



# Editorial: Prize-winning papers for 2015 and the continuing value of geographical diversity

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Since 2013, the *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* has awarded annual prizes for the best paper by a graduate student and for the best overall paper published in the journal. We are pleased to announce that the authors of the prize-winning papers in these two categories for 2015 (volume 36) are Dan Cohen (University of British Columbia) and Sarah Turner and Natalie Oswin (both at McGill University) respectively. Full details of the winning papers and the shortlists from which they were selected are as follows:

Category	Best paper by a graduate student	Best overall paper
Winning paper	Grounding mobile policies: Ad hoc networks and the creative city in Bandung, Indonesia Dan Cohen	Itinerant livelihoods: Street vending-scapes and the politics of mobility in upland socialist Vietnam Sarah Turner and Natalie Oswin
Other shortlisted papers	The Asian Development Bank and the production of poverty: Neoliberalism, technocratic modernization and land dispossession in the Greater Mekong Subregion Kearrin Sims	The fate of waste in Hawaii: Technology assessment and solid waste planning in Hawaii, 1968–78 Jordan P. Howell  Time series assessment on landslide occurrences in an area undergoing development Norbert Simon, Michael Crozier, Mairead de Roiste, Abdul Ghani Rafek and Rodeano Roslee

Dan Cohen’s paper, which was published in issue 1 (Cohen, 2015), examines the power-laden networks through which British creative city ideas travelled to the city of Bandung in Indonesia. Part of the contribution of the paper is in highlighting how a tropical city that does not appear on lists of world or global cities is nonetheless plugged into urban policy circuits that are global in scope. More significant, however, is the effort that Cohen makes to understand how a variety of local groups and authorities (re) shaped British Council initiatives in Bandung. His empirical examination of the local grounding of global policy signals an aspect of the wider urban policy mobilities literature that surely demands further attention in studies of cities well beyond Indonesia or the tropical world.

Sarah Turner and Natalie Oswin’s paper was published in issue 3 (Turner & Oswin, 2015) and concerns the politics of mobility associated with itinerant vendors in upland Vietnam. On the one hand, the paper details how minority ethnic populations have increasingly been compelled to ‘go mobile’ in their livelihood strategies by processes of market integration, environmental degradation and the growing frequency of extreme climate events. On the other hand, the authors note longstanding scholarly attention that has been given

to mobile rural livelihood practices in Southeast Asia and other parts of the global South. Turner and Oswin's paper is therefore not so much an application of the currently fashionable Euro-American mobilities 'paradigm' to upland Vietnam as an important reminder that long traditions of area studies work—including in tropical Southeast Asia—were never 'sedentarist' in the first place.

Congratulations to the authors of all the shortlisted papers, and especially to the authors of the prize-winning contributions. The *SJTG* paper prizes are here to stay: next year we will award prizes of USD 1000 to the best papers in the current volume. We hope that in the years to come, physical geography authors will appear more prominently on the shortlists, and even among the prize winners. After yet another year when both of the prize-winning papers were in human geography—although one of the shortlisted papers was in physical geography (Simon *et al.*, 2015)—we reiterate that the journal remains equally receptive to physical and human geography submissions. We recognize wider scholarly trends whereby physical geographers increasingly target specialist interdisciplinary journals rather than more general disciplinary geography outlets (Johnston, 2003). Nonetheless, we believe that the *SJTG* remains a good 'home' for physical geography work especially on climate change, deforestation, droughts, flooding and hydrogeomorphic processes in low latitude regions, as well as for environmental and policy-related scholarship on tropical forests, mangroves and soils that extends across the human-physical geography 'divide'.

We also take this opportunity to reiterate that we welcome tropical geography manuscript submissions from authors based in any region of the world. During the period of political decolonization in the second half of the twentieth century, the *SJTG*'s antecedents 'served as a platform for many indigenous voices of the then so-called third world' (Bunnell *et al.*, 2011: 2). Singapore itself, of course, went on to experience spectacular economic transformation during subsequent decades, troubling the colonial association of tropical locality and economic 'underdevelopment'. Yet profound geographies of uneven development persist, and with them come significant regional disparities in the resources available to academic geographers, not least in terms of access to international journals. This is among the reasons why Europe and North America remain the 'heartlands' of geographical knowledge production and publication internationally (Robinson, 2003). The call that Jennifer Robinson made (in this journal) for a postcolonialization of Geography as an academic discipline remains as important as ever.

In a recent analysis of the regional institutional origin of publications in the *SJTG* between 1997 and 2013 (summarized in Table 1 below), we found that 59 per cent of published papers were from Europe and North America (accounting for 35 per cent and 24 per cent of the total respectively) and a further 14 per cent each from Australasia and Southeast Asia. Despite the fact that Africa accounted for the same proportion of

**Table 1. Regional institutional origin of manuscripts submitted to and published in the *SJTG*, 1997-2013.**

	Africa	Europe	North America	Southeast Asia	Australasia	South Asia	East Asia	Other regions
Percentage of manuscripts submitted	21	21	15	14	11	9	5	4
Percentage of manuscripts published (out of total published manuscripts)	7	35	24	14	14	1	2	3

paper submissions as Europe (21 per cent) and more than North America (15 per cent) during the same period, papers from Africa-based scholars accounted for only 7 per cent of the total published articles. The figures for the proportion of submitted and published papers by South Asia-based scholars were 9 per cent and 1 per cent respectively.

What can be done to address such regional disparities given that all papers have to go through a double blind external review process before they can be accepted for publication in the journal? We remain open to empirically rich manuscripts that engage international audiences (rather than being of merely local or subnational interest), even if the research concerned is not situated in the latest debates or theories fashioned in institutions around the north Atlantic or along the west coast of North America. We are mindful, in other words, of the journal's tradition of being a forum for a diverse range of scholars based institutionally within the tropical world, as well as for those—like the Canada-based authors of the prize-winning papers from volume 36—carrying out excellent tropical geographical research from other institutional latitudes.

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