

# RGS-IBG Slawson Award Recipients

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**Year:** 2008

**Principal Investigator:** Li Kheng Poh (University of Brighton)

**Project Title:** NIMBYism and Environmental Accountability in Malaysia: Insights from the Broga and Bukit Merah Environmental Campaigns

**Abstract:**

To date, much research on environmental conflicts in Asia has focused on deforestation and the dispossession of indigenous people in rural areas. Far less attention has been paid to conflicts arising from the impacts of pollution, especially NIMBY (not-in-my-backyard) environmental campaigns. This study seeks to address the research lacuna by examining the contrasting results of the Broga (2004-2006) anti-incinerator and the Bukit Merah (1983-1995) anti-toxic waste disposal campaigns in Malaysia, and their implications for theorizing environmental accountability. Using a qualitative approach, the study will examine how heterogeneous groupings of campaigners with disparate interests have collectively utilized right-to-information and participatory discourses to negotiate spaces for accountability. It will uncover the processes through which environmental accountability is demanded of the government and business interests.

**Year:** 2008

**Principal Investigator:** Gotzone Garay (Canterbury University)

**Project Title:** Kenyah Badeng Ethnoclimatology: Local Knowledge, Scientific Forecasting and Responses to the El Nino Phenomenon in Central Borneo

**Abstract:**

El Niño events have been increasing in frequency and intensity in Borneo since the 1970s. While historical records describe past responses, studies of ethnoclimatological knowledge, responses to climatic events, and the effects of new science-based forecasting on contemporary farming communities are unknown. Using ethnographic and ethnobiological methods, this research will examine the historical and dynamic interaction of Kenyah Badeng traditional and scientific knowledge systems, and their effects on social, political and economic response strategies. The research will deepen our understanding of local responses to climate variability, as well as contribute to the growing literature on the anthropology of climate forecasting.

**Year:** 2007

**Principal Investigator:** Roy Huijsmans (Durham University)

**Project Title:** Local Childhoods in a Global World: Changing Place, Social Position, and Meaning of Work Practices Among Lao Children

**Abstract:**

The project proposed to investigate the labour migration of children and youths in Lao PDR. There are three primary areas of study, each with its own research question: 1.) Work: What kinds of work do Lao children (12-18) do? Where do they go to do this work? 2.) Level of variation and social relations: How is the 'what' and 'where' of work among children distributed across households within the study village? How do norms of gender and seniority dictate the 'what' and 'where' of children's work? To what extent, and how, do children through the 'what' and 'where' of work negotiate with, resist, or comply with gender and seniority norms? What are the new social settings and relations children engage with through the spatial dimensions of work, and how are working children socially positioned in this? How do children experience and deal with the vulnerabilities and opportunities offered by spatially diverse work practices? 3.) Policy: How do children's experiences of, and motivations for, spatially diverse work practices relate to the underlying ideas of the policies addressing the phenomenon of children working beyond their local communities?

**Year:** 2007

**Principal Investigator:** Richard Paley (University of Cambridge)

**Project Title:** Factors Influencing Effectiveness of Protected Area Management Institutions and Organisations in Cambodia

**Abstract:**

In Cambodia considerable financial and technical investment in protected areas (PAs) by donors with little discernable reduction in forest degradation is occurring. Numerous technical reports outline the threats facing PAs in Cambodia; few focus on their management. Research on the effectiveness of PA management globally, has concentrated on issues of design, management of land, ecosystems and local communities, and ecological integrity. Yet a critical issue in conservation success is the way conservation organisations themselves are organised. To understand how to improve the success of PAs and their long-term sustainability we therefore need to understand better the organisations managing them.

The objective of this research was: 'to understand how the outcomes of protected area management are influenced by: the internal structure of management organisations and operation of management institutions, and external processes and pressures. The work focuses on Cambodia, a country with a significant and relatively recently-established PA system, where organisational and management issues are recognised as critical to conservation success. The primary research questions are: 1.) What are the objectives of the Cambodian PA system and what policies are relevant to PA management?; 2.) In what ways is conservation delivered on the ground

**Year:** 2007

**Principal Investigator:** Fraser Sugden (University of Edinburgh)

**Project Title:** Markets, the State and Social Structures on the Nepali Lowlands: The Political Economy of Agrarian Change

**Abstract:**

In recent years, poverty alleviation strategies in Nepal have relied on the promotion of small scale, market-orientated farming. However, ten years after initial implementation, Nepal's agrarian policies have failed to meet many of their objectives. This research attempts to investigate why the market has not solved agrarian poverty by exploring how power relations and social structures shape market participation. The research argues that such factors are crucial to understanding why some farmers can capitalize on new market opportunities and others cannot. The research focuses on a region, Morang, where there has been significant state led promotion of small farm commercialisation. The aim is to understand the dynamics behind farming households' livelihood decisions with regards to market orientated production. The principle research questions are: 1.) How are they affected by the socio-economic status of farming households, such as labour relations and access to land?; 2.) How are they affected by unequal power in the market?; 3.) What role do social networks and trust-based institutions play?; 4.) How important is caste and gender for access to the market?

**Year:** 2006

**Principal Investigator:** Troy Sternberg (University of Oxford)

**Project Title:** Water and Land Use in Change in the Mongolian Environment

**Abstract:**

Since the end of Soviet-style communism in 1990 the Mongolian countryside has experienced a loss of government support and regulation and encountered economic pressure to maximise use of natural systems. This progression has disrupted established rural water supplies and land use practices, particularly among the region's nomadic pastoralists. As water resources, mobility patterns, and land tenure evolve the environmental implications of this pastoral transformation remains little studied. By examining water and land use change in the Mongolian countryside this research can contribute to a better understanding of ongoing human and ecological processes in arid regions.

**Year:** 2006

**Principal Investigator:** Alexandra Conliffe (University of Oxford)

**Project Title:** The Rio Conventions: Multi-Scalar Synergies, Trade-Offs and Impacts on Local Livelihoods in the Aral Sea Region

**Abstract:**

Using an interdisciplinary approach incorporating scientific and social scientific lines of enquiry, this project aimed to examine the synergies and tradeoffs that exist between the 'Rio Conventions': the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD), and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Through case work in Uzbekistan, the research cut across four overlapping layers of analysis (household, community, national and international) to understand the socioeconomic, political and institutional local realities in which global conventions are implemented. The research responded to calls to better understand the interlinkages between international environmental policy-making and on-ground realities.

**Year:** 2006

**Principal Investigator:** Julie Taylor (University of Oxford)

**Project Title:** Indigenous Knowledge and Geographic Information Systems in Namibia's West Caprivi

**Abstract:**

This doctoral research focuses on significant issues concerning environmental conservation, culture and human development in rural southern Africa. It is innovative in terms of its focus on the growing use of GIS for development and natural resource management in Namibia. Using participatory mapping and GIS as tools, local indigenous knowledge about natural resources can be tapped for the purposes of environmental planning, decision-making and monitoring by local communities, environmental NGOs and state agencies.

**Year:** 2005

**Principal Investigator:** Lorena Pasquini (University of Sheffield)

**Project Title:** Private-Sector Protected Areas and Biodiversity Conservation in the Cape Floristic Region, South Africa

**Abstract:**

Privately owned conservation areas are becoming increasingly important in meeting national conservation objectives, but this niche has rarely been academically assessed. This project seeks

to explore and understand the private conservation sector, in order to direct its growth in a manner that both improves conservation and helps achieve other social goals over the long-term.

**Year:** 2005

**Principal Investigator:** Emma Whittingham (University of Exeter)

**Project Title:** Exploring Local and External Development Interfaces in Changing Fisheries Livelihoods in Cambodia

**Abstract:**

The aim of this research is to explore the different meanings of sustainable development within the context of community fisheries development in Cambodia and to understand how global representations of sustainable development are transformed locally and the implications of this process on local livelihoods. The research focuses on two case studies: the Mekong River in the northern province of Stung Treng on the border of Laos, and in the southwest coastal province of Koh Kong on the border with Thailand. Taking a qualitative approach, the research attempts to gain in-depth insight from the many people involved in each project, ranging from project staff and their partners from provincial and local government, to a range of different households in one village where the project works. Through semi-structured interviews and observation the research tries to understand the diversity of local livelihoods and encourages people to reflect on their involvement in the community fishery and what they perceive to be its purpose. A four-day workshop with national and provincial level project staff from the case studies was also held to reflect on their understanding of, and practice in, community fisheries.

**Year:** 2005

**Principal Investigator:** Daniel Turner (University of Sheffield)

**Project Title:** The Changing Nature of Social & Institutional Support for People Living with HIV/AIDS in Botswana

**Abstract:**

This research aims to examine the sources, forms and dynamics of formal and informal support crucial to people living with HIV/AIDS in Botswana. Research currently focuses on prevention and economic impacts to households with little consideration given to support mechanisms that are vital for those with this biologically and socially debilitating and incurable disease. The Masa programme in Botswana began in 2002 and aims to offer antiretroviral (ARV) treatment to all AIDS sufferers (Govt. of Botswana 2003). This exemplary programme offers a unique opportunity to evaluate the grassroots implications of the programme and study the dynamics of support as emphasis shifts towards long-term coping strategies.

**Year:** 2004

**Principal Investigator:** Susannah Sallu (University of Sheffield)

**Project Title:** Biodiversity, Degradation and Livelihoods – Local Environmental Change in Southern Africa

**Abstract:**

Biodiversity decline due to land degradation is regularly proposed as a global crisis. At regional and local scales however, evidence for declines in diversity is mixed with recent work suggesting that diversity might commonly be increasing. The project attempts to characterise more adequately how local diversity has changed, and the effects of such on human well-being, in order to make informed decisions for the future. To address this need, the research used a range of hybrid methods - quantitative, qualitative and textual, drawing from both the natural and the social sciences, to investigate relationships between land degradation and biodiversity change in a dryland context, and land user interpretations of and responses to these changes. Research focused on communities that are dependent on natural resources in two different Southern African biomes subject to degradation and scientifically identified biodiversity changes.

**Year:** 2004

**Principal Investigator:** Peter Mackie (University of Wales Swansea)

**Project Title:** Children in Informal Trading: Cuzco, Peru

**Abstract:**

There has been considerable research on informal trading in Latin America, however very little attention has been paid specifically to children in informal trading. This research sought to redress the research deficit by investigating the geographical aspects of children's trading activities (location, mobility, temporality) as well as the experiences of child traders. The research adopted a multi-method approach, incorporating informal discussions, examination of documentary material, 30 depth key informant interviews, observational surveys describing 8,600 trading units, 400 questionnaire surveys and 30 detailed interviews incorporating visual methods. This diverse research methodology ensured that all informal trading in Cuzco was described, identifying the role of children. Furthermore, it allowed a detailed insight into the lives and experiences of the children who work in informal trading.

**Year:** 2003

**Principal Investigator:** Emmeline Skinner (University College London)

**Project Title:** Older People, Poverty and Social Livelihood Strategies in Latin America

**Abstract:**

This research aimed to develop a more informed understanding of how poverty affects older people in Bolivia, one of the most under-developed countries of Latin America. The project involved a year's fieldwork in three contrasting urban zones of La Paz, where 600 household surveys, 16 focus groups and more than 40 semi-structured interviews with older people and their family members were conducted. The research examined whether older people's contributions to household and family are reciprocated with care and support, analysing the informal livelihood strategies they use in relation to the household, community, labour market and wider political environment. It examined the multiple survival strategies used by older people and analyses the factors affecting their access to different assets.

**Year:** 2003

**Principal Investigator:** Felicity Thomas (University of Sheffield)

**Project Title:** The Impacts of HIV and AIDS on the Livelihoods of Female-Headed Households in Northern Namibia

**Abstract:**

This research resulted in a Ph.D. thesis investigating the impacts of HIV/AIDS on the livelihood dynamics and vulnerability of the most marginal rural households in the Oshana District of Namibia. Felicity examined those households headed by women, who in addition to coping with loss of remittances and labour are often responsible for caring for sick family members and orphaned children. The research was structured around four key objectives: To understand the main characteristics, vulnerability context and livelihood strategies of people living in the Caprivi Region; to explore local understandings of HIV/AIDS and chronic illness and their perceived impact on rural livelihoods; to understand how HIV/AIDS and chronic illness is experienced within and between households; and to examine institutional and policy attempts at HIV/AIDS prevention and mitigation and assess their relevance within the Caprivi Region.

**Year:** 2003

**Principal Investigator:** David Mandiyanike (Royal Holloway, University of London)

**Project Title:** In Search of Capacity: The Case of Zimbabwe's Rural Local Authorities

**Abstract:**

This study critically examined the performance of local authorities in Zimbabwe over the period of 1988 to 2003. The research was designed to unravel issues in capacity building and governance through a mixture of theoretical reflections and more empirically focused case studies in sixteen Rural District Councils in Zimbabwe. The research questioned whether there is 'capacity building' or 'capacity erosion' and if there is a willingness to build lasting capacity or is it being driven by donor conditionality? This study nurtured a historical perspective that places contemporary developments in a long-term context and generally contributes to the understanding of rural local governance within a Zimbabwean setting.

**Year:** 2002

**Principal Investigator:** Douglas McNab (University of Sheffield)

**Project Title:** Environmental Change, Land Degradation and Livelihood Diversity in Northern Province, South Africa

**Abstract:**

Land degradation is considered to be a serious threat to food security, sustainable livelihoods and poverty alleviation throughout southern Africa. A recent nation-wide study of land degradation in South Africa has identified Northern Province as being one of the most degraded region in the country. This research integrates the use of social and ecological research methods to assess the contribution of land use practices to rural livelihoods and explore the reasons for and implications of differences between policy, scientific and local land users perspectives of 'land degradation' and resource use 'sustainability' in a former homeland area of Limpopo Province, South Africa.

**Year:** 2002

**Principal Investigator:** Jennie Mallela (Manchester Metropolitan University)

**Project Title:** Fluvial Impacts on Coral Reef Framework, Carbonate Production and Community Composition, Rio Bueno, Jamaica

**Abstract:**

This study assessed the combined effects of natural riverine inputs and variation in wave energy upon the reef development and coral community structure in the small embayment of Rio Bueno, northern Jamaica. The embayment is subject to seasonally variable fluvial discharges of terrigenous sediment and freshwater. Water quality deteriorated with increasing proximity to the embayment head and river mouth, with sediment influx resulting in high turbidity levels and a reduced light environment within inner and central embayment areas. Keywords: Coral reef zonation, fluvial inputs, Dornock river, sediment stress, nutrients, turbidity.

**Year:** 2001

**Principal Investigator:** Yara Evans (University of Wales Aberystwyth)

**Project Title:** Efforts Towards Sustainable Tourism: The Case of Serra do Mar State Park, São Paulo, Brazil

**Abstract:**

This study investigated local community involvement in ecotourism in the Serra do Mar State Park, in southeastern Brazil. The local government has recently created special conservation areas in the park, choosing ecotourism as the activity which will complement the local economy whilst providing environmental protection to the largest continuous stretch of original Atlantic Forest in the country. Local community involvement is being fostered as a means to enable the sustainability of these special areas. The research sought to identify the manner and scope of local participation, the impacts of ecotourism on local people and its prospects for the area.

**Year:** 2001

**Principal Investigator:** Laurence Vagassky (London School of Economics)

**Project Title:** Upgrading Projects in Dakar's Informal Settlements: A Kick Start to Economic Transformation?

**Abstract:**

Upgrading is often presumed to speed up the inclusion of unauthorized settlements into the modern fabric of cities through the provision of legal tenure, infrastructure and basic services. Using a comparative case study approach, this research analysed how upgrading as a planning policy impacts on the housing, income-generating activities and social capital of inhabitants in two of the Dakar region's unauthorized settlements. Through structured and in-depth interview work with household heads and spouses and with the owners and managers of home-based and small-scale enterprises, this research provides evidence relevant to debates regarding the design and implementation of urban development policies.

**Year:** 2001

**Principal Investigator:** Andrew Bradley (University of Leicester)

**Project Title:** Driving Forces of Land Use and Land Cover Change in Tropical Montane Forests

**Abstract:**

This PhD investigated the driving forces behind land use and land cover change (LUCC) in Bolivian and Peruvian tropical montane forests to see how they affect peasant livelihoods. Since pre-Columbian times, livelihoods in the eastern Andes have depended on exploiting natural resources at different altitudes (verticality). Verticality and livelihoods are currently compromised by restrictions on natural resource exploitation because of newly formed protected areas; deregulation of resource exploitation caused by neo-liberal economic policies being introduced. Spatio-temporal analysis of LUCC from remotely sensed data combined with social scientific methods were used to analyse these issues.