

**SOCIAL AND CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY RESEARCH GROUP of the RGS-IBG  
AGM**

**Thursday 30 August 2007,**

**1.10-2.15pm**

**Minutes**

**1. Apologies for absence**

Present: Ben Anderson, Kezia Barker, Luke Binns, Amanda Claremont, Rachel Colls, David Crouch, Gail Davies, Russell Hitchings, Elaine Ho, Louise Holt, Peter Hopkins, Phil Hubbard, James Kneale, Jamie Lorimer, Emma Roe, Divya Tolia-Kelly.

Apologies: Chris Wilbert, Molly Hurley Depret

**2. Chair's Report**

Phil Hubbard thanked people for coming. The 2006 annual report has been produced, and can be circulated if people would like. Please let Phil Hubbard know if you would like a copy. This reported our activities for 2006, including 7 successful sessions at the RGS/IBG annual conference last year and the first materialities conference at Birmingham, which was a vibrant well-attended event. Other committee activities have included responding to a number of RGS consultations during the course of the year, including those relating to proposed changes to the research council's funding and review process.

Chair's reflections on the year between the last AGM and this, focused around three points. 1) Reflections on the experience of attending the Research Group sub-committee of the RGS, which seem to have been largely focused on dissemination rather than consultation. 2) The visibility of the group, which does not always match its large membership (around 444 people). 3) The potential for more activities, including reading groups, undergraduate conferences and so forth, with an eye to promoting inclusive and democratic geographies.

**3. Treasurer's Report**

Louise Holt will be taking over as Treasurer from this year, and the committee would like to thank Chris Wilbert for his work.

Louise Holt tabled the Treasurer's report prepared by Chris Wilbert from January 2007 to present. The current balance is £3164.20. This includes a separate RGS grant for the Materialities conference of £350. The major income since January 2007 has been RGS/IBG annual grant, the main outgoing this year food and travel costs for the speakers at the Matter and Materialities seminar at Birmingham December 2006.

#### **4. SCGRG Committee membership**

The following people are currently on the committee: David Land, Darren Smith, Jo Maddern, Rachel Colls, Kezia Barker (postgrad rep), Ben Anderson, Gail Davies (Secretary), Russell Hitchings, Peter Hopkins (Membership rep), Phil Hubbard (Chair), Emma Roe, Louise Holt (Treasurer), Molly Hurley Depret (communications).

The AGM Last year saw 9 people leaving the committee and 8 new people joining. Chris Wilbert is leaving this year after a normal period of three years. In order to plan for greater continuation and overlap of committee members in future, four new members were appointed: Elaine Ho, Amanda Claremont, Jamie Lorimer and David Crouch. Phil Hubbard welcomed the new members to the committee.

#### **5. Items for Report/Discussion**

##### **5.1. Progress on website** (from written notes by Molly Hurley Depret)

The group agreed about the need for a website, and noted the written report from Molly, including the cost of server space at about £40-60 a year.

The following content is required to get the website up to date and active:

- Mission statement
- Information from committee members
- Links for different audiences – school, undergrad, master, PhD

##### **Actions:**

- Phil Hubbard to draft mission statement for circulation and review by the committee
- **All** committee members to e-mail, affiliation &/or short paragraph about themselves, can e-mail it to Molly at [mhdepret@gmail.com](mailto:mhdepret@gmail.com).
- **All** committee members to e-mail ideas for content and links Phil and Molly

##### **5.2. Developing school links**

Emma Roe raised the question of expanding SCGRG activities to include strengthening links with school syllabi. Discussion explored the range of activities this might involve – links to the GA, RGS ambassadors scheme, sponsoring schools, encouraging students in our institutions to get involved with outreach initiatives, including schools as stakeholder groups in research grants, engaging the teachers and governors on the SCGRG mailing list, a 6<sup>th</sup> form targeted event.

**Actions:** First step is to review what is already active, to avoid duplicating efforts, and collate links on appropriate section of website. This item will then be reviewed next year.

### **5.3. Update on Materialities conference**

Ben Anderson reported from the very successful Matter and Materialities seminar held at Birmingham December 2006. This was co-organised by Ian Cook and Jo Maddern, based on the format of position papers and responses, and involved about 50 people.

Two further events are planned. One in Durham around concepts of agency. This is likely to be December 2007 or January 2008. There will be a final one in June 2008. Ben Anderson apologised for the delay in staging the second event. The use of the website as a site to post papers, photos and reviews of the day to regenerate interest and momentum was encouraged.

**Actions:** Ben Anderson and co-organisers to fix dates for future events within the next twelve calendar months, and commission some reviews of the day to post on the web.

### **5.4. SCGRG Conference Sponsorship**

This year the SCGRG was involved with the sponsorship and co-sponsorship of a large number of sessions, making us one of the most active groups. These included:

- Masculinity, intersectionality and place: dominant discourses and practices – 3 sessions
- Enchanting Geographies – 2 sessions
- Creativity and its geographies – 2 sessions
- Alain Badiou and Human Geography – 2 sessions
- Media spaces beyond representations – 2 sessions
- Geographies of sleep/iness: sleepy geographies of culture, economy and politics – 1 session
- Sustainable Lives? Geographies of Palestine and Palestinians - 2 sessions
- Senses and Memory – 1 session
- Mobilising the City: the politics of movement, fixity and representation
- Animating Geographies – 3 sessions
- Corporate involvement in Geography – 1 session
  
- SCGRG Guests were Andre Joansson, Greg Nobel, Nick Couldry

However, the process for sponsoring sessions was problematic this year. A large amount of time was invested by the committee in developing a ranked list of 5 sessions to be sponsored from a large number submitted, resulting in some suggestions rejected. This was then expanded again as further room in the programme opened up.

The SCGRG was concerned about the loss of time and potential goodwill this process had involved for the group, and would fully support its revision to reflect past group activity. There was discussion about whether we could feed criteria into the RGS process for deciding which session to sponsor. Beyond normal peer review criteria this was contentious, but there was support for making clear that the group wished to encourage and could help develop postgraduate sessions.

**Action:** Phil Hubbard and Gail Davies to take these views to the RGS research group sub-committee in September. As postgraduate rep, Kezia Barker agreed to act as first point of contact for enquiries from postgraduates if necessary.

The group also discussed making a short report, for the web/newsletter from sponsored sessions a requirement for future sponsorship of sessions. This could note papers and authors, report emerging themes and give a sense of attendance. This idea was widely supported.

**Action:** Future session organizers to be told of this requirement. Gail Davies to contact sessions sponsored this conference to ask for a brief report.

### **5.5 Future RGS Conference plans.**

The theme for the next RGS/IBG conference in London will be 'Geographies that Matter'. A range of future ideas were discussed.

- Divya Tolia Kelly raised the idea of a session exploring interdisciplinary materialities, exploring overlaps between archaeology and geography
- Rachel Colls suggested a panel on materialities in different parts of the discipline.
- Ben Anderson proposed a session revisiting/reviewing non-representational theory.
- Amanda Claremont proposed a joint session on historical dimensions to gardens.
- It was also noted that there had been less 'social' sessions recently (as opposed to those which are distinctly 'cultural').

**Action:** The process for submitting ideas for sponsored sessions to the RGS has yet to be agreed. This will be circulated to the entire group following the Research Group sub-committee meeting in the autumn.

### **5.6 Other conferences ideas**

Darren Smith raised the idea of a seminar revisiting ideas of Difference and Otherness. The group supported the development of this. The suggested timing of summer 2008 will need to be agreed alongside the final dates for the summer 'materialities' seminar. It was proposed to allocate a £1000 contingency for this event, asking Darren to aim for a break-even model, with what is left in contingency to be used to help fund postgrad travel and subsistence.

**Action:** Darren Smith to liaise with Ben Anderson to find clear dates and update group with plans.

The group also discussed Group sponsoring sessions in conferences other than the Annual IBG-RGS conference (for example, the BSA). The group agreed these could be an appropriate way to raise the profile of the group and subdiscipline.

### **5.7 Review of activities**

The SCGRG page on the RGS website says we are engaged with the following activities: "newsletter, undergraduate conferences, residential reading meeting, strengthening links to school geography". We discussed the range of activities we are currently involved in and whether we should expand them.

The idea of reintroducing the reading weekend was supported, as something that is good for developing ideas and networking, especially for younger researchers. Two models – the more focused and the broader – were discussed.

**Action:** Kezia Barker and Elaine Ho agreed to take forward this idea, with plans for a meeting in Easter 2008. Kezia and Elaine to draft some initial ideas and get further feedback and support from the group.

### **5.8 Dissertation Prizes**

Other research groups have dissertation prizes for undergraduate/masters. We discussed introducing one for the SCGRG, but the broad scope of the group could make judging this a very onerous task.

However, it was noted that the Geography Compass has a graduate essay prize competition: £100 for best student essay submitted by 1st Feb 2008. There are prizes for the urban, cultural and social sections, so all are asked to encourage postgrads to submit relevant articles to either Phil Hubbard (urban) Ian Cook (cultural) or Jon May (social). The refereeing process is now fairly quick/smooth, and we are keen to encourage new career researchers. See: [http://www.blackwell-compass.com/home\\_graduate\\_essay](http://www.blackwell-compass.com/home_graduate_essay)

## **6. Any other business**

There was no other business.