Geographical Society of New South Wales Honours Conference

2014

School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences
University of New South Wales

Friday 21st November

UNSW
AUSTRALIA

President's Welcome

The Council of the Geographical Society of New South Wales extends a warm welcome to all participants attending the NSW Geography Honours Conference, 2014. 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 18 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. Over the years we have witnessed fantastic presentations from students who have gone on to successful professional careers and/or PhD studies before entering the academic workforce. I am confident that today's presentations will continue this proud tradition.

Each year the conference rotates between Schools where geography is taught within the universities of New South Wales. This year the Council is indebted to the generosity of the School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences (BEES), and particularly the lead conference organiser, Associate Professor Wendy Shaw, and to all those people who have made this conference possible.

Finally, please stay connected with the Geographical Society of NSW as we continue to foster the development of geography and geographers in this state by publishing the journal *Australian Geographer*, by holding functions for postgraduate students, initiating conference travel awards for post doctoral geographers and holding events such as the NSW Geography Honours Conference. For further information, please contact the Society's Executive Officer Bronwyn Bate (b.bate@uws.edu.au). Enjoy the day, make new friends and stay connected with the Geographical Society of New South Wales.

Professor Phil McManus
President
Geographical Society of New South Wales

UNSW Welcome

The School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences (BEES) at UNSW, is delighted to host the 2014 Geographical Society of New South Wales Honours Conference.

This conference is a wonderful opportunity for a highly diverse group of researchers to showcase the latest research within our discipline of geography. The experience of presenting our work to a wider audience of peers is part of our professional development. Most of all, it can be lots of fun – so enjoy the day!

Associate Professor Wendy Shaw
Vice President, Geographical Society of NSW

Location

The conference is located at UNSW, Lower Campus. Tyree Room TETB LG05 (see map).
For details on getting to UNSW Kensington http://www.facilities.unsw.edu.au/getting-uni

Driving to UNSW is easy; parking is not. For information on campus parking refer to map below but note that at this time of year FREE all day parking can be found off campus but be prepared to walk for up to a kilometre or even further, and watch for time restrictions (you don't want your memento to be a parking ticket!).

Before the conference
For convenience and to avoid time wasting, please forward your Powerpoint or similar to w.shaw@unsw.edu.au at least 24 hours before the conference. Save the file in your name.

On the day
Following the format of most conferences, each presenter will have **15 minutes** to talk, and **5 minutes** for questions. You must keep to time – there will be a monitor who will alert you at the 3 minute, 1 minute and STOP NOW mark.

The conference starts at 10am with registration but if you would like to purchase coffee/tea/cold drinks – a café is close by but you will need to allocate more time for this. Please remember to bring water with you – bottles can be refilled at refilling stations.

10.00	**Registration**
10.20	**Welcome**
10.30	Melinda Norquay, University of New South Wales
10.50	Rhonda Itaoui, University of Western Sydney
11.10	Sophie-May Kerr, University of Wollongong
11.30	Jordan Welsh, University of Sydney
11.50	Heather McGirr, University of Melbourne
12.10	**LUNCH – Bar Navitas (pizza, salad, garlic bread – other food can be purchased)**
1.00	Caitlan Buckle, University of New South Wales
1.20	Cameron Byers, University of Sydney
1.40	Adam King, University of New South Wales
2.00	Alisha King, University of Sydney
2.20	**Break – award deliberations, networking, more caffeine**
2.40	Presentation of awards
3.00	**Close**

Abstracts

'Stereotyping the Shire: How media construct place and identity and influences public opinion'
Melinda Norquay

Broadcast media plays a significant role in constructing social identities and shaping public opinion (Benefix and Liebler, 1999). Its influence is particularly apparent in the attribution of stereotypes to both place and identity, the implications of which have a variety of social and economic impacts (McNeilage, 2013). This research focuses on the stereotyping of the Sutherland Shire, and its concomitant identities, as prescribed by residents and non-residents. It investigates how the media has constructed and perpetuated negative stereotypes of this one place, and to what extent this typecasting has on the public's perception of place and identity. The 2005 Cronulla Riots were a pivotal event in the positioning of the community's identity and to non-locals' conceptualisations of Cronulla as a place. Since this event the Sutherland Shire has routinely been positioned in the media as a white, insular and privileged community. This research has sought to critically examine this positioning by assessing correlations between media content analysis and surveys undertaken with residents and non-residents.

Experiences of Islamophobia: impacts on the mobility of young Muslims in Sydney
Rhonda Itaoui

The primary objective of this paper is to examine the various experiences of Islamophobia - personal, vicarious or media constructed. In doing so it will attempt to shed light on how these experiences affect the mobility of young Muslims in Sydney. Informed by contemporary debates in human geography on the socio-spatial effects of 'new racism', this paper uses a social constructivist theoretical approach, along with a 'new mobilities' paradigmatic concern in the 'politics of mobility'. It further adopts a mixed-method approach, analysing 74 web-based questionnaire surveys and 10 follow-up interviews with young Muslims (aged 18-30 years) living in Sydney.

Previous experiences of racism have proven to 'regulate' the way young Muslims perceive and access the spaces in which these incivilities once occurred. The *personal experiences* of Islamophobia result in a (sub)conscious spatial disengagement from spaces—a result of 'normalised racism' that continues to be denied and thus unchallenged by the 'immobile Muslim'. Such spatial effects operate on a collective level, where *experiences of racism transfer vicariously* to the victims wider social networks.

By drawing on these empirical accounts of 'experienced Islamophobia', the study reveals the deeper reflexive implications of 'new racism', whereby 'outgroup' constructions not only produce racist attitudes, but also result in the spatial exclusion, and motility of subjected minority groups.

Exploring Everyday Cultures of Transport in Chinese Migrant Households in Sydney
Sophie-May Kerr

Existing aggregate statistics on transport in Australia have largely reflected the car dependent practices of the dominant Anglo-European Australian population. However, recent quantitative evidence from a survey conducted in Sydney and the Illawarra revealed that ethnic minority migrants own and use cars at statistically significantly lower rates to Anglo-European Australians. These findings highlight the importance of diversifying ethnicity in Australian transport research. The aim of this project is responding to a wider call to better understand the experiences that underpin the everyday mobility patterns of diverse ethnic groups. This project focused on Chinese-Australian migrant householders in Sydney. The findings offer insights into everyday cultures of transport. Attention is given to pre-migration norms, experiences and habits – exploring how some are retained while others are lost. The findings suggest that cultural factors help explain statistical trends for lower levels of car dependence. The findings also point towards the durability of more environmentally sustainable transport behaviours over the longer-term and suggest that Chinese migrants do not quickly or readily acculturate to patterns of car dependence.

Experts in Decision-Making: A Case Study of the Proposed Abbot Point Port Expansion

Jordan Welsh

In January 2014 the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) authorised the sea dumping of 3 million cubic metres of dredge spoil in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park associated with the Abbot Point port expansion. In September 2014, after significant community opposition, the proponents decided to consider alternatives to avoid the permitted sea dumping. The controversy centred on speculation that scientists had been overruled within GBRMPA, bringing into question the role that scientists play in the decision-making process. Using this case example, this thesis examines the role of the expert in the decision-making process and political outcome of GBRMPA's permission of the sea dumping. It investigates the knowledge flows and policy networks informing the decision; evidence of regulatory capture and the closed nature of decision-making; and the mobilisation of an oppositional social movement. The research utilises interviews with key-informants, content analysis and participant observation. It finds that the expert is a peripheral actor in the decision-making process in this case for two reasons: the barriers in the relationship between experts and the primary decision-maker, constraining knowledge exchange; and the nature of power distribution among stakeholders, producing regulatory capture and political interference. Further, the thesis finds the lack of input from experts decreased the legitimacy of the decision, creating a political opportunity for a popular oppositional movement. As such, the expert has multiple roles in decision-making, namely providing knowledge and political legitimacy, depending on their utilisation by other actors such as governance structures or social movements. This is an important finding regarding future governance of the Reef to achieve knowledge-based management and political consistency. It also highlights several problematic areas in the governance structure that require further research.

Food in the city: grounding perceptions of urban food geographies in Melbourne and San Diego County
Heather McGirr

Perceptions of food systems and food acquisition decisions are grounded in specific socio-economic and environmental contexts. This thesis is an exploration of the ways that individuals perceived their food systems, where they acquired food, and the places and definitions of 'local' they used in two urban communities in Melbourne and San Diego County. A methodological framework and research tools were used to ground the complex topic of food acquisition in data, using online self-completion surveys and photo-elicitation interviews.

Peoples' realities do not live up to their expectations. There is a clear discrepancy between the ideals and the actualities of food acquisition decision-making, particularly the desire to eat 'local food'. This research provides possible explanations for why this inconsistency exists, and the potential avenues for this to be overcome. This research also paves a trajectory for further research on the role of perceptions in food decision-making. While individuals perceived that their ideals were not reflected in their practices, their attitudes did have an effect upon their food acquisition decisions. This was because their practices can largely be explained by the interplay between their perceived priorities, food preferences, dietary requirements and decision-making constraints.

Greater education and food acquisition skills are needed in both of these localities to support sustainable food consumption (for the environment and human health). The role of community and local culture strongly emerged from this research, as key influences in shaping individuals current food acquisition practices. Therefore, community leadership could also lend a greater focus to overcoming individuals' barriers to action, to afford greater access to fresh, local, seasonal and sustainable food to empower their decision-making.

What is a treechange?
Caitlin Buckle

Treechange migration - a move from urban locations to inland regional locations – is commonly imagined as a move to Arcadian Australia for a quieter life, tree-lined streets, and the rural vistas of country living (Connell and McManus, 2011). This paper explores reasons motivating such moves and seeks to play close attention to how the treechange locations and their characteristics, such as proximity to urban areas, available facilities and services, as well as how aesthetics and economic factors are factored into migration decisions. A mixed methodology was used to compliment an existing database on the regional relocations Orange, Bathurst and the Southern Highlands. The existing database showed the perceptions of ex-urban migrants but failed to represent the perceptions of urban residents as major contributors to the treechange trend, hence residents across Greater Sydney were surveyed for their perceptions on treechange. Treechange imagery was generally thought to include separate houses with large backyards; rural outlooks and natural setting. Treechange locations were perceived to be regional locations proximal to urban areas such as Sydney, and/or with adequate facilities and services, and often locations that participants had some level of prior familiarity with. These newer descriptions of treechange built on the existing data to show that a complex phenomenon sometimes typified by lifestyle choice and desire to leave the city is tempered by a desire to retain the services and opportunities offered by an urban lifestyle.

The Contested Visions of tourism on Cape York Peninsula: Frontier fantasy, campaign rhetoric, or sustainable future?
Cameron Byers

The economic future of Queensland's biophysically remarkable Cape York Peninsula has become a national battleground for turbulent contests over human relationships to land and water. With fierce cross-scalar competition from a range of business, government, conservation and Indigenous interests, it has been referred to as a frontier region undergoing a 'multifunctional transition'. Yet key mechanics driving the form of this multifunctional transition remain under-explained both on Cape York and on other rural and/or cultural landscapes. New political developments also highlight that multifunctional trajectories are more unstable than currently represented. In particular, how *consumption* land use priorities (on Cape York, chiefly tourism)

engage in the multifunctional transition alongside more prominent *production* and *protection* priorities is unclear, despite tourism's important role across a whole gamut of otherwise contested land use imaginaries. Tools from political ecology were integrated with Holmes' (2006) multifunctionality framework to generate new knowledge on multifunctional transitions in a case study area on the east coast of Cape York. Through document analysis, participant observation, interviews with policy informants and then with tourism practitioners, the passage of land use visions through scale as they reshape a multifunctional landscape was interrogated. It was identified that the political imperative for visions to speak simultaneously to disparate scales, coupled with the discursive persistence of problematic frontier themes, made communicating clear future visions to local scale actors challenging. They have also made it difficult for these visions to speak persuasively to the concerns of local actors, including tourism practitioners, when these visions are interpreted through a place-specific 'environmentality', forged by fatiguing and disenfranchising experiences of regional governance. Analysis of contested multifunctional transitions on Cape York generated a new model to understand the political ecology of multifunctional change on Cape York, with potential for wider application.

Towards solving Wallacea: a comparative biogeographical study
Adam King

Wallacea is an area within the Malay Archipelago that was first delimited in order to resolve the lack of a succinct boundary between Asian and Australian biota. Although the biogeography of this area has been heavily studied for over a century, there are no definitive boundary lines or areas of endemism currently that stand up to rigorous empirical analysis. The aim of this study is to find and define areas of endemism empirically and systematically using comparative biogeography to gain a deeper understanding of the patterns of bioregionalisation within Wallacea.

Voluntourism: University Students in this Space
Alisha King

This thesis explores university students in the space of volunteer tourism. This topic is explored with two case studies. In Case Study 1, students from the University of Sydney who have volunteered overseas before were interviewed and in Case Study 2 the researcher joined a group of twenty-six volunteers on a project in Cambodia, to ask the questions; *What motivates university students to engage in voluntourism; are they different from other voluntourist subgroups?, What makes up the experience for university students volunteering overseas?, What do university students know about development in the communities in which they volunteer, and what is their impact (intended or unintended) on regional and local development?, And finally, what role does social media play in voluntourism and what impact has it had?* These questions paint a comprehensive picture of the voluntourist experience in the space of a previously un-reported and arguably the biggest sub-group; university students.

The thesis uses a mixed methods approach. It focuses on qualitative analysis of the volunteers through interviews, online surveys, social media analysis and in field observations. The thesis suggests university motivations to be influenced by a range of factors including *'trendiness'* and a competitive graduate job market. The results point to five key motivations; *'to travel'*, *'to meet people'*, *'to help people'*, *'to gain new skills and experiences'* and *'to experience a new culture'*. The volunteer experience is reported on and the important relationship between VSAs and university students is uncovered, commenting on the popularity of VSAs and the ability of VSAs to *'set-up'* experience.

The impact of voluntourism, from the perspective of the volunteer, is explored with the conclusion that volunteer programmes fit into a negative/positive binary. It is suggested that an international set of standards is needed to accredit the 'good' programmes. This is especially important when it was also uncovered that volunteers are signing-up to the experience unaware of what they are going to be doing, or who they are going to be doing it for. Volunteers fall back on the VSAs looking 'credible', rather than proper research and hence are exposing themselves to potential exploitation. This thesis suggests that we could be seeing a new wave of voluntourism, labelled *'Voluntourism 2.0'*, as a result of the impact and role of social media changing voluntourist experience. The thesis closes by emphasising the importance of voluntourism, with an estimated 30 million voluntourists by 2020 and uncovers further gaps that have been uncovered in the literature, both specific to university students and in general to voluntourism, or as presented, *'Voluntourism 2.0'*.