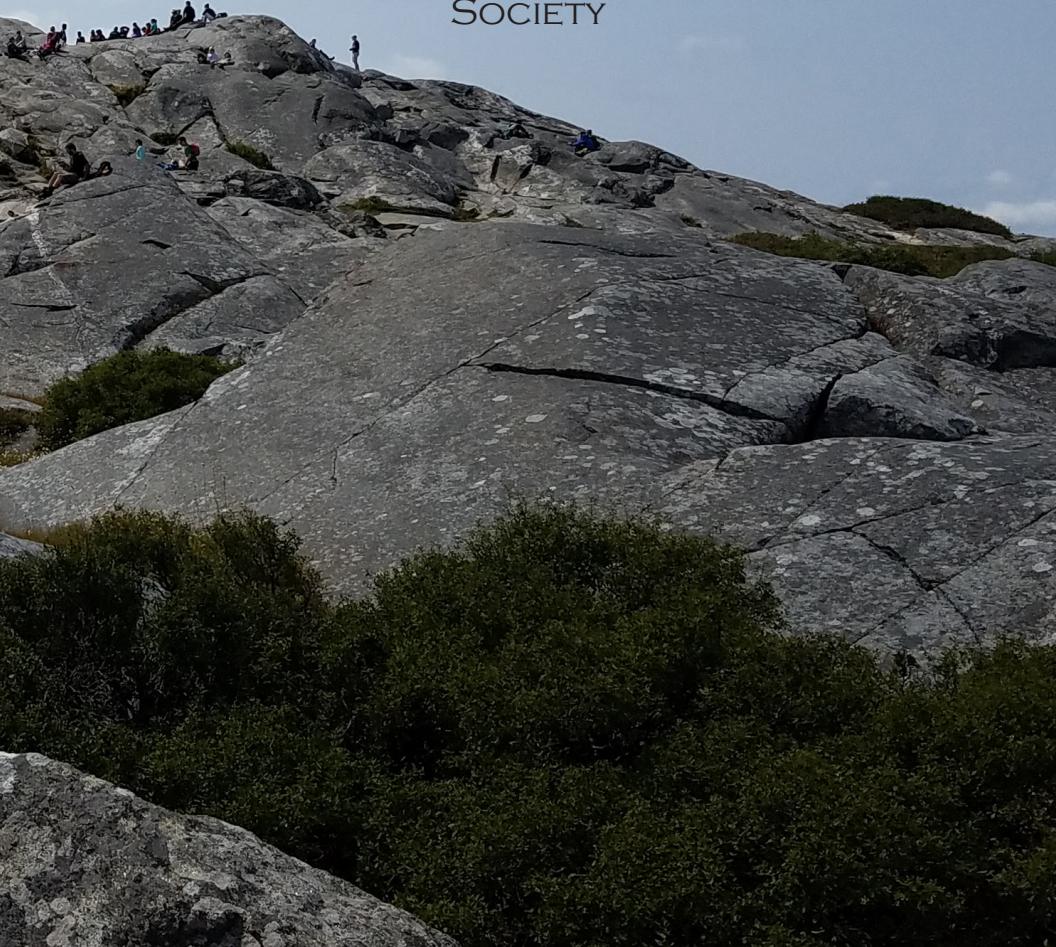


# THE MONADNOCK

VOLUME 60

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CLARK UNIVERSITY  
GEOGRAPHICAL  
SOCIETY





Dr. Deborah Martin

## From the Director

Dear Alumni and Friends of the Graduate School of Geography:

Earlier this summer I was reminded of the power of CUGS and the GSG to create a sense of belonging and community that spans time and space. As I wrote in the Summer 2018 GSG newsletter, in late June we had an unannounced visit from Dr. Azra Khan, a PhD alum from 1953, and her son, Jaleel Ishan. Dr. Khan had not been back to Worcester since she had left in the mid-1950s, despite her very fond memories of the place. When she completed her degree she had returned to Pakistan, where she raised a family and also had a career in education, teaching and leading a girls' school, among other things. She and her son Jaleel now live in Texas, and he decided this summer that the time had come to visit the place that had meant so much to his mother. On a Wednesday afternoon, they had stopped into Jefferson Hall to have a look around. As is typical in late June, very few people were here. However, a fellow Clark PhD alum was in her office; Dr. Rinku Roy Chowdhury, Clark Geography PhD '03, and of course, now an Associate Professor in the GSG. Rinku welcomed Dr. Khan and her son, and even hosted them at her home for lunch the next day. I met Dr. Khan during her visit and enjoyed hearing about her career, her supportive parents who let her travel out of the country (Pakistan) as a young unmarried woman in the 1950s, and how much the GSG influenced and cared for her while she was here as a graduate student.

Dr. Khan's visit was her first back to Worcester since graduating in 1953. Yet, this place was one she held tightly in her heart over many decades, because it was a place where she developed the foundations of her career, felt nurtured and encouraged, and which formed a part of her sense of self in the world. I think the GSG sees the best of itself, as an organization of people with a shared purpose (geographical knowledge and research), when we are able to have such a positive influence on ourselves and others in a way as enduring as it was for Dr. Khan. The fact that two PhD alums (Dr. Khan and Dr. Chowdhury) can find themselves in the same time-space and connect is testament to that lasting meaning and impact. My favourite part of reading the Monadnock is the intersection of personal growth and research trajectories with the laughing, sharing, and discoursing community of CUGS and the GSG, whether that be a sharing of field notes and experiences, gastronomic explorations, or new twists on particular US traditions (such as Thanksgiving).

Thank you to the current CUGSians who helped put this edition of The Monadnock together, editors, Jacob Chamberlain and Dan Santos, and everyone who has helped to provide stories and photos and to share their many tales from fields and desks. Enjoy this latest insight into the emerging and evolving CUGS, 2018 edition.

## From the Editors

It is clear by reading through the submissions for this year's Monadnock, as well as the many editions dating all the way back to 1927, that Clark Geography has continuously fostered groundbreaking scholars, researchers and activists (none of these being mutually exclusive) who continue to produce exciting and important work that speaks to pressing societal challenges. As academics, as well as citizens of the world, today we are faced with such challenges for social, economic and environmental justice, as movements from the far right appear to be on the rise, mass social and economic inequality persist, and environmental degradation and natural disasters caused by human-induced climate change become ever more apparent. It is the strength of the interdisciplinary work of geographers, particularly those in critically

engaged programs such as ours at Clark, to examine these issues holistically and from a myriad of perspectives: from the physical and geographical information sciences, to cultural geography and critical geographies of race, to economic and urban geographies of financial speculation, to radical Marxist and post-Marxist analyses, and far beyond.

With this in mind, it has been a thrilling and informative honor to be able to reach out to our current CUGS colleagues to find out a little bit more about what they are up to in the program and to hear from those ‘post’ CUGS geographers who are putting their skills to use in early career scholarship (you can take the geographer out of CUGS, but you can never take the CUGS out of the geographer).

Concurrently, within these pages you might find hope or inspiration in otherwise seemingly dire times. You will certainly find geographers taking cues from the likes of last year’s Atwood speaker Sarah Elwood to rethink relationships “of power and privilege” that persist today. And you will find geographers continuing the spirit of collaboration inspired by Clark alumni such as Katherine Gibson and Julie Graham in efforts to explore where “other worlds” might be “possible.”

We would like to thank all of the CUGS, past and present, who have taken the time to submit their thoughts to this year’s edition, our faculty contributors herein, as well as Katherine Gibson for sharing with us some memories as well as wisdom from Clark’s past and Geography’s present. We would also like to thank Christine Creelman, Rachel Levitt and past editor Benjamin Fash for their invaluable assistance in pulling together this feat.

With love, respect and hope, and inspired by the spirit of collaboration advised by Katherine Gibson in this edition,

J.D. Santos-Chamberlain



Monadnock co-editors (bottom right) looking on during last year’s conceptual potluck gathering. Photo by Benjamin Fash.

## Welcome to the New Faculty Members: Florencia Sangermano and Youjin Chung



Dr. Florencia Sangermano

**Could you please briefly describe your research interests? Are there (sub-) disciplines, theories or scholars which you are particularly inspired by?**

My research is focused on the study of changes in the Earth system and their impacts on biodiversity and ecosystems, through the lens of remote sensing and spatial analysis. Currently, I'm studying how land cover change and climate change are affecting the connectivity of the Vilcabamba–Amboró conservation corridor in Bolivia and Peru. I have also been working on several collaborations related to health geographies with the Biology department at Clark, assessing the risk of mosquito-borne infectious diseases in Argentina.

My work is at the intersection of Biology and Geography drawing from theories in Conservation Biology, Biogeography, Landscape Ecology and spatial analysis. I'm particularly inspired by the work of early naturalists, in particular Alfred Russell Wallace, who produced the first maps of biogeographic distributions and identified the importance of geography in driving species distributions.

**You earned your PhD in Geography from Clark in 2009. In what way/s has Clark Geography changed since your time as a graduate student? What do you think is distinctive or unique about Clark Geography?**

The main change I notice in the department is the increase in the number of faculty and students. I remember taking an Advanced GIS class with Dr. Eastman where there were no more than ten students and computer labs were barely filled. Now, we need multiple sessions to satisfy students' interest in spatial technologies. One of the peculiarities about Clark is the possibility for graduate students to develop their research beyond their advisor's field. As a PhD student you are not constrained to develop your dissertation research within your advisor's project - you have the freedom to take from your advisor's knowledge and experiences and mold them into your own research interests.

**What are you most excited for in the upcoming year at Clark with respect to 1) research, and 2) teaching?**

In the past four years as a visiting faculty member at Clark I had the opportunity to work with many Masters and Undergraduate students, but interaction with PhD students was limited. I'm really excited to start working side-by-side with PhD students interested in spatial analysis and conservation. My research has both academic and applied science components and I'm eager to show students different career pathways in Conservation GIS. I will continue teaching my regular courses in Remote Sensing, Introduction to GIS, Habitat Modeling and Wildlife Conservation GIS, and I'm preparing a new course on Conservation GIS that will focus on the incorporation of climate change, connectivity and species distribution modeling in spatial conservation prioritization.

## **How can geography contribute to addressing pressing contemporary issues and problems?**

Habitat degradation and destruction caused by climate and land cover changes are the main threats to global biodiversity and ecosystems. At the same time, climate and land cover changes can be related to population and economic growth. The complexity of the problem requires interdisciplinary work, and Geography provides that interdisciplinarity. I focus on targeting the problem of habitat degradation through the lens of spatial technologies, as the large archives of historical remotely sensed data coupled with spatial analysis allows for the assessment of the magnitude and impacts of changes at multiple temporal and spatial scales.



Dr. Youjin Chung

**Could you please briefly describe your research interests? Are there (sub-) disciplines, theories or scholars which you are particularly inspired by?**

My research program is broadly concerned with the relationship between development, gender and intersectionality, and agrarian and ecological change in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly Tanzania. I am interested in how and in what ways agrarian livelihoods and lifestyles articulate with local and global capitalist forces (e.g. the land rush) and how these relational processes (re)shape the multidimensional identities of rural women and men and their relationships to the state, society, and the environment. My work draws on and contributes to political economies of development, feminist political ecology, food and agrarian studies, critical social/feminist theory, and African studies.

## **What drew you to apply to Clark Geography?**

I was drawn to GSG's historical strengths in human-environment geography and feminist political ecology, and the overall fit between my research interests and those of the faculty members and graduate students. I was also attracted to the university's efforts in advancing liberal education through integrating undergraduate curricula, in-class learning, and hands-on practice.

## **What are you most excited for in your first year at Clark with respect to 1) research, and 2) teaching?**

I am excited about exploring opportunities for collaborative research with other faculty members and students on campus, and starting the process of preparing my dissertation monograph for publication as a book. I am excited about teaching Gender and Environment in the fall; I think there's no better time than now to be teaching this course given our current political climate. I am looking forward to incorporating emergent debates on queer ecologies and anthropocene feminism as part of the course and bringing local and international environmental/social justice activists as guest speakers to help students better link theory and practice.

## **How can geography contribute to addressing pressing contemporary issues and problems?**

Geography and related disciplines are well-poised to offer place-based and context-specific empirical analysis of the contemporary world. I think the methodological tools and insights advanced by biophysical and human geographers, when combined, have tremendous merit and productive potential in deepening our understanding of the shifting relationship between nature and society.

## 2017 Atwood Lecture: Sarah Elwood

Review by Mike Athay

In November 2017, the Graduate School of Geography at Clark University welcomed Sarah Elwood (Ph.D., Geography, University of Minnesota, 2000) to deliver the 45th Annual Wallace W. Atwood Lecture. Dr. Elwood is Professor and Chair in the Department of Geography at the University of Washington (UW). Elwood and Victoria Lawson are co-conveners of the Relational Poverty Network (RPN), a group of critical poverty scholars aiming to shift the focus of poverty research “from thinking about ‘the poor and poor others’ to thinking about relationships of power and privilege.” [1]

Dr. Elwood addressed her remarks to an audience that filled Tilton Hall on the second floor of the Higgins University Center. In her lecture, entitled “Visual Poverty Politics,” Dr. Elwood encouraged the audience to join her (and co-author Victoria Lawson) in “theoriz[ing] visual poverty politics at the intersection of conceptual approaches from visual culture studies and from relational poverty studies.” [2] To demonstrate how to accomplish this, she invited the audience to employ a relational-poverty lens (i.e., understanding poverty as emerging through relations of power and privilege) in examining throughout the lecture a series of images of artworks, art installations, and performance art regarding poverty. Drawing from visual cultural studies, Dr. Elwood’s lecture considered a number of factors in analyzing these images, such as: Who produced them, and who/what are their subjects? Where are the images produced, and where are they observed or consumed?

Applying such questions to relational poverty politics, Dr. Elwood showed, for example, how images of the idealized nuclear American family (almost always depicted as white and standing in front of a suburban house) differ along lines of place, race, gender, class, and sociality from images of people living without shelter. A relational analytic lens reveals that the normativity behind the former always at least implicitly invokes and perpetuates the trope of the latter. Moreover, the “common-sense” normative conception of the ideal American sets the bounds for explanations of poverty, eliding the roles of privi-

leged individuals and capitalist institutions in creating the conditions behind poverty in the first place.

The primary empirical work presented in Dr. Elwood’s lecture, however, detailed her collaboration with Real Change [3], an activist organization consisting primarily of people presently or formerly living without shelter in Seattle. Dr. Elwood’s analysis continued through images first of the activists’ performance art intervention at a Seattle City Council meeting; then of portraits of people living without shelter on display in galleries and around the city [4]; next of a public art installation composed of arrangements of donated shoes, with one pair of shoes for each homeless person sleeping outside on a given night; and then of activists dressing up for a political demonstration as part of a parade [5]. In each instance, Dr. Elwood argued, a relational poverty visual analysis of the activists’ interventions reveals how they 1) pushed back against stereotypes (such as by depicting those living without shelter as agents rather than as passive subjects), 2) challenged dominant (or even common-sense) discourses and imaginaries of poverty and what they ignore and hide (such as the roles of structure, privilege, and power in creating poverty), and 3) disputed, disrupted, reimagined, and in some cases (at least temporarily) reclaimed privileged spaces (such as art museums and shopping plazas). For Dr. Elwood, these examples embody the strength of the relational-poverty approach to analyzing visual poverty politics: namely, its ability to theorize disruptive practices that challenge dominant poverty discourses.

In addition to delivering the Atwood Lecture, during her visit to Clark Dr. Elwood also met with the first-year Geography Ph.D. students and led discussions together with faculty and graduate students in the GSG in a session the following morning.

Since her visit in November 2017, Dr. Elwood and her colleague Victoria Lawson have published their co-edited book, *Relational Poverty Politics: Forms, Struggles, and Possibilities*, which was released in April 2018. The book contains additional examples adopting a relational approach to analyzing poverty. It is part of the Geographies of Justice and Social Transformation Series and is available from the University of Georgia Press.



THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF GEOGRAPHY INVITES YOU TO ATTEND



## THE WALLACE W. ATWOOD LECTURE SARAH ELWOOD

### VISUAL POVERTY POLITICS



This year's Atwood Lecture analyzes the forms and potentials of visual politics that challenge hegemonic meanings and practices around impoverishment. Elwood brings together relational poverty theory with geographers' work on visual culture to theorize disruptive poverty politics, through interpretive analysis of creative visual practices by Real Change, a Seattle economic and racial justice organization that confronts Seattle's ongoing shelter crisis. By examining portrait art, a public art installation, and a parade entry, Elwood discusses how the visual form, genre, and socio-spatial relations of making and experiencing these creative visual practices refuse symbolic grammars typically used to represent homelessness and circulate counter-hegemonic explanations of impoverishment. By disrupting normative sights, practices, and socio-spatial relations in public spaces, these visual interventions re-script spaces of privilege produced through capitalist relations of dispossession and exclusion, and the ideological projects that undergird these processes. These disruptive visual politics create encounters across social and spatial difference that can challenge privileged subjects, raise new voices, and create previously unimaginable political forms. These arguments owe much to long-term collaboration and generous thinking with Elwood, her co-author, Vicky Lawson, as well as Tim Harris and other colleagues at Real Change.

7PM | THURSDAY | NOV. 9TH | TILTON HALL

Sarah Elwood is a Professor of Geography at University of Washington and co-founder of the Relational Poverty Network with Victoria Lawson. Her research contributes to relational poverty, urban geography, visual politics/methods, and critical digital geographies. Current activities include collaborative research on middle class poverty politics in mixed-income neighborhoods in Buenos Aires and Seattle and on visual politics in poverty activism.

this event is free and open to the public and sponsored by the Graduate School of Geography  
For information, contact Kayla Peterson at [kapeterson@clarku.edu](mailto:kapeterson@clarku.edu) or 508-793-7434

[1] From <https://depts.washington.edu/rel-pov/about-us/>.

[2] A full recording of the lecture is available at <https://livestream.com/clarkuniversity/2017AtwoodLectureSarahElwood/videos/165720208>. Quote from Sarah Elwood at 07:59 in the recording.

[3] See <https://www.realchangenews.org> for more details about the organization.

[4] For more details, see <https://www.realchangenews.org/2016/02/24/everyone-portrait-project-has-story-celebrate-them-us>.

[5] The Fremont Solstice Parade. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fremont\\_Solstice\\_Parade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fremont_Solstice_Parade) for information about the event.

## An Interview with Professor Katherine Gibson

Professor Katherine Gibson (Clark University, Geography, PhD '81), based at the Institute for Culture and Society at Western Sydney University, was invited to give the 2018 Roepke Lecture in Economic Geography at the 2018 AAG conference in New Orleans. She is best known for her pioneering work with the late Professor Julie Graham (Clark University, Geography, PhD '84) on diverse economies, jointly published under the pen name J. K. Gibson-Graham. In her lecture entitled "Economic Geography and Ethical Action in the Anthropocene", she outlined how, confronted with pervasive challenges such as climate change and global inequality, novel manufacturing cultures are emerging that balance financial viability with concerns for environmental and social well-being. Through four examples of Australian businesses, she highlights these cultures and the 'ethical economic actions that make other worlds possible' through prioritizing 'just sustainability' (Agyeman et al. 2003). The lecture video is now available on the Economic Geography journal website.

In an interview with current PhD student and co-editor of the Monadnock, Dan Santos, Professor Gibson discusses her lecture and the diverse economies research program, and reflects on her time as a graduate student at Clark. The interview contains references to an article, based on the lecture, that will soon be published in Economic Geography. The interview presented here has been edited, and the photos were provided by Professor Gibson.

**Dan:** In your lecture and your article, you talk about how manufacturing is now an increasing matter of policy concern. What role do you think government policy can or should have in pushing for 'just sustainability' in the manufacturing sector?

Professor Gibson: I think government policies are always going to be important in any sector of the economy, and particularly manufacturing. One of the reasons we started to look back at manufacturing was because the decline in manufacturing employment in Australia was attracting huge amounts of attention and potential bailouts by the government. Whether these policies are contributing to just sustainability or not is a big question. And I'm sure they could. I guess the most direct way is through support for fair wages and working conditions. So that's been a big debate in Australia and other parts of the world, around what role governments

should have in regulating those kinds of questions.



**Dan:** In your article, you heed Vicky Lawson's call to put economic geography into conversation with emotional geographies with respect to manufacturing. What other conversations or collaborations do you think economic geographers can or should be having with other parts of the discipline?

Professor Gibson: I would say that economic geography is already involved in questions of race justice and post-colonial issues. And questions around indigeneity.

But in terms of the manufacturing industry, I think the science and technology studies

On the way to the 1978 AAG conference in New Orleans (L-R): Two Clark graduate students, a friend of Ruth Finch-er's, Neil Smith, Ruth Fincher, Jim Lyons, Christine Rodrigue, Janet McNaught

approach to materiality is a really productive area for economic geography to be engaging with. When you think about the analysis of the object that economic geography has done, it's largely focused on the transportation of the goods, and which goods are fitting in where and in which economies, rather than the actual material capacities of particular materials. And yet when we look at the research that's going on in manufacturing, a lot of it is around pushing what materials can do. And that then is reshaping the economics of the businesses as well. It seems like we could be taking STS analysis right back into the production process to look at the ways in which new forms of production could be emerging. The other area that I think is very interesting is design and social practice. Clearly, we're going to have to look for different ways of doing making – what Elizabeth Shove talks about as the 'unmaking of unsustainability'. How that's going to interact with practices in manufacturing is another area that we could be looking at.

**Dan: You mention that these four companies, and perhaps other companies like them, offer glimmers of hope for thinking about business viability differently. What lessons can be drawn from the diverse economies research for conceptualizing how this could be, for lack of a better phrase, scaled up or expanded? What are the next steps for promoting just sustainability in manufacturing?**

Professor Gibson: I think, in terms of 'scaling up', I don't really like that term, perhaps 'scaling out' is better. Firstly, we need to have some sort of shared language around what's going on that's beyond the triple bottom line. In keeping with the work that we've done in the past, the politics of language is important and getting people to sign on to the catch phrase 'just sustainability' and use it a little bit is the first step, along with trying to get that language into a policy framework. In a way it's an experimental intervention, to try and put a different kind of vision forward. But if we can try and put forward a different vision of a very innovative and committed sector, or at least actors within the manufacturing sector, who are, yes, staying financially viable but are doing so by genuinely adhering to values around sustainability and equity and place and so on, then that's the strategy that we're trying to pursue.

**Dan: As a more general question – when you look back over the research that's been done since the mid-1990s in diverse economies, has anything surprised you about the directions that it has taken? And what else do you see, besides manufacturing, in the future of diverse economies? Do you see other directions that the field is going in?**

Professor Gibson: Well, I think what's been surprising or gratifying has been the way that the work has spread into really different contexts globally. And I think one of the big shifts happened once we wrote *Take Back the Economy* (2013), which puts the ideas out there in a more easily accessible way and has been translated into different contexts. What's been interesting is the way in which that work has been picked up around the world and used by all sorts of groups, not necessarily academic groups, to inform their interventions and economic development and so on.

I'd also like to say that it's really the work on community economies that's been picked up. I think the diverse economies research programme is an umbrella term, and really that technique of inventorying diversity is just a first step towards other kinds of ethical actions. And in that vein the move towards thinking about manufacturing is partly an attempt to address criticisms that the diverse economies work was all to do with non-capitalist activities. I think it is important for us to look at the diversity in so-called capitalist practices as well.

Another area that is being pursued is looking at the really ugly aspects of diverse economies. I mean, the inventory of diverse economies was never meant to be a normative view. It was meant to be a documentation of what's out there, including things like slavery or indentured labor or underground crime-based economies. Some people are doing more work on things like mafia and gangs and these kinds of economic interventions from a diverse economies perspective. Another group of people who have been drawn to our work are activist artists. They are using it in their exhibitions, and communicating this sort of re-thinking the economy in their work, which I think is really exciting.



At an international workshop in Luxembourg, 1980  
(L-R): Bennet Harrison (MIT), Katherine Gibson, Julie Graham, a Dutch geographer

**Dan:** For the next part of the interview it would be great to step back into the past and hear more about your time at Clark. Why did you decide to come to Clark?

Professor Gibson: Having finished an Honors degree and worked as a tutor at Sydney University for a few years, I felt the need for more input into graduate education, and the Australian situation meant you just go straight to a PhD and 'sink or swim'. So I had a thirst for a different kind of education where I could do some more in-depth coursework before starting my major piece of research.

So that led to me to North America. As I was applying I was influenced by Ron Horvath, a social geographer who increased my interest in the more radical end of geography. Up until that point, I had been interested in phenomenological work. Clark was great because it had both – it had Anne Buttmer and her humanistic work, and then it had Dick Peet and *Antipode* and so on. By the time I was ready to choose I suppose I was getting more interested in the Marxist, radical geography approach. So that's why I ended up at Clark. And luckily Ruth [Fincher, PhD '80] was there – she was allocated to be my student mentor.

**Dan:** During your presentation at the AAG you showed a picture of you and Ruth, and Neil Smith was there and a few other people, driving on the way to the AAG in New Orleans in 1978. Maybe you could talk about and reflect on what stands out about the experiences and education that you received at Clark?

Professor Gibson: I guess the thing that most stood out was my cohort. I think I was maybe one of 12 people. I think half were women, half were men, so it was amazing to be part of a group like that. I felt like what I was initiated into was something where graduate students were the center of the department and the faculty members were kind of peripheral to everything [laughter]. And that was very exciting. I can still see us going into Saul Cohen's office for him to welcome us all, sitting on that window seat over there, and we seemed to be quite a crowd.

And then the other thing that was great was the Moynihan's Friday afternoon 'seminars', which always started at 3, 3.30 in the afternoon. These were always a big attraction. People would stay for hours and then go off for dinner somewhere. And that was interesting because it was very much mixed up across the different paradigms that people were involved in.

So there was a great student feeling in the place. The leftists were a pretty significant group: Paul Sussman, Jim Lyons, and Cindi Katz, who had been there before I got there. We were involved in lots of different self-organized reading groups with various faculty members across the university. I actually worked more with people outside of geography – Don Shakow in Economics, and Bob Ross in Sociology, for instance.

One of the memorable things that happened was, in 1978, there was a huge snow storm that just shut down the whole North East, and I think people were stranded in Worcester for three or four days. I remember Julie (Graham) used to commute in from Shutesbury, and her car was so buried it took three days before we could actually dig it out. But during that period it was just like this fiesta took place [laughter]. So that was great. I definitely feel, in a way that I don't think I've ever experienced anywhere else, that the students were the center of the whole place.

**Dan: You mentioned in your lecture that you and Julie first co-wrote a paper in one of Dick Peet's classes, and this is what started your collaborative work together. What do you think made that friendship and collaboration so special and productive?**

Professor Gibson: Well, obviously it lasted a long time, so that was special [laughter]. I got involved in very close collaborations, not just with Julie. We also worked with Don Shakow and Bob Ross, as I said, and Paul Sussman. So there was a form of collaborative intellectual exchange that Julie and I were part of, and even though we'd written that paper together and we continued to write together, there were more people involved. That then distilled down to a group of four when I came back to Australia, and the four of us actually worked on quite a few papers, and wrote a manuscript for a book that never got published.

So Julie and I started working in this wider group. When she took a job at the University of Massachusetts, she started getting involved in an anti-essentialist form of Marxist theory, influenced by Althusserianism, and she brought me along into that. I was at Sydney University, but then I went to Monash University and was head of the Center for Women Studies where I had a crash course in feminist post-structuralism, and then that influenced our thinking from my side of things. The friendship and intellectual relationship developed under the influence of different thinking coming from the different places we were at. And this, I guess, produced a vitality to our development that helped us then move towards writing *The End of Capitalism* (1996).

So I think it was a funny mixture of someone (Julie) who really didn't have much experience with Geography but had been a very active member of the feminist movement and then environmental movement, who was drawn to study geography because it seemed like one of the disciplines where you could be more of a scholar-activist. And then I was coming out of a classic economic or human geographical training, but was attracted to the more engaged, political aspect of what was going on in radical geography.

**Dan: As a final question, do you have any pieces of advice or insights to share with current graduate students from your wealth of experience and a very successful career? Or perhaps things you would change or be more attentive to if you could do it over again?**

Professor Gibson: Hrmm ... I don't know if I'm very good with advice [laughter]. Well, I think that if I could do it over again, I'd probably do it the same way.

If I think about the pressures that are on people and junior academics these days, I guess I urge people starting out to build those collaborative connections early and not be afraid to work collaboratively, and to even put your names together sometimes, and play around with the system a bit. Not be cowed by the kind of seemingly endless demands on individual performance. I think we came up in a period where that kind of pressure wasn't there in the same way and I worry that the ways in which those pressures percolate down to the graduate student level are stymying creativity because of the feeling that you need to make a career, make a name for yourself. I would like to see that collaborative spirit that we were enmeshed in at Clark, and were able to manage to continue, flourish. Really, I think my success in academia is because of that collaboration and the way in which it insulated me from the anxieties and pressures that academia places on people.

So, I think looking after each other and creating a caring intellectual environment that is productive is really important, and not to lose sight of that, is the advice I'd give.

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*First Year PhD Students, 2017. Back row (L-R): Michael Cecil, Melissa Bollman, Nick Geron.  
Front Row (L-R): Mike Athay, Surendra Shrestha, Karen Hudlet Vazquez, Inge Salo, Jackie Guz, Lei Song*

## Meet CUGS

In May 2018, we invited the then first-year PhD cohort to reflect on their first year at Clark and their thoughts on geography and being geographers.

### Why did you choose to pursue graduate studies in geography? In what ways do you identify as a geographer?

**Karen:** I decided to do Geography because I have always been interested in differences in access to resources, and how people negotiate this access through legal and extra-legal ways. And geography, specifically political ecology, does that in a way that considers power and social movement theory. It also allows you to understand the various ways that different groups understand place and its relevance for their access to resources.

**Lei:** When I was in high school, geography was one of my favorite subjects. I've always been excited about maps. In China, geography is a mandatory subject in high school, and we learned physical geography and human geography. For me, whatever geography is or whoever geographers are, as long as we ask good scientific questions about the whole environment, then this is 'geography'.

**Surendra:** I am a government employee at the Department of Forestry for the Nepalese government. There are very few people in my field who know about geography. Therefore, my purpose in getting a Geography degree is

reinforced by the need for research-oriented knowledge and technology transfer to underdeveloped regions like Nepal. Sometimes, I am confused as to whether I belong to Earth System Science or Geography. Based on the work I am doing and will be doing in the coming years – biogeophysical research – I consider myself to be more in the discipline of Earth System Science.

**Inge:** I did an Honors degree in Anthropology, and then I followed my supervisor, who was based in the Environmental and Geographical Sciences Department at the university where I did my Masters. In anthropology I was interested in urban anthropology and cities – how people experience cities, processes of place-making within cities. Geography is the perfect discipline to continue exploring that.

**Melissa:** I studied environmental policy and philosophy as an undergraduate. My college didn't have a Geography department, but I took courses in political ecology and GIS. After I graduated, I worked as a program manager and policy analyst at a renewable energy nonprofit in Maryland before getting my master's degree in energy policy. I probably identify more as an energy policy researcher than a geographer at the moment, but that may change. Being in a geography program encourages me to pay more attention to the spatial aspects of energy systems than I might otherwise.

**Jackie:** In my undergraduate degree, I majored in environmental studies, but every

class I took was in the Geography department. I guess I feel like more of a geographer now than I did in my first semester. I read a paper in Dominik's [Kulakowski] class and it was about space and place in forest management and how it changed, and there was a really great chart that showed the different views of forestry across the world, and I thought to myself: 'This is geography'. It was definitely the Forest Ecology class that did it for me – that made me into a geographer.

Mike A: My way into geography was through my Masters program, where I did environmental policy and regulation, in a Geography and Environment department. The interdisciplinarity of Geography really appeals to me, and particularly questions about the environment. So interdisciplinary questions about the environment, of how humans live in the world, seems like 'geography', at least to me.

Nick: This is the only Geography program I applied to. I'm really interested in natural resource management, and specifically forests, whether urban or rural. I was open-ended about that. And there's lots of great urban forestry research being conducted in this department. And now I think I identify as a geographer, and I'm happy about it.

Mike C: I took some geography classes when I studied abroad as an undergraduate. Then I went into a GIS program because it was very interdisciplinary. I'm really interested in issues revolving around climate change, what direction we're headed over the next century – and geography is right at the intersection of a lot of interesting questions about these futures.

### **How have you found your first year at Clark? What have you particularly enjoyed, or perhaps found surprising?**

Lei: I really enjoyed it. I'm doing a PhD because I'm pretty sure I want to do research, and I really enjoy this process, no matter what I'm doing. I've also learned from Deb's [Martin] class last semester [GEOG368: Development of Western Geographical Thought] that there are other methods I can use. In the past, I was more involved in programming and maths, so I preferred to use numbers to answer questions, but now I've learned that there are qualitative methods available to do research, perhaps in my own future research.

Jackie: I think that this cohort has been really great about listening and learning from each other. Melissa is learning R and GIS, which is very impressive to me, and I'm trying to learn more about Karen's work in Mexico. And I hear Mike [Athay] talking about international aspects and cultures in relation to his economics background. I think this group learns from each other well.

Karen: It has been a lot more social than I expected. I had thought that doing the PhD would be more of an individual experience, more independent and on your own. This is what I experienced in the Netherlands during my Masters. But here you have classes and study groups and so on, and it is common to share orals lists and other materials, so you can have access to what previous generations did. In this respect, it's been a nice surprise.

Nick: I definitely agree with that. Part of the reason I chose Clark was because of the social environment. I'm part of a larger group, compared to being on my own. I think that's what really met or exceeded my expectations. Because I'm learning about what other people are doing, I'm pushing myself to expand my interests, by being in this group and seeing where everyone else is at and what they're interested in. So, I really appreciate that.

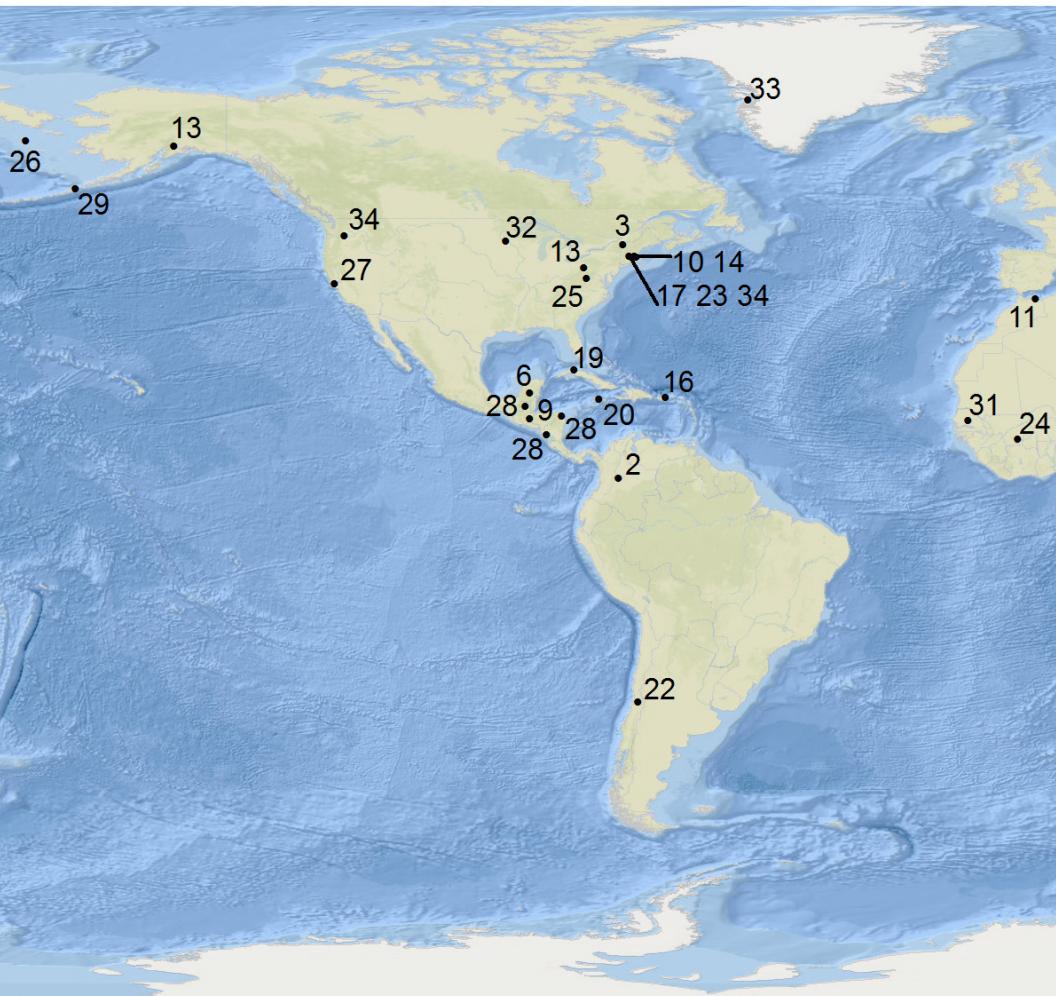
Mike A: I do think that one of the surprises for me was the formality around CUGS, and the opportunities to be involved in the department. That was probably the biggest surprise for me.

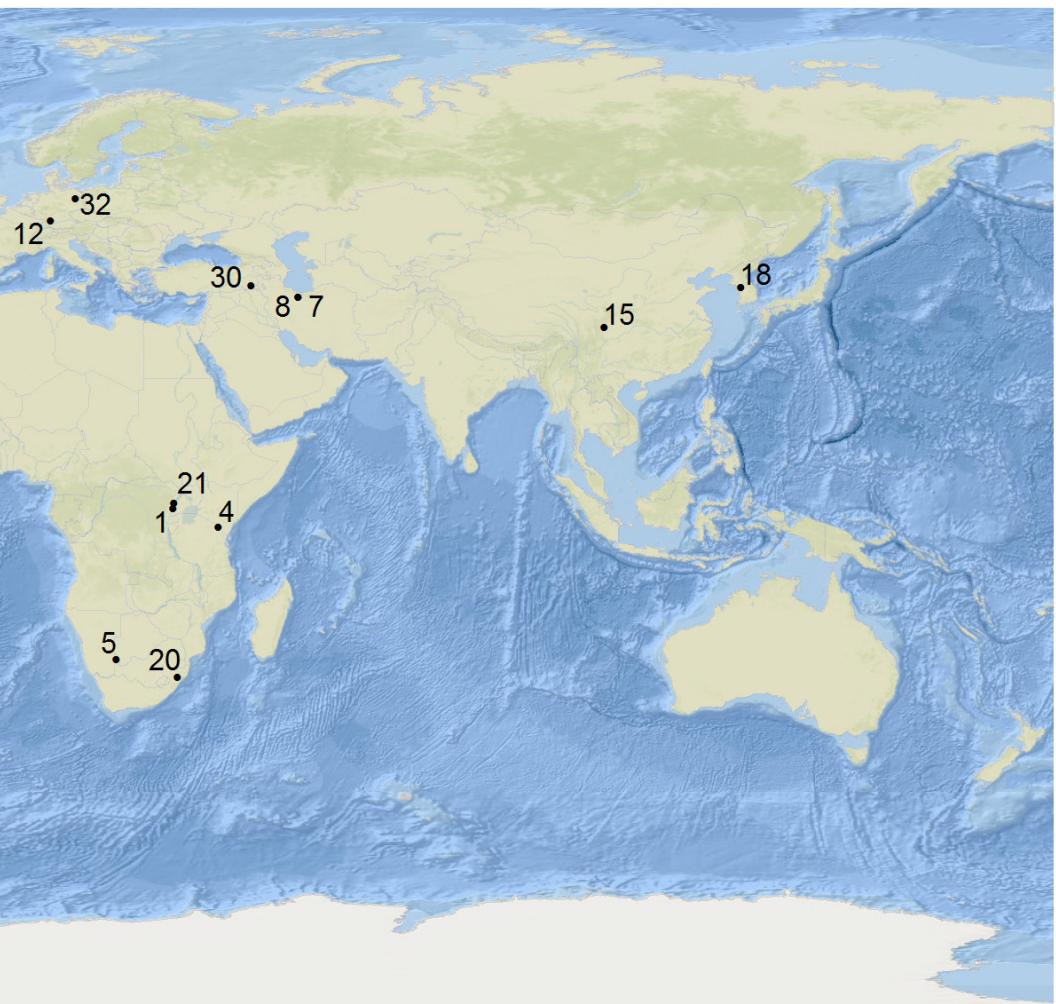
Melissa: I was also surprised by the degree to which PhD students are involved in departmental decision-making. I know that not all schools allow graduate students to attend job talks or serve on committees with the faculty. It's great to have these opportunities, particularly if you are interested in an academic career.

Surendra: I agree – I am so impressed with the coordination among faculty, staff and graduate students at Clark geography.

Mike C: I think that's one of the things that sets Clark apart – that so many people are committed to the department, both on a student level and the academic level. People are invested.

## Research Sites of Current Doctoral Students





- 20. Alex Moulton**, Jamaica; Kwazulu Natal, South Africa  
**21. Patrick Mutegeki**, Kabarole District, Uganda  
**22. Scott Odell**, Santiago, Chile  
**23. Andrew Riely**, Cambridge, MA  
**24. Helen Rosko**, Sikasso, Mali  
**25. Sarah SanGiovanni**, Pittsburgh, PA  
**26. Melishia Santiago**, Bering Sea  
**27. Dan Santos**, Bay Area, CA  
**28. Laura Sauls**, Managua, Nicaragua; Flores, Guatemala; Puerto Lempira, Honduras

- 29. Kristen Shake**, Unalaska, AK  
**30. Kaner Turker**, Northern Kurdistan, Turkey  
**31. Mara van den Bold**, Senegal  
**32. Michelle Wenderlich**, Minneapolis, MN; Berlin, Germany  
**33. Ashley York**, Disko Bay, Greenland  
**34. Yu Zhou**, Harvard Forest, MA; Pacific Northwest

*Map by Ashley York, based on a partial CUGS survey conducted in October 2018.*

## Reflections from the Field

*Current doctoral students share their experiences and insights from their fieldwork.*

### Seeking Order Out of Chaos

*Wenjing Jiang*

In his book “A Plague of Caterpillars”, Nigel Barley once wrote, “when the alien culture you are studying begins to look normal, it is time to go home” (1986, p. 153). If I were to describe my fieldwork experience in one sentence, this would be it. When I first entered Sichuan Province in Southwest China, I was to assess how the area was destroyed by the devastating Wenchuan earthquake and how it was reconstructed. Now that years have passed, it is Sichuan that has completely subverted and later rebuilt my own philosophies. Growing up in a major post-industrial city in China on the Northeastern plains, where the social orders have somewhat inherited those in the Communist era – something I realized only after arriving at Sichuan – I learned from the beginning of life to trust formal businesses only for goods and services. Yet there were almost none in Sichuan - only chaos. When I first landed at the Chengdu Airport in Sichuan, approached by a huge group of private drivers shouting at me and attempting to drag me to their cars for a ride, my world view started to shake and collapse.

My first few visits to Sichuan were full of noise and chaos. On many occasions, I felt just as foreign as I initially did in the US, if not more, a good status to be in for observing social norms in general but bad for researching specific topics, as I was attracted to and distracted by almost every white noise in the background. When this first phase of excitement gradually died down, the question then became: how to remain acute in the process of getting adapted to local cultures? My iterative approach of data collection and preliminary analysis, shifting constantly between analyses of first-hand and second-hand data, between observations and in-depth interviews, and between interviews with different groups of informants – though not by choice – turned out to be an effective strategy. During my travels across different sites and settings, the constant “detaching” and “re-attaching” process no doubt helped counter the accustomization and mental fatigue.

In the end, my 14 months of fieldwork turned me into a one-word person. Whenever asked about how my fieldwork went, I would immediately recall all the moments of excitement and frustration, so many of them that I could not decide where to start. And I knew that once I began talking, I would never stop. “Good,” I would say, with calm, incapable of telling more. This was the moment when I started to understand how and why some local villagers could not speak out loud of their experiences, feelings and sufferings. The chaos at first glance has its own order.



Yulin Market  
in the City  
of Chengdu.  
Photo by  
Wenjing Jiang

## A Note from *after* the Field

### *Carlos Dobbler*

It's June 12, 2017. I finally arrive in Calakmul, southeastern Mexico, eager to start what I envision to be eleven months of fieldwork. It was a long drive. The heat and moisture are unbearable. I set up the cottage that will be my home during my stay here. I could fry an egg on its tin roof. No running water, no A/C, and definitely no WiFi. As the day ends, swarms of mosquitoes arrive. But I try to remain positive: I have electricity and a fridge, some old mattresses too. Eleven months...?



It was a challenge, but I made it. On May 2018 I left Calakmul with stacks of household questionnaires, notes on farming strategies, GPS points – you know, classic “geographical” data. I also left with important lessons and experiences. I refined my tortilla palate and now prefer them handmade over a wood fire. I became an accomplished motorcycle rider too, although most farmers would disagree. But perhaps the biggest lesson came from living under that tin roof and witnessing the everyday lives of the people in Calakmul: we urbanites of the planet certainly need less than we think we do.

I hope you understand: landing in the US after eleven months in Calakmul would give anyone a powerful impression. I'm writing this from the comforts of an old library in Woods Hole, MA. This is America: you bet it has A/C and WiFi. While people in Calakmul can barely afford a replacement for their cheap plastic sandals, I look through the window of the library and I see sailboats everywhere. I

see sailboats, yoga mats, sunglasses, smart watches, frappes and smoothies, hybrids and SUVs, earpods, Amazon boxes, Patagonia jackets, and Hydro Flasks. I just read a piece by Alana Semuels on American consumerism. It's shocking. Today about a third of the country has an Amazon-Prime subscription, and that number keeps growing. I try to imagine myself explaining to a Calakmuleño that people from this country buy on average 66 garments per year (!!!), or more tricky, what Amazon-Prime is. *Está cabrón*, or nonsense, he would say.

A smallholder from Calakmul (right) patiently going through yet another interview with PhD student Carlos Dobler (left). Photo courtesy of Carlos Dobbler

To be sure, these patterns of consumption are not exclusive to the US. Mexican urbanites might easily consume as much. It is also important to note that Calakmuleños don't buy much because they can't, not because they don't want to. But in any case, Calakmul shifted my attention on how many of the things I have and buy are not truly essential. Having that perspective, however, is painful. I confess that going back to the Calakmul life would be extremely hard now that I have access to A/C and a shower and WiFi (...and Amazon). And it's also troubling, given my awareness of the social and environmental costs of our modern lifestyle. Rejecting plastic straws just won't make it.

Perhaps this was not a joyous “note from the field”, but I wanted to share how experiences in the field unavoidably transcend our research questions. In my case, for better or worse, Calakmul has implanted a lens that magnifies the amount of \*stuff\* we deem necessary to keep our worlds spinning.



The expansion of agroforestry and tree plantations is the main driver of tree cover increase in Western Rwanda. Photo by Bernadette Arakwiye.

## Collecting Ecological and Social Data in Rwanda

*Bernadette Arakwiye*

Recent news reported that 2017 was the second worst year for tropical forests. In Rwanda, data show about 2700Ha of tree cover loss for 2017, which is 50Ha less the area lost in 2016. This information would corroborate national efforts to curb forest loss and to increase tree cover to 30% by 2020. But what is really happening to trees and forests, particularly in mountainous Western Rwanda?

My dissertation research aims to understand changes in forest cover in Western Rwanda during the past 30 years and to identify opportunities for tree and forest-based restoration activities. I am taking a multidisciplinary approach linking socio-ecological field data with satellite images. I chose this topic and field site based on my familiarity with Western Rwanda. Having lived and worked there since 2007, I've seen firsthand the region experience recurring flooding, landslides, and drought events that negatively impacted communities. The civil wars and genocide have also taken a toll on forests and biodiversity in the region, following an increased number of displaced people, weak law enforcement, and the need for land for agriculture and population resettlement.

My field work ran from May 2017 to May 2018. My time in the field involved ecological data collection in various plots across my study area as well as interviews with farmers and government and NGO staff operating in my study area. Planning and conducting data collection for each component of my

dissertation research was a unique learning experience. I was already familiar with the process for collecting ecological data in Rwanda. This started with a visit to the Rwanda Development Board (RDB), an institution that provides paperwork to students and researchers conducting research in and around national protected areas and also matches researchers with experienced field escorts familiar with the history, fauna and flora of the various sites. On the other hand, I was still a novice in conducting interviews in Rwanda. I learned the hard way that there is no institutional equivalent to RDB for someone collecting social data; I was advised to first visit and seek permission from authorities at the sector administration level before approaching participants from a sector. This was the most difficult part of planning interviews since I have 82 sample sectors in my study area and in most cases, the local authority did not know how to handle my requests, which delayed data collection.

Ecological data collection was straightforward, even with recurring hikes on steep terrain under pouring rain. In some places, however, I needed to make sure not to startle buffaloes or gorillas. Conducting interviews was more difficult and often overwhelming. However, because I speak Kinyarwanda, I was able to directly hear the words and see accompanying emotions as my participants described changes in forest cover and the causes and impacts those changes have had on participants' daily lives. Now, national statistics on tree cover change are not abstract numbers. The consequences are also not homogenous - they are experienced differently within the sites and communities in Western Rwanda.

## Life after Clark

*Recent graduates share some of their post-Clark challenges, experiences and new research directions.*

### Doctors without Borders: Fieldwork and Friendship Persist Beyond the Dissertation

*Alida Cantor, Kelly Kay and Chris Knudson*

"Yes, oh yes, I'm going to the Mezz..."

But we weren't going to the Mezz. We were driving down H1, the sounds of Los Party Killers [1] spilling out across the hills of Honolulu in a trans-Pacific journey featuring the infamous CUGS anthem.

We (Kelly, Chris, and Alida) all graduated in 2016. Now, we're writing this update from Hawaii, where we are currently doing fieldwork for a new research project focusing on the political ecology and legal geography of conflicts around Hawaiian water resources. We're seeking to understand how the decline of sugar production has intersected with growing environmental and Native Hawaiian movements to return flows to Maui's streams. We've thoroughly enjoyed spending the past week tramping around rainforest irrigation ditches, interviewing lawyers and activists involved in the water conflicts, and, well, maybe doing a little snorkeling in between all of our meetings.

Seeking respite from Worcester winters, we have spread ourselves out across the Western US. Chris is currently a postdoc at the Institute of the Environment at the University of Arizona in Tucson, studying how smallholder agricultural producers adapt to climate change. Working in the tropical islands of Hawaii gives him a needed break from his regular work in the tropical islands of the Caribbean. Kelly is an Assistant Professor in Geography at UCLA, studying the financialization of the former industrial timberlands of the US. When she's not working, Kelly can be found walking and eating in LA—hobbies that make her sound curiously similar to a dog. And Alida is an Assistant Professor in Geography at Portland State University, studying water resources management and water law. Outside of work, she chases her 2-year-old daughter around and has spent a good part of the summer exploring the great outdoor offerings of the Pacific Northwest.

We've all spent the past few years navigating the ups and downs of life post-graduate school. While we're all enjoying our respective new hometowns, it's been amazing to come together with fellow cohort members to work on a research project. We may have moved on from Worcester, but CUGS remains near and dear in our hearts.

[1] See <https://soundcloud.com/lospartykillers>; see also Tapp, 2014-15, Monadnock vol. 57, p. 9



Chris, Kelly and Alida living the high life in the hills of Honolulu. Photo by Alida Cantor.

...

[To the Monadnock editors: Don't print this, but the story we have submitted is a lie. Here's what we're really doing with our lives.]

### From Academia to Macadamia: The Real Story

We're in Hawaii filming a pilot for our new sitcom, "From Academia to Macadamia." The loosely autobiographical show stars three academics who got caught using grant money to take tropical vacations. After the NSF's special investigative wing [1] catches them trying to buy a vacation home with government funds, they lose their university jobs and are stuck in Hawaii with only the clothes on their backs. Every episode features the three disgraced geographers cracking jokes, and nuts, as they find that the only jobs available are at a macadamia nut factory. The show also features academic guest stars such as Judith Butler and Slavoj Žižek, who have only agreed to appear on the show because it means flying first class to Hawaii. Major networks have expressed significant interest in the show, which obviously appeals to a broad audience. After some initial creative differences with the producers when we wanted to act in the show ourselves, we were quickly replaced with Tobey Maguire, Lindsay Lohan and the Olsen twins. Stay tuned and tell your family!!!

[1] We're also writing a spec script for a crime thriller show (think CSI: University) about the NSF's elite investigators.

### 'Life after CUGS'

Amy Zhang

After graduating from the GSG in 2016, I moved to the UK for a 3-year lecturer position at the University of Birmingham in January 2017. I had been told before that it would be a challenge to juggle research, teaching, supervising, and administration, especially in the first year. And as if moving across the Atlantic and starting a job in a new environment with such a challenge wasn't hard enough, I got my working visa much later than expected and didn't arrive at Birmingham until a week after the spring semester had started. In the midst of finding an apartment, sorting out

paperwork, learning where everything is and how everything is done, and opening a bank account (which is surprisingly difficult!), I also needed to prepare three lectures on economic geography to teach in the year 1 undergraduates' "Contemporary Human Geography" class in a couple of weeks. Thanks to the seminars I had on economic geographies at GSG, I was able to put together a structure for those three lectures as an introduction to the subdiscipline in a short period of time. This class was also my first time teaching 200+ students in a giant lecture hall, which is at the same time exciting, nerve-racking, and tiring. And, of course, something went wrong with the tech in my first lecture...

Just like that, my first semester in the new job passed swiftly, and soon the fall semester began with another set of "firsts": taking on an administration role while not fully familiar with all the procedures, co-supervising my first PhD student with another two colleagues, trying to write papers in a "REFable" way, and preparing to teach cultural geography even though I have never considered myself a cultural geographer... Despite challenging and frustrating at times, these "firsts" have also delivered many rewarding moments, such as seeing several of my first group of undergraduate supervisees producing wonderful pieces of research as their dissertations. I was also really excited to have received a British Academy small grant to start a new research project, to examine a



Amy Zhang

strategy that engages with pop-up art and design events for urban regeneration. However, starting a new research project when I would only be able to conduct fieldwork for a few weeks every 5-6 months proves to be quite a challenge, especially since almost nothing can be scheduled ahead of time when doing research in China: I might have to wait for days after contacting a potential research participant until they let me know that “I can meet with you this afternoon”.

If there's one important reflection I'd make at this point, it is “find your people”. Lego Grad Student recently posted online that it is important for those starting grad school to “find people with whom you can share feelings of how lost and overwhelmed you all will be”, which I think applies equally to being in grad school and afterwards. I was fortunate to find my people in CUGS and am fortunate to find my people at work now as well, who make working at a neoliberal university a slightly easier task.

## Progress to the PhD: dissertations and milestones AY 2017-18

### Degrees Conferred in 2017

#### *M.A. en route to Ph.D.*

Bernadette Arakwiye  
Melishia Santiago  
Laura Sauls  
Kaner Turker

### Degrees Conferred in 2018

#### *Doctoral*

Nathan Gill (August 2018)

“Emergent Properties of Interacting Disturbances in Subalpine Forests: Compound Effects and Adaptive Resilience”

Young-Long Kim (August 2018)

“The Role of Big Data in Understanding Urban Vitality”

#### *M.A. en route to Ph.D.*

Carlos Dobler Morales  
Wenjing Jiang  
Tong Jiao  
David Lukens  
Alex Moulton  
Scott Odell  
Michelle Wenderlich  
Leslie Gross-Wyrtzen

### Progress to Degree Milestones

#### *Dissertation Defenses*

2/7/18 – Nathan Gill  
5/3/18 – Young-Long Kim

#### **Doctoral Examination (Orals)**

5/8/17 – Wenjing Jiang  
5/8/17 – Yifan Cai  
5/10/17 – David Lukens  
5/11/17 – Michelle Wenderlich  
5/15/17 – Scott Odell  
5/15/17 – Carlos Dobler  
5/19/17 – Dylan Harris  
12/4/17 – Leslie Gross-Wyrtzen  
12/8/17 – Rich Kruger  
3/28/18 – Alex Moulton  
5/14/18 – Yu Zhou  
5/16/18 – Janae Davis

#### **Dissertation Proposal Defenses**

5/9/17 – Tong Jiao  
9/6/17 – Leslie Gross-Wyrtzen  
11/17/17 – Alex Moulton  
11/20/17 – Dylan Harris  
12/7/17 – Janae Davis  
1/30/18 – Ben Fash  
5/3/18 – Su Ye  
5/4/18 – Yu Zhou  
5/31/18 – Jacob Chamberlain

## Snapshots from the Year

(Right) CUGS, faculty member Yuko Aoyama and friends on top of Mt. Monadnock, Field Camp 2017. Photo courtesy of Brittany Lauren Wheeler



(Left) Resting on top of Mt. Monadnock, Field Camp 2017. Photo courtesy of Brittany Lauren Wheeler

(Below) 'Wayne' and 'Garth' cameo, Halloween party 2017.



(Below) CUGS, faculty and friends enjoying lively conversation at last year's conceptual potluck.



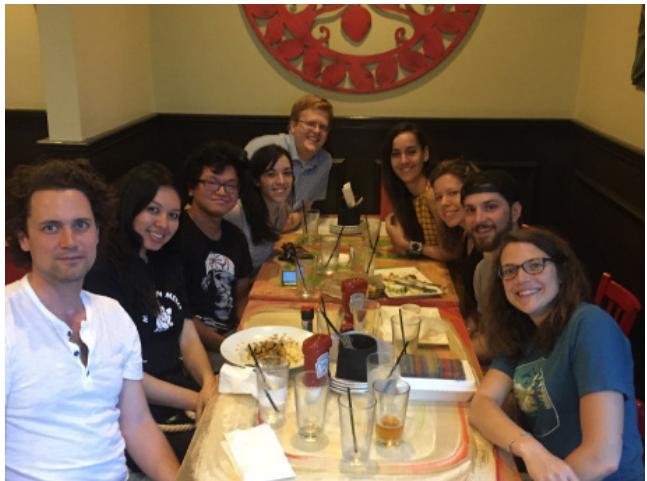


(Above) Students and Faculty attend lecture during last year's Nature-Society workshops.  
Photo by Benjamin Fash.



(Left) 4th year Alex Moulton giving opening remarks during 'Friendsgiving' dinner.  
Photo by Benjamin Fash.

(Right) Current third-years celebrate the end of their second year.



Graduate School of Geography, Clark University (May 2018)



**Front Row (L-R):** Yuko Aoyama, Chris Creelman, Jim Murphy, Deborah Martin, Ron Eastman  
**Second Row (L-R):** Alex Moulton, Kayla Peterson, Florencia Sangermano, Christopher Williams, Laura Sauls, Sam Khallaghi



**Third Row (L-R):** Helen Rosko, Rachel Levitt, Ashley York, Richard Kruger, Karen Hudlet Vazquez, Mara van den Bold, Dan Santos, Jackie Guz

**Fourth Row (L-R):** Brittany Lauren Wheeler, Nick Geron, Marc Healy, Dylan Harris, Benjamin Fash, Jacob Chamberlain, Michael Cecil. **Fifth Row:** Lyndon Estes





THE MONADNOCK

EDITORS:

JACOB CHAMBERLAIN  
DAN SANTOS

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CUGS ON THE PEAK OF  
MT. MONADNOCK, FIELD CAMP 2017

PHOTO COURTESY OF  
BRITTANY LAUREN WHEELER

