

Douglas Sutherland (1992-1997)



I joined CREES as a masters student in 1992 and left in 1997 with a doctorate under my belt. Initially, I didn't go far sliding across to the school of geography while working on the project Understanding Regional Patters of Economic Change in Russia. Towards the conclusion of that project, I left and went a bit further this time to join the OECD Economics Department, where I remain. Initially, my work at the OECD involved preparing Economic Surveys of Russia. Subsequently, I have mainly focussed on cross-country research covering a wide range of issues, though often with a public finance focus.

“ CREES was an extraordinarily vibrant place to study. The interchange between all the different members of the centre, staff and students alike, was one aspect. But also having a focal point like the Baykov library coupled with regular seminars and the annual conference exposed you to a bewildering array of ideas and research.”

Mostly, however, I'm indebted to Phil Hanson and Julian Cooper who were outstanding supervisors and who inspired by example. Between them they piqued and then fed interests, pushed and guided while involving me in teaching or other work that helped not just finish a thesis but gave me a real education. I also remember fondly how Mike Berry spurred me on in learning Russian by rewarding my efforts with a periodic (and sadly justified) "rubbish". But it is also the memories from Russia that flood back from that period; an almost surreal visit with Phil to Kaliningrad on a technical assistance project or a morning tasting of several types of lard to discern their different cooking properties before heading out for meetings to name but two.

In terms of personal influence, I often think about Phil's ability to communicate and try to emulate that in my own work. More generally, the approach to work that I took from CREES is one of trying to understand the issues quite broadly, informed but not necessarily driven by theory, and by thoroughly interrogating the available information; and it has stood me in good stead.