

Report on the EUGEO 2013 Congress

The fourth EUGEO Congress took place in Rome, Italy, 5–7 September 2013, at the University of Rome La Sapienza and at the Italian Geographical Society (Società Geografica Italiana). EUGEO is the Association of Geographical Societies in Europe which aims to represent its members at the European level and to coordinate and initiate joint activities of the members to advance research and education on the Geography of Europe and to promote the discipline of geography in Europe. EUGEO has members from 21 countries, including Hungary.

Researchers and experts from all over the world were invited to submit proposals to the congress where more than 450 presentations were given within 4 plenary and 38 paper sessions and 3 thematic panels. The EUGEO Executive Committee also wanted to stimulate the participation of young researchers at the congress by offering grants for PhD students and young researchers. The motto of the congress was “Europe, what’s next? Changing geographies and geographies of change” which shows that the main aim of the congress was to discuss the destiny of continents in an era of globalization and the future of Europe during and after a period of serious economic crisis. The congress aimed to find answers to questions which have arisen in the past few years due to modernization, globalization, and economic crisis. The congress inspired geographers to reassess the role and future of geography in Europe, as well as to rethink the concepts which are used to describe and analyze the world around us, such as the notion of states, boundaries, urban systems, landscapes, and regions.

The main Congress venue was the Faculty of Arts and Humanities (Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia) at the University of Rome La Sapienza, moreover, two additional venues were given in the program, Campidoglio and Villa Celimontana. Fortunately, all the Congress venues were centrally located and well-connected by public transport, in addition, a bus service was freely available to congress registered participants to different congress locations. The basement floor of the main congress venue hosts the magnificent Museum of Classical Art founded in 1892 by Emanuel Löwy, the first scholar in Italy to be appointed professor of Archeology and History of Art. The museum displays a collection of plaster



The main gate of University of Rome La Sapienza during the EUGEO 2013



Gábor MICHALKÓ is in the chair of session “Recent developments in global changes and human mobilities”. Lionel KIEFFER (from France) sits on the left



The audience of the session

casts of Greek statues and this unique exhibition could be visited by congress participants freely during the conference.

The congress started on 5 September, the opening ceremony was held at the Campidoglio, which was chaired by Henk OTTENS, president of EUGEO and the Royal Dutch Geographical Society. Participants were welcomed by Franco SALVATORI, former president of the Italian Geographical Society, Massimo BRAY, minister for culture and tourism, Luigi FRATI, rector of the University of Rome La Sapienza and Ignazio MARINO, mayor of Rome. The opening ceremony was followed by the first plenary session with two keynote speeches by Vladimir KOLOSISOV, president of the International Geographical Union (IGU) and Anne BUTTIMER, former president of the IGU. KOLOSISOV's presentation focused on the concepts of sovereignty, states and borders in the contemporary geopolitical context, while BUTTIMER addressed the changing practices of geography and the challenges of the 21st century.

The second day of the conference (6 September) started with parallel paper sessions and thematic panels and it continued with two plenaries in the afternoon. In the evening a concert and a social dinner were offered to congress registered participants in Villa Celimontana where the Italian Geographical Society is located in 1582. The congress participants had the opportunity to visit this unique palace and the library, one of the largest in Europe with approximately 400,000 books and over 2,000 Italian and foreign periodicals and numerous rare maps and atlases.

The last day of the congress (7 September) was comprised of parallel paper sessions, thematic panels and the fourth plenary session. One of the keynote speeches in the fourth plenary session was given by Gyula HORVÁTH representing the Institute of Regional Studies, Hungarian Academy of Sciences (HAS). He introduced the regional structure and decentralization of science in Central and Eastern Europe and in Hungary. The conference ended with the closing ceremony chaired by Henk OTTENS, president of the EUGEO and the Royal Dutch Geographical Society.

Many Hungarian geographers and researchers introduced their latest results in various paper sessions of the congress. Zoltán Kovács (HAS, Institute of Geography and University of Szeged) organized a session on comparative urban geography of post-socialist cities wherein he gave a presentation on neighbourhood dynamics and socio-spatial change in post socialist cities. Géza SALAMIN (Ministry for National Economy, State Secretariate of Planning Co-ordination, Department for Territorial Development Planning, ESPON Hungarian Monitoring Committee) also organized a session under the title: ESPON evidence in changing Europe.

Two presentations were given by Hungarian authors in the session called Ethno-Cultural Diversity and the Question of the National: the first one by academician Károly Kocsis (Geographical Institute HAS) who introduced the geographic aspects of the changing ethnic diversity and of the question of the national in the Carpatho-Pannonian area; the second one by Norbert PAP (University of Pécs) who spoke about the everyday life of Muslims in East-Central Europe.

The session "Recent developments in global changes and human mobilities" also contained two presentations by Hungarian researchers: the first one by Gábor MICHÁLKÓ (Geographical Institute HAS), Tamara RÁTZ and Anna IRIMIÁS (Kodolányi János University of Applied Sciences) under the title: Invisible tourism within the Carpathian Basin: mobility patterns and new features. The second onepaper was presented by Mihály TÖMÖRI (College of Nyíregyháza) who analyzed changes and new trends of mobility in Hungary's retail sector due to the economic crisis¹.

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Péter REMÉNYI and Áron LÉPHAFT (University of Pécs) gave their presentation under the title *Vojvodina as a frontier zone in the session called "Beyond fortress Europe? Bordering and cross-border processes along the EU external frontiers"*. Mátyás JASCHITZ's (CESCI and ELTE) presentation under the title *"The key factor for a successful territorial cohesion: cross-border cooperation – How can some EU instruments make a new geography?"* was introduced in the session called *"Breaking down boundaries: geographies for a new geography of Europe"*. The title of Judit ŰTŐ-VISI's presentation (Eszterházy Károly College, Eger) was *"Progress report and perspectives – on geographical education in the light of a survey"* which was introduced in the session called *"Geography education's challenges in response to changing geographies"*.

György CSOMÓ (University of Debrecen) gave a presentation in the session called *"Old and new economic geography: perspectives for city growth and development"* under the title: *"Major headquarter cities of the global economy in 2012: Rise of the East"*. Viktor VARIÚ (Institute of Regional Studies, CERS of HAS) introduced his research results in the session called *"Sustainable Land Management: smart governance for changing geographies of land use"* under the title: *"The role of governance modes in environmental policy integration (EPI) in regional development: experience from Hungary and some comparison to CEC."* The title of Ildikó EGYED's presentation (Institute of Regional Studies, CERS of HAS) was *"The efficiency of new governance tools in the light of Western and Central and Eastern European experiences"* which was introduced in the session called *"The European city: is there still a distinctive European model of urban governance?"*

Ádám KERTÉSZ and Anna ŐRSI (Geographical Institute RCAES HAS) introduced their research results under the title *"Is present land use in accordance with landscape capability and sustainability?"* within the session on land use and sustainability.

Besides sessions, participants had many opportunities to exchange new ideas, discuss problems and solutions, ask questions, build new relationships in an informal environment during tea, coffee and lunch breaks. In the framework of social and cultural events, the congress attendees could participate in numerous pre- or post-congress programs and excursions. For instance, the participants could taste genuine Italian foods and wines, take a walking tour to two districts of Rome: EUR (Esposizione Universale di Roma: Rome Universal Exposition) and Garbatella, take a bike tour along the ancient aqueducts of Rome, or visit Ostia Antica which is one of the most important archaeological sites in Italy.

The fourth EUGEO congress in Rome provided an excellent opportunity for European geographers to introduce their research topics and results, discuss debated questions, exchange views and opinions and to think about the future of Europe and the European geography. The congress was well organised, the staff and congress assistants managed to tackle all tasks and problems.

The fifth EUGEO congress will be held in Budapest, Hungary, in 2015, which will be an excellent opportunity for Hungary and the Hungarian geographers to show their most important research results and values to Europe. We hope that the next EUGEO congress, which will be organised by the Hungarian Geographical Society, will be as successful and inspiring as the fourth was in Rome. See you all again in Budapest in 2015.

MIHÁLY TÖMÖRI