



IGU-Commission C20.21
“Global Understanding”

Chair: Benno Werlen

Commission Report 2021

The reconstituted Steering Committee has started its work in 2021 with great enthusiasm, integrating the broad international expansion in the activities. The activities were focusing the implementation of The Jena Declaration, initiated by the commission's chair and strongly endorsed by IGU, together with the Canadian and German Commissions for UNESCO, the International Council for Philosophy and the Human Sciences (CIPSH), The Club of Rome, the World Academy of Art and Science, the Academia Europaea, and many others, especially a big number of UNESCO Chairs form around the world.

In addition, the commission started the implementation of the reformulated working program. It is focusing two main program lines: socio-cultural and regional aspects of global sustainability, and the global urbanization process.

Due to the Corona pandemic, all activities of the commission have been performed mostly in form of online conferences, workshops, and committee meetings in 2021. Despite these difficult circumstances in the six months of the running time of the commission, a quite considerable number of important results could be achieved, especially in respect of the cooperation with international science organizations, and the preparation of the and contribution to the Centennial IGC in Paris 2022.

Unfortunately, the long-term secretary, Dr. Karsten Gaebler, had to leave the commission end of September due to his new position outside the university. I would like to thank him in the name of the steering committee for his excellent work and enthusiastic support. We hope to fill the position very shortly.

Benno Werlen (Chair)

2022-03-05

A. Membership

I Steering Committee

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II Corresponding Members

The commission's newsletter has a total number of 1,502 subscribed contacts.
Nationalities are as follows:

Argentina	6
Australia	13
Austria	14
Belgium	21
Brazil	32
Canada	13
Chile	5
China	20
Czech Republic	8
Denmark	6
Finland	6
France	33
Germany	279
Hongkong	9
India	9
Israel	4
Italy	21
Japan	36
Korea (South)	10
Luxembourg	6
Netherlands	13
New Zealand	7
Norway	8
Poland	9
Portugal	12
Russia	12
South Africa	211
Spain	11
Sweden	11
Switzerland	32
Taiwan	22
United Kingdom	32
Unknown	569

B. Commission's Program Lines

To reach out to partners of the international science organization and the UNESCO network that have been established by the building up process of the Jena declaration, the IGU commission on Global Understanding orientates its work on the four guiding principles.

First to include the social and cultural dimensions in a coherent way into sustainability research and cooperation. This calls for understanding sustainability not primarily as an environmental, but rather as a societal issue. With this change of focus, for the needed deep societal transformations the ecological imperative with its call for adaptation to the natural conditions remains an important issue but is secondly paired by the attention to the need for solidarity. To foster solidary engagement, the inclusion of the citizens into sustainability research and policies is a third fundamental prerequisite, asking for the co-production of knowledge for transformative policies. Fourth, in this way, the research interest of technological problem-solving is complemented by bottom-up-based problem-avoiding strategies from a global perspective.

The vantage point of the development of a coherent commission program shall be the question, how different the challenges of sustainability do look from different locations/contexts, and how the problem of sustainability is framed in different contexts.

These programmatic outlines shall be implemented by two working groups over the next few years: urban research in a global perspective and global sustainability, stressing the need for reaching audiences outside Academia and raising awareness, in particular through non-formal education and the arts. All in all, the work of the commission will focus on implementing these topics (global urbanization & societal transformation towards global sustainability) through engagement in research, the promotion of learning programs, and the cooperation with arts.

A specific conference is – in addition to the two submitted sessions to the IGC – planned for 2023 in the aftermath of the centennial Paris congress. The event should be addressed to academic audiences, but also include people with practical experience in the field of sustainability transformations and/or affected communities. The commission's work shall be orientated toward answering its key question: How different do the challenges of sustainability look from different locations/contexts? Hereby, the distinction between “academics” and “practitioners” should not be stressed too much, since there is interesting work/research done in all domains. The event shall also be seen as a platform for making the voice of people heard who are affected by the crisis and representing their experiences and knowledge.

B. Meetings and Events

Online Kick-Off event of The Jena Declaration, September 9, 2021

Despite decades of efforts to bring about sustainable development, people around the world are facing tragic consequences of insufficient or failed attempts. The purpose of The Jena Declaration (TJD) is to enable ordinary people around the world to change their everyday actions, and to mobilize a broad global social movement for transformation towards sustainable living.

The online kick-off event was organized under the umbrella of its founding partners like the IGU, the IGU commission, and UNESCO Chair on Global Understanding, including the IGU of featured contributions from prominent representatives of the central programmatic action lines of arts, learning, and civic engagement. It includes, among others, Mamphela Ramphele, Co-President, The Club of Rome; Paul Shrivastava, PenState University and former director of Future Earth; Garry Jacobs, President, World Academy of Art and Science; Luiz Oosterbeek, President; International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences; Mirwais Sidiki, Musicologist, Afghanistan; Margalit Berriet, Network Arts & Humanities, France; Branko Smon, plastic artist, Slovenia; youth activists such as Mercy Gloria Ashepet, Uganda; Raad Sharar, Bangladesh; Luisa Neubauer, Germany; and performances by artists including Andy Innes and his group, Musician, South Africa, as well as Mitra Behpoori, Iran.

For the IGC 2021 the commission organized a session on 'Habits and Cultural Understanding' under the heading of Prof. Shangyi Zhou (China). Of the 21 submissions, 19 were accepted.

In addition to these two programmatic key events, the commission was actively present by following members in thematic relevant online and onsite conferences and events:

By Prof. Enrique Aliste

"Discursos verdes y protección ambiental: las paradojas del discurso ecológico en los territorios del sur global", Séminaire de géographie, aménagement et développement durable en Amérique latine (GADDAL), Institut des Hautes Études de l'Amérique Latine IHEAL-CREDA, Université Sorbonne-Nouvelle (Paris, France). 3-12-21. <http://www.iheal.univ-paris3.fr/es/node/3808>

"Les discours écologistes et du développement durable dans les territoires du sud global: peut-on parler d'éco-extractivisme?", Séminaire "Construire la critique du développement : objets, idées, terrains", EHESS – Université Panthéon-Sorbonne (Paris, France), 19-10-21. <https://alain-musset.superforum.fr/t1232-construire-la-critique-du-developpement-1#1496>

"Discursos verdes, protección ambiental y privatización de la naturaleza: ¿Los nuevos territorios de la sostenibilidad?", XIV Seminario Internacional de Investigación Urbana y Regional "repensar la planeación y la gestión del territorio en

tiempos de incertidumbre: procesos, escalas y gobiernos", Asociación Colombiana de Investigación Urbana y Regional, ACIUR, (Medellín, Colombia). 13-11-20.

"Discourses, Environmental Protection and Privatization of Nature: Could we talk about "eco-extractivism" in the context of ecological businesses in Chilean Patagonia?". World Ecology Research Network Conference 2021, University of Binghamton (Binghamton, USA). 22-10-21.

"Discursos verdes, protección ambiental y privatización de la naturaleza: nuevos dispositivos para el control territorial en Patagonia". XII Congreso Nacional y XXVI Internacional de Geografía, Sociedad Chilena de Ciencias Geográficas SOCHIGEO - Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, (Valparaíso, Chile). 21-10-21.

By Prof. Benno Werlen

- UN & World Academy of Art and Science (WAAS) General Conference on "Global Leadership Education", Delhi (India), February 17, 2021
- WAAS Societal Transformation, Delhi (India) April 14, 2021
- European Humanities Conference, Lisbon (Portugal), May 5-7, 2021
- UNESCO BRIDGES, Founding Conference, Paris (France), May 24-25
- Learning Planet Youth Conference of The Club of Rome, Winterthur (Switzerland), July 1-2
- Förderpreis Nachhaltigkeit 'Ehrenamt macht Schule', First Prize Laudation, Stuttgart (Germany), July 7, 2021
- The Global Education Forum, on Transformation of Higher Education for the SDGs: Transforming mindsets, transforming roles, transforming connections; Madrid (Spain), October 14, 2021
- 5th World Leisure Expo and Forum, Hangzhou (PR China), October 15-17, 2021
- COY 16: United Nations Climate Change Conference, Glasgow (U.K), October 28-31, 2021
- Sustainability of Social, Political and Economic Systems in the XXIth Century, Moscow (Russia), November 19
- Reconnecting with Your Culture in the World, Jakarta (Indonesia), November 20, 2021
- Blurring Boundaries Conference: Urbanity and rurality as geographical ways of living, Erfurt (Germany), November 24-25, 2021
- 5th UNESCO Forum on Transformative Education, Paris (France), Nov. 29-Dec. 1
- WAAS on Higher Education: Education for Societal Transformation, Delhi (India), December 6
- CIPSH General Assembly, Odense (Denmark), December 13-14

C. Networking

World Academy of Art & Science (WAAS)

As currently the only geographer being a WAAS fellow, commission chair Benno Werlen is reaching out to strengthen links of the Academy with the IGU. Again, The Jena Declaration is an important door opener for further cooperation. The

participation in conferences on the role of education for societal transformation is one of the possibilities to raise awareness for the competencies of geographers and the crucial role of geography in the sustainability curricula. The engagement of TJD as a key project of the commission could open the IGU access to relevant WAAS projects, its relations to the UN, and its sub-organizations.

Collaboration with the International Council for Philosophy and the Human Sciences (CIPSH)

The commission chair Benno Werlen was a member of the scientific committee of the European Humanities Conference (EHC) 2021, May 5-7 online from Lisbon. The EHC was co-organized by CIPSH and UNESCO's Social and Human Sciences Program. A side of the presentation of The Jena Declaration the contribution to the conference included a video presentation on the programmatic proposition 'Alliance for Global Understanding – A new Mindset to Sustainability'. The invitation to the General Assembly allowed to present The Jena Declaration to the presidents and secretaries of the member unions and organizations of CIPSH. This led to the broad support of TJD.

Collaboration with the International Science Council (ISC)

Based on the cooperation in the International Conference on "The Humanities and Social Sciences for Sustainability" in 2020 the ISC has been approached to endorse TJD officially. Unfortunately, the response was quite lukewarm, stating that as long as they haven't decided on the sponsoring guidelines, they are not able to accept the invitation. Interestingly the ISC launched in the meantime the ISC established a "Global Commission on Science Missions for Sustainability". The commission will explore soon the possibility of cooperation. As the ISC Action Plan has now competed the chances may have improved.

Collaboration with UNESCO and UN HQ

UNESCO has approved the request for the prolongation of the UNESCO Chair on Global Understanding for Sustainability for another 4 years until March 2026. With this, the basis for cooperation with the UNITWIN Network is assured. This cooperation opens access to the network of more than 700 UNESCO Chairs, more than a hundred topical networks, many of them engaged in the field of sustainability, as well as to national commissions for UNESCO. In respect of TJD, these opportunities have already been shown as very effective.

In December TJD and with it the IGU commission has been invited by the president of WAAS to cooperate with the Section for Human Security of UNHQ to take a leading role in the planned global survey on "Human Security for All (HS4A)". It is planned to change the so far applied top-down strategy (diplomacy) towards a bottom-up approach. In sum, the campaign is designed according to the principles of TJD. Through the commission, this would open the IGU prominent access to an important UN campaign. But of course, at the moment the staff situation of TJD needs a significant improvement to bring this opportunity to fruition.

D. Publications

I Publications

Articles

- Aliste, E. (2021): La emergencia de los territorios y la condición socioambiental: poder, naturaleza, ciudadanía y la necesidad de conocimiento transdisciplinar. *Anales de la Universidad de Chile*, VII serie, 19, 195-206.
- Núñez, A., E. Aliste & A. Martínez-Wong (2021): La mercancía-espectáculo de las redes sociales: la producción del paisaje edénico y la reserva de vida en Patagonia-Aysén. *Diálogo Andino*, 66, 53-67.
- Núñez, A., M. Benwell & E. Aliste (2020): Interrogating green discourses in Patagonia-Aysén (Chile): green grabbing and eco-extractivism as a new strategy of capitalism?. *Geographical Review*, 1-19.
- Marin, J., J. Cortés, E. Aliste & J. Campos (2020): Scientific controversy as a disaster risk factor: The 2007 seismic crisis in Patagonia, Chile. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 49, 101639.
- Pliscoff, P., M. Folchi, E. Aliste, D. Cea & J. Simonetti (2020): Chile mega-fire 2017: An analysis of social representation of forest plantation territory. *Applied Geography*, 119, 102226.
- Vintar Mally, K. (2021): Trends in regional development in Slovenia in the light of the goals of sustainable development. *European journal of geography*, 12(2), pp. 36–51.
- Vintar Mally, K. (2021): Socioeconomic and environmental characteristics of regional development in Slovenia. *Dela*, 56, pp. 71–87.
- Werlen, B. (2021): What constitutes societal Transformations? In: The Most Important Challenge facing Humanity, *Cadmus Journal*, Vol. 5, 203-205.
- Werlen, B. (2021): Global Understanding. Eine praxiszentrierte geographische Weltsicht. In: Wintzer, J., Mossig, I., Hof, A. (Hrsg.): *Prinzipien, Strukturen und Praktiken geographischer Hochschullehre*, 67-87.

II Commission website

<https://iguglobalunderstanding.jimdofree.com>

E. Archival Contributions

None to date.