



IGU-Commission C20.21
“Global Understanding”

Chair: Benno Werlen

Commission Report 2022

The Steering Committee started in 2022 with the implementation of the agreed working program. The main focus was on the translation of the two main program lines: socio-cultural and regional aspects of global sustainability, and the global urbanization process. The first application was of course the commission's contribution to the Centennial International Geographical Congress (IGC) in Paris. The topical framework of the proposed sessions has been set up by specific working groups Steering Committee.

Another major set of activities was 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 an impressive number of UNESCO Chairs from around the world. The campaign of broadening its support and implementation has made considerable progress in the reporting period.

Due to the Corona pandemic, in the first part of the year especially, the activities of the commission have been performed mostly in the form of online conferences, workshops, and committee meetings in 2022. In addition, the working process was – at least partly – slowed down by the fact that we were still not able to fill the position of the commission's secretary. Despite these difficult circumstances, the commission achieved a quite considerable number of important results, especially in respect of the considerable broadening of cooperation with international science organizations, UNESCO and other UN organizations, knowledge networks, and topically relevant NGOs.

Fortunately, the position of the commission's secretary will be taken over by Dr. Luis Peña from January 1st, 2023. Dr. Peña was from 2016-20 – then as a researcher at the University of Columbia at Bogota – already a member of the commissions Steering Committee. I'm very pleased to fill to the position after more than a year of vacancy with such a competent colleague.

In the face of a multitude of global challenges and growing nationalistic forces, the concept and perspective of Global Understanding gain more and more importance. The central role of geography in the constituting process of world images and representations is calling for a highly active engagement to strengthen the voice of the human, social and natural sciences as well as the integration of all of them for the benefit of all citizens. The commission will be happy to contribute to this in the upcoming years.

Benno Werlen (Chair)
2022-15-12

A. Membership

I Steering Committee

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II Corresponding Members

With The Jena Declaration, the commission's newsletter has a considerable number of new corresponding members. The total number is now 1.967. Nationalities are as follows:

Argentina	18
Australia	22
Austria	21
Belgium	34
Brazil	37
Canada	20
Chile	12
China	23
China-Taipei	38
Czech Republic	10
Denmark	9
Finland	11
France	54
Germany	371
Hongkong	9
India	22
Israel	5
Italy	47
Japan	41
Korea (South)	10
Luxembourg	6
Netherlands	16
New Zealand	9
Norway	10
Poland	11
Portugal	30
Russia	13
South Africa	222
Spain	25
Sweden	13
Switzerland	61
United Kingdom	47
United States	22
Not specified	668

B. Commission's Program Lines

In four online meetings with all participants of the Steering Committee (on 15.12.2020, 08.03.2021, 25.03.2021, and 12.04.2021) we discussed and settled the commission's guidelines and program. The agreed paper is based on three meetings of each group to specify their part-program. It finally led to a synthesized program paper with working themes for the years to come. These shall be implemented by four guiding principles:

- First, to include the social and cultural dimensions coherently into sustainability research and cooperation as well as urban research from a global perspective.
- Second, sustainability is not primarily an environmental issue, but rather a societal and cultural.
- Third, the inclusion of the citizens into sustainability and urban research and policies is a fundamental prerequisite, asking for the co-production of knowledge for transformative policies.
- Fourth, the research interest in technological problem-solving is complemented by bottom-up-based problem-avoiding strategies from a global perspective.

The vantage points for coherent implementation of the commission program shall be two main questions: How do the different challenges of sustainability look from different locations/contexts? How new forms of communication transmission of information are affecting global understanding?

It has been agreed that these programmatic outlines shall be continuously implemented by the two working groups over the next years: urban research from a global perspective and global sustainability, stressing the need for reaching audiences. All in all, the work of the commission will focus on – directly or indirectly – implementing these two topics: global urbanization & societal transformation towards global sustainability, through engagement in research and the promotion of learning programs.

To this, a series of online and onsite events are planned for the coming two years as a kind of launch event of global understanding in the framework of The Jena Declaration, together with its partners. The first one will focus on the Americas (spring 2023), the second on Asia and Oceania (autumn 2023), Africa (winter 2023/24), and finally the Arabic countries (spring 2024). These events will not only be addressed to academic audiences but also include people with practical experience in the field of sustainability transformations and/or affected communities. By this, the commission's work shall be orientated toward answering its key question: How different do the challenges of sustainability look from different locations/contexts? The events shall also be seen as a platform for giving a voice to people who are affected by the crisis and representing their experiences and knowledge.

For the preparation of these events first, a new, interactive TJD website will be launched in early 2023. To be able to interconnect engaged citizens together with human, social and natural scientists we applied the framework of TJD by the Belmont Forum for the support of a "Sustainability Action Platform" with four hubs for Americas, Asia, Northern, and Central/Southern Europe. The third (potential) element for this is the integration of TJD into the German Future Center proposed and sponsored by the German Government (1 Bio € over 20 years). The commission's chair has been asked to organize and coordinate the international support for the center. More than twenty partners, including the president of the IGU and most of the other founding partners of TJD, have responded positively. At the moment the competition between four finalist cities is in its final stage, and the jury's decision will be public in the first quarter of 2023.

B. Meetings and Events

Cultures for Sustainable Futures, International UNESCO Chair Conference, Jena, May 11-13, 2022

What can our lives - and our living together, imbued with sustainability - look like in the future, so that we no longer destroy our livelihoods? This question was the focus of this UNESCO Conference organized by the commission's chair. From May 11 to 13, more than 60 international scientists, especially UNESCO chair holders from all continents and representatives of international organizations such as the Club of Rome, World Academy of Art and Science, UNESCO Paris, Italian, and German Commission for UNESCO, but also representatives of the German Foreign Ministry have met.

Centennial International Geographical Congress (IGC) in Paris

Our commission was represented in the scientific committee of the IGC by its chair. As a result of a careful and extended discussion in the Steering Committee, the commission has submitted 2 thematic proposals to the organizers. The first one, entitled "Cultural and Regional Dimensions of Global Sustainability" (chair: Benno Werlen, Co-Chair: Enrique Aliste) was foreseen for the more open session series. The second, dedicated to the scientific part was entitled "Sustainability From the Margins. New Perspectives on Current Global Challenges" (Chair: Enrique Aliste, co-chair: Benno Werlen). Both proposals were accepted. All in all, we got about 60 applications, and we

selected a considerable number of them for the final five sessions (2 for the first, 3 for the second topic) in total. The sessions were attended foremost by the speakers and the discussion could have been livelier. For health reasons, Prof. Aliste chaired all five sessions onsite.

Presentations and Participations

By Prof. Dr. Enrique Aliste

- International Geographical Congress, Paris July 18-23, 2022. Sustainability From The Margins. New Perspectives On Current Global Challenges (Three sessions); Cultural And Regional Dimensions Of Global Sustainability (two sessions).

By Prof. Dr. Katja Vintar Mally

- Contaminated sites. International Conference, Senec, Slovak Republic, 12-14 October 2022
- Sustainaware Summer School on Climate Change and Sustainability and International Youth Climate Summit, Ljubljana, 4–8 July 2022.

By Prof. Benno Werlen

- “The Jena Declaration”, International UNESCO Chairs Forum at Expo Dubai: The Futures of Higher Education: Collective intelligence for knowledge and learning, Dubai, January 24, 2022
- Discussant, GRID Heritage India: Rethinking Heritage and Marginality Today: Crafts, Threads and Echoes, Delhi, February 18-19, 2022
- “Global Understanding”, ‘Digital Games for Global Peace Showcase: Creativity, Innovation, & Resilience’. UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Peace, Delhi, February 24
- “Cultural and regional dimensions of global sustainability”, EC2U Forum on UN SDGs, Digital Education, Research & Innovation, Pavia, April 4-7, 2022
- “Perspectives of Global Sustainability” at ‘RWYC - Reconnect With Your Culture’, 2nd Intercontinental Seminar: Culture: – Key to Systemic Change and Sustainable Development, Jakarta, April 23, 2022
- “Cultures for Sustainable Futures”, International UNESCO Chairs Conference. Friedrich Schiller University Jena, May 11-13, 2022
- “The Jena Declaration. Implementing the findings of basic research into practice”, Moonshot, Munich, May 18-21, 2022
- “Arts, Culture, Region & Sustainability”, ‘Arts Promotion Center Finland TAIKE and the Regional Council of Päijät-Häme Finland’, May 28, 2022
- “The Cultural Dimensions of Sustainability”, ‘Conversation with D. Paul Schafer on Culture as Reality’, Toronto, September 8, 2022
- “Making Sense of the World – From the Local to the Global”, ‘The Global Citizenship Convention’, Friedrich Schiller University Jena, October 13-21, 2022
- “The Jena Declaration and Global Understanding”, World Capital Institute, General Assembly, Mexico City, November 4, 2022
- “Sustainability Action Platform”, ‘Future Earth SSCP KAN’, Online Conference 2022; November 17, 2022
- BRIDGES COP27: Just & Resilient Global Futures, November 17, 2022
- “Global sustainability and the Mobilization of Knowledge for Deep Societal Transformations”, Lecture Series of the German Commission for UNESCO, November 30, 2022

C. Networking

World Academy of Art & Science (WAAS)

As currently the only geographer being a WAAS fellow, commission chair Benno Werlen continues to reach out to strengthen links of the Academy with the IGU and all geographer project leaders in its topical field of. Again, The Jena Declaration is an important door opener for new cooperation like the Human Security for All (HS4A) projects, jointly with the UN Headquarters in New York (s. below), and the “Future Education” with its ongoing conference program.

Participation in conferences on the role of education in 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 on the global as well as regional level.

International Council for Philosophy and the Human Sciences (CIPSH)

The commission chair Benno Werlen presented The Jena Declaration @ XXXV General Assembly of the International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences Odense, Denmark on December 16, 2021. This invitation to the General Assembly allowed us to present The Jena Declaration to the presidents and secretaries of the member unions and organizations of CIPSH. This led subsequently to the broad support of TJD in the course of 2022 by 10 international member unions of CIPSH, covering quite a broad field of the humanities.

International Science Council (ISC)

Based on the cooperation at the International Conference on “The Humanities and Social Sciences for Sustainability” and several follow-up events, cooperation with the ISC is continuous. The request for an official endorsement is still pending.

UN Head Quarter (UNHQ), New York

End of December 2021, the UNESCO Chair, TJD together with it the IGU commission have been invited by the president of WAAS to cooperate in the programming global survey on “Human Security for All (HS4A)”, to be implemented with the Section for Human Security of UNHQ. On October 1, 2022, WAAS commenced formal collaboration with the United Nations Trust Fund (UNTFHS). This one-year campaign will reach out to decision-makers, institutions, and the public around the world to promote a comprehensive, integrated, person-centered approach to enhance the security, human rights, and sustainable development of people everywhere. With this, HS4A changes the so far applied top-down strategy (diplomacy) towards a bottom-up approach. In sum, the campaign is designed according to the principles of the YGU and TJD. Through the commission, this could open the IGU prominent access to an important UN campaign.

UNESCO

The establishment of the UNESCO Chair on Global Understanding for Sustainability was based on the YGU and IGU Commission on Global Understanding. The contract with UNESCO is running until March 2026. This contract is the basis for cooperation with the UNESCO Chairs network and other UNITWIN Networks. This cooperation opens access to the network of more than 900 UNESCO Chairs, more than a hundred topical UNITWIN networks, many of them engaged in the field of sustainability, as well as to national commissions for UNESCO. In 2022 the cooperation with these networks could be consolidated, especially through the commission key project, The Jena Declaration. Italy and UNESCO jointly organized the International UNESCO Chairs Forum on the Futures of Higher Education to mark the International Day of Education 2022 at Expo 2020 Dubai on January 24. The Jena Declaration has been presented as a partnering project of the Italian UNESCO Chairs Declaration for Sustainability. The Forum fits within the overall framework of UNESCO's Futures of Education initiative which seeks to generate an agenda for global debate, research, and action on the futures of education, learning, and knowledge in a world of increasing complexity, uncertainty, and precarity. To be present in it has certainly a high value for the IGU and the commission.

National Commissions for UNESCO

The commission's chair presented the global understanding approach in his contribution "Global sustainability and the Mobilization of Knowledge for Deep Societal Transformations" to the 2022 lecture series of The German Commission for UNESCO – a celebration the 30th anniversary of the UNESCO Chair network.

The collaboration with the Italian national Commission for UNESCO was established through 'Dialoghi delle Cattedre Italiane. The Italian network of UNESCO Chairs. The cooperation with that chairs network – established in 2021 – and its declaration on sustainability could be intensified on several occasions throughout the year, especially at the Expo 202 Dubai. Italy commission and UNESCO – represented by Stephanina Giannini, Assistant Director General for Education – organized jointly the International UNESCO Chairs Forum on the Futures of Higher Education to mark the International Day of Education 2022 at Expo 2020 Dubai on January 24. The Forum fits within the overall framework of UNESCO's Futures of Education initiative which

seeks to generate an agenda for global debate, research, and action on the future of education, learning, and knowledge.

National Cooperation

Prof Shangyi Zhou participated in the Chinese evaluation meeting of geographical indication products held in Panshi City, Liaoning Province, China, on January 15, 2022. It was to discuss ecological environment development and agricultural development in the city. The water quality of Panshi Reservoir is high. The Chinese Academy of Sciences has a water quality inspection station in the reservoir area, which ensures the quality of irrigation water for rice production in this area. Therefore, the rice produced by Panshi has become a geographical indication product with quality assurance. On February 16, 2022, she gave an address about the cultural identity of geographical indication products at the exchange meeting that was held at the Institute of Geography and Resources of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. On September 8, 2022, the Asian Geography Society held a meeting in Hanoi, Vietnam. Prof. Zhou launched the Asian Cultural Atlas Project on the Cultural Geography Working Group of the Asian Geography Society.

Journals

In 2022 the commission Chair has become a Topic Editor for “Frontiers in Earth Science” for “Global Understanding” and an Associate Editor for “Frontiers in Sustainability”.

Other

The commission is using and building up the cooperation network of TJD, encompassing more than 110 institutional partners to date from all continents. Of special interest is certainly the newly establishes cooperation with the World Capital Institute (Mexico), the EU Erasmus Mundus network through the close cooperation with the EC2U program of the Coimbra universities network, the APHELEIA (Humanities European Association for Cultural Integrated Landscape Management), Heritage Landscapes of Asia Pacific, Reconnect with Your Culture (RCWYC), GRID Heritage India: Rethinking Heritage and Marginality Today and the International Association for Reconciliation (IARS). For the coming years, the afore mentioned German Future Center (Jena) could prove to be the most powerful cooperation partner.

D. Publications

I Publications

Books

Robinson, J. (2022): *Comparative Urbanism: Tactics for Global Urban Studies*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Werlen, B. (2022): *La Construcción de las Realidades Geográficas. Una geografía de la acción*. Edition Universitaria. Santiago de Chile.

Articles

Vintar Mally, K., Bobovnik, N., Kimovec, L. & Lampič, B. (2022): Changes in (sustainable) development of Slovenian small towns. *European Countryside*. 2022, 14, 1, pp. 87-103. DOI: [10.2478/euco-2022-0005](https://doi.org/10.2478/euco-2022-0005).

Bobovnik, N., Vintar Mally, K. (2022): Awareness of planetary boundaries as a starting point for sustainable development: an example of the use of the ecological footprint in education. *Sodobna pedagogika*. 2022, 73, 1, pp. 196-212. <https://www.sodobna-pedagogika.net/arhiv/nalozi-clanek/?id=2043>.

Lampič, B., Bobovnik, N., Grčman, H., Rebernik, L., Repe, B., Vintar Mally, K., Trobec, T., Zupan, M. (2022): The first national database of potentially contaminated sites (PCSS) in Slovenia and a

model approach for determining priority treatment. In: Paluchova, Katarína (ed.). *Contaminated sites 2022: International Conference, Senec, Slovak Republic, 12-14 October 2022: conference proceedings*. Banská Bystrica: Slovak Environmental Agency, 2022. Pp. 8-11.

Robinson J., Wu F., Harrison P., et al. (2022): Beyond variegation: The territorialisation of states, communities and developers in largescale developments in Johannesburg, Shanghai and London. *Urban Studies*. Epub ahead of print 2 February 2022. DOI: 10.1177/00420980211064159

Werlen, B. (2022): Global Understanding – Understanding the Global Condition. A geographical paradigm for the 21st century? In Kolossov, V. et al. (eds). *A Geographical Century: Essays for the Centenary of the International Geographical Union*. Springer Nature. Heidelberg, 361-375

Werlen, B. (2022): World Relations and the Production of Urban Realities: On Space and Action, City and Urbanity. In *Religion and Urbanity Online: Reciprocal Formations*. Berlin: De Gruyter <https://doi.org/10.1515/urbrel.16444317>

Werlen, B. (2022): Global Understanding. Geographische Weltbilder, Nachhaltigkeit und politische Orientierung. In Beelmann & Michelsen, D. (Hrsg.), *Rechtsextremismus, Demokratiebildung, gesellschaftliche Integration*. Springer VS, Wiesbaden, p. 413-434

Werlen, B. (2022): The Jena Declaration. Kunst und Kultur im Zentrum der Nachhaltigkeit. In Kröger, F., Mohr, H., Sievers, H. & Weiß, R. (Hrsg.), *Jahrbuch für Kulturpolitik 2021/22. Kultur der Nachhaltigkeit*. Transcript, Bielefeld, p. 96-103

II Commission website

<https://iguglobalunderstanding.jimdofree.com>

E. Archival Contributions

None to date.