August - October 2016

geog_news

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Farewell and Good Luck

- **Harriet Brookes** Human Geography Intern, 1.11.2015 - 12.8.2016
- **Dr Jen Dickinson** Human Geography Lecturer, 2008 - 2.9.2016

New Staff

- **Fraser Baker** Research Associate
  - ![Fraser Baker](image1)

- **Helen Booth-Wynn** Apprentice Technician
  - ![Helen Booth-Wynn](image2)

- **Catherine Langford** Intern Technician (Geology)
  - ![Catherine Langford](image3)

- **Dipal Soni** Programme Administrator/CENTA Administrator
  - ![Dipal Soni](image4)

- **Genevieve Tyrrell** Intern Technician
  - ![Genevieve Tyrrell](image5)

- **Catherine Walker** Research Associate
  - ![Catherine Walker](image6)

- **James Wheeler** Research Associate, CLCR
  - ![James Wheeler](image7)

- **Soban Mamodaly** Temporary Finance Administrator
  - ![Soban Mamodaly](image8)
Congratulations

• **Bashir Adamu** has successfully defended his PhD thesis on ‘Investigating broadband multispectral indices for characterising vegetation affected by oil spills in the Niger Delta, Nigeria’ with minor corrections. Bashir’s supervisors are Kevin Tansey.

• **Katy Bennett** was awarded an ESRC NCRM bursary to fund training on ‘Creative approaches to qualitative researching’ at the University of Manchester in November 2016.

• **Katy Bennett** also secured a book contract with Routledge on ‘Lived experience of multiculture’ with Sarah Neal, Allan Cochrane and Giles Mohan.

• **Andy Carr** has recently had a paper he has worked on selected as a highlight by the American Geophysical Union and also had a short write up in their publication Eos. The subject of the paper was about earthquake hazards and trying to find actual evidence for a huge earthquake from the late 19th century. Andy worked on the luminescence dating of some potential fault locations. Paper: [http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/2015JB012763/full](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/2015JB012763/full). Article: [https://eos.org/research-spotlights/tracking-down-elusive-origins-of-kazakhstan-1889-chilik-quake](https://eos.org/research-spotlights/tracking-down-elusive-origins-of-kazakhstan-1889-chilik-quake).

• **CLCR** had two significant ODA grant successes in the UK Space Agency’s IPP programme (subject to conclusion of contract negotiations), adding to the already strong portfolio of recent ODA grant successes in Geography:
  1. “Disaster Management, Earth Observation, Communications, Ground Segment and spatial data Infrastructures, autonomous vehicles, internet of things (IoT), knowledge transfer and skills transfer” with Malaysia, UK Space Agency, International Partnership Programme, led by Satellite Applications Catapult (01 December 2016 - 31 May 2018), total grant value £8,250,000; Leicester budget £119,656.
  2. “Forests 2020”, UK Space Agency, International Partnership Programme, led by Ecometrica, supported by NCEO (01 December 2016 – 30 April 2020), total grant value around £24,000,000, Leicester budget £1,318,540.

• **Clare Madge** will be working on an ESRC-Newton funded project entitled: ‘Facilitating equitable access and quality education for development: South African International Distance Education’ Education (£629,302.04 in the UK and 2.5 million Rand in South Africa). The project runs from October 2016 to March 2019 and the team are Professor Parvati Raghuram (Open University PI), Dr Ashley Gunter (University of South Africa South African PI), Dr. Bart Rienties (OU), Professor Paul Prinsloo (UNISA) and Dr Clare Madge (University of Leicester).

• **Brett Matulis** has been awarded an AHRC grant as PI for a 1 year project on nature writing (with “writing” interpreted broadly to include spoken word performance and digital video). The project will look historically at the influence of nature writing over environmental values, identify the ways that it remains influential in contemporary environmental politics, challenge the (now dominant) narrative that economic values of nature are the most effective way to achieve conservation, and seek to amplify the environmental voices of marginalised Filipina women through writing and digital content production.

• **Narissara Nuthammachot** (known as Am) had her revised thesis accepted and now works as a Lecturer in Faculty of Environmental Management at Prince of Songkla University Thailand.

• **Sue Page** has gone from being most read author in the Department to most read author in the University with a whopping 1,116 new reads in the week beginning 3 October.

• **Gong Pan** has successfully defended his thesis on ‘The Short Term Climate Response of Carbon Dioxide and Methane Fluxes from a Regenerating and a Semi-Natural Fen in East Anglia United Kingdom’ (with corrections). Gong’s supervisors are Joerg Kaduk, Heiko Balzter and Sue Page.

• **Pedro Rodriguez-Veiga** has his PhD thesis revisions accepted, Pedro’s thesis is titled ‘Large-scale mapping of Forest Aboveground Biomass Retrieval from Maximum Entropy using SAR and Optical Satellite Data. Pedro’s supervisors are Heiko Balzter and Kevin Tansey.

• **Caroline Upton** has just heard that she has been successful in an application she submitted to the GCRF ‘Building Resilience’ call – which requires projects addressing needs of AHRC, ESRC and NERC. Caroline is PI and ESRC lead for ‘Resilient Pastoralism’, Sarah Johnson, our own NERC Knowledge Exchange Fellow based in CLCR, is the NERC Co-I and an anthropologist, David Sneath, from University of Cambridge is the AHRC Co-I, and the work will be undertaken with partners in Kenya and Mongolia and in IUCN through their World Initiative for Sustainable Pastoralism. The grant is worth £146,000 over 9 months (rather a lot of money to spend in a short time period – let’s give Caroline and Sarah our support to achieve).
Undergraduate Induction Events

A number of induction events took place in the first week of the 2016/2017 term to welcome the new first year students and hopefully those that attended were able to get to know each other better and feel more settled into University life.

Pizza and Drinks Reception

The Department held their annual pizza and drinks reception in the Study Area for this year’s new intake of undergraduate students on Wednesday 28 September 2016.

There was a fantastic selection of pizzas available and all were consumed very quickly by students and staff. Afterwards, the Geography Society arranged a pub quiz at the Loaded Dog pub on London Road, there were prizes of Book vouchers, Haribo and chocolates for the best team name and best individual answers.
Leicester Walks

On Thursday and Friday of Induction week two Leicester walks were organised. The first was through Abbey Park, Abbey Meadows drainage project, Abbey Pumping Station and the National Space Centre. There was a talk and walk organised with the Abbey Meadows Project Manager and also a mini-lecture at the Space Centre to demonstrate how space is important within Geography.

Day two started off at City Hall in Leicester City Centre with some induction talks by staff, some group activities and a ‘Geography Careers’ talk by a former student now working for the City Council. Thankfully the weather was still kind and the group moved on to Leicester Cathedral to have lunch in the garden, then split into groups for a viewing of King Richard’s tomb and a tour of some of Leicester City’s hidden gems.
A new research Centre focusing on issues of social injustice both locally and globally is being formed by academics in the Department of Geography.

A free public launch event for the Centre for Critical and Creative Geographies took place on Wednesday 12 October, which featured a talk by Professor Cindi Katz from City University of New York.

During the lecture Professor Katz discussed how to research and understand contemporary inequalities and crises in the USA and some of the political, social and cultural relations and conditions of contemporary Geography worldwide.

Professor Kevin Tansey, Head of the Department of Geography, said: “I am delighted to welcome Professor Katz to speak at the launch event of our new Centre. Geography is a complex discipline and research undertaken in this Centre will lead the development of new ideas and methods that are much needed in a changing world.”

Professor Loretta Lees, Co-Director of the Centre for Critical and Creative Geographies at the University of Leicester with Professor Martin Phillips, added: “This is the first Centre for Critical and Creative Geographies in the UK. As critical geographers we are committed to working on the theory and practice needed to combat social injustice and oppression locally and globally and as creative geographers using creative methods to do so.”

Research within the Centre for Critical and Creative Geographies is divided into three unique clusters:

- Environmental Governance and Social Justice
- Planetary Urban and Rural Transformations
- Everyday Geopolitical Lives
The 2016 results for taught postgraduate student satisfaction (PTES) are in, and Geography are 13% higher than the sector benchmark. Although a small sample, this reflects extremely well on our teaching at PGT level, and those concerned in this should feel appropriately pleased.

In addition, we are also organising geography themed film nights in the department turning the Virtual Reality theatre in to our own mini cinema with popcorn. There are also a number of opportunities coming up for geography students to go away with the European Geography Association so if interested please get in touch with the committee.

For updates on the latest events and trips go to our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/groups/GeogSoc2015/

Geography Society Events

The Geography Society has begun the year with the traditional t-shirt bar crawl which was well attended by nearly 100 geography students. After a successful first event getting to know each other, our second event will then compete against each other with a massive game of laser quest! The Geography Society will be taking over Megazone on November the 15th with exclusive use of the arena.

PGT Student Satisfaction

The 2016 results for taught postgraduate student satisfaction (PTES) are in, and Geography are 13% higher than the sector benchmark.

Although a small sample, this reflects extremely well on our teaching at PGT level, and those concerned in this should feel appropriately pleased.

RGS Postgraduate Committee Member

At the recent Annual International Conference of the Royal Geographical Society with Institute of British Geographers Postgraduate Researcher Chris Martin was elected onto the Postgraduate Forum as Website Officer. He will be both keeping the website up to date as well as developing it further.

The Forum represents postgraduates in the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers). It fosters communications among postgraduates, provides information about events, activities and funding and offers support and opportunities for postgraduates to further develop their professional skills and credentials.

The committee is extremely approachable and responsive, so feel free to visit the website, follow us on twitter, email and contribute blogs or other information. Leicester students can also of course contact me directly at cm607@le.ac.uk.
I am writing this at the end of another long day of field work in Israel, having got up at 4:45am in order to beat sunrise. I am coming to the end of a two and a half week reconnaissance visit which has allowed me to test out my research methods in ephemeral channels before coming back for a longer data collection period in the spring. This trip has taught me lots of things about fieldwork in a sunny destination, namely that you have to start really early if you want any chance at collecting good photography-based data sets because the sun creates too many shadows… something that has not been an issue with my UK fieldwork!

As well as working on my PhD, with the help of Mark Powell, I have been involved in the setting up of a novel field experiment in the Nahal Yatir, which is being managed by the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. The Yatir has a series of alternating bedforms on its bed, known as bars and flats; the bars have coarse sediment and the flats finer sediment. The aim of the research project is to better understand the development of these sediment structures. We spent a few days surveying the channel to determine the characteristic slope, grain size distribution, width, topography etc. of the bars and flats in the channel. Then today, we effectively reset the system by mixing up all the bed sediment using a digger to make the channel homogeneous and remove evidence of any bedforms in our study reach. The channel now has a uniform gradient along the study reach, as well as a uniform grain size distribution. The channel will be resurveyed after each flood event (about 6 are expected this winter) and the development of bedforms monitored. As the channel is dry between flood events, the whole reach can be surveyed using structure from motion photogrammetry (SfM). This will allow micro-topographic changes in the bed structure to be detected, and our understanding of the development of bedforms enhanced.

I’m keeping my fingers crossed for a rainy winter season this year in the Negev Desert so we have an exciting data set to look at.

Rosalinde Nicholls
Helping to establish a Centre of Excellence for Tropical Peatland Research

Professor Sue Page has been granted research sabbatical for the whole of the 2016 calendar year. During this period she has been undertaking a range of research-related activities, including a recent visit to the University of Tanjungpura (UNTAN), in Pontianak city, West Kalimantan (Indonesian Borneo).

In 2014, the University of Leicester and UNTAN signed a Memorandum of Understanding, and over the last two years this has developed such that UNTAN now lead a consortium of universities across the whole of Kalimantan, with an initial emphasis on supporting staff wishing to train to PhD level at the University of Leicester or other UK universities.

The most recent initiative of this consortium is the development of a funding proposal to the Indonesian Ministry of Education in support of establishing a Centre of Science and Technology Excellence for Tropical Peatland Research. The University of Leicester, represented by Sue Page, is the international partner in the proposal and Sue was invited to attend a recent meeting and give a keynote presentation. There was much enthusiasm for establishing the Centre and a full proposal is now being developed. This will hopefully open opportunities for joint research funding applications (e.g. via GCRF/Newton funds) to support capacity building as the Centre is developed.

Research on a wide range of tropical peatland issues is needed in Indonesia, where peatlands are being deforested and drained, and are the source of high greenhouse gas emissions and fire-related air pollution.

In addition to the formal meetings, there was also a chance to take a river boat cruise and to explore Pontianak’s famous Equator monument.

NERC Festival of Research

Organised at the initiative of the newly established Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) Funder Group and with support from the Research and Enterprise Division (RED), the well-attended NERC festival of research event, which was held on Wednesday 28 September, showcased a wide range of NERC-funded research conducted by academics, postdoctoral researchers and PhD students within the University. Informal feedback after the event has been very positive.

Potential areas of collaboration have been identified across departments as well as the need to engage on larger, more strategic initiatives building on our excellent track record in NERC funded research and renowned expertise in topics encompassing areas as varied as palaeobiology, volcanology, petrophysics, geophysical imaging, Earth observation, geomorphology, Earth surface processes and evolutionary ecology.

A registry of research interests from all NERC funded academics across the University is currently being compiled. The aim is to facilitate cross-departmental and cross-discipline engagement. In a fast evolving funding landscape, where multidisciplinarity will be a key to success, internal networking is more than ever timely, leading to better mutual appreciation of the range and depth of expertise academic colleagues have to offer.

Given the success of this first festival of research, academic colleagues have requested that another similar event is organised in the near future.
Polyanna da Conceicao Bispo led a field campaign within the Tapajos National Forest, Para, Brazil, between the 12th and the 24th of September with the support of local workers, professionals from three Brazilian institutions (INPE, USP and Museu Paraense Emilio Goeldi) and logistical support from INPA-NAPPA/LBA/Santarém. The scientific expedition was carried out as part of the project “Multi-frequency RADAR imaging for the analysis of tropical forest structure in the Amazon” supported by European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement. The project hosted by CLCR (Centre for Landscape and Climate Research) is Polyanna’s post doctorate under the supervision of Professor Heiko Balzter. The main research goal is to develop a methodology to derive information on forest structure and floristics based on the polarimetric and interferometric variables from TanDEM-X (X band), PALSAR/ALOS (L band), Sentinel 1 (C band) integrated with geomorphometric data derived from SRTM (C band) to benefit the monitoring of forest communities and to provide estimates of biomass and carbon stock to understand the carbon biogeochemical cycling in tropical forests, essential in the context of global climate change.

The field campaign included a survey of 21 plots and approximately 2,200 trees. Gathered data included individual tree species, height, diameter as well as canopy measurements. The plots and the individual trees were georeferenced with geodetic GPS and the plots were chosen in a manner to represent four different forest typologies. Each plot was also characterized using the hand-held terrestrial ZEB-1 Laser Scanner (Geoslam).

The data, together with data from another 40 plots from other campaigns, will be used for modelling and validating biomass estimates and the structural characterization of the Tapajos National Forest as an area representative of the Central Amazon, using satellite RADAR images.

As the Amazon is a vast and complex ecosystem, doing fieldwork there is not straightforward. At the end of each field campaign the researchers have many stories and adventures to remember and tell. These stories can be about experiences with dangerous animals, such as jaguars and snakes, or even legend and stories about spirits told by the local population. During Polyanna’s fieldwork, for example, one of the fieldwork assistants was bitten by an armed spider (aranha armaderia in Brazilian Portuguese) and had to be taken to hospital. Fortunately he took the anti-venom and he is fine now. Also, one of the researchers, after hearing too many stories about jaguars, was so scared that when he was approached from behind and licked by a small cute dog, he thought that it was a jaguar and felt his body shaking. In the end, between adventures and laughs, the fieldwork was completed successfully.

Think: Leicester, Kirsten Barrett discusses the impact of wildfires on society and climate in southern Siberia

Boreal wildfires have been in the news quite a bit lately, with major fires in Alaska last summer, the evacuation of Ft McMurray earlier this year, and widespread burning across Siberia this summer...
Kevin Tansey hosted a delegation and made a further visit to China in September to promote cooperation in Space and Earth Observation research.

The University of Leicester was delighted to welcome a delegation from the Chinese Shandong Institute of Aerospace Electro-Technology (SIAE). The visit, led by Professor Zhang Yutu, Vice-President of the Institute, took place between the 13 and 15 of September 2016. The purpose of the visit was to hold discussions over future cooperation in research into Space and Earth Observation. The University of Leicester has recently established a Research Institute in Space and Earth Observation (LISEO) and the visit offered the opportunity to showcase some of the world-leading research being undertaken by Leicester academics promote. Kevin said ‘I am looking forward to welcoming our Chinese colleagues. I first met with representatives of SIAE at the 2014 and 2015 UK-China space workshops that were been held in Shanghai and Newbury respectively. I hope the visit is the start of a period of cooperation and collaboration’. The delegation met with Professor Paul O’Brien, Professor of Astrophysics and Space Science and Professor Heiko Balzter, Director of the Centre of Landscape and Climate Research during their visit.

The following week, Professor Tansey made the return journey to China. He was invited through the prestigious Chinese SAFEA programme (State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs) to visit Peking University. The programme also supported a visit by Dr. Marc Padilla, one of Kevin’s Research Associates. Professor Tansey said ‘Dr. Marc Padilla and I have been invited by Professor Lei Yan, Head of Beijing Key Laboratory of Spatial Information Integration and its Applications, to hold discussions around our respective research interests and to identify future funding opportunities. These research interests include mapping forest and forest disturbance, and advancing remote sensing technology in agriculture.’

**Training Workshop in Kenya**

Claran Robb, James Wheeler and Pedro Rodriguez-Veiga have been working at the National Centre for Earth Observation (NCEO) and University of Leicester’s Centre for Landscape and Climate Research with Sentinel-1A data since its launch in several projects for vegetation analysis, deforestation, biomass estimation, etc., and have developed their own algorithms using SNAP, R, and Python. In May they contributed to the NERC CENTA PhD training programme where James Wheeler lectured in LiDAR and InSAR remote sensing. Their training materials utilise SNAP tools and QGIS, as they promote the use of open source software, which is at the cutting edge of geospatial research...

[Read Full article](#)
News and Events Snippets

**Heiko Balzter** made a written submission to the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee inquiry on “Leaving the EU: Implications and opportunities for science and research”. All contributions are available on their web site.

**Heiko Balzter** made a contribution to the RCUK GCRF Call for Evidence which closed on 22 August. [http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/gcrf/gcrf-call-for-evidence/](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/gcrf/gcrf-call-for-evidence/)

**Heiko Balzter** accepted an invitation as a keynote speaker at the Symposium on “Advances in biodiversity and ecosystem services” from 24-25 April 2017 in Cardiff, held jointly between BESS and the British Ecological Society.

**Sarah Johnson** and **Heiko Balzter** hosted a delegation from Bahir Dar University in Ethiopia and GeoSAS in London who wanted to discuss EO collaboration. Both contribute to the UK Space Agency’s IPP scoping study that is currently ongoing, and are partners on the full IPP proposal that Sarah has been working on with GeoSAS.

**Jorg Kaduk** has given a talk on global warming to the Rushcliffe Mens Probus club in Ruddington, Nottingham.

**Loretta Lees** attended a workshop funded by Kosmos in Berlin on her recent book ‘Planetary Gentrification’ on October 14.

**Loretta Lees and Sandra Annunziata** attended an Anti-Gentrification workshop in Rome from 26 October.

**Loretta Lees** featured in a BBC Radio 4 programme ‘Gentrification’ with David Baker on 10 October. (1:58 mins)

**Sue Page** featured in BBC Radio 4 programme ‘Forests of the Orangutan’ part of ‘Costing the Earth’ Series (7.57 mins).

**Tom Potter** has been mentioned on the GeoSLAM website for his work studying areas of mixed tree species using the REVO, [http://geoslam.com/forests/](http://geoslam.com/forests/)

**Pedro Rodriguez-Veiga**, **Ciaran Robb** and **James Wheeler** delivered a 3-day radar training course at the Kenya Forest Research Institute in Nairobi, funded by NCEO.

**Kevin Tansey** and **Pedro Rodriguez-Veiga** attended the GlobBiomass meeting in September in Bialowieza National Park in Poland.
Recent Publications


\GEOPNEWS 13
Twitter Top Picks

**Aug 2016 - 31 days**

**Top Tweet** earned 1,240 impressions

Congratulations @hanbelcher amazing results! See you in September.

#HelloLeicester

twitter.com/hanbelcherista...

4 Likes

**Top mention** earned 148 engagements

Rebecca

@Rebecca_njg  Aug 18

Can't wait to study BA geog @LeicesterGeog in September woo 🎓

1 Like

**Top media Tweet** earned 6,521 impressions

Good luck to all students receiving A-level results tomorrow. #Clearing2016 please visit: la.ac.uk/clearing2016/plc.twitter.com/AL57yzTBQc

**Sep 2016 - 30 days**

**Top Tweet** earned 1,655 impressions

Very excited about this launch event for our new Centre for Critical & Creative Geographies on 12 Oct in Bennett LT1

pic.twitter.com/DTWxWQPdgi

1 Like

**Top mention** earned 126 engagements

Gavin Brown

@estategov  Sep 15

Very excited about this launch event for the new @LeicesterGeog Centre for Critical & Creative Geographies on 12 Oct

pic.twitter.com/1Ma4OJY4e7F

1 Like

**Top media Tweet** earned 1,271 impressions

Big thanks from a former student @amita_bhatia. Inspiring our new students ahead of their #FabulousFirstYear

pic.twitter.com/YoGQBIBGUT

45 Likes
Twitter Top Picks

Oct 2016 - 31 days

**Top Tweet** earned 1,508 impressions
Centre for Critical and Creative Geographies Launch event yesterday, reception & Prof Cindi Katz talk. @LorettaClees @MartinPhillips1 pic.twitter.com/rs5Exhiggr

**Top mention** earned 100 engagements
TheGeographyStudent @StudentGeog 
It's 2 years since my first weeks at Leicester! Has gone by so fast! finalyear ThrowbackThursday @LeicesterGeog pic.twitter.com/S2EbgwOZGO

View Tweet activity
View all Tweet activity

**OUT 2016 SUMMARY**

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View Tweet