



## The New Zealand Geographical Society/Institute of Australian Geographers Conference 2018

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The New Zealand Geographical Society (NZGS) and the Institute of Australian Geographers (IAG) held their joint conference at the University of Auckland from 11-14th July 2018. The theme for this conference was “Creative Conversations, Constructive Connections”, which was chosen because it “reflects our desire to stimulate dialogue and to enrich a discipline that is always in the making”<sup>1</sup>. While this theme could be taken as a description of the coming together of trans-Tasman rivals, it is also indicative of the many different facets of the “discipline” of Geography. Indeed, the call for papers included sessions ranging from continental philosophy to geomorphology, so there was room for everyone, including people without a formal training in Geography such as myself.

Prior to the official opening of the conference, a number of study groups took the opportunity to meet together in a less structured format than provided for in the conference programme. Included in this pre-conference event schedule was an Early Career Researcher session, which included two panels aimed at issues of particular concern to the next generation of geographers. The first of these was a “Meet the editors” session, where managing editors of four prominent Geography journals helped demystify the processes involved in publishing scholarly outputs. This was followed by an “After the

PhD” session, where four panellists shared their thoughts on how to plan a successful career on the basis of a geography PhD, whether in academia or some other setting. I helped organise this second panel along with Nick Kirk, who completed his PhD in the Department of Environmental Management at Lincoln University, and now works at Manaaki Whenua. Panellists included Harvey Perkins (who is an Adjunct Professor of Human Geography at Lincoln) and Lucy Baragwanath (who completed her PhD at Lincoln). I find it very encouraging that Lincoln University had a strong presence at this Early Career Researcher session – the only thing missing were some of our current postgraduate students!

Lincoln University researchers continued to make important contributions throughout the conference. Harvey Perkins and Mike Mackay convened a panel session based on their National Science Challenge research programme: “Supporting success in regional settlements”. This featured contributions from Lincoln’s Chris Rosin, Karen Johnston and Nick Taylor. Suzanne Vallance convened a panel on making and managing public places, which drew on her long-standing research interests in urban studies, and the Marsden funded research she conducted into the temporary use of public space following the Christchurch earthquakes. Ed Challies, from the joint Lincoln/Canterbury Universities Waterways

<sup>1</sup> See NZGS/IAG 2018 Conference Programme, page 1, available at <https://nzgsconference2018.org/wp->

[content/uploads/2018/07/NZGS-IAG-2018-Programme-Final.pdf](https://nzgsconference2018.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/NZGS-IAG-2018-Programme-Final.pdf)

Centre, presented a paper on the construction of environmental problems in the context of the proposed Waimea Community Dam in Tasman District, and I presented a paper on the twists and turns involved in using Actor-Network Theory in empirical research. As an interesting aside, Ed and I met for the first time just after the conference dinner at the Viaduct centre – perhaps a “Constructive Connection” that was only created by our attendance at this conference?

The NZGS will be holding its next conference in 2020, and it would be great to see an even greater presence of Lincoln-based researchers, including postgraduates who don't consider themselves to be “Geographers” in the traditional sense.