

<b>Institution: University of Leeds</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 33</b>
<b>Title of case study: Representing Living Religions in Diaspora: Shaping Public Understanding of Faiths in Society</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Leeds research on religions in contexts of migration and diaspora has effected improvements in representation and public understanding of religion in Britain. Key areas are: (a) high-profile <b>public debates</b>, where we have shifted assumptions about religious communities in Britain; (b) <b>national museums</b>, where we have enabled new ways of representing religions in diaspora, and advanced engagement with minority communities; (c) <b>schools</b>, where we have developed educational resources on the complex trajectories of communities in diaspora. The impact occurred between 2009 and 2012, drawing on research from 1993 onwards (Knott, McLoughlin, Tomalin), and a 35-year record of research with religious communities.</p> <p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Empirical research on and with religious communities “near at hand”, pioneered at Leeds since 1976 through the ongoing <i>Community Religions Project</i> (CRP: see <a href="http://arts.leeds.ac.uk/crp/">http://arts.leeds.ac.uk/crp/</a>), has enabled public discourse about religion to be connected to the lived realities of a multi-faith and secular society. Leeds has led research on the interactions between religious communities and state actors, and the development of conceptual frameworks for interpreting the interrelationships of religion, ethnicity, class, locality, state/nation and diaspora. Religion has been neglected as a category in diaspora studies, while the study of religion has been slow to engage migration and diaspora; this mutual neglect is redressed in Leeds research. Key researchers are Kim <b>Knott</b> (Leeds 1976-2012, PhD researcher, Senior Lecturer, Professor), Seán <b>McLoughlin</b> (Leeds 2000-present, Senior Lecturer), and Emma <b>Tomalin</b> (Leeds 2002-present, Senior Lecturer).</p> <p>Building on seminal ethnographies of religious communities in Leeds, the CRP’s agenda developed from the late 1990s to address emerging public and civic concerns on religious diversity. The importance beyond the academy of this research is demonstrated in successive commissioned/partnership projects, including ‘Inter-religious social action in Leeds’ (Leeds Church Institute [LCI], 1996-1998); ‘Leeds Pilot Faiths Consultation Exercise’ (Home Office/LCI, 2004); and the ‘British Hinduism Oral History Project’ (Heritage Lottery Fund/Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies, 2000-4).</p> <p>From the 2000s, Leeds produced innovative research in the study of religion across disciplinary boundaries especially in terms of theories of location, space and diaspora. <b>Knott</b> is an internationally leading researcher on religious plurality and religion and spatiality (1, 2). In recognition of her research leadership in this area, in 2005 Knott was appointed Director of AHRC’s ‘Diasporas, Migration and Identities’ Programme (DMI; <a href="http://www.diasporas.ac.uk">www.diasporas.ac.uk</a>); she was often commissioned to speak on the basis of her research contribution, engaging the study of religion in Europe with issues relating to diasporas, migration and identities. In 2010 Knott was awarded an AHRC ‘Impact Fellowship’ to bring the research findings of the DMI Programme to a wider audience.</p> <p>Alongside <b>McLoughlin</b>’s theoretical work on religion and diaspora, an ongoing focus of his ethnographic research has been trans-national or global Islamic identities –as reflected in his recent work which is the first to examine British Muslims’ experience and practice of <i>Hajj</i> and its transformation in diaspora (4). <b>Tomalin</b> and McLoughlin’s interdisciplinary project ‘Writing British Asian Cities’ (6) refined a new approach to the history of British Asian settlement developed by McLoughlin (5). In workshops held in community spaces and involving local writers, politicians and cultural workers, it examined previously unassembled archives documenting how five cities have been ‘written’ by different constituencies, juxtaposing discordant texts across scholarly ethnography, oral history, literary/cultural production and official/media reports.</p> <p>Knott and McLoughlin’s co-edited volume (3) brings together the theoretical reflection on diasporas</p>

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that arises from and increasingly shapes Leeds research. Original case studies of diasporas worldwide are featured, testing the usefulness of 'diaspora' for analysing the complexity of contemporary transnational lives. McLoughlin's chapter on Islamic consciousness tests distinctions usually made in diaspora studies between universal and ethnic traditions, and explores how religious imaginaries can provide a focus for new homing desires.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. Knott, Kim (2005) 'Researching local and national pluralism: Britain's new religious landscape', M Baumann and S Behloul, eds, *Religiöser Pluralismus: Empirische Studien und analytische Perspektiven*, pp. 45-68, Bielefeld: transcript Verlag. [Representative example of Knott's research; cited by EU Network on Religious Plurality, and in English- and German-language monographs on religion in diaspora/ religion in the public sphere]
2. Knott, Kim (2009) 'From locality to location and back again: A spatial journey in the study of religion', *Religion*, 39:2, pp. 154-60. DOI: 10.1016/j.religion.2009.01.003 [Peer-reviewed article.]
3. Knott, Kim and McLoughlin, Seán (eds.) (2010) *Diasporas: Concepts, Intersections, Identities*. London: Zed Books. [Represents the summation of earlier research by Knott and McLoughlin, as well as Knott's direction of the DMI Programme. Cited in recent publications on diaspora related to Ireland, Croatia, India; positive reviews by international authorities].
4. McLoughlin, Seán (2009) 'Contesting Muslim Pilgrimage: British-Pakistani Identities, Sacred Journeys to Makkah and Madinah and the Global Postmodern', in Kalra, V. S. (ed.) *The Pakistani Diaspora*, Karachi and Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 233-265. [Forms part of REF2014 submission]
5. McLoughlin, Seán (2006), 'Writing a BrAsian City: Race, Culture and Religion in Accounts of postcolonial Bradford', in Ali, N. Kalra, V.S. and Sayyid, S. (eds.) *A Postcolonial People: South Asians in Britain*, London, Hurst, pp. 110-49. [Submitted for RAE2008]
6. McLoughlin, Seán, and John Zavos (2013) 'Writing Religion in British Asian Diasporas', *Writing British Asian Cities* Research Paper WBAC 0009. Available on <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/writingbritishasiancities/assets/papers/WBAC009.pdf> (accessed 24<sup>th</sup> October 2013). [Forms part of REF2014 submission]

### Grants

- (1) AHRC-funded research network 'Writing British Asian cities' (2006-2009, £20,628) – Seán McLoughlin, Emma Tomalin, William Gould, Ananya Kabir (all University of Leeds)
- (2) AHRC Director's Impact Fellowship for Diasporas, Migrations and Identities programme (2010-2011, £142,960) – Kim Knott
- (3) AHRC 'Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam' (2011-2012, £17,000) – Seán McLoughlin funded from grant to British Museum

### 4. Details of the impact

The need for better articulation, in **public debates** around religion and the state, of the complex diasporic character of religious communities in Britain – as well as Knott's research leadership in this area – was reflected in her invitation to be a keynote speaker in the Westminster Faith Debates in February 2012. She presented an overview based on Leeds research of Britain's experience of living with religious diversity since the 1970s, to a high-profile audience from politics, the public and third sector, think-tanks and faith communities. She was quoted extensively in national media debate as the representative of a new perspective on religious identity in Britain, sparking discussion of how to move beyond established arguments about "multiculturalism" (a).

In this context of wider interest in the complexities of British religious identities, Leeds research on the specificities of these identities has changed public representation and understanding through work with **national museums**. On the basis of his earlier Leeds research, McLoughlin was

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commissioned in 2011 by the British Museum (BM) to work on British Muslims' experience of Hajj, for the major exhibition "Hajj: A Journey to the Heart of Islam" (January-April 2012). His contribution was a key determinant both of the exhibition's representation of British Muslims and their engagement with it.

McLoughlin's ethnographic research, building on his earlier publications, supplied materials for a discrete panel in the exhibition, and an audio loop of interviewees; he was an adviser to the curating team (g), supported the development of educational material, and promoted public engagement. He spoke at a study day for the BM's members and the public on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2012, and the "Arabia Late" public event on 9<sup>th</sup> March. A sustained web presence for the ethnographic research was constructed at Leeds, and received coverage in Hajj-related online forums (b). McLoughlin also provided the introduction, and advised on the structure and format, for short films on Hajj produced by Leeds Museums Discovery Centre, a BM regional partner. Research undertaken for the exhibition forms the basis of an article for the *Public Spirit* online forum for researchers, policymakers, politicians and practitioners (June 2013, promoted as a special feature to coincide with Hajj – October 2013).

The BM Hajj exhibition was a noted success, attracting 140,000 visitors (almost double its target) of whom two-thirds were from Black and Minority Ethnic communities (c). The BM's Assistant Curator confirmed that McLoughlin's contribution was "integral to the success of the exhibition", not only in ensuring "rigour" and "balance" in the exhibition itself, but also, through the research process itself, raising awareness of the exhibition in Muslim communities across the UK (e). The Project Curator commented "Muslims felt involved... which is illustrated by the fantastic visitor numbers and feedback we received" (f).

Working with McLoughlin's anthropological approach represented a new departure for the BM and there are specific plans to draw on this experience for future practice, most immediately in a redisplay of the Islamic galleries (e). The BM's Digital Learning Programmes Manager commented "The audio recordings and accompanying transcripts of British Muslims collected by Seán [McLoughlin]'s team were incredibly useful for the Education Team in building a mobile learning application for the exhibition. The transcripts... helped shape the design of the activities... Having these first hand accounts of Hajj is an invaluable way to bring the objects alive for students" (g).

Knott's Director's Fellowship work has also shaped national museums' representation of religion and diaspora. In 2011 she co-organised a workshop with the National Maritime for museum curators and researchers (including senior curators and directors of education from NMM, BM, Imperial War Museum, V&A) on *Sensitive Objects*, their relationship to religious and cultural identities particularly among diasporic communities, and implications for handling and display. Participants said they had "found the theme a helpful and productive one to consider" (h).

To develop impact in **schools**, working with design company Millipedia, the Citizenship Foundation and the Runnymede Trust, Knott developed in 2011 *Moving People, Changing Places*, a website and accompanying book to inform a public audience, including young people, about migration, identities and diasporic communities. Research by McLoughlin, Knott and Tomalin (grant 2, above) is used to frame discussions of religion and diaspora and to focus on Muslim and British-Asian communities. Targeted at KS3 and 4 for Citizenship goals on 'Identity and Diversity', the site was trialled by Knott with school groups as part of the Runnymede Trust's project *Generation 3.0*. The learning resources have been publicised by the TES, Historical Association, Geographical Association and Citizenship Foundation (f). The book has been adopted by local government EMA consultants, as a training resource on migration and diversity particularly in work with schools (i).

The continuing impact of Leeds diasporas research on **public debates** internationally as well as nationally is seen most recently in McLoughlin's British Council-organised speaking tour of Michigan (April 2013). The tour was planned by the Council to bring research insights, gained from the study of Islam in the UK, to Southeast Michigan as the area of the USA with the highest concentration of Muslims. Activities included public events at mosques, and meetings with community group leaders, museum directors and policy researchers (j).

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

Dates after web-based sources are dates accessed.

- (a) Example of coverage of Knott's contribution, *The Tablet*: <http://m.thetablet.co.uk/user-login.php?redir=article/162297> (article on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2012, "Faith and unity through diversity", accessed 1<sup>st</sup> March 2013). See also Westminster Faith Debates website, with overview of findings and media coverage of Knott's debate: [http://www.religionandsociety.org.uk/faith\\_debates-2012/identity](http://www.religionandsociety.org.uk/faith_debates-2012/identity) (1<sup>st</sup> September 2013).
- (b) Example of uptake and promotion of McLoughlin's research in British Muslim community – Council of British Hajjis: <http://dobuy.co.uk/cbhuk/?p=1858> (1<sup>st</sup> September 2013). Links to: <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/hajj/> (1<sup>st</sup> September 2013).
- (c) British Museum Report and Accounts year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012, p. 3. <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/hc1213/hc04/0400/0400.pdf> (1<sup>st</sup> September 2013)
- (d) Examples of links to the resource, with recommendations, from educational websites: TES <http://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resource/Moving-People-Changing-Places-6144132/> (1<sup>st</sup> March 2013); Citizenship Foundation <http://www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk/main/resource.php?s429> (1<sup>st</sup> March 2013). Links are to Moving People, Changing Places: <http://www.movingpeoplechangingplaces.org> (1<sup>st</sup> September 2013).
- (e) Assistant Keeper (Curator) Islamic and contemporary Middle East, British Museum (personal communication held on file)
- (f) Project Curator, Hajj Exhibition, British Museum (personal communication held on file)
- (g) Digital Learning Programmes Manager, British Museum (personal communication held on file)
- (h) Feedback from National Maritime Museum 'Sensitive Objects' exhibition, forwarded from Head of Research
- (i) EMA Consultant, Equalities and Entitlement Team, Leeds City Council (personal communication held on file)
- (j) Director, "Our Shared Future" project, British Council USA (personal communication held on file)