



Member in profile

August 2018

Dr Sophie Webber

I am currently a Lecturer in Geography in the School of Geosciences at the University of Sydney where I teach and conduct research in economic and environmental geography. At the beginning of 2017, I excitedly returned to Australian geography having completed a PhD at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver and a

postdoctoral research fellowship at the University of California, Los Angeles. I am relatively new to the Geographical Society, but now serve as a Councillor. I also appreciate many of the resources available to undergraduate and postgraduate students through the Society and have encouraged my students to engage with these.



Despite my very best efforts to resist, I have always been a geographer. I avoided all geography classes throughout high school and for most of my undergraduate degree at the University of Melbourne. But, a childhood spent co-designing 'lane-way tours' of transforming Melbourne in the 1990s and surveying peasants about land and market changes in rural China meant that I was continually dissatisfied with anything except geographical ways of understanding the world. When I finished my undergraduate degrees, I worked for a short time in finance, as a researcher for the Victorian government, and in economic and social development consulting. It was this latter job that pushed me back to geography and a PhD. After being asked to work as a team member in a large consortium building the then proposed desalination plant, a project I socially and environmentally opposed, I realised I relished the critical, relational, and non-hierarchical way of doing geography.

My research is focused on the politics of, and economies and markets for, climate change adaptation and development. Currently, I am researching and writing about attempts to make climate science more useful for adaptation decisions by creating market mechanisms to coordinate the supply of and demand for climate information. This has involved research at large organisations such as the World Bank and the World Meteorological Organisations through to 'end users' of climate information in

Southeast Asia and Pacific countries. I am also working in collaboration with colleagues and students at UCLA and at the University of Sydney to understand the logics and implications of emerging smart and resilience urban governance regimes, and their market and financial practices, for addressing environmental and climate changes in Jakarta, Indonesia. In these projects, I am fascinated by the way that powerful actors – development institutions, scientific organisations – continue to structure relations between the Global South and Global North and what this means for policies and practices that are intended to manage our responses to climate change in some of the most vulnerable parts of the world.