

WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE HPGRG CHAIR

CONVERSATIONS IN GEOGRAPHY

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The guiding dictum for my reflections as HPGRG chair is the observation by Ron Johnston and James Sidaway that 'we are making the future of geography as we practise it' (2016: 399). My commentary centres on three main themes to illustrate how conversations in geography have developed over time. The first theme discusses institutional networks—from the foundation of the History and Philosophy of Geography Working Party in 1981, via the group's elevation to a fully-fledged study group in 1985, to HPGRG's double anniversary in 2020-21. The second theme addresses research—argumentative-interpretative, empirical, experimental and/or theoretical, and preferably novel, creative, detailed, rigorous, critically reflective and well contextualised in order to enable 'progress' in geographical knowledge production, sometimes in rather surprising ways. The third theme reflects on theory and paradigmatic change—from the discussion of geodeterminism and possibilism in H.C. Darby's 1931 PhD thesis, the first in Geography in the University of Cambridge, to the proliferation of conceptual resources in what has evolved into a productive epistemological pluralism across sub-disciplinary specialisms, even if some geographers prefer conceptual orthodoxy within their own work. Looking back and looking forward therefore enables us from time to time to assess how institutional networks, research practices, and geographical writings have been shaped by and are shaping the making of geography, including the possibilities for future research on the history and philosophy of geography.

40 Years of HPGRG – Looking back and looking forward

A one-day symposium of the History and Philosophy of Geography Research Group (HPGRG) of the Royal Geographical Society with the Institute of British Geographers (RGS-IBG), Tuesday, 7 September 2021 on Microsoft Teams