

Annual Conference 2010

Welcome from the chair of conference

**Royal
Geographical
Society**

with IBG

Advancing geography
and geographical learning

I accepted the invitation to Chair the 2010 Conference of the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) in April 2009. The global financial crisis was raging. Capitalism, which had nearly ground to a halt in September 2008, had been saved by determined intervention but credit markets were effectively frozen and economies across the world had plunged into recession. Looking ahead a year and a half to the Conference, the obvious choice was not merely to centre its theme around research agendas directly related to the crisis but, most importantly, to look forward to the challenges to be confronted as the global economy began to move out of crisis. How would geographers, both human and physical, respond via their research questions to those challenges, and to what extent would they be able to set cross-disciplinary research agendas prompted by the crisis and by subsequent economic and societal readjustment?

... In the intervening year, as recovery has slowly begun to take hold – albeit at very different rates across the global economy – the nature of those challenges, both practical and intellectual, has become clearer. For the social sciences, as Sylvia Walby in a paper for the Academy of Social Sciences has recently argued, the failure to predict the financial crisis and to articulate the risks of ‘over-financialisation’ implies the need to develop a post-crisis research agenda centred firmly around the changing interrelationship of finance with social institutions. That is to say, focused not only on issues of regulation, governance and legality but also on civil society aspects of financialisation such as consumerism and its alternatives. For the environmental sciences, related issues have concerned the impact of the crisis and the uneven recovery of economies on the politics of both climate change research and global emission targets. Transition pathways to low-carbon economies have simultaneously become more vital yet more problematic.

A year after my acceptance of the Chair it is now clear that the UK economy, post-crisis, will inevitably be restructured to have less dependence on financial and business services, and will need to rely to a greater extent on other sectors – such as the creative industries – to drive future growth. The burden of debt and an ageing society will reconfigure public services, and UK universities and our own discipline within those institutions will be repositioned. The challenge of developing new environmental industries within a low carbon economy will have to be grasped, and policy makers will inevitably focus on promoting more sustainable and resilient growth within a ‘smart economy’.

Each of these issues, and more, are covered at the Conference by high-profile plenary session guest speakers. Richard Florida, University of Toronto, will lead the Conference on Wednesday 1 September speaking on the creative industries and their role in the post-crisis global economy. On Thursday 2 September, David North, Director of Community & Government at Tesco plc, and former Home Affairs Private Secretary and Senior Policy Advisor to Prime Minister Tony Blair, will address issues of sustainable consumption and development. On Friday 3 September Paul Boateng will draw on his recent experience as British High Commissioner to South Africa 2005-09 to consider the impact of the crisis and uneven recovery on the Global South. In keeping with the long and valued ‘bottom up’ traditions of the Annual Conference, we also see a range of rich and widely varied Research Group organised sessions covering all aspects of contemporary geographical enquiry.

As conferences on this scale don’t organise themselves, I would like to thank the AC2010 team, notably Stephanie Wyse, with Catherine Souch and Georgina Endfield, for their professionalism and energy in making the Annual Conference as good as it possibly could be. In addition, my thanks go to the team of RGS-IBG staff and volunteers who will welcome you to the Society over the next three days, and to the convenors of the various RGS-IBG research group sessions who made a big contribution to creating a lively, topical and engaged Conference.

I do hope you all enjoy the Conference, leaving enriched and enthusiastic to return next year for the Conferences of the RGS-IBG and EUGEO Congress of European Geographers.

Neil Wrigley, RGS-IBG Conference Chair, University of Southampton

Welcome from the Chair of the BSG 50th Anniversary Conference



The British Society for Geomorphology (BSG), formerly the British Geomorphological Research Group, is 50 years old.

As part of its celebrations the BSG has convened meetings over the last 12 months to identify the 'Grand Challenges' that face geomorphology and earth surface process research over the next 50 years. People with diverse interests have contributed to the debate, identifying five themes: simulation and uncertainty; providing the baseline - records of environmental change; processes at the surface of the Earth; connectivity in Earth surface systems; and technological advances.

The British Society for Geomorphology is delighted to be part of the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) Annual Conference in this, the BSG's 50th year. During the conference BSG sessions will debate the five themes. Each will be introduced by a keynote lecture and both the BSG and RGS-IBG are delighted to welcome a group of speakers from across the world, who are making major research contributions relevant to their theme. Each keynote is supplemented by a collection of submitted papers. The BSG is also pleased to be contributing to the wider Annual Conference, through its co-support of the 30th IGC lecture and organisation of the Tuesday evening debate entitled *Fragile environments: are we at a tipping point?*

The primary mission of the BSG is to develop understanding of the form of Earth's surface and the processes that shape it. Tied with this is a broader perspective encompassing interfaces with the lithosphere, atmosphere, hydrosphere, biosphere and anthroposphere. This makes the Earth's surface the domain of the natural sciences, not just geomorphology. It is this encompassing approach, often at the interface between geomorphology and other disciplines, which will lead to the identification of grand challenges. After all, the disciplinary periphery is often where the big questions are and it is where the broader relevance of our work is best demonstrated and judged.

All participants in the Annual Conference are welcome to attend sessions organised by the BSG. Full details are provided in the main programme.

Robert Allison, BSG Conference Chair, University of Sussex