

# Annual Conference 2014

## Welcome from the chair of conference

**Royal  
Geographical  
Society**

with IBG

Advancing geography  
and geographical learning

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

It is an extraordinary privilege to serve as the 2014 Conference Chair. One of the early pleasures was the opportunity to select a theme for the conference. The choice of 'Geographies of Co-Production' is particularly timely. In recent years the research and teaching activities of universities have been challenged by a wide range of new encounters, including commercialisation, open innovation, participatory social science, engaged arts, and public engagement. These new encounters are disrupting conceptions of where knowledge resides, how problems are framed, and who should be mobilised to influence research.

'Co-Production' is the term increasingly used to describe these new encounters, and is shaping research council agendas, institutional practices, and academic identities. The aim of this conference is to reflect on the challenges and new opportunities that arise when geographers reflect what we think we know against the 'other', those who start from a different entry point and bring different perspectives to our field of knowledge. It will provide opportunities to examine the challenges of multi-disciplinarity, and explore how different communities might deploy each other's perspectives to create new understandings. Collaborative knowledge making also requires a robust framework that acknowledges and works constructively with inevitable differences and tensions, encouraging geographers to think more creatively about dynamic locations for knowledge formation, novel forms of exchange and dissemination, and innovative methods for geographical research and teaching.

I am overwhelmed by the positive reception the theme received. Research Groups, independent session organisers, journals sponsoring sessions and individual authors have all engaged in ways that promise an extremely rewarding conference. I am also very pleased the conference has attracted new participants and audiences, with ever more international delegates than ever before. The RGS-IBG is now delivering on the ambition to host an international conference that welcomes and engages geographers from around the world.

The conference opens on Tuesday evening with a Chair's Opening Panel on 'Co-Producing Public Geographies' which brings together leading scholars to debate what co-production means for the university, academics and knowledge itself. On Wednesday the Chair's plenary lecture, sponsored by *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, will be given by Vinay Gidwani on the topic of 'Value Struggles: Ethno-geographic Notes on Waste Work in Urban India'. The Chair's early career panel on Thursday, called 'Co-Production, Participation and Precarity', is sponsored by the Society's new open access journal, *Geo*.

On Friday the focus is on the experiences of 'Black and Minority Ethnic Geographers in the UK academy' through an inclusive discussion with staff and students, and a joint Chair and *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* physical geography plenary panel 'Co-Producing Water Geographies'.

But these are just a selection of highlights – we are expecting close to 1,800 participants who will contribute to over 380 individual panels and sessions. It will be here, in these smaller and more intimate sessions, where 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, Rachel Taylor 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 energy and excitement that will make it an event to remember.

**Wendy Larner, University of Bristol**  
**Chair of the RGS-IBG Annual International Conference 2014**