



THE GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

THE GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY
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Geographical Society of New South Wales Honours Conference 2013

*Urban Research Centre and the
School of Social Sciences and Psychology*
University of Western Sydney

Friday 15th November



University of
Western Sydney

Bringing knowledge to life

Welcome

The Council of the Geographical Society of New South Wales extends a warm welcome to all participants attending the NSW Geography Honours Conference, 2013. Established in 1927, the mission of the Geographical Society is to elevate the discipline of geography, as well as to excite and engage the public in geography. This conference began 17 years ago as an opportunity for Honour students to showcase their work and provide an opportunity to meet other people who are passionate about engaging in geographical research.

The conference rotates between Schools where geography is taught within the universities of New South Wales. Each year the Council is indebted to staff at the host institution for organising the conference. This year the Council is indebted to the generosity of the Urban Research Centre and School of Social Sciences and Psychology, University of Western Sydney. The Council extends a sincere thank you to all those people that helped make this conference possible.

To help you stay connected with the Geographical Society, those presenting are reminded that your registration fee also provides membership to the Geographical Society of NSW for one year. Please make sure that you provide Dr Garth Lean (g.lean@uws.edu.au), the Society's administration officer with your contact details. Enjoy the day, make new friends and stay connected with the Geographical Society of New South Wales.

Professor Gordon Waitt
President
Geographical Society of New South Wales

The Urban Research Centre and Geography and Urban Studies group within the School of Social Sciences and Psychology, University of Western Sydney, are delighted to host the 2013 Geographical Society of New South Wales Honours Conference.

The Honours Conference is an annual opportunity to bring together the diversity of geographical research conducted in universities across the state and to showcase the work of students from geography and allied disciplines. For many geography academics and professionals across Australia the Society's annual conference is the anniversary of their first scholarly conference and research presentation to colleagues outside their own university. For those presenting today we hope that you will find the day enriching and rewarding. Please come ready to listen, learn, ask questions and network with others who have completed or are about to set out on their Honours journey.

Dr Emma Power
Lecturer in Geography and Urban Studies, School of Social Sciences and Psychology
Vice President, Geographical Society of NSW

Location

The conference is located at University of Western Sydney, Bankstown Campus

Room: 3.G.54 (circled on the map below)

The university is easily accessible by public transport. Public buses leave Bankstown Station approximately every 10 minutes throughout the day. You can also drive to the university and parking should be available before 9am. Please ensure that you purchase a parking ticket when you arrive.

Transport Access Guide: http://www.uws.edu.au/campuses_structure/cas/campuses/getting_to_uni

Campus map: http://uws.edu.au/data/campus_maps/Bankstown_Campus_North_L.pdf



8.30	Registration, coffee and tea on arrival
8.50	Welcome, Dr Emma Power (UWS) and Associate Professor Michael Darcy (Director, Urban Research Centre, UWS)
9.00	Susanna Clement, University of Wollongong Femininities, ruralities and alcohol geographies: Women's life narratives of 'going out' and 'staying in' in an Australian country town.
9.20	Gareth Davies, University of New South Wales Rapid 2D and 3D Modelling of Coastal Salinity using Integrated Geophysical Techniques
9.40	Pete Destry, University of Western Sydney Flying Under the Radar: Factors contributing to homelessness for asylum seekers in Western Sydney
10.00	Elizabeth Robertson, University of Sydney Opening the farm gate: Exploring barriers to farm tourism in two NSW regions
10.20	Ryan Frazer, University of Wollongong "It's the need that brings me back": Ageing bodies and volunteer tourism.
10.40	Morning tea
11.00	Aran Hirsch, University of Sydney Elastic Value Chains? Institutional change and smallholder development prospects in Thailand's natural rubber industry
11.20	Amy l'Anson, University of Sydney Coal Seam Gas in the Galilee Basin, Queensland: The Geological and Social Contexts of Resource Development
11.40	Justin McCann, University of New South Wales Adequacy of environmental assessment of the proposed Macquarie River pipeline to the city of Orange
12.00	Campbell McKay, University of New South Wales Informal Drowning Prevention on Ghanaian Beaches: A Case Study of Beach-related Drowning in the Developing World
12.20	Kim Nelson, University of Western Sydney Resident attitudes towards Australian tourism: Preliminary findings from a socio-cultural study in Niseko, Japan.
12.40	Lunch
1.20	Melina Ey, University of Newcastle The Good Neighbour? Australia's Contemporary Relationship with Timor-Leste and the Asia-Pacific Region
1.40	Julianna Rozek, University of Melbourne The drought tolerance of Australian geophytes and their potential application on green roofs
2.00	Elena Sutcliffe, University of Western Sydney Understanding homeless women's experiences of place: service provider perspectives on how intersections of social difference affect geographies of homelessness.
2.20	Lillian Tait, University of Newcastle Strengths based approaches in international development: new hope or old foe?
2.40	Afternoon tea
3.00	Alexander Thomas, University of New South Wales A qualitative analysis of Sydney's cycle path network.
3.20	Mischa Vickas, University of Sydney 'From the seam to the stove: the application of Life Cycle Assessment to the Coal Seam Gas Industry'

3.40	Carrie Wilkinson, University of Wollongong Understanding the embodied geographic knowledge of people who watch birds: an exploration of encounter, performance and “becoming”
4.00	End of presentations – award deliberations and networking
4.30	Presentation of Awards
5.00	Close of conference

Susanna Clement, University of Wollongong

Femininities, ruralities and alcohol geographies: Women's life narratives of 'going out' and 'staying in' in an Australian country town.

This honours project aimed to better understand the relationship between women, age, rurality and alcohol. Specifically the thesis is concerned with transformations in women's drinking over life-courses, with the entry point being women's narratives of 'going out' or 'staying in'. Using a mix-method approach informed by post-structural feminist concepts, interviews and photo diaries of women from a country town in Victoria, Australia, were unpacked using discourse and narrative analysis. Attention was given to the different ways these women use or avoid alcohol, to make sense of themselves, their relationships with others and the places they live in as rural. Results explore sets of ideas about gendered responsibilities, classed and aged respectabilities and appropriate rural femininities that are key in shaping and reshaping the reciprocal relationships that forge drinking subjectivities, practices and places.

Gareth Davies, University of New South Wales

Rapid 2D and 3D Modelling of Coastal Salinity using Integrated Geophysical Techniques

Rising sea levels, owing to climate change, are a threat to freshwater coastal aquifers. This is because saline intrusions are caused by increases and intensification of medium-large scale influences including sea level rise, wave climate, tidal cycles and shifts in beach morphology. Methods are therefore required to understand the dynamics of these interactions. Whilst traditional borehole and galvanic contact resistivity (GCR) techniques have been successful they are time-consuming as they require physical insertion of electrodes. Alternatively, frequency-domain electromagnetic induction (FEM) and capacitively-coupled resistivity (CCR) methods are potentially useful because no physical contact with the ground is required. This research compares a DUALEM-421 (FEM) and Geometrics OhmMapper (CCR) to develop a two-dimensional model, using respectively EM4Soil and RES2DINV, to characterise hydrogeological zones from incipient dune to the beachface across Long Reef beach. Owing to ease of instrument setup and the smaller DUALEM-421 receiver array spacing, the inversion results of this instrument enabled higher resolution detection of true electrical conductivity (σ). The DUALEM-421 was subsequently used to develop 3D models at low and high tides and along the entire Long Reef Beach. Lack of significant effect of daily tidal cycles implied the saline intrusion is most likely influenced by medium-large scale drivers including local wave climate and morphology along this wave-dominated beach. Further research is required to elucidate the influence of spring-neap tidal cycles, contrasting beach morphological states and sea level rise.

Pete Destry, University of Western Sydney

Flying Under the Radar: Factors contributing to homelessness for asylum seekers in Western Sydney

This qualitative study is an exploration of the factors that contribute to homelessness for asylum seekers in Western Sydney. Asylum seekers arriving by boat continue to be controversial in both political and media terms. However, the data presented in this study is concerned with those who could be seen by Australians to 'fly under the radar': asylum seekers who arrive by plane. The research was inspired after reading a report by the Hotham Mission Project (Liddy, Sanders & Coleman 2010) about homelessness for asylum seekers in Melbourne. It was considered timely to conduct similar research in Western Sydney, a culturally diverse geographical area which includes asylum seekers living in the community on Bridging Visas. The data was collected from an agency based in Western Sydney that provides essential housing services to such asylum seekers, of which five agency staff were purposively sampled to participate in the study. The face-to-face interviews involved a series of questions pertaining to difficulties that may be experienced when obtaining accommodation. Findings confirm the complexities inherent within the Australian visa system, as well as difficulties in negotiating, and competing in, the private rental market, and the significance of social inclusion/exclusion on asylum seeker health and wellbeing. Importantly, the interconnectedness of these issues is highlighted with reference to factors such as pre and post migration stressors, the influence of media, and stigma, all of which may play a role in the success or otherwise of obtaining accommodation. The small-scale study suggests that further research is warranted as a step towards identifying potential solutions to overcoming homelessness for this group of asylum seekers.

Elizabeth Robertson, University of Sydney

Opening the farm gate: Exploring barriers to farm tourism in two NSW regions

The purpose of this research is to examine farm tourism in two peri-urban regions of New South Wales, Australia. Farm tourism involves working farms which commercially accommodate day and/or night visitors for recreation. Tourism is increasingly being adopted in agricultural areas of Australia to aid regional development and economic diversification. Yet, the outcomes of farm tourism might be less favourable than previously thought, particularly as tourism harbours its own risks and challenges (Evans 2010). Farm tourism is situated in a diverse and dynamic external milieu, which may help facilitate the industry, but this same environment can also impose barriers. This thesis compares externally-generated barriers to farm tourism in the lower Lithgow and the Wingecarribee Local Government Areas. Farm tourism operators, as well as individuals from relevant private, community and government organisations, are interviewed. A variety of social, economic and regulatory barriers are identified. These are often moderated through the socio-cultural circumstances of farmers on the rural/urban fringe and the influences of external institutions. This research highlights difficulties faced by farm tourism operators in the running of their businesses, but also shows that most are handling these barriers well, and exposes ways that farm tourism may be better enabled in the future.

Ryan Frazer, University of Wollongong

“It’s the need that brings me back”: Ageing bodies and volunteer tourism.

This paper explores voluntourism by following a group of older voluntourists who travel to the socio-economically disadvantaged village of Nayonbago, Philippines, to build a house. Drawing on post-structuralist feminist epistemology the thesis aims to better understand older people’s participation in voluntourism. Guiding questions are: How do older voluntourists navigate the ethical dilemmas of voluntourism? And what are the implications of their spontaneous encounters with socio-economic disadvantage? The resulting analyses offer new insights into the embodied geographical knowledges of older voluntourists’ experiences, charting how they both reproduce and rupture normative sets of voluntourism ideas and identities. The materialities of aged bodies became an interesting entry point into the sensuous experiences of older volunteers – an avenue not previously explored in voluntourism literature. Aged bodies encouraged reflexivity of participants’ ambiguous positioning between being both ‘helpers’ and ‘needy’ in Nayonbago. The aged bodies of participants also helped reconcile the felt differences between outside and inside of their hotel as ‘Western’ and comfortable. Through encounters with hotel air, water, food, and upholstery, participants were able to both *feel* the material threshold of the hotel, and resolve the ethical dilemma of the monetary cost of staying there through understanding it as constituting a ‘restorative’ space. The paper closes by emphasising the importance of future research on older voluntourists in the context of an ageing Australia.

Aran Hirsch, University of Sydney

Elastic Value Chains? Institutional change and smallholder development prospects in Thailand’s natural rubber industry

Prices for natural rubber have recently reached record highs. As the world’s leading producer of natural rubber, this has presented Thailand with unprecedented opportunities for economic development, especially given that the domestic rubber sector is dominated by smallholders. The industry has however, undergone significant institutional changes in recent years, with buyers imposing capital-intensive production and grading regimes. Buyer-driven demands for a more capital-intensive rubber industry present unclear developmental implications for Thai smallholders who have traditionally engaged in labour-intensive production and grading. An economic reading of this scenario would suggest that plantations have become more competitive in light of these global changes, thus jeopardising the outlook for smallholders in Thailand. This study addresses the question of whether smallholder development prospects in Thailand have been hindered, facilitated, or left unchanged by institutional change in the global rubber industry. It does so through the prism of the global value chains framework, which has yet to be applied to Thailand’s rubber industry in a published study. This has presented an ideal opportunity for this thesis to make an original contribution to Thailand’s agricultural development literature. To address the research question, fieldwork was conducted in Kanchanaburi Province in Western Thailand. Semi-structured interviews and surveys were conducted with rubber producers in Kanchanaburi, as well as a number of key public and private stakeholders across the industry.

Amy I'Anson, University of Sydney

Coal Seam Gas in the Galilee Basin, Queensland: The Geological and Social Contexts of Resource Development

The exploration and production of coal seam gas (CSG) is an undeniably contentious issue. Interdisciplinary synthesis in the management of natural resources such as CSG are few, yet are of value not only academically, but for policy makers and regional communities in understanding the realities of resources, and for industry in understanding the social context in which they operate.

The Galilee Basin of Central Queensland is touted as the frontier of CSG exploration. The opportunities and challenges for the industry are constrained not only by the variable prospectivity of the resource, but the social contexts in which it exists. Exploration for CSG in Galilee Basin is therefore a fruitful basis for an interdisciplinary examination of natural resource management. However, the geology and geography of CSG in the Galilee Basin exist in neglected areas of research, necessitating an extensive study of both the geological and geographical dimensions of the resource.

The present study explores the geological evolution of the basin in order to understand the prospectivity of the resource, and subsequently investigates the broader social issues raised by the industry, specifically examining the 'social licence to operate' in this remote region. Despite the pragmatic hurdles in doing so, it is concluded that the effective management of unconventional resources is enhanced through an integration of the social and natural sciences.

Justin McCann, University of New South Wales

Adequacy of environmental assessment of the proposed Macquarie River pipeline to the city of Orange

Orange in central western New South Wales lies within the Macquarie River catchment of the Murray-Darling Basin. To meet increasing demand for water, a government subsidised pipeline project (\$47 million capital cost, \$728,000 per year running cost) proposed to pump an average of 1,616ML yr⁻¹ from the Macquarie River, 39km from Orange. The Environmental Assessment concluded that a significant ecological impact on the Macquarie River was unlikely, and impacts on the downstream Ramsar-listed Macquarie Marshes were negligible. The pipeline has since been approved for development. We independently modelled flows and likely hydrological impacts, including downstream effects on river flows and the Macquarie Marshes. There were three critical issues we identified as inadequately assessed in the Environmental Assessment, which could potentially exacerbate the poor ecological health of the Macquarie Marshes and adversely impact on the high conservation value section of Macquarie River. We found that the pumping threshold was considerably lower than required, and there was no real limit to take from the Macquarie River. These issues contribute to increasing the impact of the pumping on the river and its dependent ecosystems. A report based on this thesis provided the basis for an article in the Sydney Morning Herald.

Campbell McKay, University of New South Wales

Informal Drowning Prevention on Ghanaian Beaches: A Case Study of Beach-related Drowning in the Developing World

Drowning is the third leading cause of unintentional injury worldwide, with the majority of incidents occurring in low and middle-income countries. Although knowledge concerning drowning in the developing world context is becoming more available, it almost exclusively concerns inland water bodies such as rivers, lakes and dams. This study generates an understanding of beach-related drowning in the developing world context by focussing on the nation of Ghana in West Africa. A mixed-method social science approach consisting of a third party beach safety questionnaire, interviews and content analysis was utilised, with the results compared to the contemporary understanding of the issue, as provided by the World Health Organization (WHO). In terms of the demography of victims (Males) and the perceptions of causes (rip currents, alcohol), the findings from this research correlate strongly with that which is advocated by the WHO. However, in relation to drowning prevention and management actions, this study illustrates how beachgoers in Ghana have formed a strong reliance on the local fishing industry to provide informal lifeguarding measures; a feature which is perhaps unique to the Ghanaian context and not included by the WHO as a recognised drowning prevention measure. The implication of this finding is that existing models of drowning prevention which are effective in Western nations may not be appropriate in low and middle-income countries such as Ghana, and it is recommended that further studies concerning beach-related drowning in the developing world context be adopted on a case-by case basis.

Kim Nelson, University of Western Sydney

Resident attitudes towards Australian tourism: Preliminary findings from a socio-cultural study in Niseko, Japan.

Over the past decade Niseko, a small ski resort in Hokkaido, Japan has experienced remarkable growth. In particular, the growing popularity of the resort has resulted in an influx of Australian tourists and tourism business owners. As Japanese society is largely homogenous this provides a unique context for examining the socio-cultural effects of tourism on a host population. More specifically, in an effort to determine what the impacts of tourism are on the host population of Niseko, this study seeks to examine local perceptions of and attitudes toward foreign tourists. In order to capture local perspectives on tourism, ten interviews were conducted with residents of Niseko in September 2013. This conference paper reports on the preliminary findings of those interviews. In particular, the paper will examine emerging issues around Japanese cultural identity and the perceived cultural barriers identified by Japanese residents as existing between themselves and Australian tourists, and more recently arrived groups of Chinese tourists. The problems that Japanese locals associate with tourism (such as inflated real estate prices and leakage of tourism profits to Australia) will be discussed alongside the simultaneous commitment that Japanese interviewees expressed toward providing outstanding customer service and hospitality.

Melina Ey, University of Newcastle

The Good Neighbour? Australia's Contemporary Relationship with Timor-Leste and the Asia-Pacific Region

This thesis uses a case study of maritime border disputes between Australia and Timor-Leste to gain insight into Australia's perception of itself and its place within the Asia-Pacific region. In considering the ongoing dispute between Australia and Timor-Leste, this case study from 2002 until 2012, provides a unique opportunity to examine Australia's dealings with a smaller neighbour, and to question what this reveals about Australia's own sense of security and inclusion within the broader region it inhabits.

In essence, this thesis argues that sustained and entrenched colonial geographical imaginations continue to dominate Australia's sense of its own identity, and adversely impact upon its consequent relationships with its near neighbours. These imaginations, including Australia as a frontier and as *terra nullius*, as an isolated 'island nation', and as a 'European outpost', all proceed to frame Australia's perception of itself and its place in the Asia-Pacific through a distinctly colonial lens. In effect, this vision also serves to performatively position Australia as outside, and distinct from its immediate region. As such, an understanding of how such legacies have been maintained and manifest themselves today is central to improving Australia's interactions and relationships with its Asia-Pacific neighbours now and into the future.

Julianna Rozek, University of Melbourne

The drought tolerance of Australian geophytes and their potential application on green roofs

Green roofs are increasingly implemented solution to many of the environmental and human wellbeing issues flourishing in cities including reducing stormwater runoff, building energy, the Urban Heat Island effect, and increasing biodiversity and green space. Adoption of green roofs in Australia is curbed by limited research on plants able to survive the extreme water availability fluctuations between rainfall caused by shallow substrates, intensified by Australia's hot and dry climate. Geophytes have displayed flexible water use which may improve the stormwater and cooling benefits of green roofs, while maintaining high plant survival. They are defined as perennial plants which persist through unfavorable conditions by entering dormancy to underground storage organs, and resprouting when conditions improve. We subjected 6 species of Australian geophytes to various periods of drought and recovery. Survival, plant water use, and above and below ground biomass were assessed throughout all treatments. Plant function was determined through relative water content of leaves and stomatal conductance. *Hypoxis vaginata* var. *Vaginata* had 100% above ground survival throughout all drought and recovery treatments, while *Arthropodium milleflorum* had lower above ground survival, but 100% recovery after watering. Differences in survival were dependent on water use rate, below ground water content, maintenance of leaf water content, and other traits. *H. vaginata* var. *Vaginata*, *A. milleflorum* and *Bulbine bulbosa* in combination were found to have maximum potential green roof benefits through high water use, maintenance of leaf cover and function, and quick recovery. Further research is required into other factors that may affect these species survival on green roofs, including drought over multiple seasons and heat, and whether similar traits and water use patterns can predict drought tolerance in other geophytes.

Elena Sutcliffe, University of Western Sydney

Understanding homeless women's experiences of place: service provider perspectives on how intersections of social difference affect geographies of homelessness.

Sociology has contributed to our understanding of the social and policy dimensions of homelessness, while human geography has advanced theoretical and practical knowledge of the spatial dimensions of homelessness. A common theme has emerged: homelessness is an experience of place. This project aims to investigate homeless women's experiences of place through interviews with service providers and support staff in women's shelters in Canberra and Sydney. Researchers have noted the feminisation of homelessness in these cities (e.g. Robinson and Searby 2006; Cripps 2010; McFerrin and Laverty 2010; Sharam 2008) — that is, the increasing number and proportion of homeless women. Yet there is still a research gap in women's experiences of homelessness. A key aim of this project is to examine if homeless women's experience of place varies by social factors, such as age, cultural background, relationship and parental status and socioeconomic circumstances. Emphasis is placed on identifying 'safe places', the connection between place and resilience, and the linkage between place, belonging and identity. These are concerns that have been identified in the *National Homelessness Research Agenda, 2009–2013*, which seeks to increase understanding of homelessness in order to improve the evidence base for policy and service responses to homelessness (FaHCSIA 2009). Data comprise of semi-structured individual and group interviews with a total of 11 service providers in Canberra ($n=6$) and Sydney ($n=5$). Service providers are best placed to have insight into *variations* in homeless women's experiences. The data are analysed through the lens of intersectionality, which is a concept that stresses the meeting of social categories, for example, gender with age, class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and so on, in individuals' sense of self as they encounter and negotiate the wider social world. The objective of this approach is to further understand the complexity of homeless women's needs, which will be useful in developing policy directions.

Lillian Tait, University of Newcastle

Strengths based approaches in international development: new hope or old foe?

A strengths based approach has emerged as a new framework for practicing international development. This approach focuses explicitly on mobilising the existing assets and capabilities within a community. In contrast to the often oppressive imaginaries of previous development approaches that focus on diagnosing deficiencies and offering ready-made 'solutions' to problems, the strengths based approach offers a potentially new way of enacting development that invites community members to define their own distinctive development pathways. I argue that development discourse can be seen as performative in that it brings into being that which it describes. As such, by speaking the language of community assets, strengths based discourse has the potential to offer spaces of hope where new realities can be enacted through development interventions. Yet to what extent can these new spaces be seen to serve neoliberal development models? Do they enrol new subjects within development or do they remain part of an old model that emphasises binaries and performs victimhood? In other words, does the strengths based approach represent new hope for the practice of development, or is it simply a new name for the old foe of development from deficiency? To answer these questions this thesis explores strengths based approaches from the perspectives of those using them in majority world contexts. Research for this thesis draws on in-depth interviews with a range of development practitioners and desk based research on the projects in which these practitioners applied the strengths based approach.

Alexander Thomas, University of New South Wales

A qualitative analysis of Sydney's cycle path network.

The contention of this thesis is that cycle planning fails to acknowledge the disconnect between current cyclists' perceptions and behaviours. This glaring omission has led to overly optimistic projections of patronage on Sydney's cycling network. The thesis has used a different approach to examine cyclist's behaviours to inform planners and policy makers in designing future cycling infrastructure. A social construction approach allowed for the creation of a palimpsest of cyclists' identities and cycling cultures, and an exploration of how the stated preferences of cyclists (what they say and think they will do while cycling) differ from their behavioural preferences (what they actually do while cycling). In current cycle planning research and praxis it is most common for only cyclist's stated preferences to be included. The thesis demonstrates that understanding and accounting for the actual behaviours of cyclists—gleaned through a geographical understanding of how cyclists act and move in place—is essential for effective cycle planning.

Utilising a mixed methods approach, a multifaceted and multi-sensory engagement with research informants and the cycling environment in Sydney was achieved. In-depth interviews and focus groups allowed for the creation of rich narratives about cyclist's self-images and stated behaviours. Photo and video data complimented this discourse by providing evidence of cyclists' actual behaviours. A critical component of this methodological approach was an auto-ethnography, which served not only to enhance my own reflexivity and positionality – as both cyclist and researcher – but also facilitated an insider's access to exclusive cycling subcultures. The research uncovered three key cyclist identities: cycle commuters, recreational cyclists, and cycle couriers. These culturally distinct groups shaped not only the aesthetic identities and paradigms of cyclists, but were also found to markedly influence their behaviours. These different behaviours necessitate the importance of a cycle path network catering to the diverse needs of cyclists, as a singular network may not be the most effective way to support and promote cycling in Sydney. Moreover, gaps in the current network identified by informants highlight the relative infancy of the cycle path network and associated research. In this thesis, I found that a geographical approach and understanding of cyclists' behaviours is paramount to future cycle planning strategies as it exposes the fundamental relationship cyclists' have with their environment.

Mischa Vickas, University of Sydney

'From the seam to the stove: the application of Life Cycle Assessment to the Coal Seam Gas Industry'

Confronted with a changing climate, Australia is looking to develop energy sources that will substantially reduce its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. With the development of Coal Seam Gas (CSG), this search is being renewed underground where the country first began its addiction to emissions intensive fuels. CSG is commonly advocated as a potential bridge from a coal-dependent energy sector to one powered by low emissions renewable technologies. Justifying the greenhouse benefits of CSG, however, requires an understanding of emissions produced throughout its entire life cycle – not only its end-use combustion, but also its extraction, processing and transport.

This thesis examined different avenues to assessing the potential GHG effects of CSG. It first examined a traditional planning approach – that of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) – through a review of a number of Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for several major Australian CSG projects. Next, it examined an alternative research-based approach – Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) – by applying it to a planned CSG development. This presentation examines the strengths and limitations of EIA, and, in applying LCA as an alternative approach to greenhouse assessment, explores the challenges that were faced in collecting data on an industry currently surrounded by a fierce social and political debate.

Carrie Wilkinson, University of Wollongong

Understanding the embodied geographic knowledge of people who watch birds: an exploration of encounter, performance and “becoming”

Outside of positivist approaches little is known about the experiences, expectations and practices of people who watch birds in Australia. Given the centrality of bird-watching to the tourism industry, as leisure practice and as citizen science, the lack of critical geographical scholarship in this context is surprising. For this reason the post-structuralist feminist approach offered in this thesis enables possibilities to reconceptualise bird-watching as an embodied and situated experience. This conceptual approach is central to understanding how people “become” “bird-watchers” at the intersections of discourse, technology, human bodies, non-human bodies and space. Empirical data was sourced through semi-structured interviews, participant observation and photo-elicitation interviews with people who watch birds on the South Coast of New South Wales. Results presented over three chapters offer new insight into the embodied and situated experiences of bird-watching. The first examines how bird-watching is reliant upon embodied geographical knowledge and technologies that facilitate proximity between humans and birds. The second explores the contradictory embodied geographical knowledge of people who watch birds as environmental citizens. The final results chapter investigates how people negotiate “becoming” “bird-watcher” in their everyday lives, and how embodied geographical knowledge may transform over a life-course as parents, through ageing and as homemakers. The conclusion sets a research agenda drawing on the geographical perspective in this project to rethink the relationship between birds, people, technologies and space.