

CHRONICLE

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Report on the EUGEO 2011 Congress and the RGS-IBG Annual Conference

London, August 30 – September 2, 2011

The turn of August and September of 2011 offered a unique opportunity for European geographers: the conferences of EUGEO and the British Royal Geographical Society were held together in London. This meant that more than 1400 professionals gathered together to discuss their ideas and most recent researches. The conferences took place at two nearby locations: the RGS-IBG building and Imperial College.

EUGEO is the society of European geographical societies with members from 21 countries. This year's congress was the third – following the ones in Amsterdam and Bratislava. The scientific program of the Congress started on Tuesday, August 30 but the day before a study tour was organized in London. As a part of the scientific program more



Registration desk at the RGS-IBG building

than 20 sessions, 6 plenary lectures and a poster session took place on August 30 and 31. The overall number of presenters was nearly 200. This year's conference had three key topics: sustainability and environment; people, politics and place; and new world, new Europe. Within these topics the climate change and its consequences and the related risks got special attention.

The plenary lectures covered wide ranges of geographical knowledge. For example Merje Kuus from the University of British Columbia analyzed the role of symbolic capital in the everyday work of the European Union showing that there is still an East-West divide among experts and decision makers. Peter MEHLBYE, on behalf of ESPON presented the new trends and problems of European territorial dynamics. He stressed that the competitiveness depends greatly on global cities and metropolitan regions but because of the importance of connectivity rural areas can integrate into the global economy as well. Boleslaw DOMANSKI from Jagiellonian University, Poland introduced the mechanisms and patterns of local and regional development in the post-socialist European countries using an evolutionary perspective. A very stimulating roundtable discussion dealt with "open" geographic information.

Hungarian geography was represented by nearly 20 researchers with eight presentations showing the versatility of Hungarian research topics. For example Károly Kocsis (University of Miskolc and HAS Geographical Research Institute) discussed the questions related to ethnic identity and territorial autonomy in Carpatho-Pannonian region. Viktória BLANKA (University of Szeged) analyzed the consequences of the extremely humid year of 2010 in Hungary. Lajos BOROS (University of Szeged) showed what kinds of consequences the extreme weather conditions might have on most deprived social groups. Gábor HEGEDŰS (University of Szeged) introduced the socio-spatial effects of gated communities in Hungary, while Gábor DUDÁS and Péter PERNYÉSZ (University of Szeged) analyzed the spatial characteristics of the changing airline industry and its effects on the hierarchy of world cities. Zoltán Kovács (University of Szeged) chaired the session on "Governance and geo-economics".

The RGS-IBG Conference had 318 sessions with more than 1200 presentations in them. These impressive numbers demonstrate that the meeting is one of the most important geographical conferences in Europe. When the event started on August 31 there was a one day overlap with EUGEO Congress. The key theme of the meeting was the "Geographical imagination" which meant that a lot of presentations analyzed how we see and understand the world around us – and how we represent it. Peter HULME from the University of Essex explored how artists, writers and geographers have imagined Cuba and its relations with the United States. Some sessions focused on changing urban and rural landscapes emphasizing the role of geographical imagination. But several sessions and lectures dealt with the forms of imagination in physical geography or cartography. Steven WAINWRIGHT (Brunel University) analyzed scientific writings to show the role of geographical imagination in relation to hydrography.

Out-migration and returning migration were also discussed extensively, focusing not on only the socio-spatial characteristics of these processes but their narratives as well. Thilo LANG and Robert NADLER (Leibnitz Institute for Regional Studies, Leipzig) presented the theoretical and methodological framework of an extensive research about returning migration into the post-socialist countries. A few presentations analyzed the narratives of refugee (re-)migration and the imaginations of migration as well.

Maybe the most anticipated lecture was Jamie PECK's one, entitled "Beyond the neoliberal zombieland" in which he presented the nature of neoliberalism claiming that despite the recent crisis its logic and functioning haven't really changed. According to PECK,



Jamie Peck during his presentation



Book exhibition at the RGS-IBG building

neoliberalism acts and looks just like zombies: it does not react to communication and is very tenacious, wants the brain (mind) of the living and its appearance is disheveled. He also analyzed the emergent, Latin American notion of “post-neoliberalism” and the possible politics related to it.

As usual, a book and journal exhibition with the presence of the most influential publishing companies enriched the two events, too. The exhibitors offered their latest textbooks and journals which also helped to get familiar with the latest research trends and results.

The two meetings were both extremely inspiring and thematically rich. The joint organization gave an exceptional opportunity for networking and gathering new impulses. The next EUGEO Congress will be held in Rome in 2013 while the RGS-IBG Annual Meeting will be in Edinburgh in early July of 2012.

Lajos BOROS

Report on the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Economic and Social Geography Section of the Hungarian Geographical Society

The Economic and Social Geography Section of the Hungarian Geographical Society (HGS) celebrated the 100th anniversary of its foundation on 12 January 2012. The oldest section of the 140-year-old Association (HGA) was founded on 11 January 1912 under the name ‘economic geography section’. 27 persons participated the inaugural meeting including the élite of the Hungarian geography such as Lajos LÓCZY and count Pál TELEKI. Hundred years later as a result of the efforts of HGA, the section and the Department of Social and Economic Geography of ELTE University, a program of high standard was organized to celebrate the anniversary. About 80 persons from different parts of the country came together on Lágymányos Campus of ELTE.

The commemoration was opened by József SZABÓ, the president of HGS and was followed by Mária SZABÓ, the head of Institute for Earth Sciences and Geography of Eötvös Loránd University who greeted the audience. The program continued with scientific presentations consisted of two parts (according to the purpose of the organizers). First, presentations on the history and the establishment of the section were held, then the representatives of the contemporary Hungarian geography presented shortly the past, the present and the significance of the main disciplines of the Hungarian human geography.

The first part started with Patrik TÁTRAI’s presentation on the history of the section from its foundation up to the present. After that Zoltán DÖVÉNYI delineated the details (e.g. participants, background information) of the inaugural meeting.

The second part began with Róbert GYÓRI’s presentation (read by Márton CZIRFUSZ as the author could not participate) on the history and the main schools of the Hungarian economic geography. The following presenter was József TÓTH who tried to systematize and group the various research fields of population geography mainly through presenting scientific books and publications.

The rich history of the Hungarian urban geography was overviewed by Pál BELUSZKY. Later István BERÉNYI outlined the history of the Hungarian and the German social