



IGU-Commission C12.07
“Cultural Approach in Geography”

Chair: Benno Werlen

Commission Report 2012-2016

2016-02-29

1. Membership

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B. Members

The Commission has 638 members (as of December 1, 2015). Members are defined as subscribers of our e-mail list. Nationalities are as follows:

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Argentina | 11 |
| Australia | 14 |
| Austria | 7 |
| Bangladesh | 1 |
| Belgium | 5 |
| Brazil | 17 |
| Cambodia | 1 |
| Canada | 47 |
| Chile | 1 |
| China | 16 |
| Colombia | 6 |
| Croatia | 1 |
| Czech Republic | 2 |
| Denmark | 1 |
| Estonia | 2 |
| Finland | 3 |
| France | 102 |
| Germany | 95 |
| Greece | 2 |
| Iceland | 1 |
| India | 6 |
| Ireland | 10 |
| Israel | 7 |
| Italy | 28 |
| Japan | 16 |
| Korea (South) | 9 |
| Luxembourg | 2 |
| Mexico | 4 |
| Netherlands | 11 |
| New Zealand | 5 |
| Norway | 2 |
| Peru | 1 |
| Poland | 5 |
| Portugal | 8 |
| Russia | 6 |
| Singapore | 1 |
| Slovenia | 2 |
| South Africa | 4 |
| Spain | 23 |
| Sweden | 8 |
| Switzerland | 19 |
| Taiwan | 1 |
| United Kingdom | 39 |
| USA | 58 |
| unknown | 28 |

C. Website

<http://www.cultural-approach.net>

<http://www.global-understanding.info>

2. Meetings

The Commission regularly organized scientific meetings and events in the 2012-2016 period. In accordance with IGU recommendations, we contributed particularly (and will do so in the current year) to the IGU Regional Conferences and International Geographic Conferences. The Commission's main goal was to intensify its collaboration with other IGU commissions, a goal successfully proven by several well-attended joint sessions at the Regional Conferences and joint publication projects. The increasing number of joint projects with other IGU commissions helped to further strengthen the cultural approach in different fields of geography. In addition to participating in the IGU conferences, several international meetings and congresses were organized. Due to the changing economic environment of academic work in many countries, however, some of our projects could not be realized as intended. Severe financial cuts in many universities and institutions impeded our efforts to organize a greater number of international events.

The Commission's flagship project, the "2016 International Year of Global Understanding (IYGU)", was presented and discussed on many occasions in the 2012-2016 period. Several keynote presentations at IGU conferences as well as a high number of individual talks and presentations shed light on the Commission's work in- and outside of geography.

A. Synopsis of Commission Meetings 2012-2016

| Year | Meeting or event | Conference/Location/Date |
|------|--|--|
| 2012 | Session "Cultural Approaches in Social and Geographical Theory" | 32nd International Geographical Congress Cologne (Germany), August 26-30 |
| | Session "Cultures and sustainability" | |
| | Session "Multilocality: symbolic and material constructions of space in societies of mobile individuals" | |
| | Session "The Uses of Art in Public Space" | |
| | Session "Spatialities of Art: between policy and politics" | |
| | Session "Cultural approaches to Sacred Spaces in the global era" | |
| | Session "Cultural Identities" | |
| 2013 | International Conference "Art and geography: aesthetics and practices of spatial knowledges" | University Lumière Lyon 2 (France), February 11-12 |
| | Session "Cultural Dimensions of Sustainability" | IGU Regional Conference, Kyoto (Japan), August 4-9 |
| | Session "Representations of Nature" | |
| | Session "Sacred Mountains and cultural identities in East Asia" | |
| | Commission Business Meeting | |
| | International Symposium on "Meanings & Aesthetics in Asian Cultural Landscape" | Seoul National University, Seoul (Republic of Korea), October 12-14 |
| | International conference "Rurality – New Perspectives and Themes" | Bamberg (Germany), November 15-16 |

| | | |
|-------------|--|---|
| 2014 | International seminar “Banaras, the Heritage City of India: Culture, Tourism and Development” | Banaras Hindu University (IND), February 7-9 |
| | Session “Cultural Approach to Technology and Digital Geomedia” | IGU Regional Conference, Kraków (Poland), August 18-22 |
| | Session “Landscape Changes and Responsibilities in East Asia” | |
| | Session “MegaEvent Planning: Culture Capitals, Place, and Identity” (Joint Session together with C12.14) | |
| | Session “Digital Culture and the Digital Revolution” (Joint Session together with C12.14) | |
| | Keynote Lecture (delivered by Benno Werlen) on the IGU initiative for the UN International Year of Global Understanding (YIGU) | |
| | Commission Business Meeting | |
| 2015 | Plenary Session on the IGU initiative for the UN International Year of Global Understanding (YIGU) | AAG Annual Meeting, Chicago (USA), April 21-25 |
| | Plenary Lecture (delivered by Benno Werlen) on “2016 International Year of Global Global Understanding” | IGU Regional Conference, Moscow (Russia), August 16-21 |
| | Session “Global Sustainability and Global Understanding” | |
| | Session “Performing places, cultures and nature in different social and geographic settings” | |
| 2016 (plan) | Pre-congress conference on “Cultural and Natural Heritages in a Globalizing World” | Korea National University of Education, Cheongju City (Republic of Korea), August 14-18 |
| | Session “Cultural Geographies of the Digital” (Joint Session together with C12.14) | 33rd International Geographical Congress Beijing (China), August 21-25 |
| | Session “Cultural Aspects of Sustainable Urban Development” (Joint Session together with C12.39) | |
| | Session “Role of Heritage Sites and Cultural Landscapes in Harmonizing the World” | |
| | Session “Geographical Imaginations, Practices and Stories of Finisterrae and Border Spaces” (Joint Session together with C12.20) | |
| | Session “Mega Events” (Joint Session together with C12.14) | |
| | Commission Business Meeting | |

B. Commission meetings 2012-2016 (detailed description)

2012 Meetings at the 32nd International Geographical Congress Cologne (Germany), August 26-30, 2012

In 2012, the Commission’s main events were the sessions at the IGC. A total of seven sessions, each including four to eight papers, were organized. All of the meetings were well attended (each with approximately 50-100 participants) and reflected the on-going interest in the commission’s activities.

In accordance with the Commission's general aim, the session "Cultural Approaches in Social and Geographical Theory", chaired by Benno Werlen, discussed conceptualizations of the cultural dimensions of everyday geographical practices. The session brought together scholars from different sub disciplines of geography, each addressing theoretical and empirical questions around praxis-centred geographical research. Topics discussed in the eight papers include the uses of contemporary practice theory and social theory for geographical research in general, cultural approaches to urban geography and architectural theory, practices of public infrastructure use, cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism, the concept of atmospheres, and network research. On the whole, the session not only highlighted the cross-sectional character of a cultural approach in geography, but also its potential to re-shape central problems in human geography.

Issues of sustainability in cultural perspective were addressed in the session "Cultures and Sustainability", chaired by Karsten Gaebler. The four papers provided new insights into the role of learning and teaching, knowledge, everyday skills, and religious faith for the development of sustainable practices. Moreover, culturally differentiated strategies of mediation of environmental conflicts were discussed.

The session "Multilocality: Symbolic and Material Constructions of Space in Societies of Mobile Individuals", chaired by Mathis Stock and Michaela Schier, broached the changing face of societies under the conditions of widespread multilocal lives. Seven papers were given, addressing contemporary problems of multilocal work and family life, the question of personal identity in multilocal contexts of living, phenomena of migration and migration politics, and multilocal urban practices. In contrast to the well-established concepts of "spaces of flows" etc., the session stressed both the disembedding practices and the everyday re-embedding techniques in globalized contexts.

The eight papers presented in the session "The Uses of Art in Public Space". chaired by Julia Lossau and Quentin Stevens, examined the complex spatialities of public art's conception, production, and reception. Whereas the vast majority of existing research into public art has focused on the aesthetic, cultural and political intentions and processes which shape its production, the actual reception of public art and the material landscape within which that reception occurs remains relatively understudied. Thus, the session addressed questions of public art's actual use, including phenomena like the non-use or subversive use of public art, the politics and policies of public art, strategies of urban development through public art, (new) non-visual forms of public art and new ways of public participation, conceptual questions of the various notions of "the public" in public art discourses, and of art's materiality and the bodily interactions with artworks in public spaces.

Geographical aspects of art were also discussed in the session "Spatialities of Art: between Policy and Politics", chaired by Anne Volvey and Myriam Houssay-Holzschuch. The session particularly focused on the political dimension of art through space, addressing, on the one hand, the role of art within a spatial economy (spatial planning and land engineering), and on the other hand, bottom-up processes of artist-led urban regeneration. The eight papers dealt with topics like creativity-themed urban development, art as a tool to challenge socio-spatial divisions, the policies, politics, and spatial practices of "creative cities", and the relation between art and senses of place.

The various geographies of pilgrimage and sacred spaces in the modern world were debated in the session “Cultural Approaches to Sacred Spaces in the Global Era”, hosted by Rubén C. Lois-González, Valeriá Paül-Carril, and Miguel Pazos-Otón. Punctual or linear sacred spaces do not only represent venues of particular religious experience, they have also constituted (and constitute nowadays) very important cultural references, marking the identity of societies and territories throughout the ages. Furthermore, they have the power to create very strong images and to spread cultural references of territories throughout the entire world. Taking the historical trails of the Way of Saint-James as an example (a “sacred space laboratory”), the session’s eight papers addressed the following topics: the general cultural function of roads, the role of religious architecture for collective awareness and memory, the growing hybridization of tourism and pilgrimage, the site-specific attachments of myths to sacred spaces, impacts of religious trails on regional development, and the changing patterns of landscapes of religion both globally and locally (Eastern Europe).

The session “Cultural Identities”, chaired by Je-Hun Ryu and Shangyi Zhou, focused on East Asian local cultures. Broken into three different groups, the speakers addressed the effects of globalization in East Asia, historical places in East Asia, and questions of urbanity and rurality in East Asia in a cultural perspective. The first block discussed the complex relations between self-images and modernization processes in emergent Korean cities, the use of ecological arguments against “alien species” to foster Japanese nationalism, the politics of place-based identities, and the role of local and global networks in the East Asian advertising industry. The second block’s four papers dealt with the symbolic metamorphosis of Chinese imperial cities, the politics of identity connected to the World Heritage programme, and the historical and contemporary role of church buildings for urban landscapes and identities. Topics discussed in the session’s third block were: relations of landscape and senses of place, the challenges posed by tourism for traditional cultures, the making and everyday reproduction of urban space, and the preservation of local, place-related culture through musical practices.

2013 International Conference “Art and geography: aesthetics and practices of spatial knowledges”, University Lumière Lyon 2 (France), February 11-12, 2013

The conference “Art and Geography: Aesthetics and Practices of Spatial Knowledges” took place under the aegis of Professor Anne Volvey (University of Arras), a geographer specialized in geography of art and member of the steering committee, at the University Lumière Lyon 2, February 11-12, 2013. The event was connected to a research project funded by the French National Research Agency, Médiagéo and was supported by the UMR5600 and IRG (team research, University of Lyon), Ville de Lyon, and Culture Ireland (Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union). The conference brought together about 200 academics, artists and curators from various fields (geographers, theorists of art, artists, curators) and countries (France, Switzerland, Great Britain, Ireland, Sweden, Germany, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Canada, United States, Chile, Australia, the Philippines, Israel, Singapore).

At the crossroads of contemporary geography and art, the organizers’ aim was to explore the contemporary contours of what is “geographical” and to question the

boundaries between cultural activities like art and geography. With the latest developments in how space, place, and one's environment are viewed in contemporary art (with terms such as "in situ", "outdoor", and "alternative space" becoming commonly used), it became necessary to critically examine the relevance of geography's various responses to this "spatial turn" and to unravel the implications – in factual, methodological, theoretical, and epistemological terms – of the convergence of contemporary art and geography. Consequently, the main topics addressed by the conference's 66 papers and 13 art proposals were:

- The emergence of contemporary art in geographical knowledge; its diverse theoretical underpinnings and methodological foundations; the types of object that are co-dependent with (art venues, the spatial dimension of artistic practice or experience).
- The forms of the "spatial turn" in contemporary art and, concurrently, the ways in which geography (and its theories of space, place, and spatiality) contributes to defining the relational or contextual nature of contemporary art;
- The forms and modalities of geographical knowledge in contemporary art: the use of maps and map-making, fieldwork (observations, interviews) and documentary practices.
- The strategies used by artists to address social concerns and to respond to incentives from spatial engineering; the ways in which geographers with their diverse academic approaches register and critically reflect on those new developments.
- The relationship between art and geography in the making of knowledge of/about space and place, and the relation to space and place; the current regimes of production of geographical knowledge.

As the conference has shown, the on-going hybridization of art and geography can be observed not only in geography's adoption of artistic practices (i. e. fieldwork methodologies as essentially artistic practices, or map-making as a creative process), but also in the arts' growing interest in issues pertaining to public space, environment, and virtual space, or in the arts' engagement with contemporary spatial development planning and practice (from the branding of artist districts to festivalization and local policies based on cultivating, promoting, and clustering "creative industries"). The conference's cross-sectional character proved particularly invaluable. The event hosted 31 artists from the fields of visual arts, performance, dance/choreography, participative practices etc., producing papers, videos, photographs, drawings, installations, performances and performed papers, and participatory workshops.

2013 Meetings at the IGU Regional Conference, Kyoto (Japan), August 4-9, 2013

The Commission organized three sessions and a business meeting at the IGU Regional Conference in Kyoto. The sessions' objectives were to strengthen the cultural approach in investigations concerned with nature-society relations and further integrate the Asian contributions into the Commission's work. The sessions were well attended by IGC standards (about 25 people each) reflecting the conference attendees' great interest in the Commission's topics.

The session “Cultural Dimensions of Sustainability”, hosted by Benno Werlen, discussed new socio-cultural approaches in geographical sustainability research. Based on the assumption that much of the current integrated research – inside and outside geography – lacks an appropriate consideration of the culturally specific interpretations of the natural world, the session’s four papers not only presented new theoretical approaches towards sustainability issues, but also discussed empirical findings that stressed the relevance of culturally sensitive sustainability politics. The discussion touched upon the role of cultural settings (language, beliefs, traditions, customs) for the construction and prevention of risks like environmental changes and hazards, the tensions between the local and the global in the UNESCO’s cultural and natural heritage program, the co-evolution of and relation between natural and cultural landscapes, as well as innovative approaches towards environmentalism and resource use based in peace studies.

Culturally specific ideas about the natural world were also discussed in the session “Representations of Nature”, hosted by Karsten Gaebler. The papers presented dealt with everyday and scientific representations of nature, as well as with traditional and modern representational practices, their implications for environmental policy-making, and the potential for conflict where (culturally) distinct notions of nature encounter each other. The main issues discussed were the role of artistic practices (e. g. landscape painting) in reflecting changing nature-society relations, the use of the concept “ecosystem services” in biodiversity politics, and the culturally and socially specific landscape aesthetics.

The session “Sacred Mountains and Cultural Identities in East Asia”, chaired by Je-Hun Ryu and Shangyi Zhou, addressed the production and reproduction of sacred places through everyday practices in religious, economic, political, and other contexts. As an exemplary case for this process, the session discussed sacred mountains, which, while playing a major role in the formation of cultural identities in East Asia, remain under-researched from a geographical perspective. The session’s seven papers discussed the following topics: the tensions between the spiritual functions and the supply functions of sacred mountains, sacred mountains as historical places of resistance and religious diversity, and the valorization of sacred places in contemporary tourism. In addition, some more general topics were addressed, such as strategies of conserving natural and cultural landscapes, or issues of cultural tourism.

During the Kyoto conference the Commission also held a small business meeting. Benno Werlen outlined the commission’s general topics and reported on the status of the IYGU initiative. He emphasized the Commission’s goal to further promote sustainability research from a cultural perspective and the increasing need for inter- and transcultural approaches. Moreover, a closer cooperation with other IGU commissions was discussed. Three joint sessions, together with the Commission C12.14 “Geography of the Global Information Society” at the IGU Regional Conference in Krakow 2014, were designed to be one of the first collaborative steps.

2013 International Symposium on “Meanings & Aesthetics in Asian Cultural Landscape”, Seoul National University, Seoul (Republic of Korea), October 12-14, 2013

In close corporation with the ACLA (Asian Cultural Landscape Association) Rana P B Singh, a member of the steering committee, organized a three-day symposium on “Meanings & Aesthetics in Asian Cultural Landscape” at the Urban Greening Institute (Seoul National University). Two other members of the Commission’s steering group, Shangyi Zhou and Je-Hun Ryu, provided scientific input. The symposium gathered scholars from Australia, Belgium, P.R. China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, France, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, the USA, and Vietnam. In total 28 papers were presented, focusing on the three thematic areas: (i) exposing the meaning and spirit of place, (ii) heterogeneity vs. homogeneity in cultural landscape aesthetics, and (iii) a harmonious path through the concepts of integrity and co-sharedness. The program also included a one-day field trip to the UNESCO Heritage site of the folk village of Hahwe and its surroundings.

The keynote lecture “Meanings & Aesthetics in Asian Cultural Landscape: Commonality, Distinctivity and Transcendentality”, given by Rana P B Singh, discussed the general cultural-historical linkages between East Asian the South Asian countries. Further papers covered both specific regional topics and conceptual issues, such as notions of Indian cultural landscape, the amalgamation of the spatiality of time and the temporality of space in cultural landscapes, or ritualsapes. Other topics addressed were the idea of contextualism, traditional Korean views of natural scenery and its cultural connotations, or the idea of landscape beauty as a fusion of the sense of place, landscape appreciation, and pleasurable experiences. Finally, ACLA President, Sung-Kyun Kim (Seoul National University), outlined the central role of cultural geographers in studying the meanings, aesthetics, and exposition of cultural landscapes.

As a result of the symposium, a research anthology on Asian cultural landscapes was composed and further scientific events were planned. For instance, some members of the commission and participants of the meeting contributed to the multidisciplinary symposium on “Waterfront Cities of the World: Viewpoints of History and Environment” in early October 2014 at the LRDE (Laboratory of Regional Design with Ecology, Faculty of Engineering & Design, Hosei University, Tokyo, Japan).

2013 International conference “Rurality – New Perspectives and Themes”, Bamberg (Germany), November 15-16, 2013

From the backdrop of the advancing urbanization of the global population, an interesting rural conjunction can be observed. In the German context, examples of this conjunction are recognizable in the astonishing success of country magazines such as “Landlust” (Country Joy), in TV shows, or in the rapidly increasing abundance and popularity of urban agricultural projects. Despite this contemporary social development, profound conceptual arguments about the current status of the rural have been rare, especially in German geography. The international and interdisciplinary conference hosted in Bamberg (Germany) on November 15 and 16, 2013, tried to fill this gap and generate new impulses for a scientific examination of rurality. The conference was organized by the University of Bamberg (Marc Redepenning) in collab-

oration with the University of Mainz (Julia Rössel) and the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg (Christoph Baumann). Benno Werlen, chair of the Commission, provided his scientific advice.

The conference's international and interdisciplinary character was facilitated by a sponsorship of the Fritz-Thyssen-Stiftung as well as by the support of the Royal Geographical Society/Inst. of British Geographers, and the Research Group "Rural Space" of the German Geographical Society. About 50 researchers from different national contexts (Germany, Austria, England, Wales, Ireland, France, USA, Brazil, Argentina, and India) found their way to Bamberg in order to discuss new concepts and ideas concerning the rural. The participation of scientists from different disciplinary backgrounds (Geography, Sociology, History, Economics, Political Science) enabled a cross-disciplinary social scientific debate.

The various talks showed that the rural can be conceived as a complex and heterogeneous social spatiality. There is not one rurality, but many ruralities: the various globalized ruralities from Newfoundland to India, remote ruralities, orchestrated (post) ruralities of tourism or leisure time, ruralities of (post)productivism, threatened ruralities, etc. Several conference contributions discussed relational and "more-than-representational" perspectives. On the one hand, these approaches examine semantic dimensions of the particular ruralities; on the other hand, they put a focus on physical experiences and material effects. In doing so, a variety of themes were discussed, including:

- The status of the rural in politics of regional development and spatial planning;
- Aesthetics of rurality and landscape;
- Everyday experiences of the rural idyll;
- The influence of globalization on the rural;
- Rurality and in-/exclusion; and
- (In)justice, and vulnerability.

Although we live in a so called "urban age", the conference made clear that the rural is still a very important and vital social scientific research object – an object which requires to be analyzed from various (new) perspectives.

2014 International seminar "Banaras, the Heritage City of India: Culture, Tourism and Development", Banaras Hindu University (IND), February 7-9, 2014

The conference "Banaras, the Heritage City of India: Culture, Tourism and Development" was organized by Rana P B Singh at Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi (India). Continuing the series of seminars on Banaras, the meeting provided an opportunity to further discuss the meaning and problems of conservation and promotional strategies connected to the heritage city of Banaras. On the one hand, the city presents a cultural and religious microcosm. In the course of its history, people from all parts of India, speaking different languages and dialects, and carrying their own traits, taboos and traditions, have settled in this city. In Banaras alone, there are over 3600 Hindu shrines and temples, 1388 Muslim shrines and mosques, 42 Sikh temples (Gurudvaras), 12 churches, 3 Jain temples, 9 Buddhist temples, and several other sacred sites and places. On the other hand, Banaras also faces pro-

blems of urban development, being a sprawling city with an increasing population and housing shortage, looming water crisis, traffic congestion, sanitation issues, environmental hazards, and extreme economic polarizations. The emerging frictions between Banaras' (inter)national role as a heritage city and its increasing development problems were discussed by researchers and students from India Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Norway, the USA, Spain, Italy, and Sri Lanka. Altogether 24 papers were presented in six sessions: history, images and cultural representation (3 papers), landscapes, heritagescapes and urban ecology (3 papers), pilgrimages & tourism (3 papers), land use, environmental status, and planning (4 papers), evolving nature of urban society (5 papers), and urban governance (2 papers). The conference's discussions in particular revolved around the relationship between spirituality and architecture, the role of festivals and rituals as a form of intangible heritage, and the narrative practices of place making. Overall, the conference not only stressed Banaras' richness as a laboratory of cultural and religious diversity, but also discussed strategies of inclusive and sustainable development.

2014 Meetings at the IGU Regional Conference, Kraków (Poland), August 18-22, 2014

The Commission's main meetings in 2014 took place at the IGU Regional Conference in Kraków. We organized a total of four sessions, one keynote lecture, several individual presentations, and a business meeting.

The session "Cultural Approach to Technology and Digital Geomedia", chaired by Tilo Felgenhauer, Jena, was organized in order to encourage researchers to reflect on the geographies of technology from a cultural perspective. The session consisted of two parts, including contributions from Brazil (Fabio Contel, São Paulo), the USA (Francis Harvey, Minneapolis/St. Paul), the UK (Angela Abbott/Ronald Richardson, Newcastle), the Czech Republic (Pavel Dobos/Petr Danek, Brno), and Germany (Pablo Abend, Cologne; Karsten Gaebler, Jena). It was well attended (about 20 participants). A central issue found in many papers was the socio-spatial context of the use of technology. In particular, there were recurring findings regarding a renewed relevance of spatial concepts, both in transforming practices of interacting with technology as well as in the material context of action, which can be "augmented" and altered by digital means. Empirical examples were taken from social services, neocartography/locative media, mass media, and banking services. In general, technology seems to support spatial awareness through expanding spatial references of practice. The potential benefits of digital technologies notwithstanding, there are also significant inequalities regarding the availability of and access to digital technologies; these have to be taken into account and addressed where possible. The broad range of topics also led to a lively discussion about the kinds of theoretical arguments and empirical evidence that cultural geography can deliver in favour of or against the thesis of a digital revolution occurring in the geographies of everyday life.

The session "Landscape Changes and Responsibilities in East Asia", hosted by Shangyi Zhou (Beijing) and Je-Hun Ryu (Cheongwon), consisted of six papers that examined the change of landscapes in the processes of modernization and urbanization. As has been discussed and empirically shown, despite its traditional foundations, landscapes serve as an anchor for multiple interests in late modern societies. This is especially the case in East Asian countries, which can be used to

demonstrate the increasing role of symbolic appropriations of landscape as well as its accelerating commodification. About 15 scholars attended the session with presentations by Xiaofeng Tang (Beijing), Werner Breitung (Suzhou), Qing Yuan/Tong Liu (Harbin), Michał Konopski (Kraków), Je-Hun Ryu, and Shangyi Zhou. The main topics addressed included questioning cultural landscape management, the political and ideological framing of landscape conservation and protection, cultural practices of place making, landscape as a form of cultural and national heritage, and everyday practices of landscape delimitation.

Fruitful cooperation with the commission C12.14 resulted in a joint session on “Mega Event Planning: Culture Capitals, Place, and Identity”. Chaired by Mark Wilson (East Lansing) and Tilo Felgenhauer/Benno Werlen (Jena), the session highlighted contemporary questions of image and identity building with a strong focus on the European Culture Capitals. Subscribing to new basic approaches on the post-Fordist economies of signs and fascination, most of the contributions applied a cultural geographic perspective that considered place and local identities as the outcome of social, political, economic, and discursive practice. Given the complex and manifold character of current strategies in place and identity building linked to the “Culture Capital”-label, the session required a multi-disciplinary character. Thus, the session brought together contributions from economic geography (Waldemar Cudny, Łódź), urban studies (Agnes Nemeth, Joensuu/Kuopio), urban geography (Achim Prosek, Berlin), and cultural geography (Paul Claval, Paris), but also integrated the expertise from a historic (Colette Annequin, Grenoble) and jurisprudential (Karolina Tetlak, Warsaw) perspective. One general conclusion drawn from the presentations and the discussion was the need to focus future research on the interplay between discursive strategies of place identity building and issues of economic sustainability. While there may be various obstacles for measuring objective costs and revenues of mega-events, the material consequences of the symbolic assignment of places for local economies are observable in many regards and highly relevant for the recognition of regional development opportunities.

The integration of digital media into everyday life and the geographical implications of a new digital culture were debated in the session “Digital Culture and the Digital Revolution”, hosted by Mark Wilson, East Lansing, and Karsten Gaebler, Jena. As another joint session, together with the commission C12.14 “Geography of the Global Information Society”, the meeting brought together about 20 colleagues from various subfields of the discipline. Challenging the view that geographical inquiry into digital media is predominantly ‘big data’ research, the session focused on conceptual, empirical, and methodological questions of the everyday use of information and communication technologies. The three papers given by Michael Duggan (London), Tilo Felgenhauer (Jena), and Graeme Mearns (Newcastle) discussed the increasing convergence of material and virtual spheres from different points of view. In particular, the role of mobile communication devices for augmenting everyday life worlds and their capacity to change senses of place was discussed. Moreover, the session provided some initial insights into the use of social media as a data generator for empirical research, thus contributing to the growing debate about digital ethnography.

Regarding the more general questions of technology’s relationship with space and place, the meeting also broached the thesis of a convergence of traditional geographical imaginations and digital ‘spaces of flows’. On the whole, the session high-

lighted both the disruptions and the continuities that come along with digital technology use in everyday life.

In addition to the meetings organized under our commission's aegis, Benno Werlen presented one of the core projects, the initiative for the UN International Year of Global Understanding (IYGU), on two occasions during the Kraków conference. The keynote lecture presented the initiative's main ideas and its current status to a wider geographical audience. The paper delivered at the session "IGU, EUGEO and EUROGEO, a Challenging Network of Geographers in Education" (chair: Joop van der Schee) discussed the concept of Global Understanding with regard to its potential for school teaching. Many discussants stressed that the idea of Global Understanding might provide invaluable help when re-organizing teaching curricula and strengthen geography's role as a fundamentally integrative discipline. Thus, ideas to implement Global Understanding in teaching programs and opportunities to intensify collaboration between commissions C12.11 (Geographical Education) and C12.07 were discussed.

A small business meeting in Kraków served to review the commission's activities in late 2013 and 2014 and to debate future steps. Benno Werlen, together with steering committee members Shangyi Zhou and Je-Hun Ryu, secretary Karsten Gaebler, and about five guests, discussed the status of and the strategy for the commission's next meetings. Of key concern were the range of logistic and financial issues often preventing a considerable number of colleagues from participating in the IGU's bigger conferences. Although it was suggested to prospectively strengthen smaller meetings and seminars, the commission decided to encourage colleagues through its network to actively participate in 2015's regional conference in Moscow. Benno Werlen emphasized the necessity to prepare the commission's contributions to the IGC 2016 in Beijing well in advance. In addition, opportunities to cooperate with other IGU commissions were explored.

2015 Plenary Session on the IGU initiative for the UN International Year of Global Understanding (IYGU), AAG Annual Meeting, Chicago (USA), April 21-25, 2015

The IYGU was presented as an IGU outreach project with an educational and science orientation, whose bottom-up logic complements the existing international policies and research programs' organizational structures. It was emphasized that the mobilization of geographers, the social and natural sciences, as well as the humanities, will result in new sustainability research, education, and capacity building practices. The session was well attended. John Wertman, representing the AAG, named the Commission's Chair Benno Werlen the honorable guest of the AAG meeting, for his contributions to geographical research and his merits as Executive Director of IYGU.

2015 Meetings at the IGU Regional Conference, Moscow (Russia), August 16-21, 2015

At the Moscow Regional Conference a Plenary Lecture and two sessions were conducted under the commission's aegis. The Commission's Chair Benno Werlen

– introduced by IGU general secretary Mike Meadows – delivered a well-attended lecture on the “2016 International Year of Global Understanding”. The year’s main goals and implications for geography were outlined and debated. In particular, geography’s potential for integrating different scientific fields of sustainability research was highlighted. The necessity of further developing and implementing practice-centered views on so-called ecological problems was discussed. Furthermore, Werlen introduced the International Year’s organizational structure and the role of its regional sub-centers.

Benno Werlen also chaired the session “Global Sustainability and Global Understanding”. The session’s goal was to investigate current environmental challenges and develop new ways of overcoming the problematic implications of adapting 19th century scientific thought to 21st century problem constellations. The idea of Global Understanding was put forward as a key concept to address these problems based in globalization processes.

Three talks were given in the session. Shaohong Wu’s (China) paper “Land Surface Pattern Study under the Framework of Future Earth” presented a study on geographic research on regional change within the scope of Future Earth. In particular, questions of knowledge integration and the co-production of knowledge between scientific and non-scientific actors were debated. The author stressed the need to further debate methodological questions of integration in physical geography. Yukio Himiyama (Japan) addressed questions of knowledge and knowledge transfer. In his talk “Glocal Environmental Education – A Key to Global Sustainability” he emphasized the comprehensive nature of the idea of Global Understanding. Within the context of the IYGU, Global Understanding was discussed as a necessary concept in developing educational and learning campaigns that particularly strengthen humanistic, cultural and philosophical aspects. The paper discussed the need for multi-scale views, based on the idea of the glocal. The third talk, “The Hyperreal of Urban Space: Youth on the Fly Create Sustainable Cultures” was delivered by Margaret Robertson (Australia). The paper focused on the distinctiveness of young people’s life worlds and the implications of dynamic roles of young people for questions of sustainability. Taking the example of urban design, Robertson discussed new approaches to current ecological policies, taking the specific needs and competences of young people into greater account.

The session “Performing Places, Cultures and Nature in Different Social and Geographic Settings” was chaired by Louis Dupont and Nathalie Lemarchand (France). The event was quite well-attended and featured a total of 7 papers, divided into two parts. In general, the session aimed to explore the interconnections of places, things (physical, natural), people and performances, in all its dimensions, expressions and temporalities. In particular, questions of how and why places in different social and cultural contexts tend to be prescriptive, while embodied persons tend to be performative, were addressed. The concept of performance and performativity was debated as a theoretical key.

In the first part, three talks were given. In their paper “Performing Space and Places: Theoretical Foundations for a Renewed Approach in Geographic Researches”, Louis Dupont and Rachel Borghi discussed the theoretical foundations and usefulness of the concepts of performance and performativity. Their focus was primarily on modern

urban space and places and they insisted on what they called "situations of co-presence", which implies diversity, or its expression or not in place. Thus performance depends on people's relation to place and to each other. This more conceptual paper was followed by the case study "Walking the City: Teenagers Practice and Performances of Public Space", presented by Florence Huguenin-Richard. The paper dealt with teenagers' mobility in the city, the way they walk and act in public places. Its main hypothesis was that urban mobility is for teenagers an act of sociability, which encompasses being with friends and performing gender, attitudes, defiance, conformity, etc. The presentation showed the results of a study made in Lille (France), which used qualitative (perceptual) and quantitative (itinerary, path) data. The third presentation "English or not English?: Performing Science in a National and International Conference" was delivered by Nathalie Lemarchand and Antoine Leblanc (France). The authors started their communication by stating, in English, that, in this global area, the only way to be taken seriously at an international conference, such as IGU/UGI, is to give a presentation in English. They addressed questions like: For the non-English speakers, can this be seen as a (linguistic) performance? Can the diversity of the World be expressed in one single performative language? Is there something lost in translation? Does global science disqualify research produced in a non-normative language as being mere "local" case studies.

In the second part, four papers were given. The paper "Relocation of Kurmanj Kurds Leading to Different Cultural Geography in the North-East of Iran", given by Morteza Ghourchi (Iran), broached the question of how ethnic groups adapt to others, while continuing to express and make visible their culture. The research focused on the ways in which the music of Kurmanj Kurds of North Khorasan, as well as their traditions and customs, is performed in a regional context where they are in the minority. Ajit Kumar (India) argued in the second paper "Culture and Chameleonic Socio-Economic Space" that space is not merely an avenue of daily performance: It is an arena of conflict and struggle. Not only does it wield power but it also delegates power. The paper explored the inextricable link between physical, social and economic spaces through the narratives of two communities, Syrian Christians and Dalit Christians in Kerala (India). In the third paper "La performance du funkeiro comme forme de résistance aux normes hégémoniques sur les plages de Rio de Janeiro" Claire Brisson (France) addressed two highly performative places: the Copacabana and Ipanema beaches in Rio de Janeiro. Although the beaches are, in principle, an open space, physical characteristic of the bodies become spatial markers: an in-place/out-of-place power relation takes place. She focused on the soundscape, and how music can be used to keep certain people away, while attracting others. The fourth presentation "Performer le genre et l'espace: Femme des villes, homme des champs", delivered by Marianne Blidon (France), investigated the popular French reality show "L'amour est dans le pré", in which mostly rural men get into contact with mostly urban women. As Blidon pointed out, the show mixes rural/urban dichotomies with gender relations. As a result, if authenticity is being staged, the backstage shows an incredible pressure to perform according to gender and geographic stereotypes.

2016 Pre-congress conference on “Cultural and Natural Heritages in a Globalizing World”, Korea National University of Education, Cheongju City (Republic of Korea), August 14-18

As a member of the commission’s steering committee, Je-Hun Ryu will organize a pre-congress conference on geographical aspects of cultural heritage planning at the Korea National University of Education in August 2016. The conference will further intensify the cooperation with ACLA (Asian Cultural Landscape Association) and develop new insights into questions of cultural heritage and the nation state, heritage and identity, heritage site management etc.

2016 Planned Meetings at the 33rd International Geographical Congress Beijing (China), August 21-25

At the IGC 2016 in Beijing, the commission will host a total of five sessions and will also present the IYGU to a wider audience. The session’s topics will address a wide range of the commission’s aims and claims in the 2012-2016 period. The planned events will also further develop the commission’s core topics. Apart from addressing the cultural aspects of the digital sphere, we will also broach questions of sustainability and urban development as well as questions of Geographical Imaginations of Border Spaces. Continuing the exceptionally successful cooperation with other IGU commissions we will host four to five events as joint sessions. The commission’s IGC events include:

- Session “Cultural Geographies of the Digital“ (Joint Session together with C12.14);
- Session “Cultural Aspects of Sustainable Urban Development” (Joint Session together with C12.39);
- Session “Role of Heritage Sites and Cultural Landscapes in Harmonizing the World”;
- Session “Geographical Imaginations, Practices and Stories of Finisterrae and Border Spaces“ (Joint Session together with C12.20);
- Session “Mega Events” (Joint Session together with C12.14); and
- Permanent information stand on the 2016 IYGU is planned.

3. Networking and Communication

A. Collaboration with other IGU commissions

The years 2012-2016 have brought new, fruitful collaborations to our Commission. As has already been mentioned, we could intensify our collaboration with the commission on the “Geography of the Global Information Society” (C12.14) through various joint sessions at IGU conferences. Bringing together our two communities proved to be a highly valuable experience and also yielded the first publication project (a book on “The Geographies of Digital Culture”). Following the productive first steps of an educational implementation of the IYGU in the course of the Kraków conference in 2014, further joint projects together with the commission on “Geo-

graphical Education" (C12.11), EuroGeo and the IGU Task Force "Geography Olympiad" (T12.01) were planned but only partly implemented due to coordination problems in the coordination of joint actions of IGU commissions. New collaborations with the commission C12.20 ("History of Geography") and C12.39 ("Urban Challenges in a Complex World"), already planned, shall be put into practice at the 2016 IGC in Beijing.

B. Collaboration with other international, intergovernmental, and inter- and multidisciplinary groups

Within the scope of the IYGU, which represents some of the Commission's core ideas and involves members of our steering committee, a number of external collaborations could be established, which would also promote the Commission's work. For instance, the Commission's work is already promoted through the "International Union of Geological Sciences" (IUGS), the "International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics" (IUGG), the "Young Earth Scientists" network (YES) and the "Taking ITGlobal" organization. The Commission's cooperation with the "Asian Cultural Landscape Association" (ACLA) has intensified since 2014, through seminars and sessions at the IGU Regional Conferences. Cooperation with the ICSU, ISSC and the Future Earth project have systematically intensified as well as the cooperation with partners from the private sector (KATERVA; ESRI; World Business Council for Sustainable Development; the Chamber of Industry, CNI, Brasilia; and Chamber of Commerce, CNC, Rio de Janeiro). Contact with organizations from the public sector like SEGIB, OEI (Brasilia) and UNESCO will be crucial for the implementation of IYGU. Integrated networks for cultural landscape management with partners from the public and private sector, science and regional policies have been established in Portugal (Maçao) and Brazil (Morro do Pilar); the first one being 'Apheleia – Integrated Cultural Landscape Management for Local and Global Sustainability' in cooperation with Erasmus Mundus+ and twelve European Universities/Research Institutions, which will run for three years and has a total funding budget of 384.000,- EURO. In addition, cooperation with the Brazilian Chamber of Lawyers (BAR) could become exemplary for the cooperation of geography and environmental law under globalized conditions. Further co-operation partners of IYGU include:

- Future Earth Initiative of ICSU and ISSC (incl. the Belmont Forum);
- World Humanities Conference Liège 2017 (under the auspice of UNESCO and CIPSH);
- Association of American Geographers, whose representatives also initiated cooperation with National Geographic and its various print and audiovisual media channels, and potentially also the U.S. National Academy of Sciences;
- Japanese Forum for Science and Technology in Society (STS) (including German, French, Royal Swedish, Chinese, and Japanese Academy of Sciences, Leibniz Association etc.);
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea Initiative for Global Citizenship Education for Sustainable Development;
- Local Organizing Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games Rio de Janeiro 2016 and the Sustainability and Legacy Commission of the International Olympic Committee (IOC);

- International Federation of Rock Art Organization (IFRAO);
- APHELEIA, European Commissions' Erasmus Mundus+ Teaching Program, including 12 European universities and research institutions;
- European Geography Students Association (EGEA);
- Morro de Pilar Declaration for Local Sustainability and Global Understanding (Belo Horizonte, Brazil);
- European Association of Geographers (EUROGEO);
- CSR Research Foundation New Delhi;
- DFG German Research Foundation;
- Max Weber Kolleg;
- Max Planck Institute Biogeochemistry;
- Graduate School Human Behaviour in Social and Economic Change (GSBC);
- Ethnografilm Festival in Paris;
- UNESCO-Japan/MEXT Project on Broadening the Application of the Sustainability Science Approach;
- Festival of the University of Genoa (Festival dell'Università di Genova);
- Festival de Géographie de Saint Dié;
- Shockwave Festivals;
- Homeward Bound Project (DATNER GRANT PTY LTD);
- Melton Foundation Education for Global Citizenship;
- Neo Humanitarianism Universalist, Sao Paulo; and
- Office of Foreign Affairs of the State Government of São Paulo, Brazil.

The commission also helped to establish and is actively involved in a long-term interdisciplinary research network funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). Thematically, the trinational network is concerned with transnational change in Patagonia ("Cambio transnacional, desigualdad social, intercambio intercultural y manifestaciones estéticas: el ejemplo de la Patagonia", www.patagonia.uni-jena.de). Several current and former members of the steering committee (Benno Werlen, Enrique Aliste, Karsten Gaebler, Perla Zusman) act as project partners and/or sub-project leaders.

C. Cooperative efforts with ISSC (International Social Science Council) and with ICSU (the International Council for Science) programs

The IYGU project is supported by ICSU, ISSC, and CIPSH (Conseil International de la Philosophie et des Sciences Humaines). Partners also include the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the "Future Earth" research initiative. The IYGU is now one of the key partners of the Future Earth project. The UNESCO resolution on IYGU, Nov. 2013 stated that geography has the integrative power, on the basis of its focus on everyday actions and its cultural embeddedness as well as cultural differentiation. IYGU opens an access to culturally differentiated pathways to global sustainability and new way of integrated research. This perspectives will be explored in a

future co-operation between IYGU and UNESCO. The first meeting with the title 'UNESCO-Japan/MEXT Project on Broadening the Application of the Sustainability Science Approach' is scheduled for April 5-6, 2016 at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris. It could become, together with the outline of a study program on Global Understanding, the IYGU open access publications as Springer Briefs on everyday basis activities (6 vols. in English, Spanish, Portuguese and ev. French), and the Humanities World Conference 2017, the basis for a long lasting co-operation in the framework of decade on Global Understanding as suggested by several speakers during the IYGU Opening Ceremony February 2, 2016 at the Volkshaus in Jena.

4. Publications

The members of the steering committee produced between 2012 and 2016 more than 70 publications in the field of the commissions program, including more than 10 book publications.

Selected publications by members of the steering committee (2012-2016)

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5. Archival Contributions

None.

6. Continuation

A. Name of the commission

Global Understanding

B. Mission Statement for the 2016-2020 period (first draft)

Today, we need a global perspective for geographical imaginations. “Global understanding” becomes a new human condition, for the field of sustainability as well as for most parts of the political agenda. We need to think about *global* sustainability as well as transnational, global political perspectives.

Global sustainability requires global understanding. To think globally and act locally, we require a better understanding of how our local, daily activities impact global levels. Achieving a true global understanding requires achieving a more sustainable planet through local actions. Our common future on earth depends on successfully establishing sustainable everyday actions. This is where the local and global become one – where scientific shall be applied. We need a widespread awareness of how everyday actions create the challenges that impact humanity. This includes our capacity to connect actions and thoughts that may seem disconnected across time and space. This basis has to be implemented three main fields of action: geographical research, education and information.

C. Steering committee

N.N.

D. Work plan

TBA