

# AHRC Diasporas, Migration and Identities Programme

## Director: Professor Kim Knott, University of Leeds

### END OF YEAR REPORT FOR 2005

#### Main achievements:

- Production of the Programme Specification;
- Launch of the Programme;
- Establishment of Steering Committee;
- Establishment of office and appointment of Programme Administrator;
- Call for applications for three schemes: small research grants, networks and workshops and large grants;
- Announcement of awards for small grants, networks and workshops;
- Development of website, [www.diasporas.ac.uk](http://www.diasporas.ac.uk);
- Contact made with hundreds of researchers across the Arts and Humanities as well as stakeholders beyond the academy.

#### Summary

The Diasporas, Migration and Identities Programme has been developed, launched and publicized. It has attracted the attention of scholars in and beyond the subject communities associated with AHRC, including many from abroad. Contacts have been made beyond the academy, though there is more work to be done in engaging the programme with a wide public agenda.

The basic structures of the programme are now in place. The specification was prepared early in the year, in light of consultation over many months with a range of interested people, particularly those who attended pre-programme seminars in the autumn of 2004. It was very well received and gained favourable press coverage.<sup>1</sup> The Steering Committee, which helps to manage and monitor its progress, has begun to meet. An office has been established at Leeds, with a part-time Administrator appointed. The programme has a logo, its own stationery; its website went live in December. The three research schemes have been advertised, and two have gone through the commissioning process. Successful small research projects, networks and workshops begin in January 2006. Outline applications for the third scheme, large grants, are also due in that month.

Following the pre-programme seminars, colleagues at AHRC established a database that was transferred to Leeds and further developed during the year. It contains contact details for between six and seven hundred individuals interested in the work of the programme, including researchers (from the UK and beyond), postgraduates, curators, government ministers and civil servants, representatives of voluntary organizations and members of community groups. Enquiries from a large number of these have been fielded by the Director, Administrator and the Programme Manager at AHRC, particularly in relation to applications for funding.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Show me the money', *The Guardian*, 3 May 2005, <http://education.guardian.co.uk/egweekly/story/0,,1474899,00.html>

## **ANNUAL REPORT, 2005**

The purpose of the Director's post is to provide intellectual leadership for the Diasporas, Migration and Identities programme. The Director is expected to develop and manage the programme, conduct outreach, maintain excellence, add value and raise awareness.

I have addressed these expectations with reference to the three headings laid out in the job description: Development and management of the programme; Reporting, monitoring and evaluation; Communications and outreach.

### **1. Development and management of the programme**

#### **1.1 Programme specification, aims, objectives and priorities**

The aim of developing 'a strategically focused and detailed final specification' has been met.<sup>2</sup> The Programme Specification was prepared by the Director in February and March with reference to earlier consultation documents (arising from the original Working Group, members of AHRC committees, selected experts and participants of four pre-programme seminars) and advice from the AHRC Programme Manager and Head of Research. It identified the aims and objectives of the programme, themes and priorities.

This being the first autonomous research programme run by the AHRC, the stated aim was to maximise the participation of scholars from a wide range of arts and humanities disciplines in researching, reflecting upon and discussing diasporas, migration and identities. The objectives were described as follows:

- i To stimulate high quality research on diasporas, migration and identities across the arts and humanities which will both draw upon a wide range of disciplinary resources and skills, and encourage interdisciplinary collaboration in and beyond the academy;
- ii To make a distinctive contribution to the theoretical, conceptual, thematic, practice-led and empirical study of diasporas, migration and identities by focusing on cultural, historical and linguistic perspectives and creative practice;
- iii To develop a body of theory, methods and cases to enable a comparative analysis of diasporas, migration and their associated identities to be undertaken;
- iv To facilitate connection, communication and exchange – at both programme and project level – between researchers and a wide range of individuals and organisations who have an interest in their research and its outcomes, including those in the cultural sector, media, government, public and voluntary bodies, and to contribute to the development of public policy;
- v To contribute to public awareness of arts and humanities research on diasporas, migration and identities;

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<sup>2</sup> Job description. See full Programme Specification, at [http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/ahrb/website/images/4\\_95746.pdf](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/ahrb/website/images/4_95746.pdf).

- vi To generate research findings and outcomes of international significance and quality, to disseminate these to an international research audience, and to develop networks of researchers in and beyond the UK;
- vii To develop new connections and approaches that may become embedded in the research agenda and resources of the arts and humanities, and may be built on in future applications to AHRC for funding in responsive mode.

Rather than focusing on thematic priorities, as had been in the case in many other research programmes, the decision was made to leave the areas of research open to applicants, but to prioritise in relation to the contribution of research to innovation, change, collaboration and interdisciplinarity. Stimulating high quality, original and internationally significant research and focusing on the particular contribution that the arts and humanities could make to knowledge and understanding of diasporas, migration and identities was of critical importance. The programme prioritized,

- (a) research that interrogates existing terminology and explores new concepts (as well as analogous ones from other cultural contexts) for the study of diasporas, migration and identities;
- (b) research that explores new approaches or methods for studying diasporas, migration and identities;
- (c) research that develops new theories on diasporas, migration and identities, and/or on the engagement between these matters and broader questions in such areas as history, philosophy, epistemology, ontology, language, literature, belief, practice, law, values, ethics and the arts;
- (d) research that will change the way that diasporas, migration and identities are understood, either through historical, comparative, practice-led or innovative case studies focused in or beyond the UK;
- (e) research that takes an arts and humanities approach to addressing current UK-based issues relating to diasporas and migration and the identities associated with them;
- (f) applications which, as part of their remit, prioritise (i) research collaboration with the cultural sector (e.g. museums, galleries, heritage sector, cultural industries, the media), (ii) engagement with public, voluntary or community bodies to share knowledge and develop outcomes of mutual interest and benefit, or (iii) the development of outputs directed at a wide non-academic audience (e.g. web pages, exhibitions, performances, public lectures or presentations).
- (g) projects, workshops and networks that promote interdisciplinarity or build new connections as an outcome of their activity.

Six themes were identified as broad operational categories for defining the cultural, historical and linguistic field of research on diasporas, migration and identities:

- migration, settlement and diaspora: modes, stages and forms;
- representation, performance and discourse;
- languages and linguistic change;
- subjectivity, emotion and identity;
- objects, practices and places;
- beliefs, values and laws.

These objectives, priorities and themes will be important for assessing the programme (and its contributing projects), especially with regard to its coherence and range, and for monitoring and evaluating its progress.

## 1.2 Public announcement of the programme and its schemes of research

Following the preparation of the specification, 'Diasporas, Migration and Identities' (DMI) was launched at the Museum of Immigration and Diversity at 19 Princelet Street in Spitalfields on 21 April with speeches by the Chief Executive of AHRC (Geoffrey Crossick), the Chief Executive of 19 Princelet Street (Susie Symes), Professor Robin Cohen, author of *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (Routledge, 1997), and the Programme Director. Guests from many universities and public and voluntary bodies attended. The first call for applications was made by AHRC the following week with the public announcement of the Small Research Grant scheme (one-year projects, up to £10,000), and the Network and Workshop scheme (two-year networks, up to £20,000; one-year workshops, up to £10,000). The call for applications to the Large Grant scheme went out in November 2005.

## 1.3 Management of the programme and establishment of its infrastructure

All of these achievements arose from the combined efforts of the Programme Director, the AHRC Programme Manager (first Faye Auty, then Kate Dunmow) and other key personnel at AHRC. They have continued to work together to develop documentation for the schemes and advise enquirers, to establish a Steering Committee for the Programme, to identify and appoint peer reviewers and members of a Commissioning Panel for the review and assessment process, and to produce a timetable for the applications process. It is important to note the collaborative nature of the work carried out in year one, and the support provided by the research council. The half-time Programme Director would not have been able to meet either the requirements or the necessary deadlines in this first year without them.

Another management mechanism – which had to be put in place before it could begin to support the programme and monitor its progress – was the Steering Committee.<sup>3</sup> Chaired by David Feldman, it met to discuss the draft specification before the launch in April. Terms of reference and a timetable of bi-annual meetings were agreed. At its second meeting, in December, members of the Committee reviewed the first year's achievements and progress, considered the timetable for the second year, and made suggestions about future developments, particularly with regard to public engagement, research dissemination, and the sustainability of research on diasporas, migration and identities beyond the life of the programme.

The development of the DMI office was a gradual process, lower down the list of priorities in the early months than the Programme Specification, launch or call for applications to schemes. Preparation of an advertisement, job description and person specification for the post of Programme Administrator, followed by advertising, shortlisting, interviewing and recruitment, all took place at the University of Leeds within the Faculty of Arts. The successful candidate (Katie Roche) began work in August. This extension to the project team enabled us to acquire and further

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<sup>3</sup> For membership, see [http://www.diasporas.ac.uk/steering\\_committee.htm](http://www.diasporas.ac.uk/steering_committee.htm).

develop the database and mailing list, to develop the programme 'brand' (logo, stationery etc), and, with ISS at Leeds, to obtain a domain name and set up a website ([www.diasporas.ac.uk](http://www.diasporas.ac.uk)). These developments will allow the team to become more independent of AHRC, as appropriate, and to further fulfill the programme responsibilities with reference to communication and outreach.

#### 1.4 The assessment process; programme range and coherence

The deadline for receipt of applications for two of the three programme schemes was 24 June, and the process of identifying peer reviewers and developing a Commissioning Panel took place over the summer, with the Panel meeting in late October to assess and grade applications (chaired by Naomi Segal).<sup>4</sup> The Director advised the Panel with regard to matters of programme fit and priority, themes, range and coherence; the Programme Manager and Head of Research at AHRC advised on rules, funding and other formalities. Of 70 eligible applications for small grants, 20 awards were made, a success rate of 29%; of 54 eligible applications for networks and workshops, 14 awards were made, a success rate of 27%. The sum of awards for this first round was £320,000 (AHRC having agreed a further £120,000 in response to the considerable interest generated by these schemes in order to improve the overall success rate).

In order to ensure a wide range of coverage, the Director created a template of DMI categories which was used to inform the decision-making process. The key factor in assessment was the quality of the application (based on consideration of programme fit, objectives, research questions and methods, appropriateness and experience of applicant, proposed outputs etc), but subject range, thematic coverage and potential coherence were also considered. Once small projects, networks and workshops had been chosen, a subject 'map' of the programme was drafted. Over the next year this will be developed further with information about relevant AHRC projects beyond DMI and large research grants (once announced). The intellectual coherence of the programme is difficult to address in these early stages. It concerns not just the range of the projects, but their interrelationship, and, more importantly, their combined intellectual assets. These issues will be considered further in later reports.

#### 1.5 Training

In order to develop her skills and knowledge base, the Director undertook training and/or workshops on the following subjects: *media* (AHRC media training day; Getting Your Message Across: Introduction; Writing Press Releases; Press and Radio Interviewing; TV Interviewing (all run by SDDU, University of Leeds); *full economic costing* (University of Leeds); *European funding opportunities* (University of Leeds); *working with museums and the heritage sector* (AHRC). She also participated in an AHRC Council away-day, and the first AHRC meeting for programme directors.

The Administrator undertook an induction day for support staff at the University of Leeds, plus training in *SAP* (financial accounting software) and *Advanced Dreamweaver* (for website development and updating).

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<sup>4</sup> For membership of the Commissioning Panel, see [www.ahrc.diasporas.ac.uk/dmi](http://www.ahrc.diasporas.ac.uk/dmi).

(For discussion of other items listed in the Job Description under Development and Management, see Communication and Outreach below.)

## **2. Reporting, monitoring and evaluation**

Issues of monitoring and evaluation were taken into consideration in the identification of objectives and priorities for the programme (see above). Whilst AHRC will continue to monitor individual projects in the normal way (by requesting annual/end of project reports), the Director and the Steering Committee will be responsible for ensuring that specific programme objectives and priorities are met as far as possible (subject to the nature of the awards made within the programme and the cooperation of award-holders). As part of this process, and with programme coherence in mind, it was stated in the specification that,

A major difference between an AHRC research programme and a cluster of independent research projects funded by AHRC under its responsive-mode schemes is the focus of research on matters of related interest. This provides potential for linkage, mutual reflection on common issues or findings, and the added value that comes from separate researchers and research teams coming together to extend their thinking and ambition beyond their own project boundaries. To these ends, grant-holders will be required to attend one or more workshop at which they will share and discuss their research, to submit annual reports which will contribute to the programme report and provide material as requested for the website. Award holders will participate as requested in Programme events. To further programme co-ordination, the Director will support exchanges between researchers on different projects, and between networks and projects.

Furthermore, the terms and conditions of awards state that,

While it is the responsibility of the Research Organisation and the Investigator to manage the research, the Research Council reserves the right to call for periodic information on progress or to visit the Investigator. The Investigator may also be asked to attend meetings to exchange information and ideas with others undertaking research in the same or similar fields.

The Investigator must make all reasonable efforts, if so invited, to attend events or activities organised by the Research Council concerning the research undertaken. Such events may be held after a grant has finished.

In early pursuit of such co-operation, the programme team contacted successful applicants in November to request project summaries for the website.<sup>5</sup> Plans are in development for programme workshops to bring investigators together, and the Director has already begun to meet individually with successful award-holders. It will be necessary early in the new year to inform new award-holders about intended

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<sup>5</sup> See [http://www.diasporas.ac.uk/small\\_research\\_projects.htm](http://www.diasporas.ac.uk/small_research_projects.htm) and <http://www.diasporas.ac.uk/networksandworkshops.htm>.

programme-related outcomes and the ways in which they will be invited and/or expected to contribute to them (e.g. in terms of giving presentations on their projects, engaging with programme stakeholders, contributing to events, publications, working papers and the final conference). Procedures for regular review will also need to be developed.

Ideas and good practice with regard to the direction and engagement of award-holders, the work of steering/advisory committees and programme publicity and dissemination can be shared between Programme Directors. To this end, contacts have been developed in particular with the Directors of the AHRC Landscape and Environment Programme and the ESRC Identities and Social Action Programme. The Director was consulted by the former about pre-programme seminars, programme development and specification. Similarly, she took advice from the former Director of ESRC's Transnational Communities Programme.

Regular contact has been maintained with the AHRC Programme Manager and she has been apprised of developments regarding the office, website, and development of contacts with external bodies. The Director was invited to make a presentation to AHRC Board of Management Away Day in June 2005, but withdrew because of ill-health.

### **3. Communications and outreach**

Although the focus in the first year has been on development and management, attempts have been made to put in place channels of communication and to take opportunities to spread information and news about the programme.

Following the highly successful pre-programme seminars, the mailing list established at that time has been acquired from AHRC and further developed into a tractable database. It is now used routinely for e-mail communication with interested scholars and non-academic stakeholders about developments, news and activities.

A logo has been developed and used in all programme documents, stationery and publicity.

A programme website has been launched. Despite being situated at and managed from the University of Leeds, it was granted permission for an independent 'ac.uk' domain name. As well as providing details of aims, objectives, personnel and schemes of the programme and its various projects, the website will keep visitors to the site informed about news, events and developments, and will provide access to working papers, project summaries and publication information. Attention has been paid to design issues in order to reflect the cultural focus of the programme and the AHRC's own aesthetic values.

The Director has responded to requests from the press about the programme (though, as yet, she has not been pro-active in pursuing media opportunities). Her directorship was featured in the *Times Higher Education Supplement* in January, and she was interviewed at the time of the programme launch in April (*The Guardian*),

and again in May (by *The Reporter*, the University of Leeds staff newsletter).<sup>6</sup> AHRC has referred to the programme in its own publication, *Podium*). She has undertaken training to improve her media skills. AHRC has sent out press releases at various points during the year to alert the press to developments.

At present, the programme has few outputs. A series of working papers has been established (with the first paper lodged on the website, see below), and the website is now up and running. Initial conversations have been held with editors of two journals (*Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*; *Global Networks: A Journal of Transnational Affairs*) with future special issues in mind, and with the editor of the book series, *Global Diasporas*, with a view to its potential development as an organ of the programme.

The Director has responded to invitations to talk about the programme at conferences and meetings. She was an invited speaker at the CRONEM conference ('The Future of Multicultural Britain: Meeting Across Boundaries') in June, but could not attend due to ill-health (rescheduled for 2006 conference). She gave a paper at a plenary session of the Annual Conference of the Royal Geographical Society/Institute of British Geographers in August, entitled 'Towards a history and politics of diasporas and migration: A grounded spatial approach', in which she publicized the programme as well as raising some methodological issues for examining diasporas and migration in contemporary British spaces. This talk has become the first in a series of programme working papers, and can be found on the website.<sup>7</sup> In October she spoke on interdisciplinarity, AHRC and the DMI programme at Leeds Social Science Institute. She has attended panels and sessions on diasporas and migration at conferences within her own discipline, in Britain, continental Europe, Japan and the States, and has made contact with colleagues involved in pluralism projects in Germany, Switzerland and at Harvard in the US. She has received invitations to attend several international seminars and conferences in 2006, but is treating them with some caution given her half-time status and programme budget.

Briefings have been given at the universities of Manchester and Leeds about applying for grants within the DMI programme, and the Director has met with many individuals and teams to discuss proposals. Hundreds of email enquiries and telephone calls from academics and other stakeholders have been fielded by the Director, Administrator, Manager and other AHRC staff about various aspects of the application process.

Initial discussions have also taken place with possible partner bodies with future co-sponsored activities in mind (e.g. 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Liverpool, 2007; Festival of Islam, 2006). Rather than organizing a specific seminar series for the programme, the Director plans to co-organize seminars at different universities and other venues, (e.g. with COMPAS in Oxford, the Institute of Colonial and Postcolonial Studies at Leeds, CRONEM in Roehampton, and with some of the programme's own networks, e.g. in Manchester and at universities in the East Midlands).

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<sup>6</sup> See reference to *The Guardian* article in footnote 1, and 'Migration and identity, and how it makes us who we are', *The Reporter*, 508, 6 June 2005, <http://reporter.leeds.ac.uk/508/s9.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.diasporas.ac.uk/workingpapers.htm>.

Contacts have been made with research students, in Leeds and beyond, who have expressed an interest in helping to organize the first of two programme conferences for postgraduates in 2006.

Excellent working relations have been established with staff at AHRC, with regular communications being maintained. Two meetings of the programme Steering Committee have been held, and the Director is grateful for the support, comments and evaluation of progress its members have offered.

#### **4. Any difficulties encountered during the first year**

The only significant difficulties have arisen as a result of the complex nature of the Director's role and the need to prioritize within a half-time contract. These have not been insurmountable. It was important to accept that not all aspects of the post could be fulfilled within the first few months: in the first year it has been necessary to focus on development and management, with less stress placed on networking and publicity. Setting up the office took far longer than was at first envisaged, given the dependence on local capacity, timetables and structures (in HR, faculty administration, information systems and research support). Without the flexibility of both AHRC and University of Leeds (particularly of the Head of Department and immediate colleagues) the task of balancing two 50% workloads would have been much more difficult. Future directors of programmes should note that flexibility needs to be written into the working arrangements from the beginning (on both sides) as it is not desirable or possible to commit a rigid weekly division of hours to the two roles. On the part of the Director this requires organization, self-discipline and honorable compliance with the terms agreed in respect of both roles; from the employers this requires that, on a day to day basis, they trust the Director to serve both fairly in respect of hours worked.

#### **5. Plans for next year**

The key features of the second year of the programme will be,

- Small research projects;
- Workshops and first year of networks;
- Assessment of outline bids for large projects, invitation to selected applicants to submit full proposals, and peer review and assessment of these proposals;
- Initiation of large projects;
- First postgraduate conference.

In association with these there will be,

- Workshops and meetings with award holders (small grants, workshop and network grants);

- Question and answer sessions for those invited to submit full proposals for large grants;
- Two meetings of the Commissioning Panel.

Further, the website will be used increasingly to publicize projects within the programme, with full summaries, visual and audio materials, working papers and details of related events and publications. Relevant research projects funded by AHRC outside the remit of DMI will be identified and investigators invited to participate in workshops. Where appropriate, links will be identified between projects and investigators encouraged to collaborate.

There will be greater emphasis than in the first year on pro-active promotion, with the following groups to be contacted and engaged in the programme:

- academic and non-academic centres and organizations planning events associated with DMI issues;
- non-academic stakeholders, particular public bodies;
- teams of scholars working on DMI beyond the UK;
- publishers and editors with interests in DMI;
- the media.

For a draft timetable for future activities, see Annex 5.

There will be two meetings of the Programme Steering Committee, in May/June and November/December. In addition to attending Programme Directors meetings, the Director will also inform staff at AHRC about the programme (February) and present its work at Research Committee (March).

Professor Kim Knott  
Programme Director  
6 January 2006