

Geography

News on Geography and
Environmental Science



Students excel at BCUR 2018

The annual British Conference of Undergraduate Research (BCUR) enables students at all stages of study to submit papers, posters, workshops and performances, promoting undergraduate research in all disciplines.

This year's conference was held at the University of Sheffield where five students from the School of Geography formed part of a group of students from Queen Mary and gave either an oral or a poster presentation based on their dissertation research. This opportunity allowed them to experience the excitement that comes from presenting their own research to a community of scholars and participate in an interdisciplinary conference.

"My experience at BCUR was amazing! It was so uplifting to be surrounded by many passionate students studying an array of topics. It felt great to be able to present my own research with the support of my supervisor

Professor Dave Horne as well as fellow Queen Mary students," said Geography student **Vin Binh Chau**. "Being around so many like-minded and amazing individuals was inspirational," said Environmental Science student **Jason Lynch**. "My research looked at the influence of sediment structure on invertebrate communities in natural and managed realigned saltmarshes at the Orplands Farm site in Essex. My data builds upon the amazing research that my supervisors **Dr Simon Carr** and **Professor Kate Spencer** have been heavily involved in," he added.

"This is such a great example of how research-led teaching can

- Read more at geog.qmul.ac.uk/news



Geography delegates at BCUR 2018.

benefit both the students and the university. The high standard of student work has contributed really valuable data and ideas to ongoing research in the School, whilst the students have benefitted from working on exciting and cutting-edge projects," commented Professor Spencer.

Changing places



Field work in east London.

Staff from the School of Geography enjoyed working with many sixth form groups around the theme of

the East End as a changing place this year. We have visited Bow, Mile End, Spitalfields and Whitechapel to explore a variety of big questions such as Is Life in Tower Hamlets getting better? This has proved a great jumping off point to develop more detailed areas of investigation for the NEA. Sub-themes of housing, environment, health, social cohesion, economy and education are just some of the details we

have explored and analysed using old and recent datasets from the census, vintage photographs and newspaper articles and Goad mapping techniques.

The School provides all resources and there is no charge for workshops. Please get in touch with **Kate Amis** (Schools Liaison and WP Officer) if you would like to work with us: k.amis@qmul.ac.uk

- Check out our teacher resources at geog.qmul.ac.uk/teachers/resources

Update from the Geography Society

The **Queen Mary Geography Society (QMGS)** intersects the need for community as well as passions for learning and exploration. The breadth of the society's membership truly represents the School's diverse population — an achievement upheld year after year.

QMGS prides itself on delivering an all-encompassing social and academic calendar; including bar crawls, trampolining, networking events and guest lectures. The society promotes sustainable values to mobilise others to follow an ethically-aware lifestyle. Students in the School of Geography from all degree programmes and levels of study are encouraged to participate in any capacity possible to engage and learn from each other. In 2018, QMGS continued to grow in size and in the enthusiasm of its members, who enjoyed a whole host of social and academic

events. Socially, the welcome pizza party once again engaged new first years and bridged the



QMGS committee 2018–19 L-R: Oliver Walker, Joanna Watts, Danial Naqvi, Rebecca Dixon, Kendra Gattiker, Livia van Heerde, Catarina da Silva Neves.

communication gap between all years. Academically, a careers event focused on the social research field and encouraged members from across the School and from other departments to explore the journey of current academics and alumni. The committee is planning some exciting activities for the coming academic year, including a writing and film competition, and a conference for London universities.

- Follow [@QMULGeogSoc](https://twitter.com/QMULGeogSoc) on Twitter for news and updates

Study abroad reflections

At Queen Mary there are many opportunities for students to spend time abroad – from summer schools to semester or year-long study abroad options. All of our degree programmes are also available as a four-year version, with a full year spent abroad.

“Studying abroad was the most incredibly enlightening and culturally-enriched experience in my life so far! I managed to explore Austin in full, travel around the USA, work for The Daily Texan, meet great people, and improve my language skills.” **Danial Naqvi** (Human Geography BA 2019) spent a semester at The University of Texas at Austin in the USA.



“I made sure to do all my university work during the week so that I had the weekends free to travel. We would hire cars with friends and go on road trips to different places in New Zealand. We travelled around the North and the South Island, and after exams visited Sydney, Melbourne and Perth in Australia.” **Lucy Durrant** (Geography BA 2019) spent a semester at the University of Auckland in New Zealand.

- Find out more at geog.qmul.ac.uk/undergraduate/whyqmul/studyabroad

Strategic Equipment Investment Fund enhances our laboratory facilities

Over the last two years £1m has been invested in new, cutting-edge equipment in the School of Geography Laboratories. Our laboratories facilitate world-class research, containing an extensive suite of analytical and field instruments, and are overseen and supported by a team of dedicated technical staff. Our research is built on strong collaborations that are national and international in

scope; our group also serves as a teaching platform for the next generation of ecosystem and earth system scientists.

The Laboratories are located in the Bancroft Building on the Mile End campus. They comprise several Physical Laboratories, including wet and dry sediment analyses, high-precision chemical analyses of sediment and water, Spectroscopy, Sample Preparation,

Gas Chromatography, Microscope/CT Rooms, River Modelling and Geo-spatial Computer Modelling Suite. There is also a designated Teaching Laboratory, which is used extensively, specifically for undergraduate practical classes and dissertation work.

- Find out more and take a virtual tour of the labs at geog.qmul.ac.uk/facilities

Geodiversity still high on the agenda

Geodiversity is the abiotic equivalent of biodiversity and includes the variety of rocks, minerals, fossils, landforms, soils and geomorphological processes. **Dr Murray Gray**, Emeritus Reader in Geography, has published a book on this subject (Gray, 2013) and as a result is regularly invited to lecture around the world.

Last October, Dr Gray spent two weeks in Brazil attending the 4th Brazilian Conference on Geoheritage where he taught a short course on Geodiversity and gave a plenary lecture. He also visited many important geological and geomorphological sites in the country including the spectacular Iguazu Falls on the Brazil/Argentine border, believed by many to be the world's best waterfall system. At



Dr Murray Gray (second right) with staff and students from Rio de Janeiro.

the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro he visited its Museum of Geodiversity, gave a lecture to staff and postgraduates, and was given a guided tour of the city's tourist sites including the Sugarloaf Mountain and the Corcovado Mountain with its huge statue of Christ the Redeemer.

- Find out more about our staff and their research specialisms at geog.qmul.ac.uk/staff

Equality and diversity

Last autumn, we successfully renewed our Bronze Athena SWAN award. As a School, we are committed to gender equality, gender balance at professorial level, representation from students at all levels on the Equality & Diversity Committee, engaging with the RGS-IBG Race, Culture and Equality Working Group, and plans to decolonise the curriculum.

The E&D committee continues to implement our action plan, and to create an all-inclusive environment. We are also actively supporting Queen Mary's 'Reimagining Attainment For All' project which is looking at the attainment levels of black African students and Muslim women.



- Read more at geog.qmul.ac.uk/about/equality

Photo competition winners announced

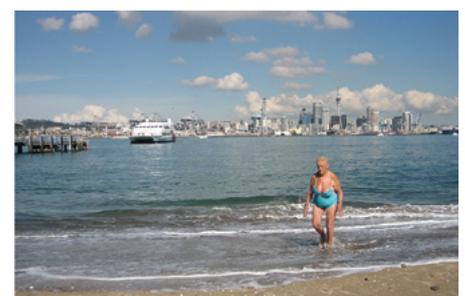
We have received over one hundred fantastic entries to our annual photo competition **Worldview**, in which all our students, staff and alumni can submit images across five categories, designed to help them think about geographical themes. Here are some of the winning images:



1st place: *Switzerland*
© Amber Louisa Veacock



Staff prize: *Koch Barn, Kansas*
© Regan Koch



Alumni prize: *Morning Dip, Auckland, New Zealand* © Andrew Blaikie

- See all images submitted to the photo competition at [flickr.com/photos/qmulgeog](https://www.flickr.com/photos/qmulgeog)

Money – Community – Money

Professor Kavita Datta, Postdoctoral Research Assistant **Olivia Vicol**, and PhD candidate **Vincent Guermond** pooled the expertise of professionals from across the academia, money remittance and third sector, to unpack the role of digital technologies in migrants' financial inclusion.

From everyday online banking, to mobile apps which trigger global remittances in seconds, the flow of money around the world is increasingly digitised. Migrants in particular are the usual suspects of digital finance initiatives. Courted by money remittance businesses for their custom, and problematized by NGOs as entrepreneurs without borders, their financial practices have been the subject of numerous attempts to digitise, to organise, and to optimise above all, in a belief that money well managed goes further.

In their workshop in March, geographers set off to examine this narrative more critically. Bringing academics in conversation with money

remittance professionals, they unpacked the political economy of digital finance, and looked more closely at how migrants use, imagine, and indeed resist digital finance in the everyday. There is much potential in digital technologies to provide cheaper and faster transfers, professionals argued. The promise of tech, however, is mediated by migrants' own willingness to adopt it, conditioned by states' regulatory environments, and dependent still, upon commercial banks' monopoly over the payment infrastructure of the world. Appealing as digital technologies may be to migrants' and the businesses which serve

them, deploying them towards financial inclusion still rests upon firms' abilities to enter the formal, and rather concentrated, banking structures which govern the mobility of money over borders.

The workshop thus opened the possibility of an exciting research agenda around the socio-political life of digital finance, and the complex intersections between state, banks, and migrants which constitute it. It is precisely this intersection that makes up the object of enquiry in Kavita's and Olivia's new Leverhulme research project, "Disciplining the Remittance Marketplace".

- Find out more about our staff and their research specialisms at geog.qmul.ac.uk/research/projects/remittance-marketplace

Visit from leading Latin American scholar

The School recently hosted **Professor Maristella Svampa**, a renowned sociologist from Argentina, for a public talk and research seminar with graduate students.

Maristella Svampa is a leading public scholar from Latin America. Based at the National University of La Plata and Argentina's CONICENT, she is a sociologist, originally trained as a philosopher, and a highly prolific writer. At once daring, original and provocative, across her career she has examined a range of pressing issues including: the rise of grassroots activism and social movements in the period of Argentina's 2001 crisis; the growth of inequality under neoliberalism and its consequence on urban society in Argentina; and the relationship between popular power and political regimes in Latin America.

Professor Svampa's talk formed part of a trip to the UK that included visits to the University of Cambridge and the University of Warwick. Her visit was organised by **Dr Sam Halvorsen**, Lecturer in Human Geography, who is currently involved in various initiatives that attempt to close the gap between Anglophone and Latin American scholarship. These include a new Latin American Discussion Group, co-hosted by the Schools of Geography, Politics and International Relations and the Centre for Primary Care and

Public Health, as well as a new Latin American Geographies in the UK Research Network.



Professor Maristella Svampa.

- For more information or to sign up to mailing lists, email Sam at s.halvorsen@qmul.ac.uk

Chat to students online



Want to find out more about student life at Queen Mary and in the School of Geography? Chat with our student ambassadors online to get a first-hand account of what it's like to be a student here. • Visit: qmul.ac.uk/unibuddy

News in brief

- **Professor Dave Horne** has recently published a paper, *Young, small-scale surface features in Meridiani Planum, Mars: A possible signature of recent transient liquid and gas emissions*, arising from his spare-time occupation of exploring Mars. Open Access available until 13 July at bit.ly/dave-horne-mars.
- The School recently hosted **Humanities and Social Sciences Distinguished Visiting Fellow, Charles Maier**, Leverett Saltonstall Professor of History at Harvard University. Professor Maier's visit brought many distinguished colleagues to Queen Mary to discuss his work on territory, and was a great example of cross-faculty and interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Research by **Dr Tim Brown** and **Professor Isabel Dyck** from the School of Geography, with other colleagues from Queen Mary, the University of Oxford, and Homerton University Hospital, shows that among black women, breast cancer is often still perceived as "a disease of whiteness".
- PhD student **Charlotte Wrigley** has embarked on a mammoth journey to Chersky, a remote arctic settlement in the Sakha Republic in North-East Siberia to conduct fieldwork for her research, which focuses on the Anthropocene, biopolitics, multispecies engagement, de-extinction, apocalyptic imaginaries and geologic time.
- How has life changed on and around the Kingsland Road? What do local residents feel about urban change in Hackney? What does it mean to feel at home? These questions formed part of a discussion that followed a screening of short films in the crypt of St Peter's Church in De Beauvoir Town in east London, including local residents, researchers and filmmakers. The event was hosted by the **Centre for Studies of Home** as part of the **Home-City-Street** project. The films were shown at the Science Museum Lates in May and will also be shown at the Hackney Archives on 12 July at an event to launch a new audio walk about life on and around Kingsland Road. Email **Professor Alison Blunt** at a.m.blunt@qmul.ac.uk for further information.
- The Globe is a copper sphere – created by former Leverhulme artist in residence **Janetka Platun** – which has been rolled through the streets of east London, as well as Shrewsbury and Delhi, recording its journeys and conversations with the public about home and migration, territory and boundaries. Globe was also on display at the Tate Modern in May as part of Queen Mary's Tate Exchange, celebrating our world-leading contributions to arts and culture. Visitors were invited to create their own miniature globes in response to Globe's increasingly distressed exterior and were given the opportunity to watch films made from the footage of Globe's journeys. Excerpts from Globe's films and a discussion of the project also formed part of a session at the Science Museum Lates on the theme of home and migration on 30 May. Find out more at qmul.ac.uk/globe
- Our masters students have started fieldwork for their dissertation projects in different locations around the world; for example, **Kavita Dattani** (Global Development Futures MRes 2018) has been discussing research on migration at a meeting in Delhi.

Read more news stories at geog.qmul.ac.uk/news

Congratulations to...

- **Tim Brown** on his promotion to Reader in Health Geography. Tim is a significant figure in the field of health geography, influential in shaping intellectual agendas within and beyond the discipline, and a committed and inspiring teacher who has played a critical role in shaping undergraduate and postgraduate curricula in the area of health geography.
- **Kavita Datta**, Professor of Development Geography, on her appointment as Deputy Vice-Principal for Research (Impact) at Queen Mary.
- **Will Monteith** on his appointment to a permanent lectureship in Human Geography, and for winning the Technology Enhanced Learning Award at the annual Queen Mary Students' Union Education Awards ceremony. He was also runner up in the Innovative Teaching Award category.
- **Ed Oliver**, Cartographer and Website Manager, on celebrating 30 years of working in the School of Geography.
- **Alastair Owens**, Professor of Historical Geography, on his appointment as Head of School of Geography. During his tenure, he will be further developing a positive culture around student learning and student engagement in the classroom, focusing on the next Research Excellence Framework (REF) and the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), as well as sustaining and developing the School's culture of collaboration and partnership-working – especially with external organisations.
- **Gale Raj-Reichert**, Lecturer in Economic Geography, on her successful application for a British Academy Rising Star Engagement Award for the project 'Improving labour conditions in global production networks through socially responsible public procurement'. Gale also secured funding for a major research project on labour governance and global production networks. She will be working with the Berlin Social Science Center in Germany on a programme of research that will advance theory of transnational labour governance in global production networks using an interdisciplinary approach combining economic geography, political science, and labour sociology.
- **Jaap van der Meer**, Emeritus Professor of Physical Geography, on the publication of a new edition of his popular textbook *Past Glacial Environments*.
- **Kathryn Yusoff** on her promotion to Professor of Inhuman Geography, reflecting her intellectual interests in the 'environmental inhumanities'.

New field trips launching this year

Two new field class modules, [New York: Nature and the City](#) and [Future Coasts](#) are being introduced in the School of Geography from the 2018–19 academic year. The New York field class will be optional for third-year students who will learn about human and environment interactions and the interconnected geographies of nature, sustainability, urban design, and global environmental change in New York. The Future Coasts field class will be optional for second- and third-year students who will explore a range of restoration and management schemes in the Netherlands to understand how delta cities and coasts can adapt to, and mitigate the impacts of climate change by working with nature and through innovative urban planning.

New York is a world city that has undergone a series of dramatic social and biophysical transformations. As key site in the development of colonial rule, to more recent urban design aimed at climate change resilience, it is a city in which the major ideas of nature have been negotiated, narrated and practiced. From the American Museum of Natural History to the green spaces of community gardens, the city is at the forefront of global environmental change and questions of sustainability, social equality and resilience. The module will focus on the changing geographies of nature in New York and their connections to the wider geographies of climate change, the Anthropocene and urban sustainability.



New York City, USA.

The Future Coasts module aims to introduce students to the impacts of climate change on coastal environments and understand how coastal morphology responds to external forcing from sea level rise, wave and tidal energy and the impacts of erosion and flooding on coastal habitats and communities. The field trip will be based around Rotterdam, the Rhine-Meuse delta and Dutch coast and will also explore how innovative and sustainable approaches can be used to build resilient cities, reduce flood risk, improve habitats and to mitigate the impacts of climate change. The trip will include visits to natural coastal management schemes, ecosystem restoration sites, and sustainable urban drainage schemes.



Rotterdam Tidal Park, The Netherlands.

Both field class modules will run in alternate years.

- Find out more about fieldwork at geog.qmul.ac.uk/undergraduate/whyqmul/fieldwork