people are also aware of the global processes that impact on their ability to find work. They make serious efforts to gain employment and are commonly frustrated by their inability to do so. As such, compulsion to undertake voluntary work or enter into low-quality employment or training is likely to increase feelings of disaffection and disempowerment among job-seekers.

Community experiences of globalisation

The notion of globalisation as an external threat to existing forms of employment and identity is often associated with strong negative reactions to some of its most visible impacts, namely unemployment and migratory workforces. Dominant discourses surrounding migration either lead to xenophobic and protectionist attitudes, or 'top-down' forms of multiculturalism. From our research, it is clear that people respond to the impacts of globalisation on communities in ways that do not always conform to, and often disrupt, these two categories:

- Although attachment to a particular locality remains an important source of community, existing feelings of marginalisation and powerlessness often undermine community identity and empowerment, meaning that community action is absent or weak in some areas.
- Communities tend to be already plural and made up of ongoing interactions between diverse groups.
- Assumptions that there are existing 'cohesive' communities which are threatened by 'immigrant' populations are problematic. Communities tend to be made up of many diverse groups that reflect ongoing histories of connection. This challenges the simplistic concepts of 'us' and 'them' which have informed both media and political discourses around immigration.
- Migration flows entering the UK for work, especially from European Union (EU) states, have fostered a 'hierarchy of whiteness', with British citizens often perceiving British whiteness as substantially different

from white non-British migrants. This trend has developed out of a combination of media and government scapegoating, and regional and global deregulation of labour markets.

- Despite some respondents harbouring xenophobic attitudes, it is clear that the impact of migration flows on an area is not always predictable, and different groups and individuals in the same area often respond to migration in different ways.
- Some areas exhibited 'ordinary multiculturalisms', which operate independently of government policy agendas and shape community relations and dynamics in important ways. These suggest forms of identity and relations that transcend the limits of both xenophobic attitudes and some forms of policy-based multiculturalism.

Conclusions

The report concludes that:

- There is a clear gap between elite concepts and discourses of globalisation and how people on the ground understand and relate to global processes. Global processes such as migration are ostensibly negotiated at a local level because their impacts are felt through people's everyday experiences.
- The local impacts of these global processes are uneven, whereby some groups and individuals benefit from globalisation and others are excluded or disadvantaged by it.
- It is therefore necessary to explore not only the extent of connection between local and global levels but also the modes and terms of connection.
- While global processes such as in-migration may cause tensions and divisions at a local level, this is not inevitable, and the research highlights examples of 'ordinary multiculturalism' that defy 'them and us' discourses in government and the media.
- Communities and workers can shape local impacts of globalisation. However, their ability to fundamentally transform the processes that cause these conditions is often limited.

Implications for policy and practice

Following on from these conclusions, it is possible to identify a number of key recommendations for policy and practice. We outline an approach based on 'progressive localism'. This suggests community strategies for negotiating global processes that are outward looking and that create positive affinities between places and social groups:

- Elite constructions of globalisation have had disempowering consequences. Everyday experiences of global processes need to be taken seriously and used to inform policy-making.
- The vulnerability and insecurity of low-paid workers has been increased by processes of labour market deregulation and the flexibility associated with globalisation. Serious consideration should be given to a *national living wage* to replace the current minimum wage. This would strengthen the position of low-paid workers and facilitate the re-entry of unemployed and economically inactive groups into the labour market.

- Globalisation has exacerbated the marginalisation of unemployed young people, especially in old industrial regions. Support systems need to be facilitated that combine provision of education, training and employment services. Demand-side measures should be taken, such as the restoration of the Future Jobs Fund scheme by national government to provide subsidised training and employment places.
- Government needs to recognise the uneven impact of global processes on places and communities, rather than assuming a level playing field. Policy to encourage localism must not deepen inequalities in material resources and social capital between and within communities. Progressive localism that is outward-looking, and based on solidarities beyond the local, needs to be facilitated by devolved government, regional policy-makers and non-profit groups.
- Exclusionary responses to globalisation can be challenged by supporting 'ordinary multiculturalisms' at the community level. This can strengthen community resilience, as shown in our Heathrow Village case study.

1 Introduction

This report describes the findings of a study on community experiences and understandings of globalisation in the UK. The project used a ‘bottom-up’ approach to investigate the uneven processes of economic, social and cultural change associated with evolving forms of connectedness. We recognise that community experiences of globalisation are crucially mediated by institutional structures and policy frameworks at the local, national and European scales.

The project set out to address the following aims:

- to explore how socio-demographic, cultural and geographic differences affect experiences of interconnectedness, as well as variations in the forms that interconnectedness takes;
- to understand which individuals, groups and communities are experiencing empowerment, and in what forms (social, cultural, economic, political), and which are experiencing alienation and disempowerment;
- to examine the role of new technologies in those (positive and negative) experiences; and
- to analyse how the policy environment and the national, regional and local scales mediate these experiences, and to draw out the implications for future policy formation.

These aims were addressed through a focus on three case studies: north-east Lincolnshire, Greater Glasgow and west London around the so-called ‘Heathrow Village’. The case studies were chosen to reflect a range of local impacts of, and responses to, globalisation. North-east Lincolnshire and the Heathrow Village were sites of prominent industrial disputes which contested aspects of globalisation, in 2009 and 2005 respectively. Glasgow is an old industrial region where globalisation has had divisive local impacts. These case studies were chosen to emphasise that different communities are not just passively impacted upon by globalising processes, but can be active in shaping and contesting them.

The research employed a qualitative methodology, based upon interviews and focus groups with workers, young people, representatives of community groups, local authorities, trade unions and interest groups. This provided us with a ‘bottom-up’ perspective on globalisation, distinct from what might be described as the ‘top-down’ conventional wisdom of policy-makers, business groups, academics and media commentators. Our methods allowed us to investigate the experiences and views of groups whose opinions on globalisation are rarely heard, informed by the broader Joseph Rowntree Foundation research programme aim of exploring the relations between globalisation and poverty in the UK.

The fieldwork was undertaken over a three-month period between June and September 2010 (see Appendix I). It was therefore carried out in the aftermath of the 2008–9 recession. The recession was one of the central ways in which our respondents experienced processes of globalisation. While the research was not directly about the recession, this report highlights its impacts on UK communities. In particular it shows how workers, communities and marginal groups have experienced and negotiated these recessionary times.

This report has nine main sections. Section 2 introduces the concept of globalisation, highlighting its contested and uneven nature. This is followed in Section 3 by an overview of the UK experience of ‘internal’ globalisation, covering the relationship between globalisation, the UK policy framework and inequality. Section 4 outlines the case studies. Sections 5 to 7 present the findings of the research, structured by the key overarching themes that emerged from our analysis of the data. These sections cover the uneven impacts of globalisation, connection and empowerment in labour markets, and community negotiations of globalisation respectively. Sections 8 and 9 set out the main conclusions of the research and the implications for policy and practice.

2 What is globalisation?

We hear a great deal about globalisation in the media, from the government, and in both academic and popular discourses: the refrain that we live in a 'globalised world' is almost constant. But what is globalisation, and what does it mean to live in a globalised world? There are many definitions, most referring to increasing levels of integration between different human societies across a variety of dimensions. These include economic integration (production networks, trade, finance and regulation), cultural and social integration (the creation and dissemination of popular culture, migration, travel and tourism, patterns of consumption), and regulatory and institutional integration (conducted through institutions such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the International Court, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the Bank for International Settlements).

In this respect, globalisation is an elite discourse, which constructs and interprets the phenomenon in particular ways. The notion of globalisation as an inexorable and inevitable external force, which creates distinct opportunities and threats for societies and communities, has proved particularly powerful (Coe and Kelly, 2002). Such discourses of globalisation have a self-actualising quality, actively fostering integration through reforms such as privatisation and deregulation. Nation-states have played a particularly important role in facilitating globalisation through policies such as liberalising trade, abolishing capital controls and creating flexible labour markets.

In this report, we shift the focus away from such 'top-down' models of globalisation to a perspective that highlights the experiences of communities, individuals and social groups. To this end, we define globalisation as:

- The historically mediated, uneven processes, facilitated through new technologies and mobilities, through which some actors, places, institutions and markets have become increasingly interconnected.

This definition highlights the differentiated nature of globalisation: while some individuals, groups and communities have become more globally 'linked-in' as a result of globalisation, others are experiencing new forms of disconnection and exclusion (Taylor, 2002). In line with this approach, we have explored the impact of different globalising processes on communities, rather than thinking in generic terms about the relations between globalisation and places. To make globalisation relevant to the lives and experiences of research participants, it was necessary to engage with specific globalising processes. The main global processes with which we are concerned are: corporate restructuring driven by global competition, particularly 'offshoring' and the search for cheaper supplies of labour; the increasing reliance upon subcontracting; labour migration and flows; the growth of information and communication technologies (ICTs); and greater trans-local cultural connections.

It is important to remember that the effects of these processes are often complex; some may have both positive and negative dimensions. ICTs, for example, enable new and more numerous forms of connection, but can also introduce new forms of competition into the workplace that make people feel less secure in their jobs. To explore experiences of such processes, we develop the following conceptual approach to globalisation through the report.

First, we argue against understandings that position places and communities as neatly apart or separate from globalising processes. Globalisation's impact is never 'pure', separate or exclusive. Rather, it is always entangled with and worked through specific processes and places. The global does not operate

at a scale detached from particular places but instead is 'locally produced'. Most places are positioned 'on the receiving end of some wider forces' and are the 'seat of the production of others' (Massey, 2007: 21). This gives rise to a sense of the diverse outcomes and ways by which globalisation is experienced in different communities.

Secondly, globalisation is a geographically uneven phenomenon that has a markedly different impact on different places. This differentiated impact reflects the different histories and geographies of connection that places have to the global economy. For some elite groups in global cities, such as London, for example, which contain headquarters of large corporations, financial institutions and associated business service firms, the past few decades have been a time of great prosperity. By contrast, many traditional industrial communities, such as Glasgow, have been marginalised by global processes of economic restructuring (Cumbers, *et al.*, 2009; Mooney and Scott, 2007).

Thirdly, different groups and communities have markedly different potential and abilities to shape globalising processes. Elite groups and trans-national corporations have been particularly adept at shaping and controlling globalising processes, often benefiting from hidden state subsidies and support (Allen, *et al.*, 1998; Massey, 2007; Sklair, 2001). Other groups and communities have had their already precarious working conditions and access to labour markets exacerbated by the globalisation of capital and labour, often manifest through processes of offshoring, capital flight and disinvestment. They have been profoundly affected by the introduction of flexible working conditions and the development of a subcontracted low wage economy (Wills, *et al.*, 2010; Standing, 2009). These shifts have generated increasing insecurity and precarity among low-paid workers who are often women and from ethnic minorities, as we demonstrate in the Heathrow case study.

Fourthly, elite constructions of globalisation can have disempowering consequences. They construct globalisation as remote and disconnected from people's lives. This makes it hard to envision how communities might intervene in globalising processes. If we think in terms of different globalising processes that are worked through particular places, it becomes easier to see workers and communities as active agents in shaping and negotiating such processes (Featherstone, 2008). For instance, in contrast to chauvinistic responses to globalisation based around prejudice to immigrants, there are also examples of 'ordinary multiculturalisms' which suggest more positive ways of negotiating connections (Chan, 2010; Gilroy, 2004).

Discussions of globalisation frequently focus on 'external' processes of trade, financial integration, technological innovation and supranational governance (Held and McGrew, 2002). To understand the impact of globalisation, however, it is necessary to engage with 'drivers within the nation state, as well as forces that operate outside the domestic context' (Diamond, 2010: 4). We are particularly concerned with the domestic effects of what might be termed 'internal' globalisation (within the UK), focusing attention on the local experiences and impacts of ostensibly global processes. The next section develops an account of some of the key aspects of 'internal' globalisation in the UK.

3 'Internal' globalisation: the UK experience

As we emphasised in Section 2, we view globalisation as a multi-faceted phenomenon which is effectively 'hosted' and carried by related globalising processes – for example, offshoring, labour migration, deregulation. While this makes it difficult to disentangle distinct globalisation effects, it is important to recognise the complexity of the two-way linkages between globalising processes and nation-states whereby states are both facilitators and 'victims' of globalisation (Dicken, 2007).

The impacts of globalisation within a particular country will be shaped by the system of political and economic governance in operation. An Anglo-Saxon model based on low levels of employment regulation and worker support is dominant in the United States (US), the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, while the Rhineland model of France and Germany combines strict employment protection with high levels of worker support (Milberg and Winkler, 2009: 7–8). Other models include the 'flexicurity' approach of Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands, characterised by a lack of employment regulation but high levels of social protection and strong commitment to retraining, and the Mediterranean system of strict employment legislation and low levels of worker support (*ibid.*).

As indicated by its inclusion in the Anglo-Saxon group, the UK has embraced globalisation as part of a market-based approach to economic policy (Wills, *et al.*, 2010). Since the mid- to late 1990s, a strategy of competitiveness has become dominant, portraying globalisation as an external challenge for the UK economy, which requires a range of reforms to promote growth, innovation and skills (Bristow, 2010). As part of this response, increasingly globalised policy concepts and discourses such as welfare to work and flexible labour markets have been translated into specific policy initiatives that have affected local communities and labour markets (Etherington and Jones, 2009).

Labour market polarisation

One particularly important area in which globalisation has affected people's daily lives is through access to the labour market and employment (Diamond, 2010). Labour has become increasingly globalised through the emergence of a global labour surplus, based upon the development of new labour supplies in developing countries, particularly China and India (Standing, 2009). As a result, workers' share of national income has declined across much of the globe, reflecting a serious weakening of labour's bargaining position relative to capital. The effects of these broader forces have reshaped UK labour markets over the past decades, with important effects on patterns of inclusion and marginalisation (Diamond, 2010).

Recent research provides evidence of the development of US-style job polarisation and income inequality in the UK. Goos and Manning (2007) show that both the highest- and lowest-wage occupations have grown, while demand for routine manual and clerical work has fallen, suggesting that such jobs are particularly vulnerable to technological change and 'offshoring'. According to Wills *et al.* (2010), low-paid jobs in the UK have been devalued to the point of becoming difficult to fill. The availability of such work has been an important factor in underpinning large-scale migration to the UK in recent years, particularly from the accession countries of central and eastern Europe (Stenning and Dawley, 2009). Increases in labour supply have also contributed to the rise in unemployment among 18–24 year olds looking for unskilled work (Diamond, 2010: 8). The effects of the recent recession seem to be exacerbating these trends, with young people who do not have a university education and ethnic minorities worst hit by rising unemployment (IPPR, 2010).

Problems of unemployment, labour market inactivity and low pay tend to be spatially concentrated in particular areas that have been largely left behind by processes of labour market restructuring (Gore and Hollywood, 2009).¹ Over the past decade or so, the problem of localised worklessness has been identified as an important policy priority, fostering a succession of initiatives to enhance employability in the context of an ongoing shift from welfare to work (North, *et al.*, 2009).

Poverty and inequality

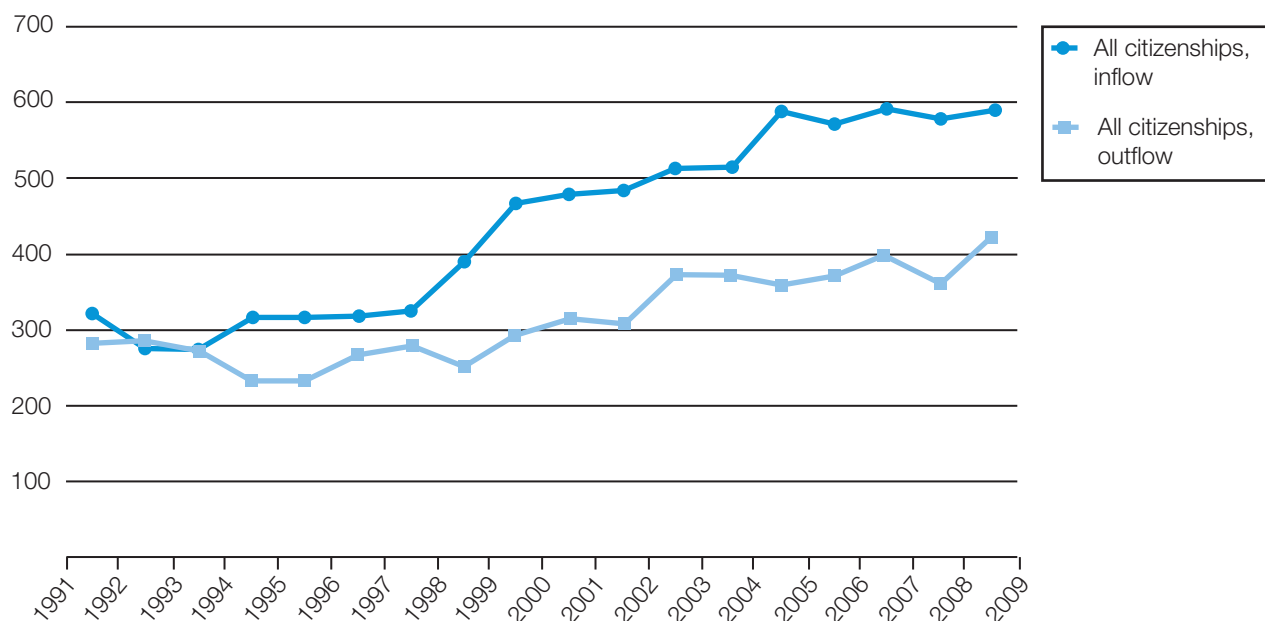
Changing levels of poverty and inequality in the UK are highlighted by figures derived from the *State of the Nation Report* (HM Government, 2010). Although wages have risen since 2000, income inequality in the UK is now at its highest level since comparable statistics began in 1961 (*ibid*: 6). Levels of relative and absolute poverty have fallen over the past decade, though severe poverty (income below 40 per cent of the median) has increased and levels of income poverty are generally above the European Union (EU) average. The relationship between globalisation and inequality in the UK is complex and multi-faceted, with national policy playing a crucial mediating role. Two key observations can be made, however. Globalising processes are associated with increases in inequality in many countries as the share of wages in national income relative to capital has fallen, with the US acting as a crucial trendsetter in this regard (Standing, 2009). Second, levels of inequality in the UK are high compared with other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (HM Government, 2010). This differential seems to reflect how the unequal effects of globalising processes have been exacerbated by adherence to an Anglo-Saxon model of economic regulation, based on low levels of employment regulation and worker

Table 1: Percentage of households with Internet access by country and region, 2007 and 2009

Region	Year	
	2007	2009
London	69	80
East of England	67	77
South East	65	75
South West	69	72
East Midlands	59	67
West Midlands	56	67
North West	56	67
North East	52	66
Yorkshire and The Humber	52	64
England	61	71
Wales	57	68
Scotland	60	62
UK	61	70

Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2009

Figure 1: Long-term international migration, all citizenships, outflows and inflows, thousands, 1991–2008



Source: ONS 2009

support, compared with the ameliorating effects of other national frameworks such as the Rhineland model (Etherington and Jones, 2009; Milberg and Winkler, 2009).

Information and communications technologies

A key facet of globalisation is increased mobility and widespread use of ICTs such as the Internet and mobile telephones. The use of such technologies, however, is conditioned by existing socio-economic inequalities and social networks. As Table 1 shows (see page 14), household access to the Internet is unevenly distributed by region, reflecting income to some extent. The percentage of houses with Internet access in Scotland, for example, increased by only 2 per cent between 2007 and 2009, while the proportion in England increased by 10 per cent over the same period. Age is correlated with use of the Internet; particular activities such as social networking and the use of web TV and web radio are undertaken disproportionately by those in the 16–24 age group. Moreover, ostensibly global technologies such as the Internet and email are often used for local ends, according to existing social practices and norms (Dutton, 2010).

Globalisation, migration and community cohesion

Although UK migration statistics are problematic because of the lack of systematic data collection, a general upward trend is apparent over the last 18 years for both inward and outward migration (see Figure 1 above).

Between 2004 and 2008 an estimated 2.9 million people came to live in the UK (similar to the inflow between 1991 and 1995) (ONS, 2008). Emigration also increased; 2008 recorded the largest outflow of people from the UK (427,000, up from 285,000 in 1991). The UK had roughly 3.5 million migrant workers in early 2009, just under 1.5 million (42 per cent) of whom had arrived since 2004. Around 620,000 of those who arrived since 2004 are from the A8+2 accession countries in eastern Europe.

Migration to the UK is far from new, of course, and the combination of older and more recent flows of migrants has created an increasingly complex pattern of integration and marginalisation (Diamond,

2010). The experiences of ethnic minority groups have become more diverse, with Chinese and Indian communities, for instance, overtaking the white majority in educational attainment, while other groups are falling behind, particularly the Pakistani, Afro-Caribbean and Bangladeshi communities (ibid.: 7).

This picture of movement and differentiation is far more complex and nuanced than recent simplistic media coverage would imply (IPPR, 2010). Yet the popular notion of migration as a threat is indicative of some of the ways through which relations between globalisation and communities have become politicised and mobilised. One powerful narrative concerns the dispossession and marginalisation of the 'white working class'. According to Garner, *et al.* (2009):

... in the narratives told to us, it is the white working class who are the biggest victims of social change. Some of the conversations included examples of how people perceive unfair situations in which minorities are advantaged; either directly or indirectly.

Garner, *et al.*, 2009: 7

The notion of the 'white working class' invokes a sense of authentic whiteness being threatened by globalisation. This exclusionary construction of whiteness is itself actively generated by groups and commentators as part of their efforts to negotiate globalisation. In response, there is a need to emphasise forms of multiculturalism that are shaped through everyday practices of interaction between those of different backgrounds. These practices are usefully captured by Paul Gilroy's term 'ordinary multiculturalism' (Gilroy, 2004). By this term he suggests forms of lively and assertive 'convivial culture' where racial/ethnic difference becomes an 'unremarkable principle of metropolitan difference' (ibid.).

Having summarised the impacts of 'internal' globalisation in the UK, we now turn to introduce the case study areas before moving on to discuss the key themes that emerged from the research.

4 The case studies

A key theme in understanding the diverse experiences of globalisation relates to the forms of connectedness between different communities and social groups and the broader global processes outlined above. Our selection of case studies is intended to reflect the diversity and complexity of these linkages. In this respect, they should be viewed as ‘instrumental case studies’ (Stake, 1995: 3) where particular local experiences and impacts of ‘internal’ globalisation in the UK help to shed light on the broader phenomenon. In the same sense that globalisation is not a new phenomenon, it is important to recognise that places are not territorially bounded and that social and community relations reflect the intersection of a range of overlapping social and economic relations (Massey, 1994).

Outwardly connected communities: global living in the Heathrow Village

The first case study area, the ‘Heathrow Village’ – referring to the communities to the west of London around Heathrow airport, spanning the boroughs of Hillingdon, Hounslow and Ealing – can be defined as an ‘outwardly connected’ place, with strong and diverse external connections in economic, social and cultural terms. Many people in the area are tied to Heathrow airport through their employment by a range of firms, which often operate through dense and complex global contractual relationships. In this sense, the area as a whole is implicated in a range of processes directly related to globalisation. The area contains a variety of ethnic groups, reflecting successive waves of inward migration from Ireland, south Asia and more recently Somalia, which continues to open the area up to broader global social and cultural flows and influences. By UK standards, the local labour market is relatively buoyant, with low levels of unemployment and median earnings above the national average. The ethnic diversity of the area attracted much attention as a result of the industrial relations dispute at the Swiss airline catering company Gate Gourmet in 2005, now owned by an American private equity company. At the heart of the Gate Gourmet dispute was the company’s decision to sack 147 largely female Punjabi members of its permanent local workforce and replace them with 120 agency workers (Pearson, *et al.*, 2010). The dispute involved over 1,600 workers from Gate Gourmet and other local companies acting in solidarity with their dismissed colleagues, suggesting that community relations supported a process of mobilisation in response to global economic processes. The strategic position of Heathrow as a global economic hub further establishes the Gate Gourmet dispute as intimately linked to processes of globalisation.

Defensively connected communities: north-east Lincolnshire and the Lindsey oil refinery

Our second case study centres upon the communities and workers around the Lindsey oil refinery in north-east Lincolnshire, owned by Total.² While much of the region around the refinery is rural, the presence of the Total and ConocoPhillips refineries and the major port complex at Immingham means that the area is embedded within broader global production networks. In addition, the agricultural sector and fishing industry have a history of employing foreign workers and being exposed to trans-national influences. The Lindsey refinery was the focus for an industrial relations dispute in 2009 which was indicative of connections between the established workforce at the refinery and broader processes of globalisation experienced in terms of subcontracting and the importation of foreign labour. Although unemployment

remains low in the area, wages are also comparatively low and the threat to skilled work by the employment of foreign workers raised important issues around employment rights and labour mobility in an increasingly globalised labour market.

Disconnected communities: young people in Greater Glasgow

Our third case study, the Greater Glasgow region, demonstrates the uneven local impacts of global processes.³ In contrast to the other two case studies, unemployment is much higher in Glasgow, which is recognised as one of the most unequal cities in the UK with entrenched concentrations of social disadvantage (Mooney and Scott, 2007). Historically a highly connected city, deindustrialisation has created acute dilemmas concerning the transition to a new post-industrial economy in Glasgow. Deindustrialisation in places like Glasgow is part of the broader process of the globalisation of labour, rendering traditional industries in these places uncompetitive in the context of cheaper supplies of labour in developing countries. Glasgow has embraced globalisation in the sense of attracting investment in services, finance, retail and cultural industries, linked to a substantial remodelling of the urban environment to appeal to the affluent and upwardly mobile (Paddison, 1993). Despite such initiatives and a succession of 'active' labour market policies in recent years, a substantial 'jobs gap' remains as a result of deindustrialisation (Cumbers, *et al.*, 2009; Turok and Edge, 1999). This case study focused in particular on unemployed young people without graduate level qualifications. For this group, labour market disconnection is mediated by local and national institutions and norms in terms of everyday social networks, state benefit systems and local employment agencies (Cumbers, *et al.*, 2009).

5 Uneven impacts of globalisation

In this section, we examine the uneven impacts of globalisation, focusing attention on specific issues: globalisation as a concept and discourse, uneven local geographies of globalisation, in-migration, the use of ICTs and the implications of this for connectivity, and the effects of the recession.

It is important to recognise that the nature of globalisation as an elite discourse means that the term is not widely employed outside policy and business circles. That said, it is clear that individual groups/ organisations living in our case study communities have their own understandings of, and opinions on, the role of global processes such as the recession, corporate outsourcing, labour migration and ICTs. According to one respondent, for example:

I think at a certain level of the trades union movement globalisation is discussed, but I think very quickly the discussion boils down to what I suppose one might describe as specific aspects of globalisation. So you'll have fairly well developed thinking around outsourcing, for instance ... Why the concepts of globalisation? I think an understanding of globalisation and different interpretations of what globalisation means, I think, are still at a fairly basic level and I think the value of the concept is limited because I don't think the trade union movement has decided yet about how economically damaging or how economically beneficial globalisation is. I think there's a long way to go on that very debate between the very defensive and the very macro-economic.

Trade union official, Greater Glasgow

Several respondents from community and public organisations across the case studies indicated that the term globalisation is rarely used in the course of their everyday interactions with local residents and service users, a point that was corroborated in focus groups and interviews with workers and unemployed young people. This does not mean, however, that individuals in deprived communities do not connect their circumstances with global processes. There appears to be a relatively broad understanding of the credit crunch and recession as manifestations of a global crisis, probably because of how they were framed in the British media (e.g. as a result of the sub-prime crisis in the USA). There are also longstanding discourses around the effects of international competition (affecting labour and production costs) on British industry that pre-date the current crisis by several decades.

Local geographies of globalisation

The local impacts of global processes are not only uneven in the sense of varying between communities and geographical regions, but also in the sense of varying within communities. Different sections of the community may benefit from global process in different ways at different times. This is captured in a quote from one interviewee from the Heathrow Village:

And what quite often happens is that the really unskilled work tends to get taken up by the incoming communities ... Because it's been easier to do those jobs and they've [the established communities] actually stepped up a grade. They're integrated into the wider society. So they step up and move out further which lets more people in.

Local councillor, west London

Many of the migrant workers near Heathrow had experienced downward class mobility in the process of migrating from rural areas of the Punjab to London, leaving good incomes from previous roles and accepting low-paid work as a means of establishing a life in the UK. This is in contrast to many of the more recent temporary migrants from central and eastern Europe who work in low-paid jobs for reasons that are not necessarily related to the establishment of a permanent home (cf. Pearson, *et al.*, 2010). Experiences of changing connections over time are often filtered through rather mundane, everyday things. For example, one respondent recalled that on his arrival in the UK he spent £20 for a 20-minute telephone call to India, whereas nowadays the cost can be as low as one penny per minute. This highlights the positive aspect of globalisation in making connection over distance affordable to non-elite groups.

In north-east Lincolnshire, large-scale industry is juxtaposed with areas of considerable disadvantage, generating 'a real contradiction' between 'the amount of wealth generated and the amount of unemployment' (local development officer, north-east Lincolnshire). The separation between this industry and local communities is striking, reflecting the capital-intensive nature of employment in these facilities, which rely on a small number of permanent staff with mobile labour brought in on a contract basis to undertake particular tasks. One form of connection that does exist, however, involves less skilled local residents performing menial work during shutdown periods:

... what tends to happen – and it's a very strange thing – they have what they call 'shutdowns' here, and they have two a year, and basically they close down the plants, so they'll shut down the whole refinery or whatever, or certainly a big chunk of it, and they do a maintenance – it might last several weeks ... What people locally do is ... You can earn a thousand quid a week in your hand doing that type of work; it's horrid work, it's unpleasant, it's crawling up pipes and de-coking stuff.

Local development officer, north-east Lincolnshire

Alongside the relative disconnection of certain groups from global processes (for example, the unemployed), this form of menial labour represents a particular form of connection between local workers and the refinery. One of the few other forms of connection between the refinery complex and the local community was between the disadvantaged village of South Killingholme and ConocoPhillips, who own and operate the refinery next to Lindsey. Although very few residents are employed in the refinery, ConocoPhillips has funded community facilities and activities in response to the disruption caused by periodic alarms and past explosions in the refinery. One community worker suggested that the 'paternal attitude' of ConocoPhillips had actually stifled community initiative with the village becoming overly dependent on the company (authors' interviews).

In Greater Glasgow, according to a representative of a campaigning group, the two main issues with which they are concerned, low pay and welfare reform, are 'intimately connected to the process of globalisation and in particular deindustrialisation that's taking place in west-central Scotland' (voluntary group representative, authors' interviews). The social geography of the city is characterised by pronounced inequality:

If the east is the largest, both in terms of what I would say social deprivation indicators ... if you go to the East End most people in certain communities probably won't be working or have got health barriers. In the west ... it's much more mixed, you've got parts of Yoker, parts of Drumchapel, parts of Partick, Anderston, Finnieston, you've got pockets that need support, but you mix in that with the Jordanhills and your West Ends [more affluent areas], you know.

Community development officer

In west London, by contrast, as an economic development officer interviewed for the project pointed out, the growth of varied industries around the Heathrow Village – including a number of European company headquarters – has led to a broader range of opportunities for more aspirational younger generations,

although significant pockets of deprivation remain. More generally, the geographies of affluence and disadvantage found in the case study areas reflect the nature and terms of their connections with globalising processes, rather than connection or disconnection per se. Areas that relied upon traditional manufacturing or extractive industries which became globally uncompetitive have been disadvantaged, while areas viewed as more attractive residential and social environments for the local business, professional and managerial classes have prospered.

In-migration

The process of in-migration is one of the most concrete ways in which globalisation impacts on people's lives, often sparking fears about competition for jobs and services and the perceived privileging of immigrants over established local residents. All three case study areas demonstrate distinctive histories of immigration and social change. West London has attracted successive flows of immigrants since the late 1950s and 1960s, changing the social composition of communities as earlier migrants moved on, leaving space for more recent arrivals:

As I say with the population down here it's changed over the years. From when my wife first grew up in Cranford it was a very, predominantly Irish community ... In the 70s as Uganda, the Uganda problem started there was a big influx from Asians from Uganda coming into the area. And they started settling here ... If you look at it they tell us that immigration from all sorts of different parts of the world and things. And the Irish they slowly sort of moved out a bit further. As they were doing better they slowly moved out and then the next wave came. There was a big Italian community here at one time. Still the best thing about it, there hasn't been this divide between communities as much.

Local councillor, west London

In north-east Lincolnshire, apart from the use of foreign workers in the Lindsey refinery, migrant workers tended to take up particular types of work, reflecting what was available in the local economy:

They've always been around the area really. You've got, in terms of the agriculture side you've got the Portuguese who are around and have been, more towards Boston area, but you've still got it this way. But lots of eastern Europeans working in food processing – a lot of the jobs round here you don't want to do, there's a reason that the foreign workers are in; they're crap jobs – it's sawing up frozen, big lumps of fish with a saw to make into fish fingers – it's smelly. Most of the jobs that are available here – it's not exclusive, I don't want to talk the place down too much – are not good jobs; it's food processing, the chemical industries you don't want to be working round (have a look round the factories and see why).

Local regeneration officer

In Greater Glasgow, the arrival of asylum seekers as part of the British government's dispersal programme in the early 2000s generated considerable tensions in the disadvantaged working class communities in which they were housed, largely because of existing forms of economic and social exclusion. This sparked resentment and violence towards the asylum seekers, though much work has subsequently been done to improve relations.

Information and communications technologies

The uneven nature of globalisation is reflected in access to ICTs in terms of the digital divide between the 71 per cent of UK household with access to the Internet and the 29 per cent that remain offline (Dutton, 2010: 18). This inequality was evident from the case studies with rural communities in north-east Lincolnshire, for

instance, disadvantaged by poor-quality Internet connections, with users still relying on dial-up services (authors' interviews). In Greater Glasgow too, respondents reported pronounced geographical disparities in access:

But some communities still have very low access to Internet, so you've still got much less computer ownership compared ... to other communities in Glasgow. ... There were a range of projects which were about raising digital access, digital inclusion across the city and I think ... in certain communities there's still a huge lack of parity in terms of access to ICT provision because of poverty levels, they can't afford to do broadband.

Community development officer

Indeed, a recent tabloid newspaper article described the city as an 'online graveyard' following a report by the market research firm CACI which showed that Glasgow contained six of the ten neighbourhoods in Britain with the highest percentages of the population without Internet services (Hamilton, 2010). Since computers and Internet use have become normalised, those without access (or whose access is too slow to enable them to make effective use of the Internet) are at risk of greater disadvantage and marginalisation, as research on minimum income standards has shown (Davis, *et al.*, 2010).

While the importance of access to the Internet emerged consistently as a theme from the research, it was not an uncomplicated facilitator of outward (global) connections. Some workers at Gate Gourmet, when interviewed, expressed positive opinions of the growth of technology in their industry in general, but were also keenly aware of how technological development can be used as a means of cutting costs by forcing down pay, conditions and skill levels of workforces at a local level. For users of the Bear Facts forum involved in the Lindsey dispute (see Appendix I), the Internet and chat room technology clearly represent an important new form of communication; nevertheless, use of the forum did not mean that participants had highly developed ICT skills.

In Glasgow, the young people who took part in the focus groups felt comfortable using the Internet for job searches and social networking. Similarly, community employment organisations viewed ICT, particularly texting, as a key engagement tool for communicating with young people (authors' interviews). As this indicates, ostensibly global technologies are often used for local ends. At the same time, however, a community worker in Glasgow pointed out that many of the people she sees have trouble using the Internet for more than basic searching, while a respondent in north-east Lincolnshire commented that many job applicants did not seem able to fill in online forms (authors' interviews). As another Glasgow respondent remarked, the Internet is of limited value for job searching if applicants lack the skills to write a proper covering letter to employers, as some unemployed young people may do. The critical underlying point here is that connection is not, of itself, a source of empowerment. ICT should therefore not be viewed as a panacea for connecting people to labour markets and services in the absence of basic skills and knowledge.

The impact of the recession

Research demonstrates that the impact of the recession has been greatest in those areas in which unemployment was already high in March 2008 when the recession began, meaning that the areas with the weakest labour markets have been hardest hit (Dolphin, 2009). The effects of the recession were apparent in the experiences of the young people who participated in the two Greater Glasgow focus groups, who had all been claiming Jobseekers Allowance for more than twelve months. While the majority had been in paid work since they left school, they reported that there was far less work available over the last two years:

Male respondent: I worked for myself, doing stone restoration, served my time, and started to work for myself about three year ago. It's just always brutal, but just got worse and worse, and you have to go

about chapping at doors and that ... when you're worked and then you're no working ... Yeah, the recession seemed to come about just as I started working for myself, it's always been hard.

Motherwell focus group

As this statement indicates, the recession is held to be behind the reduced availability of work, demonstrating how global economic processes are shaping local labour market outcomes. To a considerable extent, these experiences are borne out by secondary data. North and South Lanarkshire had youth unemployment rates in June 2009 of 9.1 and 10.9 per cent respectively, above the national (GB) average of 7.7 per cent (Glasgow Works, 2009: 1). Similarly, overall unemployment in north-east Lincolnshire increased from 7 per cent in March 2008 to 11.3 per cent in December 2009, while the area experienced a rise of 107 per cent in youth unemployment between June 2009 and June 2010 (Nomis, 2010; TUC, 2010).

Summary

The impacts of globalisation are uneven not only between localities, but also within them. This section has shown how the impacts of global processes at the local scale are experienced differentially and unequally, benefiting some groups while marginalising others. Crucially, as the material on local geographies of globalisation and Internet usage indicates, inequalities and unevenness are generated through wider global processes and connections. These inequalities are being exacerbated by the recession, compounding the difficulties faced by low-income and excluded groups.

6 Connection and disconnection in labour markets

One of the key themes of this study is the effect of global processes upon labour market and employment outcomes. In particular, increasingly competitive conditions in global markets are generating pressures on employers to develop new strategies to reduce labour costs, especially the offshoring and subcontracting of work to cheaper foreign labour (Standing, 2009). Such 'global' processes are at the same time shaped and mediated by policy regimes at the UK and EU levels that frame the employment environment under which companies operate.

In this section, we explore three key topics arising from these broader issues: the first explores the experience of looking for work and training, and dealing with the welfare to work regime; the second discusses growing competition from foreign migrant workers; and the third explores the scope to which workers, unions and communities are themselves able to shape broader global processes of change through their own actions.

Employment services and welfare to work

Unemployed young people in the Hamilton and Motherwell focus groups were generally quite critical of the training opportunities available in the area. In particular, respondents questioned the value of the training courses (e.g. customer service) offered through Jobcentre Plus which they saw as too generic and therefore of questionable relevance to potential employment (Hamilton focus group). A further criticism concerned the low pay associated with the employer placements that respondents had undertaken:

Male respondent: I've done landscaping, I've done a bit of brick laying, I've done training for it all and all that, but sitting out in that placement, I must have been there near enough a year and I'd be getting £60 a week and it was disgraceful. And you are going out and training, but see the employer, they want to send you back to your training unit, they will keep you on for as long as they can because he is not paying you, he is getting you for nothing. And you are going out and you are working from 7 o'clock in the morning to 5 o'clock at night. So I ended up just saying 'no, sack that, I'll go and work in a supermarket, or my brother's pub', and I've not had a job since then.

Hamilton focus group

This reinforces the findings of other research which emphasises how unemployed people perceived there to be a lack of real linkage between training and education provision and opportunities for paid work, particularly when the remuneration of work and training undertaken was low (Quinn and Seaman, 2008: 52). Such remarks also highlight strong feelings about the differences between the quality of available work and training and a sense of what are fair wages and conditions.

A key theme of the two Greater Glasgow focus groups was dissatisfaction with Jobcentre Plus, where the general experience was of coming in to sign on without receiving much in the way of support or advice on employment opportunities.

Male respondent: I think it's more active as in the number of people that are going through the doors, but in terms of helping people, the help's not there. I agree with Sharon, you go in to sign on

and literally it's a two second job and you are out ... Tick a box and there you go. I'd understand if someone's being lazy and not even trying, they should be hassled into it, but some, look, like us or whatever are trying really hard to get a job, they should be able to sit down and help you, not just ... no matter what your circumstances are, there you are, sign that right, any change, no right, bugger off.

Hamilton focus group

The crux of this criticism concerned a lack of tailored support and advice; respondents felt that they were simply being processed through a mass welfare system that took no account of individual circumstances. In general, our research provided further evidence that negative experiences of employment and benefit agencies, such as Jobcentre Plus, tend to actually reinforce unemployed people's feelings of disconnection and alienation from the labour market through a lack of recognition among support services of individual circumstances (Quinn and Seaman, 2008).

Participants in the two focus groups generally emphasised their willingness to work and frustration at their inability to find work over the past couple of years. This not only echoes the findings of other recent research (see Crisp, *et al.*, 2009), but also confounds increasing governmental and media discourses of worklessness which attribute unemployment to a lack of individual motivation and drive (Hoggart, *et al.*, 2006). Our evidence reinforces other research which shows that the effects of the recession have been worse in traditional industrial areas such as Motherwell and Hamilton than in other parts of the country (Dolphin, 2009).

At the same time, the invidious effects of becoming increasingly dependent on welfare were also acknowledged:

Male respondent: I don't know, I think once you're on benefits, you're feart [afraid] to come off them, you get dependent on them, know what I mean, what am I going to do if I'm not getting my rent paid ... it's not a lot of money, but if you're not working it keeps you going, know what I mean.

Motherwell focus group

As such, unemployed young people themselves acknowledged that an element of dependency can set in once they have been on benefits for some time and see little prospect of gaining meaningful employment. Respondents also emphasised the depressing effects of prolonged unemployment in terms of boredom, lack of confidence and stress, often leading to arguments with other family members. Effects such as a loss of confidence made it more difficult to find work again:

Male respondent: see when you've not been working your confidence goes down as well, know what I mean, you're no full of yourself in the same way, you cannae go and sell yourself to folk, know what I mean ... you cannae even afford a new pair of trainers or nothing, know what I mean ... I think you need to be full of yourself when you've got to talk to somebody about work ... especially if all you've got to do is watch Jeremy Kyle all day, and then you've got to go and speak to somebody about work and all that ... It's just, you've got nae confidence, especially if you've been out of the game for a wee while, you've no got the same confidence going back to it.

Motherwell focus group

This loss of confidence leaves the long-term unemployed particularly disadvantaged since their stock of qualities demanded by employers (confidence, esteem) are those that are most affected by the experience of unemployment (Quinn and Seaman, 2008: 50).

One way in which government reforms have sought to address the issue of 'work preparedness' is through voluntary work. Focus group participants had strong views on this:

Interviewer: so have many of you been encouraged to do voluntary work?

Male respondent 1: I wasn't going to do it ...

Interviewer: For the experience and so on.

Female respondent 1: That's what the job centre tries to do.

Male respondent 2: I mean it does give you good experience, it's something you can say, aye, I've got experience in it, but what's the point in working for nothing, let's face it you're out panning your cunt in and you're getting nothing out of it.

Male respondent 3: Aye, it's no right.

Male respondent 2: Know what I mean, I can see the experience side of it, but the money side of it.

Male respondent 1: It's not just that, if someone's working for years of experience of doing something, and you've done it for a couple of weeks voluntary, it's just not the same ...

Motherwell focus group

Volunteering is often positively valued by policy-makers and middle class groups as a means of generating community benefit and social capital, echoing US communitarian discourse (Coleman, 1988). Indeed, voluntary work looks likely to become an important element in the coalition government's forthcoming Work Programme, underpinned by compulsion where people will have to undertake such work in exchange for benefits (DWP, 2010). As indicated above, however, such compulsory 'volunteering' is viewed as false and exploitative by unemployed young people, suggesting that it may increase their disaffection if it is not accompanied by meaningful training and clear routes into paid employment.

'Foreign workers' and the contracting out culture

A key globalising process, evident in all three case studies, was the influx of migrant labour which was perceived by respondents as a threat to 'local' jobs, feeding into existing media and policy debates about 'British jobs for British workers' (following the use of this phrase by the then Prime Minister at the Labour Party Conference in September 2007). In Greater Glasgow, young people in our focus groups emphasised what they saw as the threat of cheaper labour from eastern Europe, particularly Poland, who were perceived as being willing to work for lower wage rates than local workers. Along with the recession, this was seen as a key reason why it had become markedly more difficult to find work over the past couple of years:

Female respondent: I come across it ... and it was all Polish that was there ... we were there for about two year, then all the Polish came in about a year ago...

Male respondent: And as far as the work getting done the now on Shotts Prison and I don't know anybodies that's working there, and there must be loads of different types of trades in there and I don't know one person that's working in there.

Female respondent: My partner is.

Male respondent: Is he, what's he do?

Female respondent: ... he's up at Shotts Prison, but there's only three, the company he's working for, there's only three Scottish and the rest is all Polish. It's only him and his mate and the gaffer that's Scottish and that's the only three that work with machines and the rest, it's all hand diggers.

Motherwell focus group

The use of migrant workers on construction and maintenance contracts such as the work at Shotts Prison seemed to compound unemployed young people's sense of disconnection from the local labour market. In this sense, flexible recruitment strategies by employers involving the hiring of foreign workers on a contract basis marginalise young local workers because these jobs are not advertised locally, for example in job centres. Thus, connectedness of labour markets across the globe – or, in this case, the EU – has a dual impact that is enacted through subcontracting chains, affecting both the migrant workers recruited for low wages and the local workers and the unemployed who face increased competition and undercutting as low-skilled work is devalued (Wills, *et al.*, 2010). The use of 'temporary' Polish migrant workers in the Gate Gourmet case, for example, caused tensions with the long established Punjabi community, who were originally recruited as low-wage 'immigrant' labour in the 1970s (Pearson, *et al.*, 2010).

To the workers employed at the Lindsey refinery, employers' use of foreign labour was viewed as a blatant form of exclusion and discrimination against the British workforce, especially in the context of growing unemployment in the construction sector. As such, the resentment and scapegoating of foreign workers for 'taking our jobs' was complexly intertwined with wider changes in employment conditions and practices. While people repeatedly referred to 'them' coming 'over here' to 'our' country, there were few direct references to migrant workers directly 'taking' British workers' jobs. Comments about foreign workers were usually linked to national agreements being overridden by employers. For example, 'DelBrass' said, on the Bear Facts forum:

... hundreds of construction workers are either unemployed or facing unemployment while foreign workers are being employed to do their jobs. It's about time the construction unions [Blue book signatories] cut the bullshit, stopped hiding behind anti union legislation and got on with the job they are paid to do and fight for the jobs of their loyal membership.

Bear Facts forum, accessed July 2010

In another posting to the forum, 'handsomebob' argued that British construction workers must:

... safeguard our fundamental right to employment in our OWN country, a right we should NEVER have to champion, because it IS a fundamental right ...

Bear Facts forum

The workers initially adopted Gordon Brown's 'British jobs for British workers' slogan to draw attention to the dispute, although this backfired somewhat by attracting the British National Party (BNP) and allowing the strikers to be branded as 'xenophobic' by Lord Mandelson and the media. While workers' representatives managed to prevent the BNP from exploiting the dispute for their own ends, they expressed strong resentment at Lord Mandelson, the then Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, and the media for misrepresenting them (authors' interviews).

The dispute was more complex than simple protectionism and xenophobia and instead draws attention to the pernicious ways that employers' use of global labour networks can exacerbate tensions and conflicts between workers. Indeed, in common with much of the engineering construction industry, the existing 'British' workforce at Lindsey is a highly mobile and skilled one, many of whom have a long history of working overseas as migrant workers (e.g. Cumbers, 1992). In this sense, they can be said to be beneficiaries of globalising processes as well as its apparent victims, in the case of the Lindsey dispute. While few of the comments on the Bear Facts forum showed much reflexivity about these ambiguities

of globalisation, first-hand knowledge of working conditions elsewhere (for example in the Norwegian oil industry) was important in developing their arguments around emergent labour practices in the UK. The core of the complaint surrounding migrant workers was that employers were using less-qualified Italian workers through a subcontractor, at lower rates, in breach of existing national collective bargaining agreements. The mobilisation over the specific issue of employers' use of cheaper foreign labour at Lindsey resonated with a broader sense of disempowerment and the prospect of exclusion from the British labour market that was felt by workers throughout the industry.

In west London, employers' use of cheaper, often European, labour was also a key issue:

We are not against European people, but they are not from our [directly-employed] teams, they are keeping teams from the agency because they don't want inside people. So that's why they kick out the inside people. They are kicking people out so they can bring in cheap labour ... So the company wanted to change, like they want no sick pay, they don't want organised persons, they don't want anybody going for sick, they don't want to pay pay-rise; they want their good option which is agency, minimum wage. And one person who worked 20 years, he can gain £10 an hour or £8 an hour, so they are getting £5.50, £5.60 per hour so they can keep two people, they have a cheaper option.

Male respondent, Gate Gourmet focus group

The link between migrant workers and the increasing use of contracting out and agency work by employers has been noted in other studies. The TUC recently reported that as many as 62 per cent of Jobcentre Plus vacancies are accounted for by employment agency activities (TUC Commission on Vulnerable Employment, 2008) while migrant workers tend to make up a disproportionate number of the agency workforce, estimated at around 25 per cent by one researcher (Vosko, 2008).

The trend towards an agency workforce across much of the Heathrow Village not only affected wages and conditions in the workplace, but also family and community relations. It had a disproportionate effect on south Asian women workers, many of whom worked in places such as Gate Gourmet while their husbands and sons usually found higher-skilled and higher-paid jobs linked to the airport (authors' interviews; Pearson, *et al.*, 2010). Based upon traditional patriarchal relations, many of the women worked part time to generate additional income to supplement the main male wage. At the same time, the (relatively few) men sacked from Gate Gourmet found it particularly difficult to cope with this form of economic emasculation, which one described as 'torture' (Gate Gourmet worker, August 2010). Older men indicated that they found it more challenging to find other employment to support their families. Women played an important role in leading the action, prompting some activists and commentators to link Gate Gourmet to other British Asian and Black women's struggles such as the Grunwick strike of 1976–8 (Gupta, 2005). This earlier dispute in north London was important in unifying female workers across ethnic and racial boundaries against the same kind of exploitation of low-paid women migrant workers that resurfaced in the Gate Gourmet action (Pearson, *et al.*, 2010).

In the Lindsey dispute, much of the anger was directed at the EU's Posted Workers Directive (PWD), which governs the minimum employment standards for citizens of other EU countries. For example, 'Standupandfight' wrote:

The introduction of the European free market economy gave companies the right to operate and trade in other European countries. It did not give these foreign companies the right to ostracise, discriminate or exclude host country citizens from the ability to access the labour market in their own country.

Bear Facts forum

Originally conceived as a means of ensuring 'fair competition' by applying basic minimum employment standards across the Union, recent research suggests that the PWD is being used by employers to undermine existing local and national collective bargaining agreements in a similar vein to the situation at

the Lindsey refinery (Ewing and Hendy, 2010). Both the Gate Gourmet and Lindsey disputes also highlight the relatively minimalist approach of the UK government in implementing EU directives, where the minimum wage is used as the legal baseline for wages rather than existing industry-specific collective bargaining agreements (ibid.). This means that, as long as employers are observing the basic minimum wage of £5.93 per hour (for workers aged 21 and over), there are no legal restrictions on the wages they pay dependent on skill levels. This would provide considerable opportunity for employers to reduce wage levels for all categories of workers, given that the average hourly wage (based upon a 37.5 hour week) was around £13 in 2009 (ONS, 2009a).

In the Lindsey case, a resolution was reached at national level between union officials, Total and Jacobs (the subcontractor in question). Some ambiguity remained, however, over the status of the agreement, with some workers feeling that they had been ‘tricked’ by the use of the term ‘noted’ rather than ‘agreed’ in the document (authors’ interviews). Most of the dismissed Gate Gourmet workers eventually accepted a pay-off or their old job under the new conditions that prompted the strike. Despite the inspiring story of resistance to globalisation associated with strikes and the empowering effects of action, the workers still lost in this particular respect.

The global local: making wider connections

While many of the changes described above represent threats to established working conditions, the Gate Gourmet and Lindsey cases are also of interest for what they tell us about the capacity of workers and communities to shape and affect global labour processes. In both disputes, a critical element in the escalation of the local strike activity was the workforce’s embeddedness at crucial nodes within broader global networks, meaning that local action could have a wider global impact (Herod, 2001).

In the Gate Gourmet case, for example, the wider national and global repercussions were made clear when Heathrow airport was brought to a standstill after the BA baggage handlers walked out in sympathy with the Gate Gourmet workers:

Well also because it is a global industry it affects what is going on not just in its small little village that we are talking about, it is having an impact worldwide. Because the food that Gate Gourmet was producing for flights these were flights going all over the world. Once you start interrupting global flight patterns then that starts to have an impact upon what is happening in the different flight nodes around the world, and not just that but also on the cargo the flights carry as well because cargo has to arrive at a certain place at a global hub in order to move somewhere else.

Gate Gourmet Support Group representative

In the Lindsey dispute, the threat to UK and European energy supplies, by the spread of strike action to other refineries, resulted in greater government pressure on employers to settle than might have occurred otherwise. Asked whether the Lindsey strikes were successful, one union official replied:

Oh, very successful, yes. Very successful. There’s no doubt about it ‘cos they, the government didn’t think we could organise and mobilise ourselves. Neither did Total, the employer. ... ‘Cos they just took us for complete mugs ... if you look at all the wildcat strikes, er, throughout Britain, we caused the wildcat strikes because we got organised. And we got organised because nobody was taking us seriously. I mean, the unions had to repudiate what we were doing, because of the laws of the land, what we were doing was illegal, so they had to repudiate it just so they didn’t have their funds sequestered.

Union official

At the same time, it is important to emphasise the very different ways in which the workers and communities in the two cases were located and positioned in terms of local–global dynamics. In the

Gate Gourmet dispute, the global centrality and visibility of Heathrow meant that the strikers were able to garner greater global attention and solidarity with other workers than might have been possible in a less 'connected' workplace:

You talk about business being global but actually you got a real sense of trade unions' international and global solidarity through that website and through the messages that came in. And it was really quite incredible because people really did connect, it did have a huge impact worldwide very, very quickly ... [P]eople knew about it almost straight away I think primarily because Heathrow was stopped for several days there was no BA flights because of the baggage handlers and so that made it worldwide news. And it just seemed to touch a lot of trade unionists around the world who thought we ought to show our solidarity and all those messages came in which were fantastic.

Gate Gourmet Support Group representative

In particular, the UNITE union was able to use its trans-national connections to enlist the support of its US union allies against Gate Gourmet operations in North America (authors' interviews). While positioned within these wider networks, the dispute remained 'localised' as a form of collective action as the secondary action involved other workers in the Heathrow Village, many of whom were friends and family of the Gate Gourmet workforce, demonstrating a cohesive place-based sense of community.

Another powerful element of the dispute that garnered support at both local and wider scales was the identity of many of the workers as south Asian migrant women, often perceived to be highly disempowered. Their inversion of this popular perception, much like the Grunwick strike in 1976–8, linked gender and ethnic exclusions to strong local and global connections to create a situation in which the workers drew support from a wide range of individuals and groups. As such, their specific experiences and positions as south Asian immigrant workers in the UK labour market was a central determining factor in their effective mobilisation of themselves and others around the sackings (Pearson, *et al.*, 2010).

The Lindsey dispute was 'local' in the sense that geographically the actual dispute focused upon a particular refinery, but one of the reasons for the relative success of the dispute was that the workforce is itself a mobile and itinerant one, with experience of working across a range of sites in the UK and overseas (authors' interviews). From the point of view of the campaign against Total, this was important because the strikers were able to activate their own pre-existing spatially extensive networks to 'upscale' the dispute to the national level. The solidarity of workers who walked out in sympathy in 17 other oil and gas plants throughout the UK was of crucial importance, highlighting the wider national implications of Total's decision to sack the 647 striking workers at Lindsey and drawing the UK government into the dispute.

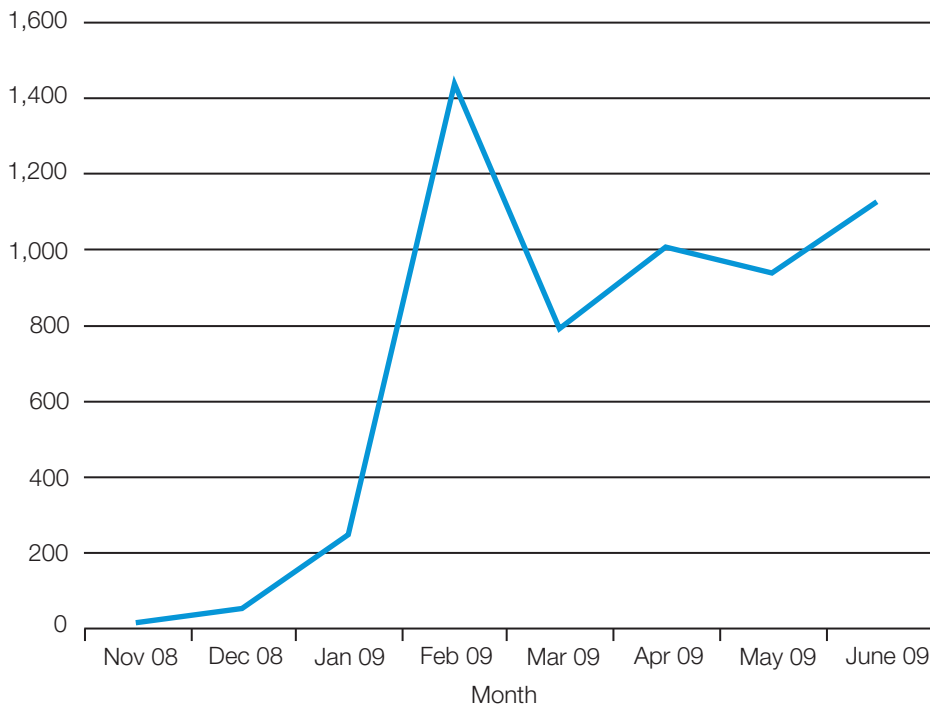
Technologies such as the Internet and mobile phones played an important part in rapidly escalating the conflict to the national scale once the local decision had been taken for strike action:

You put it on Bear Facts. You get the, one of them [picking up his mobile phone], you get a text message. Now, you send, say, the list I used to send, you put the same message on and you send it out to about 150 people. Now that then spreads like a bush-fire, and within an hour everybody knew what was happening, at Saltend, from Glasgow, you name it, it just went country-wide 'cos everybody got text messaging. So we got organised with text messages, got organised with emails, there were lads going round on their own volition picketing other stations, other power stations, and other such things, letting people know what were happening, so they came out in sympathy as well. So it was well organised even though – we wasn't organising it as such, the whole industry just mobilised itself.

Union activist, July 2010

As this statement indicates, the key critical 'networking vector' (Routledge and Cumbers, 2009) was the Bear Facts forum which allowed the workers to communicate and organise independently of the trade union hierarchy. Figure 2 (see page 31) shows how new posts dramatically increased in January–February

Figure 2: Bear facts forum: new posts



2009 and again in June 2009, during the first and second waves of strikes. While expressions of wider solidarity were evident around the Lindsey dispute, there is a sense in which the dominant interpretation of the Lindsey dispute as rooted in xenophobic attitudes also led to relatively lower levels of international solidarity than Gate Gourmet.

Summary

In both the Lindsey and Gate Gourmet disputes, workers were closely connected to global processes of outsourcing, cost reduction and the mobility of labour, but felt disempowered by the negative effect on their job security, pay and conditions. This created grievances which sparked spontaneous action in response to what were seen as unfair management decisions. In both cases, this action had an immediate wider impact due to the shutdown of Heathrow and the sympathy actions at other oil and gas plants in the UK. While an official resolution was reached in response to Lindsey, and some Gate Gourmet workers accepted deals, the underlying sources of the grievances that sparked the disputes – downward pressures on pay and conditions, the growing use of agency and contract labour – were never really addressed. Some Gate Gourmet workers, in this regard, are still campaigning for an offer of something they consider to be ‘justice’ as a result of their mistreatment. Despite the immediate impact of the disputes in terms of media and political attention and considerable public support, the actions essentially interrupted rather than altered the operation of global labour processes.

7 Community negotiations of globalisation

This section of the report addresses the relationships between globalisation, immigration and communities. This has been one of the most contentious aspects of experiences of globalisation and has been marked by a political and cultural context where immigration has often been constructed as threatening and eroding 'traditional communities' (IPPR, 2010). Frequently, accounts of the impact of globalisation tend to assume that there are 'authentic' homogeneous 'white' communities that are being disrupted by processes of globalisation. This ignores the diverse histories and geographies of migration that have shaped different communities (Hall, 2000). While the concept of community has strongly positive connotations (Levitas, 2000), this indicates how it can be mobilised in exclusionary ways through the construction of a set of social and spatial boundaries that define 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. This section engages with the multiple and contested relations between communities and processes of globalisation. It focuses initially on notions of community before exploring 'defensive' responses to globalisation and the more positive ways in which it has been negotiated through forms of grassroots or 'ordinary multiculturalism'.

Constructions of community

In our study, the Heathrow Village was described by respondents as a 'tight' though ethnically diverse community, on the basis that so many people worked at Heathrow in a variety of roles such as catering, transit, baggage handling, customer service and so on (authors' interviews). Similarly, some working-class communities in Glasgow were described as strong and active due to their common industrial history:

It's inherently very difficult to get genuine involvement from community residents involved in their community ... It does work in, I think, traditional working class communities it's far easier ... I mean, for example, in Yoker there's a huge ex-shipbuilding community so there's a lot of community cohesion around the shipbuilding and familiarity around previous work colleagues who used to work in the shipbuilding and stuff.

Community regeneration officer

In this example, the social relations that constitute community have persisted beyond the common source of employment in the shipyards. Young people in the Motherwell and Hamilton focus groups, by contrast, tended to be critical of lack of community identity and facilities in their areas. In general, community emerged as a less central theme of the research in north-east Lincolnshire. This partly reflected the mobile character of the refinery workforce and disconnection with the surrounding communities.

Whiteness and defensive responses to globalisation

Different understandings of 'whiteness' surfaced in all three case study areas. Migrant whites were often conflated with migrant non-whites in the narratives of white British respondents. This is clear in the account of one respondent living near Heathrow who noted that:

West Ealing is particularly poor. You walk down the street, more than fifty-fifty chance the person that walks past you will not be speaking English. A lot of the nannies are Polish, a lot of the cleaners, domestic

cleaners, a lot of street cleaners are Polish, um, I'd say virtually all the traffic wardens are black or dark skinned. Right, so yeah, there is a lot about. Now, a lot of the people in this estate that's going to be knocked down are coloured people, and white people just avoid the estate by not walking through it.

Community activist

This respondent, active in a local community organisation, inadvertently connects whiteness with Britishness. White Poles are seen as differently white, appearing to have more in common with non-white ethnicities than with a white British population. This perception of different forms of whiteness is structured through migration flows from central and eastern Europe that are relatively new (since EU expansion in 2004), compared with earlier waves of immigration to the Heathrow area from south Asia, North Africa and east Asia (Pearson, *et al.*, 2010). Importantly, the migrant workers to which the British workers refer are largely white populations, such as Poles, Italians and Portuguese.

Through the narratives of the Lindsey refinery workers there were exclusionary associations of skill and whiteness. This was in part generated through nationalistic discourses which compared the quality of work undertaken by British and non-British workers. Members of the Bear Facts forum were often concerned by the quality of the workmanship undertaken by migrant workers. 'Handsomebob' sums up this attitude:

Lifting great sheets of fabricated plate with just plate grabs, that was another no pinkies, no chains, no shackles, unbelievable. This is par for the course with these so called skilled men, we've all seen them, in my opinion they are at best semi-skilled, at worst killers. Because that's gonna happen sooner or later with these chancers, somebody is gonna die, and the main culprit is the greedy companies who only have their eye on the balance sheet at the months end. Their greed will kill.

Bear Facts forum

Part of this animosity towards the workmanship of the migrant workers came down to the different systems of accreditation and qualification between different countries. Arguably, this allowed workers who were not sufficiently trained or experienced to be employed by construction firms because there was no way of knowing how different accreditation schemes related to one another. The concerns about the skill, experience and qualifications of migrant workers is a genuine one often based on fears over dangerous working practices. This is combined here with a rather exclusionary rhetoric of national pride. This positions British construction workers as the 'best trained workforce' in the world, generating associations of white Britishness and masculine skill through the negotiation of globalising processes. Such associations became explicitly politicised and contested through the conduct of the strikes.

The Lindsey workers adopted the slogan 'British jobs for British workers'. Their strike took place in a context where such exclusionary, nationalistic accounts of workers' struggles were bolstered by official government discourses and practices. This is related not just to Gordon Brown's infamous 'British jobs for British workers' speech, but also to the exclusionary practices associated with 'citizenship tests', broader media and political discourses on immigration (IPPR-CRE, 2007). Material from the discussion forums emphasises how some participants in the dispute mobilised prejudiced and xenophobic language. Thus 'Rigger' wrote:

It's my country and my family and ancestors have been here from the beginning. My family has fought in world wars for this country, and I bet they didn't do it so we could be shafted by ethnics and eastern Europeans.

Bear Facts forum

This statement is perhaps one of the clearest examples of racism. 'Rigger' implies a clear sense of exclusionary construction of tradition and lineage. A number of other forum members expressed similar sentiments, often with rather colonialist undertones.

It is important to emphasise, however, that the adoption of a 'British jobs for British workers' discourse through the strikes was not uncontested by participants in the strike. One forum post, for example, criticised the kind of racist sentiment contained in the above quotation as 'the type of nationalist crap u can expect to read on a BNP leaflet' (Bear Facts forum). Trade union activists also contested racist organising imaginaries held by some participants during the dispute. One respondent emphasised how he used connections with General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trade Union (GMB) officials to circumvent a racist discourse developing around the dispute:

So this time I fetched Paul Kenny to it, er, and Steve Pryle who was a GMB press person and obviously Paul Kenny is our General Secretary. I got them involved 'cos it were getting a bit naughty 'cos it was starting to look like it were racial with the Italians being there, and there was no racial intent at all, not one bit. I mean, you're not going to stop the Posted Workers Directive, the free movement of workers around Europe, you're never gonna stop that, that's the law. And anyway, I worked in Europe, so it'd be hypocritical for me to try and stop somebody. But if they're using, what we did find out about the Italians, cos we had a project joint council, they was underpaying them.

Union official

The fact that the framing of the dispute as British versus foreign workers was strongly contested by some participants shows that there is nothing inevitable about this way of framing industrial action. It also emphasises that the exclusionary forms of whiteness mobilised by some workers do not simply pre-exist such disputes. They are actively produced and reproduced through such defensive and exclusionary ways of negotiating globalising practices.

In the Greater Glasgow focus groups, competition from Polish and Eastern European workers emerged as a key theme. Some participants clearly resented the presence of Polish immigrants, evoking a sense of injustice at the failure to meet perceived national rights:

Interviewer: Do you see evidence of it, conflicts ...?

Male respondent 1: I've not seen any conflicts, I would just say that the Polish are benefiting and we're not and that's no right, this is our country, know what I mean.

Interviewer: Or at least there should be a level playing field.

Male respondent 1: No, I don't think it should be, I don't think they should even be here because we're not going to their country.

Male respondent 2: I mean fair enough the odd one, but no as many as there is.

Male respondent 1: I've nothing against Poles, I've meet them in the gym and that, they're minted, they're all sound, but it's just no right, just no right.

Motherwell focus group

Such views went uncontested by other participants in each of the two focus groups, meeting with some agreement. As indicated earlier, there is a clear sense of eastern European immigrants being scapegoated as responsible for local unemployment. This reflects how the globalisation of labour markets can foster social division and exclusive attitudes rather than more positive forms of connection (Wills, *et al.*, 2010).

Ordinary multiculturalism and community experiences of globalisation

The communities we are engaging with were established through ongoing diverse histories and geographies of connection. Much like migration's role in creating differences of 'whiteness', discussed in the previous sub-section, migration flows to a particular place do not create a homogeneous sense of immigrant culture that can be easily engaged with by settled populations. Near Heathrow, one respondent bemoaned the difficulties that his largely white residents' group faced when trying to work with the local mosque:

You see there's this mosque down here and we've been trying and trying to engage with them, we went to see them, asked could we rent a room for our committee meetings, and we haven't got anywhere at all. Eventually we met a very charming white Caucasian Muslim lady ... and she said 'well you're unrealistic'. I says 'why?' 'Well, I go to the mosque, right, I'm an odd one because I'm white. We've got Indonesian Muslims, we've got South American Muslims, we've got African Muslims, we've got Muslims from all over the world and they've all got their own flavour of Muslims. Then they've got the elder Muslims, very traditional, then you've got the young Turk Muslims. They're always infighting – there's no time to deal with the outside world!' And in some ways the Christian churches are like that as well.

Community representative

Multiculturalism is often imagined as a form of 'bridging' social capital between singular 'native' and 'immigrant' communities or between discrete 'ethnic minority' groups (Harris and Young, 2009). This is problematic in locations such as West Ealing where many different cultures and ethnicities – not to mention social and economic classes – intersect. This also challenges 'top-down' approaches to multiculturalism which prioritise the roles of key community leaders as speaking for discrete communities (Nagel and Hopkins, 2010). In this regard it is more useful to engage with forms of grassroots or 'ordinary multiculturalism' (Gilroy, 2004). This emphasises the need to go beyond discourses of integration and assimilation which have framed recent policies, but which do not resonate with actually existing experiences in communities (Back, *et al.*, 2002; Chan, 2010).

Indeed, a major reason for the 'British jobs for British workers' discourse failing to resonate with many residents around Immingham was the long-standing connection of the region to the North Sea maritime trade and the fishing industry, involving the movement of people between Humberside, continental Europe and the Nordic countries (e.g. Norway and Iceland):

I don't think it really it caught fire. I don't think people said that it was a race type issue. I think it was an employment issue and a contract issue. And I think most people thought the same way. There certainly wasn't any uprising of feeling, bearing in mind that the workers that they had there were living on a boat in the middle of the dock; they were really vulnerable. If local people had've really wanted to do something about it, that boat wouldn't have been there ... I mean they sorted the Icelandic bloody Navy, they could've soon sorted that out; there wasn't that depth of feeling. I hate to say it, but it was kind of an idiot response; you haven't got a contract, nobody was prepared to go to the unreasonable terms that they wanted and then they made it into a race issue and said 'it's all about foreign workers'. This area's too used to foreign workers for that.

Local regeneration officer

The British workers at the refinery were used to travelling between industrial sites and often had little connection to the surrounding area. Local residents, on the other hand, were used to British and non-British workers co-operating and socialising together on the Grimsby fish docks, for instance, or the farms of rural north Lincolnshire. Similar shared histories of in-migration and community have shaped the lived experiences of older generations in Glasgow with the city attracting a range of groups over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including Lowland and Highland Scots, Irish, European Jews, Asians, Italians,

Poles and more recent asylum seekers and refugees, notwithstanding the growth of religious sectarianism (Edwards, 2007).

Similarly, during the Gate Gourmet dispute, Heathrow's international connectivity was utilised by supporters as a means of leveraging greater power. This included international solidarity through the aviation industry with workers in Norway and Denmark refusing to load meals onto aircraft bound for London Heathrow that were otherwise serviced by Gate Gourmet (International Transport Workers Federation, 2005). The workers were supported by an unofficial walkout by airport ground crew. Airport baggage handlers and other workers grounded British Airways flights for 24 hours, but this was deemed illegal under legislation outlawing secondary picketing (Pearson, *et al.*, 2010).

These solidarities were constructed through common everyday experiences as workers in the aviation industry, rather than ethnic commonalities. Gate Gourmet workers resented the ways in which the union (Transport and General Workers Union, now Unite) presented 'the solidarity action as resulting from the close networks and the community strengths of ethnic and family relationships amongst the (Asian) workers' (Pearson, *et al.*, 2010: 424). Likewise, although a Sikh gurdwara was used as a communications and distribution hub during the Gate Gourmet dispute, a wide range of people passed through the doors of this temple. This suggests how grassroots/ordinary forms of multiculturalism shaped the organising practices of this dispute.

The forms of community mobilised at Gate Gourmet and the Lindsey oil refinery were constituted through different patterns of migration and mobility, generating different understandings and practices of community. While the Gate Gourmet dispute mobilised a diverse range of ethnicities, the key actors remained among the Punjabi population whose strong socio-historical bonds galvanised massive support from the community as a whole. For the Gate Gourmet workers, close-knit historical bonds led to a powerful sense of togetherness, although potential supporters outside this in-migrant community often struggled to gain 'entry' (authors' interviews). By contrast, in the Lindsey case the mobility of the skilled British workers tended to exclude settled local populations with whom the problematic racial labelling of the strikes did not resonate.

Summary

We have argued that there is no single way in which globalising processes associated with migration impact on or threaten place-based communities. Instead we have argued that these processes are negotiated in diverse ways. It is clear that despite evidence of some antagonism between groups, particularly 'local' unemployed young people and eastern European migrants in Motherwell and Hamilton, vibrant forms of grassroots, working-class multiculturalism can also be found, particularly in the Heathrow Village. The failure of the 'British jobs for British workers' slogan to resonate in north-east Lincolnshire also suggests that it is not just in urban spaces that such forms of 'ordinary multiculturalism' have effects. This emphasises the need to go beyond the simple binary discourses of the mainstream policy community in responding to the impacts of globalisation on communities.

8 Conclusions

Our concern in this report has been to understand from a 'bottom-up' perspective how individuals and communities are experiencing processes of globalisation. Five specific findings emerge from our research:

- There is a clear gap between the concepts and discourses of globalisation used by elite policy-makers and the understandings of people on the ground. Respondents had a sense of the broad global processes that affect their lives, but these are understood in terms of particular local impacts and experiences, such as increased unemployment and competition for work.
- These local impacts of global processes are highly uneven. Some groups within communities (generally more educated and skilled workers) have benefited, whereas others (particularly the unemployed and less skilled) have been left behind. This is illustrated by government research that has linked globalisation with poor outcomes for low-skilled workers and rising income inequality (DBERR, 2008; Government Equalities Office, 2010: 10). The Glasgow case showed how ICTs, which have been linked to higher productivity and remuneration in certain professional occupations, could act as a new barrier for those without access or the broader skills to use them effectively for their own ends. Changes linked to global processes, such as increased use of ICTs, may have both positive and negative effects; for those already disconnected from local labour markets, however, like the young people interviewed in Glasgow, a familiarity with ICTs is not enough to positively 'reconnect' with employment.
- Uneven impacts of globalisation increase precarity for many groups of workers as well as for the unemployed. This was illustrated in the Heathrow Village and north-east Lincolnshire cases, where respondents clearly expressed increased insecurity related to global commercial competition, outsourcing, the use of agency and non-permanent staff, and the perception of being undermined by the migrants willing to work for below-subsistence wages.
- The recession is exacerbating inequalities produced by the differential effects of earlier processes of global integration, a finding that accords with other research on the uneven effects of the downturn (Dolphin, 2009). This is particularly evident for unemployed young people in Glasgow, where the recession has worsened already difficult labour market conditions produced by past processes of deindustrialisation.
- While some global flows such as in-migration can create new social divisions and tensions, our research highlights examples of 'ordinary multiculturalism' which strengthen social cohesion in multi-ethnic communities, despite the prevalence of 'them' and 'us' discourses in wider society and the media.

In addition, our research prompts these broader reflections on globalisation and processes of connection and disconnection. Conventional understandings of globalisation and connectivity have tended to assume that connection is in and of itself a source of opportunity and empowerment. This is often the experience of professional and educated groups, reflecting the nature of globalisation as an elite discourse. What our research demonstrates, however, is that the experience of what might be termed 'ordinary' communities is often different: some forms of global connection, particularly where they increase competition and

insecurity in local labour markets, are associated with disempowerment and disaffection. As the north-east Lincolnshire and Heathrow Village case studies show, economic globalisation and increasing labour market competition can bring about a deterioration in working conditions, an increase in temporary and non-standard forms of work, and job losses for workers.

This overarching point about connection generating disempowerment can also be made in the case of young unemployed people in Greater Glasgow. While this seems, on first inspection, to be a clear example of disconnection resulting in marginalisation, the root cause of disengagement from the labour market is the wider process of deindustrialisation related to the globalisation of labour markets (with intensifying competition from low-wage manufacturing centres such as China). Rather than simply emphasising the degree of connection that globalisation engenders, researchers and policy-makers at all levels need to focus more attention on understanding and addressing the (often simultaneously) positive and negative impacts of new forms of connection, such as technological change and increased global labour market competition, on UK communities.

A crucial issue, however, is that communities' capacity to influence and shape global processes is often limited, particularly with regard to the global economic processes that structure labour markets. As the Lindsey and Gate Gourmet examples show, workers have agency that enables them to act independently of management. Both cases show the ability of workers and communities to take localised action and draw upon broader networks of solidarity beyond the immediate sites of conflict, generating a real sense of empowerment. Ultimately, however, despite short-term resolution of these disputes, grassroots action was unable to alter the broader employment environment (outsourcing, cost reduction and the use of contract labour). The responses of participants involved in the research suggested that they perceive this environment as being fundamentally affected by national level policy, which actively mediates the impacts of global processes on local communities through selective deregulation and re-regulation.

9 Implications for policy and practice

In keeping with our 'bottom-up' approach to globalisation, our policy recommendations suggest that policy-makers and practitioners need to learn from community level experiences of globalisation that are often marginalised or ignored. Our recommendations are informed by principles of 'progressive localism'. By this term, we suggest community strategies that are outward-looking and that create positive affinities between places and social groups affected by global processes. National and devolved governments have an important role to play in fostering progressive localism by providing the institutional support and capacity that will enable communities to shape and respond to global processes.

Our research indicates the following implications for policy and practice:

- Elite constructions of globalisation have had disempowering consequences. At the community level, people had important everyday experiences of global processes. These need to be taken seriously and used to inform policy-making. Non-governmental organisations, trade unions and community groups should build on the existing material connections that exist between places experiencing global processes. These groups and organisations should forge positive social connections between people and communities (such as the solidarity between workers in the same supply chains that were mobilised in the Gate Gourmet dispute) as a key strategy for overcoming the uneven and potentially divisive effects of globalisation.
- The vulnerability and insecurity of low-paid workers has been increased by processes of labour market deregulation and flexibility which reflect the UK policy response to globalisation. Serious consideration should be given to a *national living wage* to replace the current minimum wage. This would strengthen the position of low-paid workers. It would also help the re-entry of unemployed and economically inactive groups to the labour market. There is considerable international evidence to suggest that long-term productivity and export competitiveness is higher in countries that avoid job polarisation and wage inequality.
- Globalisation has exacerbated the marginalisation of unemployed young people, especially in traditional industrial communities. Reconnecting this group to the labour market is a crucial policy challenge. A punitive approach based on compulsion will have a deterrent effect. Integrated and more sophisticated support systems need to be facilitated in order to combine provision of education, training and employment services. Supply-side reforms need to be matched by demand-side measures to create jobs and training places. A welcome first step would be the restoration of the Future Jobs Fund scheme by national government to provide subsidised training and employment places.
- Government needs to recognise the uneven impact of global processes on places and communities, rather than assuming a level playing field. Policy to encourage localism must not deepen inequalities in material resources and social capital between and within communities. The role of the local community in the Gate Gourmet dispute shows that strong local institutions and forms of solidarity can constitute progressive localism. This is localism which is outward-looking and based on solidarities beyond the local. Devolved government, regional policy-makers and non-profit groups should help to facilitate such progressive localism.

- Exclusionary responses to globalisation can be challenged by supporting ‘ordinary multiculturalisms’ at the community level. This can strengthen community resilience as evident in our Heathrow Village case study. Such actually existing multiculturalisms disrupt the discourses of integration and assimilation that have framed recent policy. Our research in north-east Lincolnshire importantly suggests they are significant beyond major urban areas. The perpetuation of a ‘them’ and ‘us’ language, such as established ‘residents’ versus ‘immigrants’ or ‘hard-working families’ versus ‘welfare scroungers’, risks further social division and community fragmentation.

Notes

- 1 When we use the term 'unemployment' in this report, we also include labour market inactivity in addition to the claimant count and the wider International Labour Organization measure (Industrial Communities Alliance, 2009).
- 2 We use the term 'north-east Lincolnshire' on a geographical rather than an administrative basis, referring to the local authority area of north-east Lincolnshire and the adjoining north-eastern part of north Lincolnshire as far as Scunthorpe. This forms the hinterland for the port and industrial complex around Immingham.
- 3 'Greater Glasgow' refers to the wider metropolitan area that encompasses the city and six neighbouring local authorities: East and West Dunbartonshire, North and South Lanarkshire, East Renfrewshire and Renfrewshire (Turok and Bailey, 2004).
- 4 This total number of respondents does not include material from the Bear facts forum.

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Appendix

Efforts to ensure a relatively balanced group of participants in terms of gender and role were made, although time constraints meant that this was not always possible. In particular, a combination of these time constraints and ‘research fatigue’ meant that we found it difficult to access female workers involved in the Gate Gourmet dispute. Likewise, due to the mobile nature of the workforce, participants in the Lindsey strikes were also hard to access. Nevertheless, identifying key actors in support groups, unions and local government ensured that it was still possible to garner a great deal of first-hand information from those involved in the disputes. Approaching youth and welfare organisations in Glasgow gave the team the opportunity to speak to large and mixed groups of young people, avoiding the difficulties faced in the two other case studies.

Discussion of the Lindsey oil refinery disputes draws significantly from material gleaned from the Bear Facts forum, set up and run by and for workers in the engineering construction industry. Given that the Lindsey strikes and the sympathy actions around the UK were unlawful wildcat strikes, workers expressed concerns about speaking in interviews about their experiences for fear of recriminations such as blacklisting. Bear Facts therefore became an important source of primary information that was used to provide more voices of workers themselves. The forum contained more than 200,000 words of relevant discussions from the period between December 2008 and July 2009, offering a wealth of insider knowledge and discussion. In this way it offered a unique opportunity as a ‘virtual ethnography’ (see Parr, 2003) to trace the real-time development of relationships and discussions before, during and after the two waves of strikes.

In order to address the problem of consent, it was decided to make a public posting to the Bear Facts forum, outlining the research and asking for participants, suggestions and so on. In doing this, the purposes and practices of the research were freely available for all to see and comment upon. After members of the forum – including the site administrator – commented on it and sent private messages explicitly to suggest that we explore the archives, it became an illustration of de facto consent.

Table 2: Summary of case study respondents in this research

	Lindsey oil refinery	Gate Gourmet	Glasgow	Total
Interviews conducted	8	6	7	21
Focus groups (participants)	0(0)	1(4)	2(16)	3(20)
Total respondents	8 ⁴	10	23	41

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