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Emerging Themes for the Los Angeles AAG Annual Meeting

Each year, the AAG identifies a few featured themes for its Annual Meeting. These are often suggested by the meeting's location itself or by political and intellectual trends within the discipline or in society at large. The AAG president and executive director generally develop these annual themes, in conversation with the AAG Council, the meeting's Local Arrangements Committee, and the membership at large. In past years, these themes have ranged across the full breadth of the discipline, and included topics such as Climate Change, Geography and Human Rights, Space-time Integration in Geography and GIScience, and Geography and the Humanities.

These multi-faceted themes are not intended to be the exclusive focus of an AAG meeting, but rather serve as a lens to help focus discussion and

provide a fresh and engaging skeletal structure to each of our large and richly-complex meetings.

Many potential themes are readily suggested by Los Angeles itself. A focus on international cities and urban geographies is a natural theme for the LA meeting. Water is always a dominant consideration for Los Angeles. Others come immediately to mind: The Pacific Rim and Asia. Borders. Migration and immigration. Hollywood, film, and global cultures. Transportation. And so many others. We invite you to help develop additional themes by suggesting new ideas for Los Angeles, and for coming years as well.

Following is the initial set of themes we have developed for the AAG Los Angeles meeting, scheduled for April 9-13, 2013:

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AAG Newsletter of the Association of American Geographers

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USPS 987-380 ISSN 0275-3995

The AAG Newsletter ISSN 0275-3995 is published monthly with July/August combined, by the Association of American Geographers, 1710 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20009-3198. The cost of an annual subscription is \$25.00. The subscription price is included in the annual dues of the Association. Not available to non-members. Periodicals postage paid in Washington, DC. All news items and letters, including job listings, should be sent to the Editor at the address below or to newsletter@aag.org.

All Newsletter materials must arrive at the Association office by the 1st of the month preceding the month of the publication. This includes job listings. Material will be published on a space available basis and at the discretion of the editorial staff.

When your address changes, please notify the Association office immediately. Six weeks notice is necessary to ensure uninterrupted delivery of AAG publications. To assist the AAG office in your address change, include the address label with your change of address.

Postmaster: Send address changes to AAG Newsletter, 1710 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20009-3198, or address@aag.org.

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Emerging Asia

Acknowledging Los Angeles' and California's location on the Pacific Rim, and their increasing interconnections with Asia, Eric Sheppard's 2013 presidential plenary session will take up the question of "Emerging Asia." This title references three aspects of Asia today: Its rapid (re)emergence as a center of the global economy; its enormous diversity as a region (Asia being a European geopolitical construct designating the land masses east of Europe, rather than a homogeneous region); and, within the heterogeneous sub-regions of Asia, the expanding differences in the livelihood possibilities of those who have come to live prosperously and those who live precariously. This session is conceived as a provocation to US geographers: To be paying more attention to Asia, and to its distinctive perspectives and voices. Speakers will be invited from the US and Asia, with expertise in different sub-regions. The AAG presidential panel session will anchor this thematic track in Los Angeles. As a featured theme, of course, "Emerging Asia" should not be restricted to human geographic processes: Research examining Asian biophysical and nature-society processes also is encouraged.



Richardson



Sheppard

wage manufacturing and informal economies, settlements, and urban politics accompany the emergence of a powerful, consumption-oriented urban middle class. How can we understand these changes? Are post-colonial cities simply following the trajectory of US and European cities, or are distinctive urban forms emerging, requiring distinctive theorizations

or interventions 'from the south'? What are the implications for 'northern' cities? These questions are becoming widely debated; LA is an excellent forum to engage further with them.

Climate Change, Variability, Adaptation and Justice

This track of sessions will examine the latest research on global climate change and variability, including geographies of projected climate change impacts, mitigation and/or local adaptation strategies, and societal and human rights implications. The US government's recent Strategic Plan for US Global Change Research for the next decade will also be discussed in terms of its potential opportunities for geographic research related to global and climate change. Sessions addressing activities and outcomes of the United Nations Conference of Sustainable Development (Rio+20) are also encouraged.

Beyond the Los Angeles School: Global Urbanization

In the 1990s, Los Angeles was advanced as the home for a new school of urban geography, billed as replacing the Chicago School. The LA School took up the important, unfinished task of expanding how we think about cities. In the 21st century, the center of gravity of urbanization has relocated decidedly into the global South. Asia and Africa, in particular, are experiencing unprecedented rates of urban change, shaped by, and shaping, global processes and policy agendas. The urbanization of poverty has been a central aspect of these changes, as circular rural-urban migration, low

Geography, GIScience, and Health: Spatial Frontiers of Health Research and Practice

Building on several recent AAG initiatives together with the National Institutes of Health in this research area, this theme will explore new research frontiers in health and social environments, and also address progress generated by the AAG Initiative for an NIH-wide Geospatial Infrastructure for Health Research. These AAG initiatives have generated an increased awareness by health researchers as well as geographers of the core role that geography and GIScience can play

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in addressing global health needs, both in research and in practice. Sessions will include leading medical and health researchers, and we encourage geographers active in these areas of research to present their work.

Activist Geographies: Struggles for Social and Environmental Justice

Los Angeles has become known nationwide as a place where diverse social and activist groups and movements have undertaken innovative struggles around such issues as conditions of work, immigration, borders, transportation, prisons and environmental justice. Geographers at places such as the University of Southern California, the University of California, Los Angeles, and California State campuses, have worked closely on, and with, such movements. These times of burgeoning activism in cities worldwide, from the Arab awakening to the occupy movements, and of academic interest in

activist research in and beyond geography, make Los Angeles a particularly appropriate place for a focus on activist geographies. Activist geographers, wherever they work, are encouraged to organize sessions to share research and learn from one another.

Borders

Southern California is an excellent venue for advancing scholarship on political borders and their implications for the places they separate and the connectivities between them: Migration, language and culture, water, sovereignty, economies, etc. The US-Mexico border provides a compelling regional focus for this theme, and research and theoretical work related to borders elsewhere is also welcome. Field trips to border areas will also enrich these sessions.

We want to reinforce, of course, that the above themes are not intended to be the exclusive focus of the Los Angeles meeting;

we seek only to highlight a few research areas of current relevance and interest, among so many others of equal significance. The dynamism, innovation and range of cutting-edge research presented at AAG Annual Meetings is always remarkable, and we encourage the broadest range of scholarship and research at our meetings. The AAG Specialty Groups also develop their own featured sessions each year, and we encourage prospective attendees to contact the AAG Specialty Group in your area of research interest to help build strong session tracks around the many diverse and interactive topics and regions that they represent. For more information, visit www.aag.org/annualmeeting.

We look forward to seeing you at the AAG Annual Meeting next year in Los Angeles, a most creative and fascinating "transnational" city. ■

Doug Richardson and Eric Sheppard