

Annual Conference 2013

Welcome from the chair of conference

**Royal
Geographical
Society**

with IBG

Advancing geography
and geographical learning

Welcome to the 2013 RGS-IBG conference, and to London!

One of the pleasures of accepting the role of Chair was the chance to select a theme for the conference. I am sufficiently aware, however, to appreciate that agrarian transformations in Asia – my own cosy research corner – might not attract much of an audience. I wanted to select a theme that was meaningful across all geographical fields, could be interpreted in a variety of ways, and would therefore provide scope for a rich variety of engagements. I wanted a theme that was open but also one which research groups and panel organisers could define, if they wished, in quite narrow terms. 'New geographical frontiers', I felt, was such a theme.

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The 'frontier' can be employed as a concept, a metaphor, or as a point of empirical focus. While it is a classic geographical preoccupation that has rightly been problematised, it continues to command our attention. I have been delighted by the response of the Research Groups, independent session organisers, journals sponsoring sessions and individual authors to the theme. I am also pleased that the conference has attracted new participants and audiences, with more international delegates than ever before. Over the next three days we will discuss and debate the re-working of frontiers under the forces of globalisation, the shifting frontiers of geographical theory, innovations in geographical methods and thought, the challenge of inter- and trans-disciplinarity for geographical practice, and the changing role and place of geography in society and economy.

The conference opens with an expert panel considering 'Migration, climate change and the research and policy imperative' on Tuesday evening. On Thursday lunchtime, Tania Li considers 'What is land? Making-up a resource', while later that day Anindita Datta and colleagues discuss 'Gendered violence: Gendered frontiers' drawing on case studies from across the global North and South. This is one of the 100+ sessions which mark the centenary anniversary of permanent admission of women to the RGS. Finally, the Friday plenary considers new frontiers of scholarly publishing in an exploration of the landscape of open access publishing. These are just a selection of highlights -- we are expecting some 1,500 participants who will contribute to more than 300 individual panels and sessions; it will be here, in these smaller and more intimate sessions where, I hope, the future of geography will be explored, debated and challenged.

I would like to thank all those involved in the organisation of the conference, particularly Stephanie Wyse, Madeleine Hatfield and Catherine Souch, but also all others at the RGS-IBG who have been working so hard to arrange the event and ensure it runs smoothly. In addition, I am grateful to all of you who have taken the trouble to convene sessions and cajole presenters and who, over the next three days, will be chairing sessions or, indeed, just attending to give the conference the frisson that will make it an event to remember.

Jonathan Rigg, RGS-IBG Conference Chair 2013
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