

The 8th International Conference on Geomorphology of the IAG

Paris, 27–31 August 2013

Since the first meeting in Manchester in 1985, the International Association of Geomorphologists (IAG) has been established and evolved into a world-wide association of 43 national members (31 countries with voting right and 12 developing countries not paying a membership fee but annually reporting on their activities to the Executive Committee). It is almost of symbolical significance that we find one of the most enthusiastic initiators (and first president) of the association, Professor Denys BRUNSDEN, among the keynote speakers in Paris again. Other supporters of the idea of international cooperation among geomorphologists, like Andrew GOUDIE, became Honorary Members of the IAG.

The 8th conference was organized by the Group of French Geomorphologists (GFG) in the La Vilette Park, in the Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie and included 27 sessions which covered most of the geomorphological topics from theory (e.g. the history of the discipline) to applications (e.g. geomorphological mapping). The largest number of papers were presented in the sessions "Fluvial geomorphology and river management" and at the meeting of the Working Group "Human Impact of the Landscape".

After the long paper and poster sessions, started at 8 a.m., in the evenings the fatigued audience could listen to one-hour keynote lectures, which equally reflected the great the-



The venue of the Conference: Cité des Sciences and de l'Industrie



Decorative hall in the Hôtel de Ville, where we had the welcome party



Some of the young geomorphologists who got an IAG grant to participate

matic variety of geomorphological research: Denys BRUNSDEN (United Kingdom) told "Tales from the Deep" (i.e. ocean-floor topography); Victor BAKER (United States) lectured on planetary geomorphology; Ana Luiza COELHO NETTO (Brazil) on the significance of extreme events in the tropics; Asfawossen ASRAT (Ethiopia) on human origins in Ethiopia and Xiaoping YANG (China) on the paleoenvironments of arid Central Asia. Fortunately, after two days of sessions we could take a rest and go on one-day field trips. Some preferred just a short walk along the Seine River, while others decided on a whole-day bus excursion to the famous cliffs of Etretat on the coast of La Manche (called English Channel on the opposite coast). The cultural programs included a welcome cocktail in an elegant hall of the Hôtel de Ville, built in the pompous style of the Second Empire; wine and cheese tasting in the Cité des Sciences and the traditional gala evening on board of the old freight vessel Boreas, now converted into a pleasure boat. The illuminated Paris remains an unforgettable experience for all participants present.

At the Second General Assembly it was announced that President Michael CROZIER (New Zealand) was succeeded by the geoarchaeologist Eric FOUACHE, professor at the Université Paris Sorbonne Abou Dhabi, a new filial of that renowned institution. As vice-presidents Irasema ALCANTARA AYALA (Mexico), Mauro SOLDATI (Italy) and Xiaoping YANG (China) were elected in close competition. The new Secretary General, Sunil KUMAR DE (India), undertook the laborious task of organization of the next world conference in Kolkata in 2017. It was decided that the next regional conference will take place in the Siberian city of Barnaul, a convenient starting point for excursions to visit sites of glacial paleofloods in the foreland of the Altay Mountains – as Andrei PANIN, one of the new members of the Executive Committee, explained to us.

Traditionally, scientific pre- and post-conference excursions are organic parts of such meetings of geomorphologists. Although the cancellation of pre-conference trips rightfully caused much disappointment among the participants involved, the post-conference excursions ran successfully. In the Massif Central, for instance, a small but highly international group could study the fluvial morphology of the Allier River, building stone weathering, the eruption history of the Chaîne des Puys, Monts-Dore, the maar lakes and enjoy the sight of numerous architectural monuments in Issoire, St-Saturnin, St-Nectaire and Besse. This excursion was organized by Marie-Françoise ANDRÉ, Jean-Claude THOURET and Pierre BOIVIN from the University of Clermont-Ferrand.

The unfavourable financial situation at the centres of Hungarian geomorphological research prevented many colleagues from participating at this – not exactly inexpensive – conference, but the universities of Pécs and Debrecen and the Budapest Technical and Economic University were represented with papers and posters. Other countries had similar financial problems, so the IAG Executive Committee supported as many as 21 young geomorphologists from various parts of the world with grants.

Two valuable books were published on the occasion of the Conference: "Géomorphologie de la France" edited by Denis MERCIER for Dunod Publishers and the English-language description of a selection of geomorphological sites entitled "Landscapes and Landforms of France" edited for Springer by Marie-Françoise ANDRÉ and Monique FORT, who were also the main organizers of the whole event. Along with Stéphane COSTA, President of the Organizing Committee, they deserve the gratitude of all participants, who had a wonderful week in a major scientific and cultural centre of Europe, also appropriately called the "City of Light" and tourism capital of the world.

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