Community Religions Project:
The Religious Mapping of Kirkstall

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What is the role of religion in defining the community of Kirkstall?
Contents

- Methodology
- Boundaries
- Community and Identity
- Religious diversity in Kirkstall
- Exploring Geography and Identity
- Conclusions
- Bibliography
Methodology

- Semi-structured Interviews
- Questionnaires
- Participant Observation
- Limitations
- Ethical Issues
“Two principles are foundational; first, the duty of the researcher to treat the subject as the researcher would wish to be treated; and second, historically more recent development of the notion of rights.”

(Love, 2012, p.38)
Conclusion

- Limited through time constraints
- Conducted 25 Interviews
- Received 37 Questionnaire responses
- Gave us a total of 62 interactions
Boundaries

- Official boundaries
- Your Kirkstall boundaries
- No clear definition of Kirkstall’s boundary
- Reasons for different boundary definitions
Boundaries

- Official boundaries
- Your Kirkstall boundaries
- No clear definition of Kirkstall’s boundary
- Reasons for different boundary definitions
Official definitions

- Parish Boundaries
- Postcodes
- Kirkstall Ward Boundaries
  > The Kirkstall Ward Vision Report described the area as: “Burley, Queenswood Drive, Moor Grange and the Spens, Hawksworth Wood, as well as Kirkstall itself.”
Your Kirkstall Boundaries

- Confused by official definitions
- Aimed to find your definition of boundaries
- Contrasting boundary definitions in each group...why?
The reasons we have for these different definitions can be divided into two categories:

- Logistical – relating to the location of places of worship
- Christian – the attempt to link to Kirkstall’s Christian history
Logistical

- Central location
- Transport links
- Multi-cultural area

“A shared notion of togetherness, united by common history or goals, sharing and participating in activities, cultures and ideologies” (Young, et al, 2007, p. 56)
Christian

- Our Lady of Kirkstall Parish
- Abbey Churches Together

“Religion leaves a mark on an area, particularly when religious landmarks dominate the area” (Park, 2004, p. 2)
Conclusion

- Accepting the diversity of boundary definitions
- Impact this had on our project
- Role of religion in different groups’ creation of boundary definitions
Kirkstall Abbey and the Abbey House Museum
The Abbey and the Abbey House Museum’s place in Kirkstall

- Central focus point
- Secular space for community events
- Community spirit and social cohesion
History of the Abbey

- Founded in 1152 in Kirkstall
- Dissolved on 22\textsuperscript{nd} November 1539
- Dissolution marked the beginning of its shift from a place of worship to a secular resource
Diversity

- Welcoming and Diverse
- Secular stance
- Used for religious education
Conclusion

- Key secular resource for the community
- Tourist attraction and centre of learning
- Transition of the Abbey from religious to secular reflects the more diverse religious demographic of Kirkstall today
Defining community
Religious and secular communities in Kirkstall
How does Kirkstall identify itself?
Online Community
What is “community”? 

Religious and Secular communities in Kirkstall
How does Kirkstall identify itself?

- “stepping stone”
- “in-between place”
An Online Identity?

- Religious social media
  - St Stephen’s
  - The Assumption of Our Lady
  - Leeds Chinese Christian Church
  - Shri Swaminarayan Mandir
- Secular social media
  - Kirkstall in Bloom, Kirkstall Online, etc.
- Kirkstall Matters
Conclusion

- Strong religious and secular bubbles of community in Kirkstall
- Identity is being maintained online
Religious diversity in Kirkstall

- Kirkstall residents’ perspectives
- Religious organizations as centres for the community
- Interconnection of religion, age, migration, and community spirit
- Religious community engagement with wider community
Your Perspectives

Our survey was taken by 37 people (19 people “No religion”) – not generalizable, but maybe representative.
Religious Organizations as Centres for the Community

“...In Britain, there is a common notion that religious organizations should be community centres.”
(Nye cited in Barot, 1993, p.126)
“Religion is clearly to do with personal experience and change, and also with shared experiences and community.”

(Park. 1994, p.33)
Interconnection of Religion, Age, Migration, and Community Spirit

Transitions
- Migrants to Leeds
- Demographic changes = changes in the building organisations
- Students

Shri Swaminarayan Mandir
Would you consider Kirkstall to be a religiously diverse community?

“Very diverse communities to include, all Asian and European Countries”

“I am only aware of Christian places of worship in Kirkstall (apart from the Mormon centre on Vesper Rd). Nor am I aware of a large non-European community that might create such diversity.”
Diverse religious engagement with wider community

- Abbey Churches Together
- Leeds Chinese Christian Church
  - Teach food safe skills to Chinese restaurant personnel
  - Partner w/ NHS and Touchstone
  - Youth and family support
- Shri Swaminarayan Mandir
  - British Heart Foundation
  - Earth Hour
  - International Women’s Day
  - Bone Marrow Recruitment Drive
- Yorkshire Cricket Board: Leeds Inter Faith Project
Conclusion

- Religious community identity, but not a “Kirkstall identity”
- Challenge: Keeping their religious community identity strong through transitions in Kirkstall
- Creating opportunities for engagement
Exploring Geography and Identity

- The role of Kirkstall festival
- The influence of Kirkstall ward boundaries
- The impact of different generations
- The importance of recognising the diverse population of Kirkstall
- A look into the relationship between Kirkstall and Leeds
Kirkstall festival

- Reflects Leeds as a city
Kirkstall ward boundaries
- Impact on identity

Generational considerations
- Difference in connection to Kirkstall due to age?

Kirkstall’s diverse Population
- Difference in connection for Kirkstall’s various residents
“The intensification of worldwide social relationships has linked distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring miles away and vice versa”

(Giddens, 1990, p.64)
Conclusion

- Identification with a location is complicated by influential events, Kirkstall’s complex boundaries, age, diversity within the population and the intensification of the relationship between city and local life.
- Some residents may feel a stronger connection elsewhere but identification can be expressed towards both local and wider locations according to Giddens.
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With special thanks to...
Bibliography

- Booth, E and Perry, B. 2015. Interview with S. Allen. 25 February, Leeds
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Thank you!!