

Human Geography at Edinburgh



School of
GeoSciences



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School of GeoSciences

The Human Geography Research Group

The Human Geography Research Group is interested in social, economic, cultural and political interactions across space, in places and with the environment. It draws on both quantitative and qualitative methods, making innovative contributions to both approaches. Interdisciplinary and collaborative working is an integral part of the research culture among human geographers. At a time when the boundaries between nature and culture, environment and economy, science and society, genetics and experience, and rural and urban life are increasingly open to question, the Human Geography Research Group is in a unique position in the School of GeoSciences in its capacity to work across disciplinary boundaries.



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

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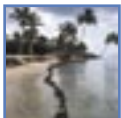
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News

Professor Liz Bondi's recent successes include (as co-investigator) a research project on 'Placing Voluntary Activism in Neo-Liberal Welfare States: A Comparative Study' (funded by the ESRC), and two books: *Emotional Geographies* (Ashgate) co-edited with Joyce Davidson and Mick Smith (Queen's University, Ontario), and *Working the Spaces of Neoliberalism: Activism, Professionalisation and Incorporation* (Blackwell), co-edited with Nina Laurie (University of Newcastle).

As part of her AHRC-funded inter-disciplinary project on high rise living and modernity, Professor Jane Jacobs organised a 10-paper session on 'The Geography of Big Things' at the 2006 annual meeting of the Association of American Geographers in Chicago, March 2006. Contributions to the session included papers from Dr Ignaz Strebel and from Paul Anderson, the PDRA and postgraduate working on this project.

As part of their work on minorities and cultural identity, Dr Jan Penrose and Dr David Howard have been awarded funding from the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland to examine Scottish identity and the Mela in Edinburgh and in Glasgow. Dr Penrose has also been awarded a Faculty Enrichment Award from the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Canada to update and develop her related Honours teaching programme in Minorities in Multicultural Society.

Amongst the Group's postgraduate students, Innes Keighren (AHRC-funded PhD) has been awarded Visiting Researcher status at the University of Kentucky and a Helen and John S. Best Research Fellowship by the American Geographical Society Library and University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Center for International Education in connection with his work on the historical geographies of the book. Kat Smith has been appointed to a Visiting Fellowship at the School of Geographical Sciences, University of Bristol, as part of her PhD work on the relationship between research and health inequalities in Britain.



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Geographies of the City

Edinburgh human geographers contribute in various ways to understanding the contemporary city and urban life, including: the politics of public space, how the city is experienced differently by different urban dwellers and processes of regeneration and conservation. Such research reshapes how the city is understood, improves the quality of urban life, and envisions alternative urban futures.



One example of urban research is the AHRC-funded Highrise Project, undertaken in collaboration with Architecture at the University of Edinburgh. This project investigates the varied fortunes of the residential

highrise in the UK and Singapore. The team is charting the demolition of a highrise in the UK and the on-going revitalisation of a highrise in Singapore. The study contributes to understanding the interface between built forms and society, and the role of building technologies in everyday life.





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Art in the Landscape

Edinburgh research is aiming to extend cultural geographical understandings of imaginative processes as they relate to landscape. In elaborating understandings of the relations between people and places we can inform future strategies for creative engagement with landscape, and explore ways of value-adding to the countryside as a key cultural resource.



The Outsider by Anna Gillespie (2004)

A project funded by the AHRC and undertaken in collaboration with the University of Plymouth, mapped the embodied experiences and practices of artists involved in the creation of, and visitors to, the 2004 *Hebden Bridge Sculpture Trail* in Yorkshire. The project considered the extent to which collaborative and community arts events could play a role in stimulating new understandings of landscape, place and identity.



An Under-complicated Experiment in Mutual Awareness by Steve Messam (2004)



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Geographies of Insurance

Recent research in the area of social and financial inclusion has examined the extent to which people with various health conditions are excluded from the life insurance market. At a time when policymakers are turning to private insurance markets to fill gaps in the welfare state, the researchers wanted to understand the reasons behind exclusion from these markets and the possible responses by policymakers and the insurance industry.



Key achievements include completing the first comprehensive survey in the UK of the way health risks are defined and assessed in the life insurance industry. We also explored the use of innovative participatory research methods by convening a Citizens' Jury to involve members of the public in the debate about the use of genetic test results in life insurance underwriting. This ESRC-funded project involved collaboration with the insurance industry, members of health and genetics interest groups, policymakers, the medical profession and the public.





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Shaping the World, Mapping the Nation

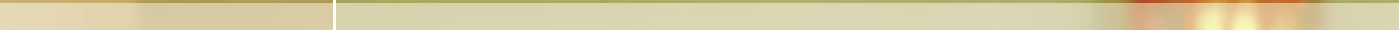
What shape is the world? How do we know? Questions concerning the shape of the world were central to early Enlightenment theorists. Matters of geography were crucial here, for according to whose geodetic ideas were accepted, the world looked different from Paris than it did from London. Professor Withers is examining the nature of the Enlightenment as a geographical question, a project which is involving the consideration not just of what contemporaries thought and did about solving the shape of the world but how they saw and represented national space.

Take Scotland as one example.

What is arguably Scotland's first atlas - Blaeu's 1654 *Atlas Novus* (which was in fact based upon earlier mapping by Timothy Pont and others) - became the basis to many later 'correct' maps of Scotland in the Enlightenment. Map makers drew - sometimes literally - upon others' earlier works in advancing 'new' knowledge. As this research has revealed, it is thus necessary to consider the social and intellectual connections between practitioners and their audiences, between notions of science and national identity, between the production of geographical knowledge and its reception, in order to know how geographical knowledge gets made and becomes accepted.



Joan Blaeu (c. 1599-1673)



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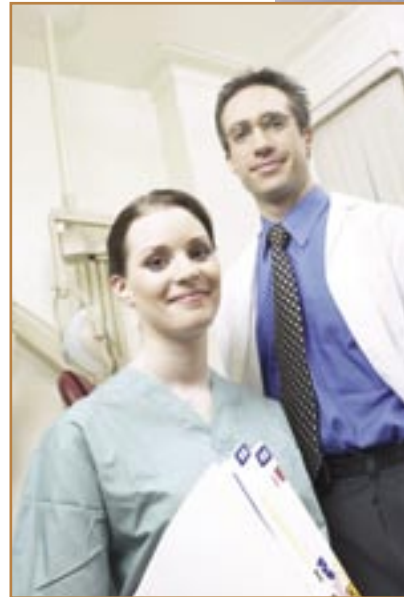
Health Care Planning - Geographical Information Systems

Catchments for health care provision are rarely clearly or accurately defined thus preventing professionals from delivering effective health care that matches the needs of the population. Traditional single regionalisation methods have exposed problems of either over or underestimating service provision. Recent technological advances, especially in GIS, now present new ways of defining health care regions and no longer limit the geographer to arbitrarily defined administrative units.

Geographers at the University of Edinburgh are working to solve the problem by successfully applying multidimensional GIS techniques, developed outside the health domain, to define health care catchments that adequately reflect the flow of patients to health service facilities. Whilst much of this research has focussed on health, the technique does demonstrate potential for catchment



design in other areas of administration. Developing upon this research, further work in 2006 will concentrate on the assessment of spatial accessibility to integrated education in Northern Ireland.





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Sustainable Tourism in Belize

Increasingly, the response of governments to the growing pressure of tourism is the adoption of sustainable tourism, to protect the environment whilst providing new economic development opportunities.

Edinburgh is researching tensions between tourism and the promotion of sustainable strategies, exploring the potential for self-regulation and evaluating its adequacy for protecting the environment.

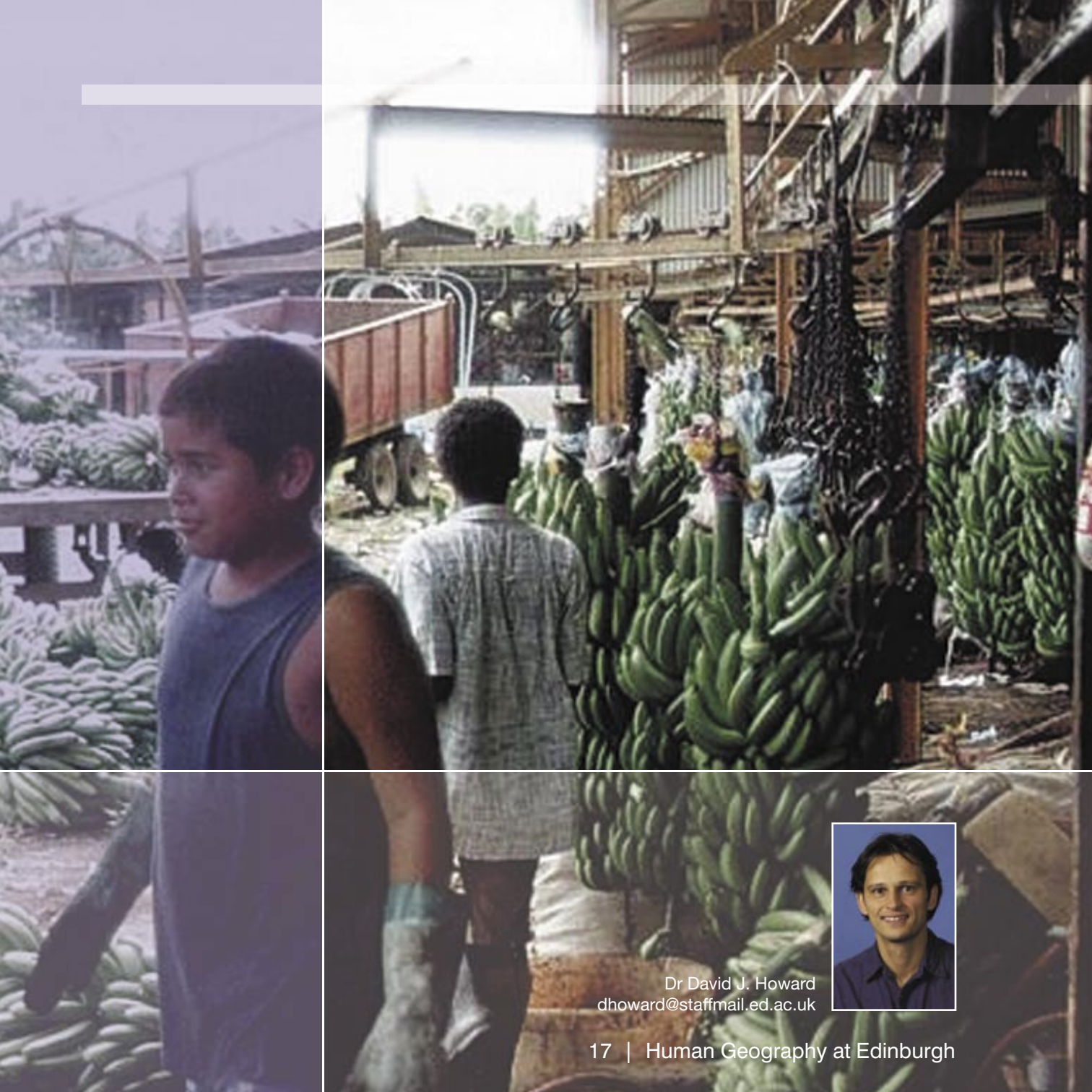
In a case study of the growing significance of tourism in Belize, research explored the tensions between tourism, as an archetypal mode of gratification, and the Government of Belize's promotion of sustainable tourism.

Through interview, observational research and discourse analysis,

the practices of tourists, the tourist industry and the local population were recorded. These were evaluated to identify inconsistencies between tourist practice, and environmentally sustainable goals, with a view to potential amelioration through management.

The University of Edinburgh has over 40 years of research in Belize. See: www.geos.ed.ac.uk/research/eoo/belize/





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Global Trade - eLearning

Researchers at the University of Edinburgh have developed a ten-week interactive course designed to equip new undergraduate students with essential IT and communication skills necessary throughout the Geography degree programme.

Students access global agricultural commodity statistics including production, exports and tariffs. From the perspective of either the grower, policy maker or the buyer a final report is prepared incorporating full description and analysis of results.



Students use open lab-access and specified demonstration and workshop hours to guide their project following an introductory lecture, but the emphasis is to produce a report on the basis of their own independent research. Final reports are assessed online by staff and by peer review.

The course is an e-learning experience that develops research skills and encourages balanced thinking. Running in WebCT interlinking a range of Microsoft products, students quickly learn to utilise the extra capacity and resources e-learning can deliver.



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Not shown - Professor Lynn Staeheli



Post Graduate Opportunities	Collaborating with Industry	Links with Government & Society
PhD research opportunities www.geos.ed.ac.uk/postgraduate MSc by Research in Human Geography (ESRC RT-recognised) MSc by Research in GIS & Society (ESRC RT-recognised) MSc in Geo Information Science MSc Environment & Development MSc Environmental Sustainability	Knowledge Transfer Partnerships Sponsored research E-learning Consultancy Continuing Professional Development Corporate & Social responsibilities	Knowledge transfer Social & Economic development Ethics, economic growth & Environment Multi-level governance system & Enterprise policy Social Implications of Policy Geographies of multiculturalism in Scotland Geographies of Scientific Knowledge

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In the School of GeoSciences, we explore the factors and forces that shape our world and environments in which we live. As a leading interdisciplinary group, we aim to understand the interaction between the Earth's geology, atmosphere, oceans, biosphere and human responses and roles in this complex interplay. With over 100 academic specialists and some of the best scientific infrastructure in the UK, we deliver new insights into the dynamics of the Earth system and its relationship with society. This interdisciplinarity enhances our ability to model and predict global responses to environmental change, and to serve the needs of society, government and industry through meaningful knowledge transfer.

There are five integrated and interdependent research groups:

- **Subsurface Geoscience**
- **Global Change**
- **Edinburgh Earth Observatory**
- **Human Geography**
- **Centre for the Study of Environmental Change and Sustainability (CECS)**

Further information on MSc & PhD opportunities can be found at: www.geos.ed.ac.uk



'Red Markers II' by Alice Betts on the 2004 Hebden Bridge Sculpture Trail