IGU Commission on Political Geography, 2000-2004

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Commission's Members:
The Commission has 410 members from 50 countries:

Africa: Bostwana, Gabon, Egypt, South Africa, Zambia
America: Brazil, Canada, Chile, Columbia, Mexico, USA, Venezuela
Asia: China, India, Iran, Israel, Japan, South Korea, Pakistan, Singapore
Australia and Oceania: Australia, New Zealand
Europe: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia-Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, UK

I. Chairman's Column

Dear friends and colleagues, The events of 2002 showed that all form of regionalism and borders remain in the focus of the social sciences. International conferences, research projects and initiatives
are driven by transnational epistemic communities emerging as a result of adaptation of national and regional academic and political groups to globalization and to internationalization and transformation of academic knowledge. Our Commission and neighbouring academic and expert groups (for instance, BRIT) are a good example of such a community. Post-modernism makes the notion of region, borders and other categories of political geography flexible, soft. It is assumed that they can be adapted to concrete needs and interpreted in different ways. In the continuing rapprochement between political geography and geopolitics, geopolitical narratives and discourses of power being developed under the influence of geopolitical culture play a key role. It changes, in particular, the paradigm of border studies, which are to a growing extent based on the notion of soft security, on the ideas about global networking and transformation of spaces of places into spaces of flows. The formation of these new spaces does not mean, however, that the states are not deeply implicated in processes of globalization: the world's mosaic is being created by interaction between old and new actors. I am glad that the objectives of our Commission 2000-2004 (see the previous Newsletter) and our agenda match these developments.

Vladimir Kolossov, Chair

II. Future Events Sponsored by the Commission

Organizers: Omar Bongo University, Libreville (Gabon) and University of Metz (France) in collaboration with University of Ottawa (Canada) and Joseph Fourier University, Grenoble (France). Urban space is a result of numerous political, economic and cultural decisions and of the activity of more or less informed and mobilized citizens. Decision-makers are most often guided by divergent and conflictual interests. The issue of urban conflicts whose depends on their unequal political and economic power. They develop different strategies in order to appropriate, occupy, control and defend the territory and to influence the provision and the localization of services and urban policy. It is proposed, first, to discuss the experience of research and the role of geography in theory and practice of urban policy; second, to compare political developments of urban agglomerations in different parts of the world; third, to consider the following concrete problems: 1/ Municipal reforms and geopolitical issues in the administrative-territorial division of urban areas; 2/ Urban environment: geopolitical issues of resources and risks; 4/ Territorial planning and infrastructure: options and strategies; 5/ Identity and competitiveness of large cities in the world political play; 6/ Images and representations: the construction of symbolic space.

Three days of sessions will be followed by a two-days field excursion in the triangle Libreville-Lambarene-Port Gentil (information on its cost will be provided later). More details can be found on the site www.gabon.uottawa.ca. Contacts: from Europe: Prof. Francois Hulbert at hulbert@zeus.univ-metz.fr, fax **33-3-87-31-59-70; from Africa: Dr. Jules Djeki at jd564@hotmail.com; from North America: Prof. Daniel Lagarec at dlagarec@uottawa.ca, fax **1-613-562-5145; from South America, Asia and Oceania: Prof. Martin Vanier at martin.vanier@ujf-grenoble.fr, fax **33-4-76-82-20-01.

2. International Conference "Political Geography and Geopolitics: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow", Moscow, Russia, June 1-7, 2003. Co-sponsored with the IGU Commission on History of Geographical Thought. Scientific program: I- Political geography and geopolitics: unity in diversity (modern theoretical issues). 1/ Territorial and political organization of society as the basis of political geography. 2/ Globalization and glocalization: the unity of political-geographical and geopolitical processes. 3/ The question of scale in political geography and the concept of place. 4/ Political science, international relations, political geography and geopolitics: their places among social sciences. II- Geopolitics I: international relations and the world geopolitical vision (the view from above). 1/ Postmodernist approaches in geopolitics: the geopolitical world order or chaos. 2/ The crisis of the Westphalian system and modern geopolitical challenges. 3/ Geopolitics and
security: the new principles of international interaction. 4/ The realities of globalization: geopolitics versus geoeconomics? 5/ The cultural foundations of geopolitics. 6/ The world after September 11: illusions and reality. 7/ Small states in the conditions of globalization. III- Geopolitics II: geopolitical images and identity (the view from below). 1/ Sociology of geopolitics: geopolitical images of the world in public opinion and in the opinion of experts (low and high geopolitics). 2/ Geopolitics and the system of education: the role of secondary and higher educational institutions in shaping geopolitical images of the world. 3/ The geopolitical role of mass media. 4/ The construction of space. The role of discourse in shaping the political map at different territorial levels. 5/ Geopolitical macroregions as social constructs. IV- Globalization and new identities. Political geography, the process of territorial integration and disintegration and the modern methods of studying borders. 1/ Identity, security and borders: local, regional, national and global levels. 2/ State borders as a part of the world system of borders, the regime and the functions of borders. 3/ State building and borders on the post-Soviet territories. 4/ Cross-border policy and cooperation: modern challenges and new ideas. 5/ Transborder regions: experience and prospects.

Conference organizers: Prof. Vladimir Kolossov (vladk@online.ru) and Ass. Prof. Vladimir Gorbanyov (mirec@mgimo.ru or gorbanyov@mtu-net.ru). Secretariat: Dr. Nadezhda Borodulina (n-borodulina@mtu-net.ru) and Mr. Boris Bykov (bykov@mgimo.ru). Registration: before March 1, 2003: US$200 (students: $50), March-April 2003: US$250 (students: $100). Excursions: Moscow (during the conference) and Rostov-the Great and Jaroslavl, historical towns of Central Russia (June 5-6, the all-inclusive cost: US$100).

3. The Third Polish-Romanian International Seminar on Political Geography "Central and Eastern Europe Before Enlargement of European Union and NATO", Gdansk-Hel, Poland, September 1-3, 2003. Programme: 1/ Territorial and political organization of society as the basis of political geography. 2/ Political science, international relations, political geography and geopolitics: their place among social sciences. 3/ Re-definition on East, Central Europe and South-Eastern Europe region. 4/ Political geography: the processes of territorial integration and disintegration at Central and South-Eastern Europe before enlargement of NATO. 5/ Role of new members and European security after enlargement of NATO. 6/ New European borders: local, regional and national levels. 7/ Cross-border policy and cooperation at Central, South-East and East Europe regions.

The proceedings will be published in Romania as a special issue of Revista Romana de Geografie Politica and also in Poland. Organizers: Dr. Jan Wendt at geo@univ.gda.pl and Dr. Alexandru Ilies at ilies@uoradea.ro. Secretary: Dr. Tomasz Michalski at geotm@univ.gda.pl. Abstract submission deadline: March 31, 2003. Abstract should be written in English, no more than 1800 words. Fee covers two nights at Hel, dinners, coffees, conference materials and cost of travel from Gdansk to Hel and back. Conference fees: 75 euros or 300 Polish zlotys (students 50%). Correspondence, registration and information: Dr. Jan Wendt, Department of Geography of Regional Development, University of Gdansk, Al. Pilsudskiego 46, 81378 Gdynia, Poland.


Fees: US$150. An optional one-week post-conference excursion is planned: Koper-Ljubljana-Zagreb-Sarajevo-Mostar-Medjugorje-Dubrovnik-Split-Rijeka-Koper-Ljubljana (bus-boat; the all-inclusive cost is estimated US$600). Organizer: Prof. Anton Gosar, Dean, Faculty of Humanities, University of Koper, Glagoljaska 8, 6000 Koper, Slovenia. Tel. **386-5-663-77-44. Fax: **386-5-
5. XXXth IGU International Congress "One Earth, Many Worlds", Glasgow, UK, August 2004. General themes: Geography and sustainability; Environmental innovation; Global trends and local challenges; Ressource and hazard management; Environmental sensitivity. Communication and diversity; Implications of the knowledge economy.

- Pre-Congress Workshop of the Commission at the University of Durham, August 12-15, 2004. Theme: "Geopolitics and international relations: The geographical pivot of contemporary history (100 years after Mackinder)". Organizer: Dr. Luiza Bialasiewicz. Special sessions dedicated to Professor Gerald Blake: "Border studies: a new paradigm?".
- At the main Congress in Glasgow: 1/ Three joint sessions co-sponsored with the Commission on Geography and Public Policy, the Commission on Evolving Issues of Geographical Marginality: a/ Evolving issues of geographical marginality; b/ Border identities and the othering neighbours; c/ Political and spatial marginalization. 2/ Separate sessions: Globalization and political geography of war and peace. Details follow.

III - Other Future Events

1. The Border Regions in Transition (BRIT) VIth International Conference "Regionalization, EU’s Enlargement and Shifting Borders of Inclusion and Exclusion", Pécs-Békéscsaba-Debrecen, Hungary, September 21-27, 2003. This conference is held only a few months before the first round of EU's enlargement eastward is scheduled to go ahead. This will have important consequences for border cities and cross-border interaction as more restrictive visa and border-control formalities take effect. At the same time, the enlargement process is unfolding as the EU itself is seeking a clearer foreign and security policy profile. The conference encourages theoretical, empirical and practical discussion on borders, border regions and geopolitics. It will focus, in particular, on the following questions: 1/ Scrutinizing the new regionalism: the second great transition?; 2/ The present global geopolitical scene; 3/ Geopolitics of EU's enlargement; 4/ Northern and other dimensionalities of the EU; 5/ Enlargement and its impacts on external/internal borders of the EU; 6/ Border areas case studies I: environment, economics, minorities and other governance issues; 7/ Border areas case studies II: sociologies of cross-border interaction.

There will also be a special session devoted to the EXLINEA research project, funded by the European Union. This conference is conceived as a travelling event and will begin in the Transdanubian city of Pécs. Then, it will travel on through Croatia and Serbia to Béckéscsaba in Hungary's Great Plain Region. After an excursion that will take the group through Romania, BRIT VI will hold its final panels sessions in the East Hungarian city of Debrecen. The conference will close with an excursion to the Ukrainian borderlands or another nearby area.

The total all-inclusive cost of the conference is estimated at present to be around 350 euros. Send abstracts and panel suggestions to Imre Nagy at nagyi@rkk.hu (Center for Regional Studies, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, P.O. Box 199, 7601 Pécs, Hungary).

2. International Conference "Territorial Administration and Public Policy: Restructuring of Big Governments, Welfare State Aspirations and Local Economies", Prague, Czech Republic, September 19-20, 2003. This conference is organized by the IGU Commission on Public Policy, and its aim is to address issues of current territorial administration and public policy at a wider context of societal organization at local, regional, national and supranational levels. Democratic local and regional governments represent more integral aspirations and interests formations and provide integral frameworks for economic and other corporate actors and citizens. By examining the relations between, on the one hand, basic principles of territorial self-government, administration
and governance and, on the other hand, geographical strucrtuation and the role of public authorities, civil society and economy, the conference can contribute to our better understanding of current issues of territorial administration and public policy and continuing need for restructuring of big governments, welfare state aspirations and local economies.

Deadlines: 31 January 2003 for pre-registration form and abstracts. 30 June 2003 for registration, payment and hotel reservation. 15 August 2003 for papers. Fee: US$60. Organizers: Prof. Petr Dostal and Eva Kuzelova. Email: dostal@natur.cuni.cz or kuzelova@natur.cuni.cz.

3. The Research Committee on Political Geography of the IPSA (International Political Science Association) is planning three geography-related panels during the 19th IPSA World Congress in Durban, South Africa, June 29-July 4, 2003 (see details on http://ipsa.ca/congress):

1/ The territorial foundations of democracy - with some references, in light of current developments, to Jean Gottmann's The Significance of Territory; 2/ Maps and reconstructions of the past - with some reference to nationalism, tribalism, ethnicity, as manifested in the Balkans, Southern Africa, and elsewhere in the world; 3/ The geography of war and peace - on the geographical and spatial aspects of conflict and the resolution thereof, including diplomacy.

The panels are currently being organized by the IPSA Research Committee on Political Geography co-chaired by Prof. Georges Prevelakis (University of Paris I Pantheon Sorbonne) at prevelakis@noos.fr and by Prof. Alan Henrikson (Tufts University) at alan.henrikson@tufts.edu.


IV - Past Events Sponsored by the Commission

1. International Workshop "Rights to the City", Rome, Home of the Geography, Villa Celimontana, May 29-June 1, 2002. The conference was sponsored by two IGU Commissions (Political Geography and Public Policy) and was organized by Lynn Staeheli, Doris Wastl-Walter and Lorraine Dowler. Armando Montanari, Tania Lines and Flavia Cristaldi provided local arrangements. Fifty participants from 10 countries and 12 disciplines were involved with the conference; twenty-one participants were postgraduate students.

Taking its lead from the writings of Henri Lefebvre, conference papers explored the changing geographies of the city in response to globalization, and the processes of marginalization and centrality that are emerging. Papers addressed a range of topics and blended theory with empirical work; many of the papers had direct implications for public policy. Papers addressed the following themes: theoretical perspectives on rights and justice; emerging geographies of inclusion and exclusion; structures of governance, policy and finance; the roles of property rights and regimes in creating new spaces in the city; the politics of mobility and access; spaces of representation; public space and design; and grassroots political strategies in response to the changing geographies of the city.

The Home of Geography provides a wonderful venue for IGU conferences. The highlights of the conference include the Home of Geography itself and a one-day field excursion exploring the social geography of Rome. It was organized by Professor Flavia Cristaldi and featured the research of several students working with her at the University of Rome-La Sapienza. Papers from the conference will be published through a volume of proceedings that will be made at no charge to libraries and scholars who are members of the IGU and through a double issue of GeoJournal.
2. International Conference "Between Schengen Space and Enlargement to the East: The Territorial Recompositions of the EU", Metz (France) and Schengen (Luxembourg), June 17-19, 2002. Organized by Prof. André-Louis Sanguin (University of Paris-Sorbonne), Vice-Chair of the Commission and Dr. Marie-France Gaunard (University of Metz), the meeting held in commemoration of the 17th and the 12th anniversaries of the Schengen Agreements. It gathered 60 participants from 15 countries which submitted 41 papers. Most participants came from East European countries which will join EU since May 2004 or since 2007. Six sessions were devoted to the following themes: 1/ European Building: Retrospectives and Perspectives; 2/ Borders and the New Territorial Geometry of Europe; 3/ Cross-Border Cooperation and Euroregions; 4/ Territorial Recomposition of the Enlarged EU; 5/ The EU's Enlargement; 6/ Schengen Agreements and their Spatial Consequences. Giusseppe Callovi, the personal representative of the European Commissioner on Justice and Internal Affairs, and Wenceslas De Lobkowicz, the personal representative of the European Commissioner on Enlargement, greeted the conference at the closing session in Schengen. The proceedings of the conference will be published in May 2003 in a special issue of the geographical review Mosella.

Petra Horinova, Charles University, Prague

3. IGU Regional Conference "Geographical Renaissance at the Dawn of the Millenium", Durban, South Africa, August 4-7, 2002. As most Commissions, the Commission on Political Geography had two special sessions organized by Prof. Anthony Christopher, member of the Commission's Steering Committee. Twelve papers were submitted to these sessions. Some of them were of general and theoretical interest (F. Eva, N. Kliot, M. Ramutsindela, A. Christopher, R. Paddison), the rest were about specific topics and areas (P. Pienaar, S. Adhikari, X.M. Santos-Solla, F. Gonzalez-Sanchez, P. Goheen, E. Deliry and B. Antheaume).

F. Eva proposed some criteria and presented a general picture of the so-called geopolitical world order, making an attempt to show its hierarchical structure. N. Kliot examined the impact of the September 11th attack on the physical structures and social organization of the world's cities. M. Ramutsindela presented a preliminary analysis of different views on the African Union, especially in light of the initiative of the Libyan leader Ghadafy. A. Christopher analysed different ways and results of the decolonization process, considering also the kinds of relationships with the former colonies. R. Paddison analysed the changing way to imagine and to present a national identity during the process of federalization of an already existing state. Pienaar showed a series of interesting maps reflecting various proposals to reform the political-administrative division of South Africa made by Afrikaner associations in order to create an Afrikaaner-speaking independent or autonomous state. S. Adhikari considered the evolution of the Indian raison d'être and the state idea during 50 years. X.M. Santos Solla, L. Gonzales, F. Gonzalez Sanchez focused their attention to the EU policy towards fishery in international waters and its results. P. Goheen spoke about the Canadian experience in the development of democratic participation in the management of public space. E. Deliry Antheaume and B. Antheaume made a presentation about symbolic geographical representations on Africa in graffities in the South-African cities.

Unfortunately, the rooms suggested by organizers for the sessions of the Commission on Political Geography were too small (25-30 seats), and some colleagues had to stand, to seat on the floor or to remain out of the door. But it was a sign of the interest to the work. Accomodation in Durban was very comfortable, and the conference was well organized, even if participants were concerned with the difficult social situation in the city after the sunset. But they had also an opportunity to feel problems of transition to a post-colonial and post-apartheid regime. Political geography has a huge range of topics, and several papers presented at other sessions could be considered as political-
geographical. It could provide a basis for inter-disciplinary geographical debates. South African colleagues wrote interesting papers on the current situation in the country and its cities. Some of them are personally involved in the events as activists or experts.

Fabrizio Eva, University of Milan

V - Other Past Events

1. The Second Polish-Romanian International Seminar on Political Geography "Central and Eastern Europe: Past, Present and Perspectives", Oradea, Romania, May 9-11, 2002. The regular conferences organized by Romanian and Polish geographers from the University of Oradea (Dr. Alexandru Ilies) and the University of Gdansk (Dr. Jan Wendt) are a good sign of interest paid to political geography in Central and Eastern Europe and a significant contribution to the development of our discipline. Of course, they consider not only regional but also theoretical problems, and the meetings are open: beside scholars from most countries of the region, the conference in Oradea was attended by geographers from Canada, Germany, France, Iran, Italy and Turkey - altogether by about 100 participants from 13 countries. The papers submitted to the conference will be published in English and French in the Revista Romana de Geografie Politica, also in Central and Eastern European Review of Political Geography, and in separate publications. The numerous presentations can be divided by five large topics: 1/ Geopolitical problems of European integration and transition, the place of Central and Eastern Europe as a whole and of its separate countries in the contemporary world; 2/ Geopolitical images and representations; 3/ Boundaries and border cooperation; 4/ Minorities (Germans, Hungarians, Jews, Poles, Romanians...) and democratic participation; 5/ Regionalization and decentralization in the context of the new European architecture. As always, such events have an important "human" side. Every participant remembers with very warm feelings new acquaintances, the party in mountains and dances around a big fire, the excursion to the small town of Beius and to the magnificent Bears Cave, the hospitable and friendly atmosphere of the meeting in general. The conference was a brilliant opportunity for the participants to learn more about Transylvania, a unique multicultural region of Europe.

Vladimir Kolossov

VI - Networking

a. Collaboration with other IGU Commissions and Task Forces

- The joint conference has been held with the Commission on Public Policy: Rights to the City, Rome, Home of Geography, June 2002 (Chair: Prof. D. Wastl-Walter);
- The Commission on History of Geopolitical Thought (Chair: Prof. Vincent Berdoulay) is a co-sponsor of the conference in Moscow (June 2003): "Political Geography and Geopolitics: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow";
- Three joint sessions are being prepared in cooperation with the Commission on Public Policy (Chair: Prof. D. Wastl-Walter) and with the Commission on Evolving Issues of Geographical Marginality (Chair: Prof. W. Leimgruber);
- Regular exchanges with plans and other information with the Commission on Human Mobility (Chair: Prof. A. Montanari) are kept.

b. Collaboration with other international and inter- and multi-disciplinary groups

- Regular exchanges with information on future events and publications with the Committee on Political Geography of the IPSA (International Political Science Association) co-chaired until
late 2002 by Profs. Paul Claval (University of Paris-Sorbonne) and Jean Laponce (University of British Columbia) and now by Profs. Georges Prevelakis (University of Paris I Pantheon Sorbonne) and Alan Henrikson (Tufts University);  
- Cooperation with the interdisciplinary group BRIT (Border Regions in Transition) whose members participate in the sessions of the Commission and its publications.

c. Messages from the Commission's Chairman

- The Chair of the Commission sent five messages with information and questions to the members of the Commission and to about 20 the most active and regular participants of the events it sponsors. A printed newsletter has been distributed to about 400 addresses at the end of the year 2001.

VII - News from the IGU

The IGU General Assembly held during the Regional Conference in Durban (August 2002) has decided, in particular, that there would be no distinction between Commissions and Study Groups. Hence, all former Study Groups have been transformed in Commissions. The Task Forces have been retained as temporary groups to be created ad hoc for special problems to be studied. The former "Full Members" of the Commission now make up the Steering Committee, and the "Corresponding Members" have become Members.

Our Commission was one of the first to use the IGU Home of Geography in Villa Celimontana in Rome as the venue for a workshop. The Home of Geography accommodates the IGU Library and archives and publishes a Newsletter, available in English and French on www.homeofgeography.org. In the sixth newsletter, published on October 31, 2002, attention is drawn to the new publication series, the first two volumes of which have appeared: 1/ Human Mobility in A Borderless World; 2/ Food and Environment: Geographies of Taste. Please, use the Home of Geography homepage to keep informed about IGU matters.

VIII - New Titles in Political Geography


KOLOSOV, Vladimir (ed.), The World in the Eyes of Russian Citizens: Myths and Foreign Policy, Moscow, FOM, 2003 (in Russian)


This newsletter has been shaped and published at the Sorbonne (Paris) by Prof. André-Louis SANGUIN, Vice-Chair of the Commission.

IGU-CPG Website: www.cas.muohio.edu/igu-cpg

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this page are strictly those of its authors. The contents of the page have not been reviewed or approved by Miami University.

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