



**IGC
COLOGNE 2012
DOWN TO EARTH**

IGC TODAY 29.08.2012

32ND INTERNATIONAL GEOGRAPHICAL CONGRESS IN COLOGNE 26 - 30 AUGUST 2012

DEAR GEOGRAPHERS!



While we are gathering at the University of Cologne the largest river of Central Europe, the Rhine, is still flowing through the city as peacefully as ever, undisturbed by the buzz created by 2300 geographers. Tourist boats

and container ships are passing under the bridges connecting the two parts of Cologne either side of the stream. Most visitors to Cologne are impressed by the picturesque view of this unique "riverscape".

Cologne and the Rhine are an excellent example of human-environment interactions and reactions. From time to time continuous heavy precipitation in the Rhine's catchment area causes severe inundations, putting the old city centre of Cologne at risk of being flooded. In the past, extreme floods often devastated the centre of Cologne. The most severe summer flood of the last millennium hit Cologne in July 1342. Bridges were destroyed. Rows of houses bordering the river were washed away. Erosion cut deep gullies into the meadows along the Rhine and hillslope erosion destroyed fertile agricultural land.

A volcanic eruption between June 1783 and February 1784 at the Laki fissure in Iceland was responsible for the most severe winter flood of the last centuries in Central Europe. The winter of 1783/1784 was one of the coldest since records began.

When spring arrived, sudden warm weather combined with heavy rainfall resulted in unprecedented amounts of snowmelt gushing down the Rhine. Large blocks of floating ice blocked bridges and many settlement areas along the Rhine suffered from severe flooding.

In Bonn, a 13-year old boy named Ludwig van Beethoven, was trapped with his parents in the top floor of their house. They narrowly escaped the floods and survived. Many others were not so lucky. It's hard to imagine that during these floods, Rhine water gushing through the old town of Cologne, destroyed everything on its way. Today mobile flood walls protect the old town of Cologne.

Floods and severe erosion are, needless to say, not only a characteristic of Cologne. In China, floods and erosion have been shaping landscapes for a long time. The famous geographer Ferdinand Freiherr von Richthofen, chair of the organising committee of the 7th International Congress of Geography in Berlin in 1899, investigated erosional landscapes and floods in China. Ferdinand von Richthofen's merits were honoured this year in his hometown Pokój (former Carlsruhe) in Poland in June 2012. A bust was erected as a visible and hopefully long-lasting symbol of this joint Polish-German cooperation.

Hans-Rudolf Bork



Thumbs Up: Everything is going fine at the IGC 2012 in Cologne

IMPRESSIONS

The IGC 2012 Barometer: Sunny Outlook

After two full days of Congress sessions, lectures, symposia, field trips and mingling, people have plenty to say about the Congress.

MAIN, the hub of IGC happenings. The turquoise-clad volunteers, all briefed and bright-eyed, stand at the ready to assist the IGC scholars and scientists from around the world. "Well organised" is perhaps the most common feedback from Congress participants. "No matter where you turn, there's always someone you can approach for help," says one geographer from Hong Kong.

For some, who find the Congress overwhelming – not only by its size but by the sheer breadth of its scientific programme – this is an important aspect. Shanti Sumartojo, a sociologist from the Australian National University, who used the walking tour of the city to get her "thinking geographically", appreciated the fact that the organisers thought of offering childcare. "This really sets the right tone," says Sumartojo, who often travels with her children.

Mala Mohammed Daura from the University of Maiduguri in Nigeria and President of the Association of Nigerian Geographers spoke positively not only of the platform offered by the Congress for international exchange and insight, but of the efforts made to attract greater participation from geographers

from the developing world.

For young geographers just launching their careers, the IGC is seen as a great chance to gather feedback on the value of their work. A PhD student from Germany says the Congress is key for positioning his own work in the larger context. "The keynotes in particular, which articulate where Geography is heading in terms of its future tasks, have been central in helping me gauge my own work and where it fits into the bigger picture."

For more established geographers, the Congress is a chance to catch up with international colleagues and gather new input. The Congress has all-around value for Arndt Schimmelmann, a geochemist from Indiana University. "What's so great is that I get to see stuff I'm not normally confronted with. And this time around I've even found new venues and opportunities for collaborations."

Two young professors from Université Paris 8 were particularly pleased with the proximity of the IGC this time around. "It's a shame we have to go home so soon." Which, by the way, seems to be a common sentiment among this year's Congress-goers.

SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

Down to earth: Science meets school – geographers visit local schools

Globalisation and global change have made Geography not only a dynamic but a salient, future-oriented science.

Understanding the need to spread the word about the importance of Geography, IGU geographers visited local schools in the Cologne-Bonn region to report on their latest research. The renowned colleagues responded positively to our idea of promoting the relevance of Geography to the younger generation and were eager to participate. "It sounds both fun and informative," says Prof. David Lanegran from Minnesota (USA). "I've heard much about German Gymnasiums - I never thought I'd be able to visit one."

Sparking real interest

Lanegran's wish came true – he lectured on "Development, urbanization and restructuring of the iron mining region of northern Minnesota and the related developments in Detroit" at the Irmgardis Gymnasium in Cologne. His talk inspired the students to ask excellent questions and even compare the situation in the Manufacturing Belt with the structural change in Germany's own Ruhrgebiet, exploring the transferability of the situation in Detroit to that of the Opel factory in Bochum.

Veronika Selbach

DATES

29.08.2012, 11.45 am:
Keynote-lecture "Global Change and Globalisation":

Eduardo de Mulder
"Global planetary change and human globalization"

Bruno Messerli
"Global change and globalisation – challenges for Geography"

The Keynote-lecture will take place in MAIN 13 and will be broadcasted live in KEY 7 if the maximum occupancy is exceeded.

LAST MINUTE CHANGES

FIELD TRIP HD 08: Cologne – a cultural melting pot
Postponed to 1:00 pm

FIELD TRIP HD 09: Cologne cathedral excavations
New meeting point: Main entrance of Cologne Cathedral

Session C08.24-06 Land Degradation and Geomorphology: Monitoring, Assessment, and Theory Development 4 (scheduled 16:00 in MAIN 01):
SESSION CANCELLED

GET YOUR IGC 2012 T-SHIRT

AND YOUR IGC 2012 MUG.

Both are available at the booth of the German Geographic Society (DGfG) in the marquee.

GET IN TOUCH

E-Mail to the editorial office
info@igc2012.org

f IGC-Facebook
facebook.com/igc2012

t IGC-Twitter
twitter.com/IGC_Cologne2012.de



„MY DAY AT THE IGC...“



Megha from the IGC-Team

Its been an eventful three days at the IGC and the information counter has been a great vantage point to witness the activity of the congress. The variety of participants is astounding, we have had the chance to interact with geographers from around the world; from students

to professors and researchers and doyens of their fields. We saw them meet old colleagues and friends, exchange ideas in the lobby, rush from one session to another, meet new people, leave excitedly for excursions, arrange to discuss things further during the evening social programmes or plan a tour of the historic city of Cologne in free time. The energy is infectious.

I also had the chance to attend a few sessions yesterday and have a list of new ideas to explore. A PhD research can be a lonely journey, it is opportunities like these where one can share the intellectual excitement of fellow researchers, locate one's own research in the current work in the discipline and truly feel a part of a larger academic effort to understand our world.

Megha Sud



IGC field trip impression: „From Rome to Prussia“ (Amelie and her group)

KEYNOTE “GLOBAL CHANGE AND GLOBALISATION”

Global Change and Globalisation – Challenges for Geography

Humanity finds itself at an evolutionary crossroads. The choice is that of a perfect storm of progressively deepening crises on the one hand, and expanding perspectives of unprecedented opportunities, on the other (Club of Rome 2012). Holistic action is now urgently needed to avoid the significant costs and consequences, both in economic and human terms (OECD 2012). These two quotations by two different organizations, but with comparable content, may be illustrative of our current situation and knowledge, while we recognise the limitations of our unique planet.

First, we look back and demonstrate with instructive figures what has happened in climate change and in global change, i.e. in nature and in society. Four scenarios show the climate change processes from 1870 to 2100. We will then present the effects of the human-induced global change in the 20th century, which the author himself (McNeill 2005) called a turbulent and dramatic scenario. We know that perhaps 80% of these changes have occurred only in the second half of the 20th century. Therefore, it would be much more instructive to analyse and to compare only the last 50 years and to link the natural and the anthropogenic forces in different local or regional studies.

Secondly, four topics may show that geography has ideal prerequisites for an active and innovative participation in international research programmes from the past to the future. We call the first topic “Linking natural and social sciences: Geography as Bridge-BUILDER”. It all began with the UNESCO - Man and Biosphere Programme in 1971, and ended with the last 2011 Nobel Prize Winners Symposium in Stockholm and the wonderful formulation “Ecosystems and social systems are dynamic and inextricably linked”.



Why has geography not made much better use of this unique chance to play a leading role in this domain of research? Of course, geography also needs basic grassroots and specialised research. We argue, however, that at least some qualified collaborators should spare a certain amount of their time for this promising “interdisciplinary responsibility” with a rapidly increasing significance since Rio 1992. Society and economy are starting to realise that our planet's natural resources are limited, surprisingly 40 years after the publication of “Limits to Growth” (Meadows et al, Club of Rome, 1972). We therefore propose the second and much more concrete title for a stronger engagement of geography in attractive questions of sustainability: “Ecosystem Services and Resource Use”. Knowing that this issue needs to be addressed on a global level, we also propose a more active participation of geographers in international research programmes.

All these efforts are useless if we do not find a way in which our knowledge can contribute to so-called “science – policy dialogues” (third title) or even in political decision making processes.

My last point is an appeal to support the “International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education” (fourth title) on all levels and in all regions of the world. The reason is evident: We are at a crossroads with global change and globalisation, and therefore we need to consider a new way of thinking about global solidarity and responsibility and about a new relationship between nature and society. All this demands more courage to intervene in political decision processes from the local to the global level and more energy to support the education of the next generations in order to change today's Global Change.

Professor Bruno Messerli

IGC SPOTLIGHT

GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING: PROMOTING GEOGRAPHY'S COMPETENCES THROUGH AN INTERNATIONAL UN-YEAR

Thinking globally and acting appropriately locally presupposes global understanding. A global understanding of socio-cultural and natural realities is an essential human condition in the 21st century: People need to understand how their everyday actions are embedded in global processes, and what the global impacts of these actions are in order to achieve more sustainable ways of living.

To reach these goals and to promote geography's visibility in the field, the IGU has launched an initiative for an International UN-Year of Global Understanding (IYGU) in 2016. This is a unique opportunity to gain worldwide public attention for geography's competences in mastering major challenges of our time.

This initiative aims to bridge the awareness gap between local acts and global effects by stimulating transdisciplinary research initiatives through education and information, which will yield actionable insights into the ways people can live together more sustainably.



The IYGU organisation will include continental action centres, as well as national working groups for the different fields of action. This initiative is gathering the best-known experts from all scientific fields. It is supported by global umbrella organisations, such as the International Council for Science, the International Social Sciences Council, the International Institute of Philosophy and the Humanities, as well as the International Human Dimension Program. The IYGU has strong partners in economy, media, and politics. Nobel Prize laureates and leading representatives of sustainability policies act as goodwill ambassadors.

We invite all geographers to support this vital initiative on the national, continental, and global level. If you are interested in this initiative, please contact the secretariat IYUN_IGU@uni-jena.de.

Further information is available on www.global-understanding.info.

Prof. Dr. Benno Werlen
Executive Director of IYGU

COMMENT OF THE DAY

“Nice to meet colleagues from all over the world, the networking at this congress is even more important than the very interesting sessions on scientific topics.”

- Michael Lukas | Universidad de Chile -

Jörg Stadelbauer

Berlin 1899:

The Seventh International Geographical Congress

A Retrospective on Occasion of the 32nd IGC, Cologne August 2012

Now available at the desk of



MARQUEE M 02.02

WEATHER

29.08.2012



28°C, sunny

IMPRINT

University of Cologne info@igc2012.org
Albertus-Magnus-Platz www.igc2012.org
50923 Köln



IGC COLOGNE 2012 DOWN TO EARTH

Fachschaft Geographie

The YOUNG RESEARCHERS' FORUM Party

TICKETS ARE AVAILABLE FOR 5€ AT THE GeoDach BOOTH IN THE MARQUEE 2 TENT