

# The Slawson Award

**Royal  
Geographical  
Society**  
with IBG

Advancing geography  
and geographical learning

## Andrew Vincent Bradley

### Education

- BSc (Hons) in Geography, University of Hull (1993)
- MSc in Earth Observation Science, University of Leicester (1997)
- PhD Geography, University of Leicester (2005)

### Current position

Research Associate, University of Leicester  
Department of Geography (2009)

### Slawson Award

Andrew's received the Slawson Award in 2001 for his thesis '**Driving forces of land-use and land-cover change around tropical montane forests of South America**'.



The forests on the eastern side of the Andes Mountains are high in biodiversity and in some areas are protected by national parks. Exclusion of people with traditional land use rights created a new threat to the forests since too much land-use pressure on the surrounding regions could encourage people to return to the parks. Previous contact with NGOs had indicated that in the national parks burning grasslands to improve pasture was destroying forest at the upper tree-line, and in the lowland areas forests were being fragmented through cultivation of the coca bush, the base ingredient for cocaine. Andrew went out to investigate pressures around a Peruvian and Bolivian National Park. His field research focused on understanding contemporary livelihood activities and decisions, and the historical context of land use in and around the national parks. Andrew's fieldwork was for 4 months in 2002 during this time he interviewed Bolivian farmers about contemporary land-use, land-use change and changes in farming activities.

Andrew found that burning for cattle grazing in the highlands was largely related to community areas which evolved from the structure of the original Spanish haciendas. Strict management of community activities in the Peruvian park had reduced burning; conversely the absence of management in the Bolivian Park meant people still exercised their historical rights to graze cattle in the mountains and burning at the tree-line continues. In the lowland areas clearance of forest was largely a result of road access for colonization which began in the 1960s. Since that time Bolivian colonist farmers' livelihoods depended on prices of tropical fruits and coca leaf. From the 1980s anti-coca policies encouraged less lucrative alternatives to coca which required the clearance of greater areas of forest which has caused significant environment damage by disconnecting the montane forests from the lowland forests. In contrast to this, Andrew found although the lowlands in Peru have experienced minor incursions of coca cultivation in the park, the lowland montane forest is relatively safe since the area around the park has remained remote and underdeveloped, and is now decreed as a new national park.

### Since the Slawson Award

The results of the fieldwork were combined with a time series of land-cover changes mapped from satellite images so Andrew could interpret how changes in livelihood decision making had impacted on land-cover change. These results were channeled into the completion of Andrew's PhD thesis, and have contributed to several publications on grassland burning and forest fragmentation. Andrew has since been employed at the University of Reading, the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and the University of Leicester concentrating on remote sensing burning activity and vegetation cover. Andrew revisited the Bolivian field site in 2007 to pursue further research questions that arose during this fieldwork.

Andrew says that this award from Paul and Mary has been invaluable. The award has allowed him to experience fieldwork in a range of tropical environmental conditions and a cultural understanding of Andean peoples. It has stimulated his current research agenda.

