

Dr Laurence Brown
Mapping migrant cultures in Manchester 1880-2000
End of Year Report for 2007

Early research has focused on Caribbean immigration to post-war Manchester through the exploration of existing oral history collections and new interviews with the Mapping Our Lives group.

This has revealed the complex crossings Caribbean migrants made between imperial, Pan-African, West Indian and national identities during the period 1945 to 1968. The migration process had a profound impact on how these collective identities were constructed. Through mapping the series of temporary accommodation which many immigrants moved through upon arrival in the UK, we have been able to explore a range of migrant networks, and how these were shaped by gender and island of origin. Moving through rented rooms brought some migrants into contact with West Indian or Pan-African networks, while for others they reinforced island solidarities and cultures. These relationships, which were often expressed in sites such as clubs and churches were also being remade in reaction to external events, particularly changes in empire, which fuelled increasing national identification.

During the first six months of the project (Jan.-June 2007), Brown arranged the purchase of the necessary computing equipment for the project and appointed the project PhD student (Ms Connolly). Based on consultation with Williams and Faculty IT Officers a pilot database was designed. Brown and Ms Connolly geo-coded existing interviews and archival materials held by the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre, Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre, and the North-West Sound Archive. Brown and Ms Connolly also attended an outreach seminar by the Historical Geographical Information Systems Research Network in February 2007 at the University of York. During months seven to eleven (July-Nov. 2007), Brown arranged for the appointment of the Post-Doctoral Researcher and IT Research Officer. Brown and Ms Connolly arranged two sessions with the Mapping Our Lives Group where informants were asked to mark their experiences on historical maps obtained from Digimap.

Our research questions have not changed, but they have been elaborated with the appointment of the research team. Ms Connolly has focused her early doctoral research on the 1981 riots and the emergence of youth gangs in Moss Side. As a result, Brown has concentrated on the first generation of migrants to Manchester in the 1940s and 1950s, conducting research at the National Archives in Kew and at the Manchester Central Library.

Because of the delay in the Post-Doctoral Researcher (Dr Balkelis) taking up his post, the geo-coding of the interview collection held by the Manchester Jewish Museum began in November. Dr Balkelis has extensive research experience on Baltic immigration, and is initially focusing on the connections and differences between Jewish immigrants and other migrants from Eastern Europe. Regular contact with Bill Williams has identified numerous potential sources to develop this research theme.

Our GIS Research Officer (Dr Owusu) has reviewed the project pilot database and has begun exploring different approaches for mapping migrant routes and contact zones.

Brown has held regular meetings with staff from the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre to develop the outreach focus of the project. With staff from the centre planning has begun for a community workshop to be held in early 2008.