

# IGU Commission on Political Geography Newsletter

The Commission on Political Geography (CPG) of IGU-UGI aims at encouraging geographical research on various dimensions of the connections between power, politics, and spaces, and at stimulating the exchange of findings and insights among political geographers from different countries. It is also focused on the analysis of the connections between political geographies (that is all the discursive praxis pertaining with the representation of the world in its political organisation) and the making of the world itself.

## Chair's Column

## IGU Award Winning

The Commission on Political Geography (CPG) of the International Geographical Union (IGU/UGI) received the 2015 Commission Excellence Award. Given that there are more than 40 Commissions and a Task Force in the Union, we are quite honored and grateful to the former chairs, particularly Elena dell'Agnese, and Commission members.

### Great surprise

Last June, Virginie and I received a letter from the IGU Secretary-General about the result of the IGU 2014 Commission Excellence Award selection. I vaguely remembered that there is such an award but have never thought of us getting the award. It was a great surprise for us. Here I cite part of the report of the Award Committee:

*The IGU Commissions Excellence Award Committee nominates unanimously the Commission on Political Geography for the IGU Commissions Excellence Award 2014. Although many IGU commissions perform very well in terms of the criteria for the IGU Commissions Excellence Award, the Commission on Political Geography has performed exceptionally well in 2014. The Commission participates consistently in the IGU Congresses and Conferences by organizing special sessions and panels, often in collaboration with other IGU commissions. The Commission organized an impressive number of conferences and workshops in Europe, North and South America and Asia, and collaborated with several external organizations, including the ISSC. The Commission has a strong record of publishing special issues in international refereed academic journals as an outcome of commission meetings and communicates about its activities through a newsletter, website, mailing list and Facebook group. The Commission encourages and stimulates the involvement of young researchers*



<http://igu-online.org/>

### CPG Website

<http://www.igu-cpg.unimib.it/>

### CPG Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/456054597763023/?fref=ts>

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*and researchers from low-income countries in its activities. The commission has a travel grant program for postgraduate students and early career scientists, giving preference to young scholars, in particular from developing countries. A young members' board stimulates the involvement of young scientists in the activities of the commission.*



Award ceremony at Moscow State University, August 21, 2015 (photo by Akihiko Takagi)

Virginie and I succeeded the role of CPG chair(s) last year as Elena was elected as a Vice President of the IGU. Most of the highly estimated attempts were initiated by Elena. We simply continue and develop such activities and others that have been promoted by former CPG chairs. In addition, any of our activities cannot have been carried out without advises and collaborations of the Steering Committee members and fellow political geographers all over the world. Thus, our success is definitely the outcome of collective efforts. It needs to be emphasized that continuing mutual support and friendly collaborations among political geographers across the world is and will be indispensable for the further development of CPG and political geography as an ever-evolving sub-discipline in geography.

### Future Challenges

The 2014 CPG annual report has more than 8,000 words and is one of the longest as an IGU Commission report, reflecting the frequent holding of IGU conferences and the increasing number of international conferences on political geographic issues. There are so many conferences in which CPG and its members are involved every year. Even though the co-chair system began when Virginie and I became co-chairs, there are so many tasks we have to handle to organize worldwide IGU-related conferences. I believe that the co-chair system has a great merit and that co-chairs should be selected to cope with the on-going internationalization of political geography.

In this respect, we need to make more efforts to make close connection to political geographers in Asia, Africa, and Latin America and to promote political geography among younger geographers particularly in low-income countries. The location of our activities are still biased towards Europe, North America, and other developed countries. One of our future challenges is how we can effectively reach the Third World as sites and interests of our activities. Good news in this respect is that the 2016 IGC (IGU main conference) will be held in Beijing, China. We have already begun to organize several sessions (see the later section) and a pre-conference held in Guangzhou/Shenzhen and that the 2020 IGC will be held in Istanbul, Turkey following the IGU Regional Conference in Quebec City, Canada in 2018.

As Virginie points out on many occasions, we also need to think how we can effectively communicate with non-English speaking countries and geographers there. Although we have very internationalized Steering Committee members, the skill of English is still a crucial key of communication and publication among us. One of the realistic options for this would be that we continue to have key political geographers in the Committee who can act as an interface to connect CPG and their national/local circle of political geographers. Establishing virtual CPG regional chapters and promoting the translation of seminal works in political geography into different languages might also be ways to promote this idea.

As mentioned in the letter from the Award Committee, how to encourage the participation of young researchers particularly from low-income countries in IGU conferences is a determinant of our future success. We have just started the small travel grant award (\$500 for each) but not attracted so many applications yet. Because of the award winning, we now have some financial resources to promote this idea. We need to keep advertising our activities on our website and facebook and through other SNS's.

We would greatly appreciate your continuing support for and interests in CPG and look forward to seeing you in next sites of our activities. Thank you very much.

Takashi Yamazaki, Co-chair of CPG



*Past Events*

## IGU Moscow Regional Conference

Following Cracow, the IGU Regional Conference was held in Moscow from August 17th to 21st, 2015. CPG organized twelve sessions under eight themes many of which were well attended. Current and former members of the CPG Steering Committee also gave keynote and thematic lectures in addition to our award winning ceremony. In the business meeting, the plan for the CPG pre-conference in Guangzhou/Shenzhen 2016 and other issues were discussed.

### Sessions and Lectures

The 2015 IGU Regional Conference was held at Lomonosov State University of Moscow, Russia from August 17th to 21st to commemorate the 170th anniversary of the Russian Geographical Society. Our long-time colleague, Vladimir Kolosov acted as a representative of the Local Organizing Committee and led the Conference to great success. During the Conference, CPG organized the following themed sessions:

Bordering Eurasia: Politics, power, and political geography (chaired by Paul Richardson and Akihiro Iwashita)

Borders and illegalities (chaired by Adriana Dorfman and Elena dell'Agnese)

The critical geopolitics of food (chaired by Elena dell'Agnese)

For Kropotkin (chaired by Anthony Ince and Simon Springer)

Gender activism in Asia: Peoples, places and politics (with the Commission on Gender and Geography, chaired by Shirlena Huang and Chih Yuan Woon)

Problems of contemporary political geography and geopolitics (chaired by Inocent Moyo and Christoher C. Nshimbi)

Rethinking what (political) geography ought to be: Theories, histories, and practices of geography and geopolitics as instruments of peace (with the Commission on the History of Geography, chaired by Takashi Yamazaki and Alexey Postnikov)

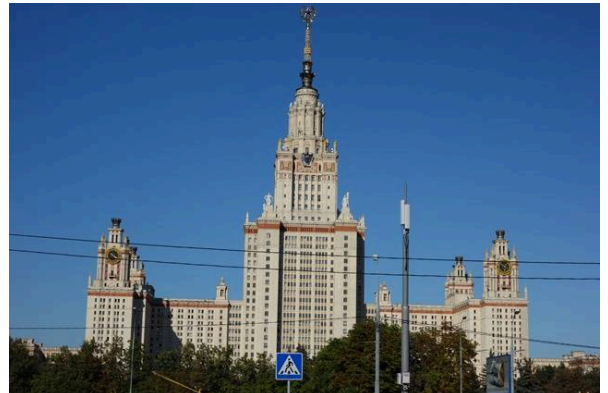
Russian geopolitics and the former Soviet countries (chaired by Takashi Yamazaki)

Many of the sessions were well attended and had active discussion though some CPG sessions were held in parallel. In addition to these sessions, former and current members of the CPG Steering Committee also gave the following keynote and thematic lectures, marking the important role (political) geography plays in understanding contemporary world affairs:

Alexander Murphy (USA): Coping with a fast-changing, unstable world: Opportunities and challenges for geography

John O'Loughlin (USA): Climate change and conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa

Vladimir Kolosov (Russia): Russian geography:



Session "For Kropotkin," August 20, 2015  
(photo by Takashi Yamazaki)



Alec Murphy's lecture, August 19, 2015 (photo by Takashi Yamazaki)

Specifics, achievements, problems

Elena dell'Agnese (Italy): From "pasta" to "poi": towards a critical geography of food

Takashi Yamazaki (Japan): The spatial control of "vices" in the U.S. military outpost: Value contradictions in a long-term stationing on foreign soil. This lecture was sponsored by the journal *Geopolitics* published by Taylor & Francis (see [www.tandfonline.com/fgeo20](http://www.tandfonline.com/fgeo20) ).

During the conference, the Russian Geographical Society awarded John O'Loughlin (University of Colorado at Boulder, USA) a Semyonov gold medal for his distinguished research in political geography on the former Soviet Union.



Left: John O'Loughlin (left) and Vladimir Kolossov (right) at the end of the award dinner.

Right: O'Loughlin after the award ceremony. (photos by Takashi Yamazaki)

### CPG Travel Grant Award

For this conference, CPG decided to offer limited funding (two grants of \$500) to assist two postgraduate students and/or early career scientists from low-income countries in attending the conference. The definition of low-income countries was based on the list of such countries prepared by the Local Organizing Committee (see <http://igu2015.ru/grants>). Applicants were first to submit an abstract for participation in the conference. To be eligible for a CPG grant, the abstract was to be reviewed, accepted and placed in a CPG-related session within the IGU 2015 Scientific Programme. Applicants were then to submit a full paper to both of CPG Co-Chairs (Virginie Mamadouh and Takashi Yamazaki) via email by 31 March 2015. The results of the review were notified by the end of April. After the review of the applied papers, a grant was awarded to Deepika Saraswat (India) in US dollar cash after her presentation at the conference venue. The title of her excellent paper is "Regional convergence of Russian and Iranian geopolitics: Changing contours of Eurasia."



Deepika Saraswat

### Business Meeting and the CPG Preconference of the IGC Beijing 2016

The CPG business meeting was held during the conference. The issues discussed include future activities, the use of the commission fund, and a plan of the CPG preconference of the IGC Beijing 2016. In collaboration with Yungang Liu (Sun Yat-sen University, China), I made a presentation on the planned preconference. The preconference will be held from August 18th to 21st at Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou followed by a field trip to the Shenzhen/Hong Kong border region. Sun Yat-sen University will financially support the preconference. More details will be made public in a few months on the CPG website and facebook. Regarding the IGC Beijing, please see the section below.

(Takashi Yamazaki)

## Other Past Events

### **Association of American Geographers (AAG) Political Geography Speciality Group (PGSG) preconference, Chicago, USA, 20-25 April 2015**

The AAG Political Geography Specialty Group (PGSG) preconference was held at DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois, USA, on 20 April 2015. There were approximately 60 attendees, including graduate students, faculty, and the broader community. There were 44 paper presentations, divided into 8 sessions: (1) Violence, Governance, and Resistance; (2) Resource Economies and Environmental Governance; (3) Nation and Identity; (4) Militarism, Technology, and Logistics; (5) Theorizing Political Geography: Key Topics & Debates; (6) Borders: Theory and Practice; (7) Borders and geopolitics in the Middle East; (8) Borders and geopolitics in Asia. The event, which ran from 8 am - 6 pm, was followed by a PGSG group dinner.

(Natalie Koch)

### **International Scientific-Practical Conference 'The Spatial Transformation of the Urban Environment in the Development of Post-Industrial Society' and Socratic XI Reading 'Jean Gottmann as a Visionary and a Critic (on the centenary of his birth),' Kaliningrad, Russia, August 23-26, 2015.**

After the IGU 2015 Regional Conference in Moscow, the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University (IKBFU) brought together a group of Russian and foreign academics (from Italy, France, the Netherlands, Poland and the USA) at the Institute of Environmental Management, Territorial Development and Urban Construction, to discuss political and urban geography. Special attention was given to the work of cosmopolitan geographer Jean Gottmann (born in Kharkov in the Russian Empire in 1915) who has been an innovative and prolific urban and political geographer in France, the USA and the UK. The IKBFU also organized a field trip in the National Park Curonian Spit and a visit of the city of Kaliningrad. The photo shows the participants at the feet of the statue of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) who was teaching philosophy – and geography – in Königsberg.



(Virginie Mamadouh)



*Future Events*

## The 33rd IGC in Beijing 2016

The 33rd International Geographical Congress (IGC) will be held in Beijing, China from August 21st to 25th, 2016. The theme of the Congress is “Shaping Our Harmonious Worlds,” which highlights today’s common pursuit for harmony between humankind and nature, between environment and society, and for harmonious approaches to the world’s hazards and conflicts.



Congress venue (China National Convention Center)

### CPG Sessions

The call for session proposals was closed at the end of September. CPG has received the following 13 session proposals:

- Sociocultural Encounters in Geography: Borders, Borderlands, Grassroots Non-State Actors and the Southern African Integration Project (proposed by Christopher Changwe Nshimbi and Innocent Moyo)
- The Eurasian Pacific – Geopolitical Moments and Unfulfilled Promise (proposed by Sergei Golunov and Akihiro Iwashita)
- Scales of Politics and Policies in Latin American Borders (proposed by Adriana Dorfman and Alejandro Benedetti)
- Autochthony, Allochthony and Belonging: Migration, Xenophobia and Social Cohesion in the Southern African Region (proposed by Innocent Moyo and Christopher Changwe Nshimbi)
- Rethinking Carceral Geography in ‘Harmonised Societies’ (proposed by Claudio Minca and Chin-Ee Ong)
- Postcolonial Literary Geographies (proposed by Patricia Noxolo)
- Politics of Environment and People (proposed by Anjana Mathur Jagmohan)
- The Transformation of Political Space and Prospects for New Governance in the Contemporary Phase of Globalization (proposed by Takashi Yamazaki)
- A Reexamination of Militarization and “the Space of Occupation”: A Comparison Perspective (proposed by Takashi Yamazaki and Rassem Khamaisi)
- Changing Geopolitical Imaginations of Asia (proposed by Alexander Murphy)
- China’s Geopolitical (Re)Positionings in a Changing World (proposed by Chih Yuan Woon)
- China Looks South: Development, Infrastructure and Culture on the Border with Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam (proposed by Jussi Laine and Victor Konrad)
- Conversations between Gender and Political Geographies Key Concepts, Methods and Themes (with the Commission on Gender and Geography, proposed by Virginie Mamadouh and Marianne Blidon)

While the summaries of these sessions will be posted on the Congress and the CPG websites shortly, the call for abstracts has been open since August 15th. Abstracts can be submitted through the Congress website at <http://www.igc2016.org/dct/page/70047> The call will be open until January 15th, 2016. For any information about the Congress, please look at <http://www.igc2016.org/dct/page/1> Those who have any questions about CPG sessions can ask CPG Co-chairs (Virginie Mamadouh and/or Takashi Yamazaki). We look forward to seeing as many participants as possible.

**CPG Preconference in Guangzhou**

As mentioned above, the CPG preconference will be held at Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, China followed by a field trip to the Shenzhen/Hong Kong border region. The title of the preconference will be “International Forum on Frontiers of Political Geography” the objective of which is to promote the “understanding” of political geography in China and narrow the gap in the level of such understanding between the West and the East. The table (prepared by Yungang Liu) shows the currently planned schedule (subject to change). Participants can go to Beijing after the preconference by train, which will take about 8 hours. Accommodation and ground transportation will be arranged by the organizer. For more detailed information, please contact Takashi Yamazaki (CPG Co-chair).

Date	Time	Arrangement	Location
<b>18 August</b>	Whole day	Check in	Sun Yat-Sen University
	Afternoon	Downtown investigation	Guangzhou
<b>19 August</b>	Whole day	Academic forum	Sun Yat-Sen University
<b>20 August</b>	Whole day	Academic investigation	Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong
<b>21 August</b>	Whole day	Academic investigation	Shenzhen - Guangzhou- Beijing



Urban landscapes in Guangzhou (by Yungang Liu)



The route map of a one-day field trip to the Shenzhen/Hong Kong border region (by Yungang Liu)

(Takashi Yamazaki and Yungang Liu)

## Other Future Events

### **Association of American Geographers (AAG) and AAG Political Geography Speciality Group (PGSG) preconference, San Francisco, USA, March 29 – April 2, 2016**

The meeting will be held at Hilton San Francisco Union Square and will feature over 5,500 presentations, posters, workshops, and field trips by leading scholars, experts, and researchers. The deadline of abstract submission is October 29th (as of October 17th). The AAG website (<http://www.aag.org/cs/annualmeeting>) provides any kind of information about the meeting. For detailed information about PGSG preconference and PGSG-related calls for papers, please visit their website at <http://www.politicalgeography.org/>

### **Borders and Mobility: 33rd Annual Spring Symposium of the Centre for South Asian Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, Honolulu, Hawai'i, April 6-8, 2016.**

The deadline to submit proposals is January 15th, 2016. For more information, please visit the Center for South Asian Studies website at: <http://www.hawaii.edu/csas>

### **Association for Borderlands Studies (ABS) Annual Conference, April 13-16, 2016, Reno, Nevada, USA**

ABS Annual Meetings are held in conjunction with the Western Social Science Association's annual conference at Grand Sierra Resort and Casino (2500 E 2nd St, Reno, NV 89502, United States). The Association for Borderlands Studies invites proposals for individual papers and complete panels related to the study of borders. Papers on all topics and areas concerned with border studies are invited but papers related to the theme for the 2016 annual conference "Borders in the XXI century: Border institutions and governance" will particularly be welcome. For more detailed information, please look at: <http://absborderlands.org/studies/annual-meetings/>

### **15<sup>th</sup> Border Regions in Transition (BRIT) Conference "Cities, States and Borders: From the Local to the Global," Hamburg (Germany) – Sønderborg (Denmark), May 17-20, 2016**

The objective of the 15th Border Regions in Transition (BRIT) Conference organized by the University of Southern Denmark, the University of Hamburg and the HafenCity University Hamburg is to rethink the complicated relationships that bind cities and state borders. The conference will offer a unique opportunity to explore the collaborative or competitive strategies of this odd couple under the current circumstances of globalization. The deadline of paper submission is November 1, 2015. The conference website is: [http://www.sdu.dk/en/Om\\_SDU/Institutter\\_centre/I\\_Graenseforskning/Events/BRIT+2016](http://www.sdu.dk/en/Om_SDU/Institutter_centre/I_Graenseforskning/Events/BRIT+2016)

### **Contemporary Crisis and Changes: Geoeconomical and Geopolitical Approaches International Conference, University of Reims Champagne-Ardenne (URCA), Reims, France, May 26 and 27, 2016**

This conference will be organized by François Bost and Stéphane Rosière, Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne, EA 2076 Habiter and supported by the IGU-CPG. For several years, the world seems to have entered a period of high instability. Economically, the "subprime mortgage crisis" appeared in 2007 in the USA, then spread planet wide in all areas of activity, leading to lower growth and unemployment. In geopolitical terms, tension spots have also multiplied (Middle East, Ukraine) and challenge the borders, generating strong migratory waves. This process, by itself, carries conflicts. The aim of the conference "Contemporary Crisis and changes" is to question these contemporary upheavals through both a geo-economic and a geopolitical reading. Deadline for submission: 1 December 2015. More information (English and French) <http://www.univ-reims.fr/site/laboratoire-labellise/habiter-amenagement-et-geographie-politique/les-activites-de-recherche/axe-espace-politique/colloque-crisis-et-mutations-mai-2016,18852,32229.html>

### **Borders, Walls and Violence: Costs and Alternatives to Border Fencing: International conference organized by the Raoul Dandurand Chair at the University of Quebec at Montreal (UQAM), Montreal, Canada, June 1-3, 2016**

The conference website: <http://borderwalls.hypotheses.org/130>



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The **Newsletter #20** was edited by Takashi Yamazaki and Virginie Mamadouh, Chairs of the IGU Commission on Political Geography Amsterdam/Osaka, October 2015

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