**PARALLELS AND INTERSECTIONS**

**Australian Population Association Graeme Hugo Colloquium**

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When I was approached to participate in this Colloquium I wrote a short memoir that I titled ‘parallels and intersections’. They underpinned the casual, lifelong friendship between Graeme Hugo and me.

I first met Graeme in 1968. I was an undergraduate at Flinders University and beginning to get interested in what was happening in the wider world. Flinders had some strengths in East and Southeast Asia, where there were many hotspots. Think Mao Zedong, war in Vietnam, the coup in Jakarta, and the winding down of Australia’s role in Papua New Guinea.

Alaric Maude and Graeme Hugo taught a subject on Southeast Asia. Graeme was a few years older than me, but we had both come through Adelaide’s state high schools. He was an exceptional student.

Graeme was writing his Masters and had travelled through Malaysia and a handful of other Southeast Asian countries. He included many coloured slides in his lectures. Both he and Alaric had a genuine passion for the region. I was enormously impressed that they had travelled in Asia and the Pacific. My travel had been limited to the surf breaks from Cactus in the west to the Sydney Central Coast in the east. I had never flown on an aeroplane!

Their enthusiasm came through in the teaching and it was the highlight of my undergraduate learning. Graeme and I had things in common apart from attending a state high school. We both had a fascination with Indonesia - mine, I guess, as a result of him - and we both had bad hair.

I decided my future was going to be connected to Southeast Asia and the Pacific, beginning with my Honours thesis.

After completing an undergraduate degree I was keen to find a job. David Lea, from the University of Papua New Guinea, was looking for a Tutor in the Department of Geography. He was in Adelaide to talk to Graeme about the position. Graeme, however, decided he would enroll in a PHD at the ANU. I was asked would I be interested in the Port Moresby job? I replied within a nanosecond. As it turned out, it it was my great break.

After three years in Port Moresby in 1975 I moved to Monash to do a PhD. Graeme, meanwhile, had finished his PhD on population mobility in West Java, and had returned to Flinders. His output was starting to grow and I was influenced by his work, citing his PhD thesis on ‘Population Mobility in West Java’, his papers on ‘Circular migration’ and ‘New conceptual approaches to migration in the context of urbanisation’ and his review of ‘Demographic research in Indonesia’. Apart from Graeme, the other significant influences included Terry McGee, Gavin Jones and Lea Jellinek.

After Monash I moved to the Research School of Pacific Studies here at the ANU, published my PhD on Indonesia, and broadened my interests to Vietnam, collaborating with Terry Hull and others, and later undertaking work on cities and regional economies in China. I also read and wrote on theories of development and underdevelopment.

I remained aware of Graeme’s research and prolific publications, but it had less of an influence on me during this period, primarily because population mobility in the controlled socialist societies of Vietnam and China was somewhat different to that in the more or less market based economies in the rest of Southeast Asia. Moreover, the data available was poor and often doctored, making it unreliable.

In the early 1990s I applied for the position of Professor and Chair in the Department of Geography at Adelaide University. I was shortlisted but it took the committee many months before it told me I was unsuccessful. I was puzzled about why it took so long, but I had my suspicions. Eventually Adelaide announced that Graeme Hugo, who was then Reader at Flinders, had accepted the role at Adelaide.

Soon after I applied for, and was offered, the position of Professor and Head of Geography at Flinders, filling the vacancy left by Murray McCaskill. Many had expected Graeme to take on the role.

On my first day back at Flinders I was shown the room that had previously been for the Honours students. Graeme had taken it over, as was his way, and it was still stuffed full of books, reports and sundry other documents. However, pasted on a window was the Campaign for Peace in Vietnam sticker I had put there in 1970.

Through the 1990s Graeme and I, as heads of the two Geography departments in Adelaide, managed to simultaneously compete and cooperate largely without rancour. We competed for undergraduate and postgraduate students and for bragging rights as the best geography department in town. Flinders won, of course.

In staff meetings I would regularly cite what Graeme was doing at Adelaide to bolster my argument that major changes were needed at Flinders. I suspect my colleagues thought it crass. Academia is about collegiality, not competition. Right?

We cooperated with Graeme in the joint population studies program. Gour Dasvarma and Ross Steele maintained the work at Flinders. Gour has already spoken about this. The population program supported four academic staff in total. We changed the name to the School of Geography, Population and Environmental Management to make clear the areas of emphasis.

Adelaide University had commenced a graduate Geographical Information Systems (GIS) program. I wanted to start an undergraduate program at Flinders as part of a general upgrade of our approach to cartography. Graeme generously invited us to become a core member of the National Key Centre in Social Applications of GIS that he headed at Adelaide University. Flinders was also a joint recipient with Adelaide of ARC Infrastructure grants for GIS. Andrew Beer had responsibility for getting the program established, setting up our Spatial Information Systems Laboratory for teaching and research. It would have been significantly more difficult without Graeme’s initial and ongoing support.

Graeme and I shared two PhD students. Yosh Azuma was one of them. When I arrived at Flinders Yosh had set up a camp bed in one of the laboratories and I got the impression he was living there. It turned out he wasn’t, but he did spend a lot of time on campus. Yosh wrote a mammoth treatise on becak in Jakarta. He is on the staff of Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto and still very active in Cambodia and Indonesia.

I recall two occasions when I had to fill in for Graeme at conferences. At one event I diligently presented his paper, putting forward his arguments. Someone in the audience started attacking me for what Graeme had said. At first I tried to explain what I thought Graeme meant but it reached a point where I had to forcibly state that the critic had better take this up with Graeme. Friendship only goes so far!

Graeme took a number of staff with him to Adelaide. He was always surrounded by a group of loyal, talented and hard working mainly female colleagues. Graeme was a master of cut and paste techniques and they had the skills to help turn the work into a finished product. One of his colleagues, Cecile Cutler, returned to Flinders, and became a vital member of our team. Cecile was recently awarded her PhD.

Our careers diverged over the last 15 years. Graeme’s academic standing and impact on population policy continued to grow and I moved to the dark side – management (or administration as we call it in universities).

We would occasionally catchup at an Academy of Social Sciences meeting in Adelaide, or in airports. We had one significant difference. As a product of the western suburbs Graeme supported Port Power in the AFL; being born in the western suburbs yuppie enclave of Glenelg, I followed the Crows.

For 47 years Graeme and I were collaborators and competitors. There were numerous intersections and parallels. We had a good relationship but not an especially close one.

I am grateful, though, that I never had to play Graeme at tennis. It would have been a crushing humiliation – for me.

In thinking about these connections with Graeme I was reminded of the complex social networks that connect and often glue the social sciences together.

Social media is changing the ways in which these connections are made and sustained. The high cost of access to academic publications significantly reduces the impact of publicly funded research, and alienates the growing numbers of influential independent commentators and researchers.

The social sciences is likely to be in an increasingly precarious position vis-à-vis the STEM disciplines in the universities of the future. It has already happened in the UK and the USA.

A precarious position because the discipline and sub-discipline atomization of the social sciences, while essential to the creative chaos that underpins good, original critical thinking, is also a vulnerability of the social sciences, as it is of the humanities.

There is a quiet fraying of the academic reputation of the social sciences that needs to be arrested.

My last meeting with Graeme was, fittingly, in the Qantas Club lounge in Canberra in July last year. Graeme was his normal ebullient self. Friendly, engaging, interested and with a story about what he was currently doing. And, of course, busy and in a hurry.

It was a symbolic place to meet for both of us given how much of our lives were spent in aircraft and airport lounges.

I was deeply shocked and saddened by his sudden passing.