

IGU - International Geographical Union Activities' Report - Year 2016

Representative in IGU - Prof. Dr. Maria Paradiso
Università del Sannio paradiso@unisannio.it

1. Introduction

Upon the occasion of UGI Congress in Beijing in 2016, we recorded a further advancement of the Italian participation in chairing Commissions for the period 2016-2020 through the acclamation of Professors: Cosimo Palagiano for Topomimy (Joint Commission IGU-ICA), Maria Paradiso for Mediterranean Basin, Marcella Schmidt of Friedberg for History of geographical Thought; Barbara Staniscia Executive Secretary 'Human Mobility'. There are Italians in the Steering of Political Geography and there is an increasing active participation in Rural Geography. As a matter of fact, the success of affirmation is an engendered one, mainly characterized by women. Elena dell'Agnese continues the mandate of Vice President after the support received from Italy IGU Representative and National Committee.

This year 2017, the Italian Geographic Conference is open for the first time in its history to international participation and upon suggestion of Representative in IGU Maria Paradiso, Organizational Committee formulated Call for sessions in several languages, for being open to collaborations with IGU Commissions for sessions preparations. For example, the Annual Conference IGU Mediterranean Basin will be 'within' of the Italian Geographical Congress with a series of sessions: <http://www.congressogeografico.it/sessioni/>

2. Main activities carried on by IGU during 2016 relevant for Italy and for CNR

In this report, in the final part, I attach brief notes of new elected IGU President Prof Yukio Himiyama, Japan.

From the perspective of Italy's Representative, there is a long tradition of relations with the new President and especially cooperation and closeness with the Japanese national community.

Below, I attach the essential steps in the General Assembly's discussion of IGU Beijing 2016 clarified by the Executive Committee. I see on the basis of the IGU strategy notes, the essential emphasis for a better coordination within National Research Council as regards the role of the National Committee of ICSU in order to materialize a mutually productive relationship between Italy and ICSU through even the Union, specifically also via concrete openings to the Social Sciences and Humanities.

From IGU Newsletter 1/2017: "IGU Strategy 2016-22. The original strategy, drawn up initially by Kolosov at the beginning of His Presidential term and Followed by several iterations, was tabled. Himiyama emphasized that we should continuous and in particular with these efforts to enhance and emphasise the role and activities of the Commissions and National Committees, especially in regard to Future Earth and IYGU. The information from Future Earth and IYGU needs to be monitored regularly to ensure that the relevant Commissions are alerted and become involved as appropriate. New initiatives and special projects may be required to be developed over the next four years; creative opportunities may exist in relation to external bodies, such as Future Earth and CIPSH, as well as through our own IYGU. Implementation of the strategy requires a better division of labor than has been the case thus far. This was discussed at some length; the strategy document indicates the main goals and activities and the key elements were raised and, where appropriate, allocated to EC member Responsibilities. It was agreed to take these important matters up again early in the May 2017 EC meeting in Quebec". Beijing Congress took place in August 2016.

All IGU activities are regularly accessible on IGU web site <http://igu-online.org/>

3. Activities carried on by Maria Paradiso within the Union during 2016 and impact on the Italian scientific community

Maria Paradiso set stable information flows in the national community regarding IGU world, attended all IGU Conferences along years, took parts also in the last IGU voting in Beijing 2016. Italy

supported all candidates who were elected. Maria Paradiso consulted for next years for general and thematic meetings as well as general items discussed in General Assembly and ad hoc meetings.

With UGI Congress in Beijing in 2016 we recorded a further advancement of the Italian participation in the Presidencies of Commissions for the period 2016-2020 by the acclamation of Professors: Cosimo Palagiano for Topomimy (Joint Commission IGU-ICA), Maria Paradiso Mediterranean Basin, Marcella Schmidt of Friedberg for History of geographical Thought; Barbara Staniscia Executive Secretary 'Human Mobility'. There are Italians in Steering of Political Geography and promising new collaborations in Rural Geography. In fact the success is primarily an engendered one with female Colleagues joining Steering committees.

It was organized by the Italian Geographical Society in November 2016 a day in memory of the late President IGU Adalberto Vallega 'REMEMBERING ADALBERTO Vallega AFTER 10 YEARS' (11th May 1934 - 22nd November 2006). Special speeches were delivered in particular by Ronald F. Abler -Past President International Geographical Union-, Giuliano Bellezza -former Vice President IGU- and Maria Paradiso.

Maria Paradiso has been invited by Prof Sebastian Lentz (Leipzig, Germany) and by the President of IGU Kolossov to intervene in a Presidential Panel of IGU Beijing 2016 entitled 'image and the role of geography and geographical societies in the relationship with other sciences'. Prof. Paradiso provided and discussed positive examples of Italian geography and Italian Geographical Society as well as offering ideas for key initiatives of international collaboration in the dedicated part of the panel. The exchange activities and information regarding topics of particular interest for the Geography environment such as ICSU, Future Earth and IYGU are carried out. Please, refer to the first part of this report.

As Representative, anticipating the IGU strategy of closer links with the countries, I had already moved ahead in 2015 with the proposal of UN-RAC Regional Action Centre of the IYGU-International Year of Global Understanding based in Rome in CNR, with a reach of Mediterranean coordination of the other RACs of national importance established in European countries and in the Mediterranean basin (my idea has been approved by IGU IYGU Director Prof Werlen). Unfortunately the proposal has not been materialized -the possibility of opening a RAC-Regional Action Centre with Mediterranean reach in CNR (see email and the previous report of the Director on the impossibility to realize stated by Director Brugnoli). Despite this initiative cannot be pursued by CNR, Maria Paradiso has collaborated with Professor Benno Werlen, Jena Director IYGU IGU and stimulated and accompanied the Tunisian community, Turkish, Greek and Israeli one for opening a RAC, in the eventuality of a Mediterranean RAC coordinating other Mediterranean RACs from Italy. This idea has not been abandoned even though at the time it could not be materialize in CNR. We hope that CNR, hopefully via the Institute of the Department of Social Sciences and Humanities can think positively of hosting and supporting the IGU flagship project IYGU in cooperation with ICSU-ISSU-International Council of Philosophy and Humanities in Italy CNR.

At the request of the Director of the Institute of Economic and Social Geography of the Russian Academy of Sciences Prof. Vladimir Strelesky the Italian Representative in IGU, Prof. Paradiso introduced Prof. Strelesky to colleagues geographers of University Sapienza. She is cooperating for the drafting of an agreement for exchange and cooperation on a range of issues including identity and regional consciousness, population movements and ethnic geography. It would be appropriate to provide a specific agreement also under the premises of CNR for Italo-Russian Geography cooperation.

A similar request was received from the French IGU Representative Prof. Antoine Le Blanc to establish a partnership for the Italy-France Geography.

Prof. Paradiso as the Mediterranean Basin Commission Chair has organized in Antalya, Turkey June 2016 with Turkish Geographical Society International Conference 'Mediterranean Sustainability between climate change and human mobility' that has stimulated the interest of publisher Springer and the participation of colleagues from Italy (Genoa and Campania) as well as many European countries, from the Basin, US, and Japan.

The representative Maria Paradiso in collaboration with the organizing committee of the Congress in particular Filippo Celata (deputy Representative for IGU) has proposed to the organizing Committee

cooperation with IGU Commissions to facilitate foreign presence in Italy and meeting with Italian foreign colleagues. In particular, the Mediterranean Basin Commission will hold its Annual Conference in the Italian Geographical Congress. Below call options expiring on February 15: <http://www.congressogeografico.it/sessioni/>

Professor Paradiso had research meetings with Institute of Population studies Dr Corrado Bonifazi in order to envisage networking with leading research centers in Europe dealing with mobilities, migration, asylum issues in the frame of Maria's contacts in IGU also in order to assess possibilities for an EU Scientific Consortium submission for Horizon2020.

A special international panel on the topic of refugees' issues and impacts on Europe's external relations was organised by Maria Paradiso and will be held during Italian Geographical Congress with the participation of Dr Bonifazi as a key panelist. The panel is composed by leading experts (academics, UN Universities on Mobilities and EMN NCP) in Europe. Other CNR Colleagues were invited to send abstracts for presentations. International publications in main international publishers will follow.

4. Evaluation of the participation in terms of benefits and membership cost

The relationship is great; it should indeed be enhanced for example as regards the ICSU. The IGU Representative has not been getting further information since the last National Committee ICSU (still Presidency Boriani) took place. It should be discussed on collegial basis how Italy intends to exploit its potential in ICSU also via CNR Representatives' action in Unions.

The IGU promptly informs via newsletter with member. It is particularly open and productive the exchange of ideas and information with the IGU Secretary, President and Commission' Chairs.

5. Evaluation of Italians' attendance and how to improve interest and involvement

As it is clear from previous reports, the financial problems of the Italian public research in the social sciences and humanities (and partially the August IGU meetings' schedule) does not favor so far a numerically stronger presence, while wide transparency and access to information is ensured by the Representative with the support of AgeI- Italian Geographers association and other associations to the members of the national community.

One can lament the missing ICSU National Committee activation for a greater involvement of the Italian potential.

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Given the financial difficulties to participate in events abroad, a synergy for UGI was proposed within the organization of the Italian Geographical Congress, this year open to international colleagues (Rome, 7-10 June 2017). The Representative Maria Paradiso in collaboration with the organizing committee of the Congress in particular Filippo Celata (deputy Representative for IGU) has proposed to the organizing Committee a cooperation with IGU Commissions to facilitate foreign presence in Italy and meetings with Italians by foreign colleagues. In particular, the Mediterranean Basin Commission will hold its Annual Conference in the Italian Geographical Congress. Below call options expiring on February 15: <http://www.congressogeografico.it/sessioni/>

Professor Anna Trono, Salento Lecce is organizing a Conference in Italy with Commission Rural Geography.

6. Italian experts with important roles within the Union or within related Commissions and Programs (if known)

Maria Paradiso, Chair Mediterranean Basin, Cosimo Palagiano for Topomimy (Joint Commission IGU-ICA), Marcella Schmidt of Friedberg for History of Geographical Thought; Barbara Staniscia Executive Secretary 'Human Mobility'.

There are Italians in Steering of Political Geography and promising new collaborations in Rural Geography. In fact the statement success is primarily a female one. Elena dell'Agnese continues the mandate of Vice President after the support received by the Representative Maria Paradiso during the election campaign.

The Mediterranean Basin Commission has received honorable mention along with Political, Urban, Gender as best commissions in IGU.

7. If Union with CNR Commission, short summary about the 2016 CNR Commission activities

There is no a CNR Commission so far. Activities regarding information took place electronically and Maria Paradiso attended the Annual Conference of Italian Geographers of September 2016 and she reported in the General Assembly. The current Committee composed by the presidents of the major geographical associations must be reformed to make room for younger colleagues and really engaged in international scientific activities primarily in IGU or two committees should forecast: one honorary, the second one organizational one. Finally it would be desirable to include CNR colleagues on major issues such as migration, Mediterranean, sustainability. After the Geographical Congress next June it will be assessed the possibilities for an effective committee oriented to scientific endeavor and strengthening Italian participation despite the poor conditions for social sciences funds.

8. Notes (if any)

It is suggested:

- Activation of specific agreements with the Institute of Economic Geography and Social Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS)

-and the CNRS Morocco.

- meeting of the National Committee of ICSU which includes Representatives in Unions.

It is suggested that the Representative activities, in consultation with relevant CNR bodies, be financially supported in other missions and activities abroad and not only that one of participation in the IGU Conferences, in order to develop further joint initiatives.

The IGU recent stronger interest towards linkages with National Committees should hopefully find in Italy a renewed financial support on the basis of initiatives and plans decided by mutual agreement CNR Representative and the competent bodies.

9. Conclusions

I am available for further exploitation of argument or provide additional information and considerations in in presence meetings.



Prof. Dr. Maria Paradiso

Italy, 8 February 2017