



National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies

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Instruments of Peace? Reflections on a doctoral journey

We all know that peacemaking is somehow in the Franciscan genes. But do we always see it in action? This is a question I've been grappling with recently. After four years of hard work I've finished my PhD thesis at Otago University's National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies and just graduated.

So what about the peacemaking? I was interested in looking at what motivates Franciscans as peacemakers as well as their stories of how they saw themselves as peacemakers. I chose to do this research in Sri Lanka among the Catholic Franciscans there. There has been more than 30 years of civil war in that country, pitting the ethnic majority of Sinhalese against the Tamil minority. Franciscans were on both sides of that divide. What made for even more interesting results was that there are a number of different congregations of Franciscans there. I met members of five different Orders of friars, three different Orders of sisters, and several different Secular Franciscan fraternities.

Everyone might be inspired by Francis but each one receives that inspiration in different ways. Some of them take a devotional approach to Francis. He is a person to pray to, to ask favours of, to make offerings to at his statues. These Franciscans felt he was a saint who could help heal them. The trauma of the war is immense and despite the current peace, the wounds remain very deep. These people were like "wounded healers" as they tried to find healing for their own wounds as well as being signs of hope and healing to others.

A few Franciscans were very active in work for peace and justice. They were like the "professional activists." They were well educated in Franciscan sources and had a range of contacts with others. Many were very able communicators. But some were not always easy to live with back in their convents or friaries.

"Professional" peace activists can be so concerned with peace in their outside ministries they don't work for it in their home life! (This is not just Franciscans I'm talking about here!)

Some Franciscans were highly committed to peacemaking through the witness of their community life. These were often communities of mixed ethnicity. You can easily imagine how impressive it can be if someone sees groups which are separated by civil war managing to live together under the same roof. This witness didn't come easily but needed lots of continuous work together.



Dr Christopher John Masters SSF with Dr Heather Devere

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News in Brief

Professor Isak Svensson is visiting NCPACS from Uppsala University during November and December. Isak was here as a Postdoctoral Fellow from October 2009 until his return to Sweden in June 2012. He has since been instrumental in developing the close relationship between Uppsala and Otago. In that time, a number of students and staff from both institutions have undertaken extended visits. A formal exchange relationship has also enabled Masters students from both universities to travel and gain formal recognition for courses.

Congratulations to the team from the Master of International Studies programme in the Politics Department at Otago, who prevailed in the **5th Annual Great Debate** against the Master of Peace and Conflict Studies team. MInSt successfully convinced the adjudicators (Associate Professor Lisa Ellis, Philosophy; Dr Doug Hill, Geography; Professor David Tombs, Centre for Theology and Public Issues) that “the universe is on the side of justice and peace”. We look forward to the 2017 debate in which NCPACS hopes to draw the series 3-3.

In association with Buddhist Peace NGO, Soka Gakkai International New Zealand, the Centre is running the inaugural **Youth Peace Essay competition**. Aimed at 17-25 year olds, the competition aims to elicit the voices of youth in creating a more just and peaceful world. The theme for the 2016 competition is Unity in Diversity. Daisaku Ikeda wrote that “[p]eace is found when you reach out and make an effort to understand and embrace someone who is different from you”. In response to this theme, we hope that participants will look at what this means in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand. The winning essay will be published on the Centre’s website.

Congratulations to **Dr Katerina Standish** and **Dr SungYong Lee** who have both been promoted to Senior Lecturer, effective February 2017.

PhD candidate **Natasha Jolly** has recently had two book reviews accepted for publication. Her review of *Women and Genocide: Gendered Experiences of Violence, Survival, and Resistance* by Donna Gosbee and JoAnn DiGeorgio-Lutz (eds). Toronto: Women’s Press, 2016 will be published in the Political Studies Review while a review of *Restorative Justice Dialogue: An Essential Guide for Research and Practice* by Mark Umbreit and Marilyn Peterson Armour, published by Springer Publishing, will appear in the Internet Journal of Restorative Justice.

A paper by PhD candidate **Sylvia Frain** “When Do Colonies Count as ‘America’? Securing and Resisting the ‘home-land’ in Oceania” was a finalist for the 2016 Yasuo Sakakibara Prize at the American Studies Association Annual Meeting in Denver, Colorado, which was held this month.

A time for radical commitment

This newsletter is going to press 10 days after the United States Presidential election. No-one expected Donald Trump to win and the whole world is trying to make sense of what this unexpected victory means for race relations, religious tolerance and pluralism, gender equality, and basic human rights in the United States.

Perhaps more importantly, however, is what it means for the rest of the world. Trump’s initial nomination of Jeff Sessions for Attorney General, Mike Pompeo for CIA Chief and Mike Flynn as National Security Advisor do not bode well for global peace and justice over the next 4 years. Each one of these nominees has been criticized by elected officials and the media for racist and Islamophobic comments. Each one believes that the United States should utilize torture more extensively in the interrogation of “terrorists” and “military enemies” and each one represents extreme views on the rule of law, intelligence and security.

The nomination of Stephen Bannon as Co-Chief of the White House does not augur well for rational political discourse or prudence at top-level decision making either. The reality is that this election means that many of the Human Rights and Peace achievements of the 20th century will be severely compromised if not negated by the actions and decisions of the Trump administration. The much vaunted checks and balances of the American system no longer exist because the White House and Congress are politically aligned and the Supreme Court will shift right when the Trump Administration takes power. It is possible that some moderate Republicans will break ranks eventually but for the next year and the first hundred days this incoming administration promises more chaos than order and a systematic assault on many of the achievements of the last 50 years.

This will undoubtedly make our work as peace and conflict researchers, teachers and practitioners that much more difficult. In a world of “Post Truth” politics it will be difficult getting critical analysis and empirical evidence heard by decision makers. Gains made on Climate Change, for example, will be negated by US withdrawal from the Paris Accord. Gains made on nuclear non-proliferation will be undermined by the negation of the Iran Nuclear Deal and by encouraging Japan and South Korea to build their own nuclear arsenals. Human Rights regimes and the quest for equality will be negated by contempt for the United Nations and by transgressive discourse on race, religion and diversity.

The Centre remains committed to the development of critical and constructive peace and conflict research. We reiterate our radical commitment to peace, justice, equality, and sustainable and just development. We will not be cowed by those who choose dominatory, coercive, military and violent solutions to the world’s problems and we will certainly not be supine in the face of a Republican assault on basic humanitarian and humanistic values. These are dangerous times, which will require considerable courage on the part of all those interested in building a peaceful world. Our students are drawn from all over the world; our Faculty are engaged in research all over the world; we will continue to practice an ethics of care, hospitality and inclusion in our own work and will work to ensure these values prevail globally.

Me rongo
Kevin

Professor Kevin Clements
Director
National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies

Introducing our 2016 doctoral candidates



Kieran Ford

I began my PhD here in March 2016, arriving from the UK. Having been taught during my undergraduate studies by Professor Richard Jackson at Aberystwyth University, I decided to follow Richard's move south. I am focussing my PhD (under his and Dr Katerina Standish's supervision) on the issues surrounding strategies to counter extremism in UK schools. I've been fascinated by the political and sociological roles of education systems for some time, having taught in schools or settings around the world, in Uganda, the UK, Switzerland, Thailand, Egypt, and now in New Zealand. In 2015, I completed an MPhil in Education at Cambridge University.

Having grown up a Quaker and having joined the democratic and co-operative educational youth movement, The Woodcraft Folk, at fifteen, I've tried for some time to meld my activism for peace and justice with a passion for using education for emancipation and social change. My focus on the UK's current counter-extremism and counter-radicalisation strategies is motivated by their appearance to engender an education that restricts, alienates and promotes a violent status quo, the very opposite of what I believe an education should hope to achieve, which is an education which empowers and inspires young people to build a more just and peaceful future



Natasha Jolly

I began my stint as a PhD Candidate at the NCPACS in April 2016. My research project involves looking into micro reconciliation between men and women in post conflict communities, through the use of restorative dialogue processes to deal with the aftermath of sexual and gender based violence. My interest in transitional justice, interpersonal relational repair and gender issues in conflict was born out of a work placement as a pro bono legal assistant at the UN International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in the Hague. I have trained as a lawyer, having joined the Bar in India in 2012. I also have Masters Degree specialisations in Public International Law and International Peace and Security from University College London and King's College London specifically. I have had the opportunity to hone my skills in the human rights and humanitarian fields through internships at various domestic and international institutions. Currently, I am continuing my training as a conflict mediator and negotiator under the auspices of the NCPACS.

I consider myself very fortunate to be a part of this inspiring cohort of academics and especially to be supervised by Dr. Heather Devere and Prof. Kevin Clements. I look forward to seeing my academic and professional endeavours come to fruition, while contributing to the growth of NCPACS as a doctoral candidate.



Tonga Raniera Karena

Ko Taranaki te maunga

Ko te moana tāpokopoko a Tāwhaki te moana

Ko Waitoteroa te awa

Ko Parahuka te marae – ko te Whetū Moeahu te Tangata!

Ko Te Niho o te Atiawa te Piringa Pouwhare

Ko Parihaka te Papa kāinga

Ko Te Whiti o Rongomai rāua ko Tohu Kakahi ngā manu e rua!

When my grandmother scolded me for learning the art of Māori weaponry at a young age, she asked me – how can you hold a taiaha in one hand and a raukura in the other? This became a formative experience and has been part of long process of searching for the philosophical roots embedded in the question as well as the Parihaka resistance movement. While the cultural revitalisation of Māori customs and norms has been a significant part in my search for identity, the ontology of Parihaka and the normative critique it offers has been a source of pride as well as a source of historical injustice. My main research question for my PhD is: "How does the dynamic of 'Power' and/or 'Mana' (de)subjugate the social-political ideology of 'Peace' and/or 'Rongo'." I envisage that this will uncover the philosophical dimensions that were hidden – yet explicit – in the reprimand from my grandmother.



Adan Suazo

After finishing my graduate studies at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University, Sweden, I returned to my hometown of Montreal to explore issues related to inclusion patterns in peace processes.

During the last three years, my research has somewhat departed from the inclusion question, and has mainly focused on how environmental variables may be harnessed to increase the likelihood of peace in a conflict zone. This topic has led me to present my work in venues such as the Canadian Peace Research Association and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's Conference of Youth.

I hold membership in the Canadian Peace Research Association, the Otago Energy Research Centre and the Loyola Sustainability Research Centre. For my doctoral degree at the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, I am exploring how qualitative and quantitative asymmetries in freshwater access may result in the emergence of structural violence.

A list of selected publications can be found on my profile on the Centre's webpage.

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Instruments of Peace? Reflections on a doctoral journey

For some, the effects of the war were too great. Pressure from outside groups, or differences in their friary or convent life were too great. They escaped into external ministry perhaps as a relief from the unhappy life back home.

Some spoke of new identities they created for themselves. Sri Lankan church life is fairly structured for many. There are expected roles for priests, sisters and brothers. Some broke out of these moulds. For example, one sister I interviewed earlier was living in a refugee camp. She and other sisters had taken off their habits and wore the usual clothing of Tamil women. A Sinhalese army officer came to interview her. He thought she was Tamil so he spoke in English. She replied in Sinhala. He was already confused. "What's this?" he demanded to know of the communion wine. "It's the blood of Christ." "Who do you work for?" "I work for Jesus." "If you don't go away you'll be shot." "I don't mind – you can shoot me!" It was the army officer who went away – and she remained in that camp without being shot, having defied every possible category of identity the officer might have wanted to place her in.

There are lots of stories like these, as well as simple ones of faithfulness in daily life, despite huge difficulties.

So – what is the Franciscan peace "thing"? I'm not sure I'm much closer to understanding that! Perhaps it comes to being open to the radically questioning, yet in a sense deeply conservative, vision of Francis. Place God at the centre, and then those God loves – all of humanity and the whole of creation, especially the most despised. Look for the relationships. Is God's love made manifest? Before peace can be made by exterior activism, there needs to be peace and healing in internal relationships. A faith which is open to the wisdom of other traditions can help sustain us in this journey. And knowing Francis, his words, his life, his prayer, can help us create our own identities as Franciscans of peace and live out the promise of that Franciscan "peace gene".

If you really want the full experience my thesis, all 100,000 words plus appendices, is available online at the Otago University research archive: hdl.handle.net/10523/6521

Wishing you peace and all good!

Christopher John SSF

Reprinted from *Tau Pacific* – the magazine of the Pacific Province of the Third Order of the Society of St Francis

Two Years On: Dr Prakash Bhattarai



In 2014, Prakash Bhattarai completed his PhD at the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies. Prakash was one of the first students to begin doctoral study at the newly established Centre in 2011. His PhD research was focused on issues around third-party interveners' coordination in armed conflict and peace processes, taking the Maoist armed conflict of Nepal and Moro conflict of the Philippines as case studies.

After completing his doctorate, Prakash returned to Nepal where he is currently acting as President of Centre for Social Change (CSC), a non-profit research and advocacy institute founded by a group of Nepali scholars and practitioners actively involved in various professional fields. CSC was formed in early 2015 with an aim to adequately respond to three major obstacles to social change process in Nepal: discrimination, violence, and violation of human rights. CSC works mainly with youth, women, political leaders, and policymakers.

Prakash has been very successful in publishing articles in peer-reviewed journals. Over the past two years, two of his PhD thesis chapters have been published in the form of journal articles; one in the *International Negotiation Journal* (booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/journals/10.1163/15718069-12341324) and another in *International Journal of Conflict Management* (dx.doi.org/10.1108/IJCM-08-2014-0066). One of his book chapters on issues around nonviolence resistance has been published by the Centre for Nonviolence, University of Rhode Island, and a research article on micro dynamics of land conflict and its resolution in Nepal (publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/microdynamics_of_land_conflict_and_land_conflict_resolution_in_nepal.pdf) has been published by International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Prakash is involved in academic teaching, as a visiting lecturer at the Department of Peace, Conflict and Development Studies at Tribhuvan University and as a visiting lecturer at Armed Police Force Staff College where he teaches an MA level course on Conflict, Security, and Development. He is also currently serving as visiting faculty (part time) at International School of Advanced Studies (ISAS) affiliated to Mid-Western University, Nepal.

Through his links with various international organizations and UN agencies, Prakash has been involved in consulting work as a training, research, and project evaluation consultant for peacebuilding, security, violence prevention, community mediation, and youth and gender related projects. He has association with various organizations in Nepal and abroad including United Nations Development Programme (UPDP), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Dan Church Aid (DCA), The Asia Foundation (TAF), Safer World, FHI 360, and Alliance for Peace/Governance Facility.

Dr Patrik Johansson returns to Sweden

Gaining a Master Scuba Diver qualification and young sons who can speak fluent 'Kiwi' English are just two of many outcomes of Dr Patrik Johansson's two year Postdoctoral Fellowship in New Zealand.

Patrik, along with his wife Dr Elisabeth Eriksson and sons Henning and Dag, arrived in June 2014 for the two year Fellowship, funded by the Swedish National Research Council. Previously, Patrik held various positions in the Department of Political Science at Umeå University, most recently as Study Counselor, following the 2010 defence of his PhD thesis on the relationship between refugee repatriation and peacebuilding.

Prior to arriving in New Zealand, Patrik's plans were to spend the two-year Fellowship advancing his Postdoctoral project on resilient peace, an idea which views peace – post-war peace and peacebuilding in particular – as a system which is never stronger than its weakest link. This means, for example, that “high scores” on democracy would not necessarily compensate for “low scores” on social equality. In addition to analyzing the various components of the peace system, Patrik intended to explore explicit challenges to this system, challenges that the system needs to be resilient against. How can challenges and setbacks be handled in practice – and how can this inform research on peacebuilding?

During the Fellowship, other opportunities arose to work on forced migration and UN Security Council research as well. For example, earlier this year he and Peter Wallensteen had a chapter in a major volume on the Security Council published by Lynne Rienner in cooperation with the International Peace Institute. He has also been compiling a dataset of all draft Security Council resolutions since 1946, which he presented at the International Studies Association (ISA) in Atlanta in March 2016 and at the Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS) in New York in June 2016. In December 2015 he attended a workshop in Montréal on the role of displaced persons in shaping solutions to conflict and displacement. This will result in an edited book, in which Patrik contributes a chapter about situations where displacement takes on a symbolic significance that goes beyond the concrete problem of displacement.

In July Patrik and his family returned to Umeå in Sweden. The Centre is grateful for the many contributions Patrik made while at NCPACS including assisting with teaching in several Masters of Peace and Conflict Studies papers, and willingly taking on supervision responsibilities. This was particularly important during the second half of his Fellowship when other Centre staff were on Research and Study Leave. The chance to start supervising postgraduate students alongside experienced colleagues has equipped him well for his return to Sweden where he will have his first PhD student, who coincidentally is from New Zealand.



Dr Patrik Johansson with NCPACS Director, Professor Kevin Clements

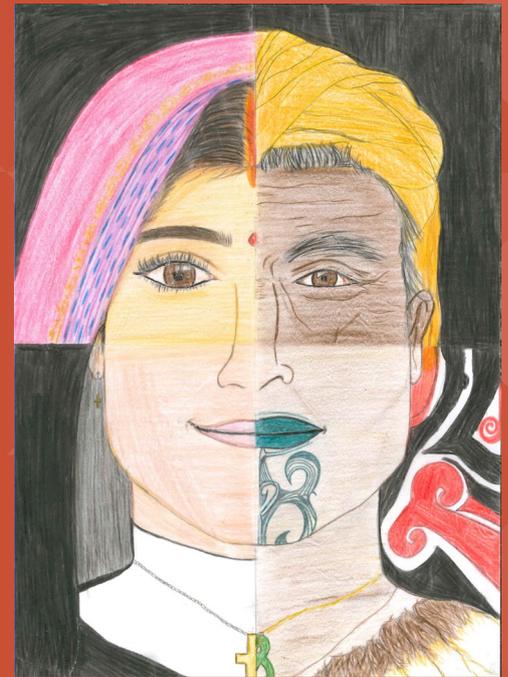
Like other visitors to the Centre, Patrik willingly shared his experience of academic life from a Swedish perspective, and this wisdom helped to inform many operational decisions in the Centre. In addition, Patrik brought experience as a civilian observer working in Macedonia (2001-2002) and Hebron (2003-2004). In the role with the EUMM (European Union Monitoring Mission) in the Balkans, Patrik's team spoke with local people, parliamentarians, leaders of minority parties and journalists, filing daily reports to Brussels. Working for TIPH (Temporary International Presence in Hebron) in the second role, his team focused on violations of the Hebron protocol and human rights, reporting to the Israeli Defence Forces and the Palestinian Police Force as well as sending fortnightly reports to contributing governments.

The Johansson's home city of Umeå is a university city of comparable size to Dunedin. Like the University of Otago, Umeå University draws

a diverse population of students from across the country as well as internationally. One of the interesting debates taking place at Umeå University is the extent to which the university should teach in English. While most of the literature is in English, most lectures are in Swedish. However Patrik believes that there will be pressure to offer Masters courses in English soon, to cater for a wider pool of students.

He returns to take up the role of Director of Studies in 2017, working closely with a new Head of Department, which will require a more central involvement in teaching decisions. He will also be teaching a paper on Justice and Reconciliation, which he helped develop but has not actually taught before.

On a personal note, Patrik said that the family intends to do a lot more travelling around their own country, having learned how to travel well as a family during their many trips around New Zealand.



2016 Cartoon competition

The 2016 NCPACS cartoon competition, themed *Unity within Diversity*, drew entries from all over the world including the Baltic States, China, Iran and Cuba. In total 76 entries were received.

Sophie Morgan, a student from Queen's High School in Dunedin, won the secondary section of the competition. Her image of a stylized face depicting different ethnicities, cultures and religions emphasized common humanity over difference.

"In my cartoon, the message I am conveying is that together, no matter what culture or religion we are, we can all be one," said Sophie.

Mileta Miloradovic from Serbia won the open section of the competition. Mileta is a satirical cartoonist, who publishes in newspapers and magazines as well as exhibiting his work. In Mileta's work, adjudicators Professor Kevin Clements and last year's winner Alistair Craig saw references to the plight of refugees fleeing their homes by sea and the strength to be found in countries coming together in a united response.

Many of the cartoons were beautifully rendered and while some struggled to communicate a clear relationship to the theme, there is no doubt that the cartooning community is thriving all over the globe.

Recent publications

Boulding, JR, Clements, K, Morrison, ML & Strimling Yodsampa, A 2016, 'Elise Boulding's Legacy to the Twenty-First Century: Reflections on Her Contributions to Understanding Conflict and Peace', *Journal of Negotiation and Conflict Management Research*, vol 9, no 4, pp. 274-291.

Clements, K 2016, 'Foundations of Peace and Conflict Research and Recent Developments: A Review of *The Contemporary Conflict Resolution Reader*', *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, vol. 22, no. 4, pp. 422-423.

Devere, H, Te Maihāroa, K, & Synott, J (eds) 2016, *Peacebuilding and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Experiences and Strategies for the 21st Century*, Springer International Publishing.

Jackson, R (ed) 2016, *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Terrorism Studies*, Routledge, Abingdon.

Lee, S, Joshi, M & Mac Ginty, R forthcoming 2017, 'Built-in Safeguards and the Implementation of Civil War Peace Accords', *International Interactions*, Vol 43, DOI: 10.1080/03050629.2017.1257491

Standish, K & Talahma, R 2016, 'Looking for Peace in the National Curricula of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia', *Peace and Conflict Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 2, Article 2. Available at: nsuworks.nova.edu/pcs/vol23/iss2/2

Bristol, British Columbia and Beyond

Since June 2016, I have been on a period of research leave which will take me through to February 2017.

Apart from the opportunity that this time allows for focused research, reflection, and writing, the highlight of my time away from the Centre so far has been a trip to Europe and North America to meet with colleagues, give lectures, and attend conferences. I was fortunate enough to win a Benjamin Meaker Visiting Professorship at the University of Bristol. This provided me with two months' accommodation, office space, and a chance to meet staff and students in the Sociology, Politics and International Affairs department. It proved to be a wonderfully stimulating environment, and I was able to make huge

strides on my Marsden project on pacifism, including submitting two new articles and organizing a special issue for the journal, *Critical Studies on Security*. It greatly helped that there was a nearby café which made New Zealand quality flat whites! Some of my greatest insights and learning occurred while reading and enjoying a quiet flat white in that café.

While based in Bristol, I was able to travel to the Critical Studies on Terrorism Working Group (CSTWG) Annual Conference in Newcastle to present a keynote lecture on why critical terrorism studies as a field should adopt a pacifist, nonviolent approach to counterterrorism. It was a lovely opportunity to see how the group I first set up in 2006 had grown and developed. Another trip to Prague to attend the European Consortium on Political Research (ECPR) Annual Conference allowed me to catch up with some of the best researchers in political violence in the world.

After two months at Bristol University, I started the North American leg of my trip where I visited colleagues and gave talks about my research at universities in Vancouver, Nelson BC, and Squamish in Canada, followed by Santa Barbara, Amherst MA, and Denver



Richard Jackson on the Charles Bridge in Prague.

in the United States. Highlights included attending the Peace and Justice Studies Association Annual Conference in Nelson, BC, where I presented a paper on how we might de-subjugate pacifism. Nelson is a spectacularly beautiful town (the movie *Roxanne* with Steve Martin was filmed there), and was the perfect setting for a conference devoted to peace, justice, and activism.

Other highlights included a very inspiring visit with Professor Stellan Vinthagen, the world's first professor of nonviolent resistance at the University of Amherst, Massachusetts, and a visit to the University of Denver to see Professor Erica Chenoweth, who leads an amazing programme on the empirical study of nonviolence. In addition to valuable discussions with her colleagues and post-graduate students, Erica took time out of her busy schedule to take me fly-fishing in the Rocky Mountain National Park for a day. It was the perfect end to an amazing trip. I am grateful to the University of Otago and the Marsden Fund for the opportunities provided by this research leave.

Professor Richard Jackson

NCPACS at NZPSA

NCPACS has always maintained a strong presence at the annual New Zealand Political Studies Association conference. In previous years, Centre students have impressed with the quality of their presentations, and we were delighted when doctoral candidate John Gray won Best Postgraduate Paper in 2014.

This year, NZPSA is being held from 28-30 November at the University of Waikato in Hamilton, with a Postgraduate Workshop on 27 November. NCPACS staff and students will be contributing nine presentations, including:

Dr Heather Devere: The Politics of Peace and Conflict Studies

Sylvia Frain: Indigenous resistance to political colonisation & American militarisation in the Mariãnas Archipelago

Aidan Gnoth: De-subjugating knowledge: problematising the emancipatory capacity of peacebuilding theoreticians

John Laidlaw Gray: Owing Peace: Assessing the Impact of Local Ownership on Post-conflict Police Reform

Professor Richard Jackson: Rethinking the Relevance of Pacifism in IR: The Case for Nonviolent Counterterrorism

Natasha Teresa Jolly: From Conflict to the Brink of Democracy – Dealing with the Aftermath of Complex Gendered Warscapes in Transition

Ajirapa Pienkhuntod: Civil society networks and peacebuilding of local religious leaders in the intra-state conflict in Southern Thailand

Adan Suazo: Exploring Post-Conflict Revisionism and Renewable Resource Scarcity

Nick Tobia: Contested Peace Agreements: An agonistic reconceptualisation of the terminus document for civil war peace negotiations

Working for peace in divided communities

When Rachel Rafferty began her doctoral study at NCPACS in 2013 as the first Rei Foundation (formerly Global Futures Charitable Trust) scholarship recipient, she had no clear idea about what caused the difference in attitudes of those who work to build peace in divided societies compared to those who do not.



Aware that these different groups existed in her own context of Northern Ireland, she hoped that gaining an understanding of how people behaved in this specific context might prove to be useful in other situations.

“In a society like Northern Ireland, people can become very entrenched in loyalty to a single community. Those who work to build peace between groups can be viewed as traitors.”

At the conclusion of her research, Rachel says that she now has some understanding of the factors that motivate individuals to get involved in building peace between groups in such a divided society. This knowledge can help peacebuilding practitioners recruit others who are likely to be favorable to their work. It can also provide goals for effective grassroots peacebuilding in societies affected by long-standing identity-based conflicts.

“I have learned to never give up on the possibility of peace building in anyone. There are so many processes that socialize people and develop their perspectives. Home, education and the media all play a role. Peace education, whether it's based on short term programmes or better still, a peaceful pedagogy, can make young people aware that they have a choice between the worldview that they have learned and experienced in their home and communities, or the worldview presented to them by other adults.”

In the course of research interviews undertaken in her home country, Rachel met three or four people who had changed their perspective through what she called humanizing moments, when they became aware of a sense of 'shared humanity'.

“Seeing the human cost and developing a relationship with people who are different is something that can happen in a wide variety of contexts. I hope that my research, both in this thesis and in continuing work, will be of use in highlighting the importance of relationship building, changing mindsets and working towards social cohesion.”

Looking back at her study at the Centre, Rachel reflected on the benefit of working in a place where a diverse range of work is

being undertaken. Learning about more than just her own field of research, through interaction with staff and other students, both informally and through research presentations, was a reminder of the breadth of the peace and conflict field.

“Like so many others, I have found the doctorate can sometimes be a lonely process, particularly having worked professionally as part of a team before beginning my study. Having to make my own decisions and keep motivated was difficult at times but I kept reminding myself that this is normal and something most students experience on the journey.”

However meeting with other students who were working on intergroup conflict was very helpful; while they based their research in different countries and contexts, they all had a similar interest in human psychology and human behavior.

Rachel was particularly appreciative of the help and support she has received to undertake a doctorate. “Obviously I couldn't have done this research project without the support of the Rei Foundation – their generosity has made it all possible. I also really appreciate the work of Kevin Clements in setting up such a vibrant research centre with a global outlook. And of course, my supervisors – Katerina Standish and Heather Devere – have been a constant source of support, guidance and useful advice.”

Now that she has submitted, Rachel is beginning to look to the future. “I am thinking a lot at the moment about how to share my learning with people who can benefit from it – whether through publishing my findings or coming up with ways to put the learning to work in practical projects.”



During her field research Rachel interviewed individuals living and working in areas strongly affected by past political violence.

Recent graduates

Congratulations to recent graduates from the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies.

August

Br. Chris Masters PhD
Huifang Qin MPCS
Sinead McAllery MPCS

December

Stacey Hitchcock MA
Matt Matahaere MPCS
Matiu Workman MPCS
Alvaro Tejera Perez MPCS

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