

RGS-IBG Social and Cultural Geography Research Group AGM 2011

Thursday 1st September 2011, 13.10

Royal Geographical Society

Minutes: Russell Hitchings and Gail Davies

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Owain Jones and Jo Norcup.

In attendance: Gail Davies (chair), Russell Hitchings (secretary), Chris Bear (treasurer and membership secretary), Emma Roe (Dissertation Prize), Harriet Hawkins, Ben Anderson, Amanda Rogers, Hannah Macpherson, Sarah Mills, Mia Hunt, Lucy Rose, Rebecca Sandover, Penny Holiday, Lia Shimada, Katy Bennett

2. Chairs report: Gail Davies

The chair started by thanking everyone for their contributions to the group's activities that year.

The group currently has around 460 members. We are around £1810 in credit.

The main activities support by the group for 2010-2011 included:

- The January 2011 event on 'Geography and the New Empirics' (see <http://www.scgrg.org/geography-and-the-new-empirics/>). This event included 50 participants from geography and other disciplines, with workshops, a keynote paper from Alan Latham (UCL), submitted papers, and a closing panel debate. Thanks to Harriet Hawkins, Chris Bear, Amanda Rogers and Alex Tan for their work running this event.
- Bursaries were provided for three conferences organised by the wider membership on: Space and Irigaray (Oxford), Salty Geographies (Glasgow) and Urban Greenspace (Leeds Metropolitan).
- The SCGRG received a record number of submissions (for 50 slots) for conference sessions for the 2011 RGS-IBG conference. In the end, we were only able to sponsor less than half of these. The full list of sessions co-sponsored were:
 - (Re)Imagining Materialities
 - 'Emerging from the dark': explorations into the experiences of the night (4 sessions)
 - "Getting lost on the way to Farmville": Virtual, mobile and online spaces of interaction
 - Emerging geographies of animal-technology co-productions
 - Exhibitionary Geographies and the Post-Museum (2 Sessions)

- Geographical perspectives on the British Diaspora
 - Geographies of Friendships (4 Sessions)
 - Geographies of Humour and Humorous Geographies (2 sessions)
 - Meteorological Imaginations: Towards geographies of affective practices of weather, atmospherics and landscapes (3 Sessions)
 - Mobile Geographies of Art: Bodies, technologies and transnationality (2 sessions)
 - Moving Geographies: Film and Video as Research Method (3 sessions)
 - For further details see <http://www.scgrg.org/2011/08/rgs-ibg-ac2011>
- The group was pleased to provide day passes for five research group guests: Miriam Burke (independent artist), Jane Dyson (independent anthropologist), Ben Gallan (Australian Centre for Cultural Environmental Research), Ralph Hoyte (independent artist), and Nicola Triscott (director Arts Catalyst).

Other news included:

- The publication of the special Forum: Reinvigorating social geographies? in the journal Social and Cultural Geographies in August 2011. This forum followed from the Brighton conference sponsored by the group in 2009.
- In autumn 2010, the committee published a joint statement on tuition fees; the text is available at <http://www.scgrg.org/2010/12/social-and-cultural-geography-research-group-statement-on-tuition-fees/>. The statement was widely circulated and supported.
- The chair would also like to thank members who have responded to requests from the RGS for consultation on school curriculum and voting for RGS Council.
- There have been no proposals for the 'Events fund' in 2011.

Matters arising: There was a brief discussion of further plans publishing plans from the New Empirics conference. The event organising committee to review and put any proposals forward for discussion via email. We also discussed the reason for lack of proposals coming forward for the events fund. Some informal approaches fell outside the deadlines. There has also been some feedback that the amounts on offer are too small. Given the changes to the RGS-IBG next year, we decided not to change the way this was working this year, but to use the fund to support SCGRG events around the RGS (see below)

3. Treasurer's Report: Chris Bear

The group is £1810 in credit.

The total spend last year was £1800, with income of £1350.

The main outgoings were the new empirics conference, dissertation prize and bursaries for conferences.

The main incoming funds were the RGS subvention, the RGS Research Group grant and participant registration fees for the 'New Empirics' conference.

The only recurrent costs for the group are the £100 and £50 dissertation prizes.

The group has been working to reduce the overall balance carried forward each year by the group, without eroding the future capacity of the group to run events. Since 2009, the balance has reduced from around £3,000 to £1,800. The aim is to reduce this still further to around £1,000 to £1,500.

There may be some future challenges to the group's income. As the number of RGS groups has grown, the subvention to each group has reduced. This was £650 in 2009, and is now £500. Bearing in mind the £150 committed each year to the dissertation prize, this could reduce the scope of the group to stage events.

Whilst we are still carrying a large balance we felt we did not need to do anything to address this, but in the future options for charging non-RGS members to be part of the group and charging fees for events were discussed.

4. Committee membership

The chair thanked Alex Tan for his two years as postgraduate representative. Elaine Ho has had to return to Singapore for the year, so Chris Bear has been appointed Acting Treasurer (by Chair's action). This post will be reviewed at the next AGM in 2012.

The group had a large influx of new committee members in 2009, and there will be a large number standing down in 2012, including Gail Davies (chair) and Russell Hitchings (secretary).

We talked about how to ensure the smooth hand over to new members and to build a rounded committee that represents the diversity of social and cultural geography.

Action: All committee members informally to canvas others who might be interested over the coming months about potentially joining the group in this capacity from 2012.

We were also very pleased to recruit a number of new members to the committee. These included Sarah Mills (as membership secretary, taking over from Chris Bear), Mia Hunt and Rebecca Sandover (joining us as new postgraduate reps), and Hannah Macpherson (joining as committee member). The committee welcomed the new committee members.

The full committee for 2011-12 is as follows:

- Gail Davies (Chair) (secretary 2006-2009, chair 2009-2012)
- Russell Hitchings (Secretary) (2006-2009, secretary 2009-2012)
- Chris Bear (Acting Treasurer) (2009-2012)
- Sarah Mills (Membership Secretary) (2011-2014)
- Jo Norcup (Education co-ordinator) (2009-2012)
- Emma Roe (Dissertation Prize co-ordinator) (2006-2009, 2009-2012)
- Mia Hunt (Postgraduate Representative) (2011-2012*)
- Rebecca Sandover (Postgraduate Representative) (2011-2012*)
- Ben Anderson (2006-2009, 2009-2012)
- Kate Boyer (2009-2012)
- Harriet Hawkins (2009-2012)

* According to RGS rules, postgrad representatives are appointed on a one-year basis, but we very much hope you will consider re-election to a longer term.

- Elaine Ho (2007-2010, 2010-2013)
- Owain Jones (2010-2013)
- Hannah Macpherson (2011-2014)
- Amanda Rogers (2009-2012)

The list shows the terms of the committee, and the need to plan for the large number of members leaving their posts in 2012. Committee members who have served one term can stand for further election for another three-year period, but on RGS regulations those who have served for two terms must stand down.

Action: Chris Bear and Sarah Mills to liaise to hand over the letter templates and contact details for the membership secretary role. **New members** to submit brief biographies to Gail Davies to post on the web. **Existing members** to submit any alterations to their biographies <http://www.scgrg.org/committee/>.

5. Dissertation Prize: Emma Roe

Emma Roe detailed the selection process for the prize for the benefit of new members. It was agreed that this was working very well. We talked about making sure all relevant departments were aware of the prize (in view of staff turnover amongst those responsible for organising dissertations in each relevant university) and about how we might make sure that only very good submissions are received (to minimise on excess marking). It was thought that one very good way of doing this would be to continue with the practice of (after soliciting consent from relevant students) putting the winning prizes onto our website as an online archive. This was thought to be a good idea in terms of also increasing traffic to the site and promoting the group more generally.

The committee subsequently met in a closed group to agree the final winners. The winner was the dissertation from Durham University, entitled "We are not here, we are not there": Young Refugees' and Asylum Seekers' Negotiations of Identity and Belonging. The runner up was Mary McLaren from Exeter University 'Constructing distant geographies of care: the example of Fairtrade in Horsham'. The winner is awarded £100 and the runner up £50. Both are also awarded a year's individual subscription to the Taylor and Francis journal Social and Cultural Geography. The chair thanked the publishers for their support for this prize.

Action: Emma Roe to contact the winners and liaise with **Chris Bear** and Taylor and Francis to organise the dissertation prize. **Gail Davies** to check with new and past winners about posting their dissertations on the web.

6. RGS-IBG annual conference 2012

The next RGS-IBG annual conference will be held in Edinburgh from 3-5th July 2012. It is likely to be a smaller event due to space constraints. All deadlines will also be two months earlier than normal.

There was much discussion about how best to deal with the challenges (and opportunities) presented by the smaller annual conference in Edinburgh next year. The SCGRG normally stretches its allocation of sessions well beyond its nominal allocation of seven slots, which every research group gets. This year we had people submitting proposals for over 50 individual slots (with some topics looking for multiple slots). In the end, we managed to co-sponsor around 24. However, it has been suggested we

just will not have the same flexibility next year. We should expect to schedule only 7 1hr 50mins slots in the main conference, but have the potential to run some separate pre or post conference event alongside the main conference. We will know more at the RGS research subgroup committee meeting in early October.

At the SCGRG AGM this year, we talked about how we might decide what these seven slots would comprise. Based on the submissions for AC2011, this would have had the effect of us turning down 85% of everything proposed to us, which seems arbitrary and a waste of effort across the board.

With the smaller conference next year, we decided we might like to 'curate' these slots ourselves, so as to use the sessions to develop broad conversations across work in social and cultural geography, rather than solicit pre-organised sessions, which tend to be more focused

It was decided that we might also like to try and run a more open postgraduate focused pre-conference event on 'emerging research in social and cultural geography' to ensure that opportunities for postgraduates are not curtailed.

We discussed how we might take this approach forward. We have limited time so it was decided the committee would try to arrange a conversation over email in the coming weeks to decide on possible topics / themes that should ideally both speak to the conference theme in some way and also allow for a diversity of cultural / social appropriations, with a face-to-face meeting later in the year to review the papers submitted to sessions.

Themes already proposed include one linked to the conference theme on security, and one on social and cultural geographies with impact. Amanda Rogers also proposed a panel discussion of social and cultural geographers responding to current events. This was widely supported.

Actions: Gail Davies to report on more details conference plans from the 3rd of October sub-committee meeting. In the meantime, the group to start some discussion on the focus of themes via email. Gail to contact Postgraduate forum to see if it would be possible to schedule a pre-conference event before their training afternoon. (This has already been done, and Cheryl Willis is keen). **Russell Hitchings** to liaise to find a date for a meeting in the autumn to review submitted papers in person.

7. Communications

The SCGRG now has a profile on the web, facebook and twitter. Chris Bear and Emma Roe reported how committee members are using various means to promote the group. Over one hundred people 'like' us on facebook, and various individual committee members use twitter independently. Gail Davies maintains the website (with help from Richard Milne and Chris Bear), which has around 60 members signed up. We discussed how to encourage links between different interfaces such as twitter and the website. We discussed how it might be a good idea to find a way of making sure interested parties can move easily between different sites, including a new dedicated twitter account @SCGRG_RGS.

Actions: Gail Davies has now set up the new twitter account and emailed the login details to all the committee. The success of this will depend on **all committee members** logging in to this to use it effectively. **Chris Bear** is exploring how to link the

facebook site to the twitter feed. **Richard Milne** is exploring how to link the website to twitter.

8. AOB

Gail Davies drew attention to the educational resources and links to other RGS resources (publishing, grants etc.) on the SCGRG website and encouraged committee members to respond to Jo Norcup's request for information on further educational resources.

9. Dates

3rd October 2011 Research Group Sub-committee meeting at the RGS
31st October 2011 Deadline for Research Group Grants
31st January 2012 Annual Report due
3-5th July 2012 RGS-IBG Annual Conference in Edinburgh

The date of the next AGM will be during the next annual conference meeting in Edinburgh.