

## COMMISSION ON THE HISTORY OF GEOGRAPHICAL THOUGHT

NEWSLETTER no 22

December 2002

At the request of the Executive Committee of the IGU, this bulletin is being distributed in a hardcopy paper version. This is certainly an advantage for colleagues without access to the internet, but the time needed to produce it slows down the speed with which it can be circulated. As a consequence, I would ask colleagues to write and let me know if they wish to receive a hardcopy version in the future, or alternatively to communicate their electronic addresses, which will enable us to communicate more frequently. The size of our mailings will then progressively grow smaller (and our postal costs as well!). The bulletin can however be accessed on the site of the Commission

<http://www.univ-pau.fr/RECHERCHE/UGIHG/>, where you will find additional information as well (in languages other than English and French) throughout the year, as well as links to other sites. Please send me announcements of meetings and other activities, so that they can be posted on the Commission site.

Another concern of the Commission is the participation of colleagues who come from less wealthy countries. In this regard, the congress in Durban was a disappointment. However, the new participation of colleagues in Latin America is confirmed: our plans to hold our main meeting of 2003 in Mérida, Mexico, are taking shape and a significant attendance is anticipated. In anticipation of the major meetings in Glasgow (2004) and Beijing (2005), the Commission continues to diversify its activities, principally in the form of workshops to explore the potential contribution of the history of geography to the major contemporary themes such as sustainable development. A "Rio + 10" seminar has been held at the UNESCO in Paris, in collaboration with specialists of the Division of Ecological Sciences and the Programme on Man and the Biosphere (MAB). This seminar gave an idea of a book content which could provide a historical, epistemological, and international perspective on the question of sustainability.

Beyond this, the Commission encouraged initiatives to diffuse interest in the history of geographic thought. The example of Brasil is detailed below. The congresses in Glasgow and Beijing will serve to discuss the achievements of the Commission with respect to its major current objectives: to reflect on the way of approaching the global dimension of the history of geographical thought, to open ourselves to other means of thinking and of expression, and to contribute to a prospective future development.

Vincent Berdoulay

**Rio+10 Seminar : Science, public policies, and geographical contexts. Issues in sustainability (UNESCO, Paris, June 3rd, 2003).** This seminar was organised by V. Berdoulay and Bertha Becker with the collaboration of specialists from the UNESCO Division of Ecological Sciences, the MAB (Man and Biosphere) Programme and the World Heritage Center. It continued two other workshops (in Pau and in Rio de Janeiro) for meeting the Commission's objective of clarifying what are the main geographical contributions to the challenge of sustainable development. The idea is to do historical analyses which can be useful for approaching future issues. The discussions and debates were based on the 14 presentations made by participants coming from eight different countries (France, Brazil, Germany, Cameroon, Italy, Indonesia, Spain, United States), as well as on the papers sent by representatives from China and Canada. It is anticipated that these contributions and debates will help in producing a book which will illustrate the intellectual contribution of geography to present and future issues.

### **IGU Regional Conference (Durban, South Africa, August 4-8, 2002)**

At this conference, the meetings of the various commissions were integrated into the programme as a whole. Dr Dianne Scott of the University of Natal, South Africa, co-ordinated the plans for our Commission.

One of the keynote speakers at the Opening Ceremony of the Durban Conference was Professor Anne Buttimer (Ireland), President of the IGU, and former Chair of the Commission on the History of Geographical Thought. She spoke on the theme of the meeting "Renaissance in Geography", remembering particularly the life and work of Alexander von Humboldt. In a well-illustrated talk she discussed the integrative and ecological nature of Humboldt's work, and mentioned both the influences upon the young geographer, and his influence on the later direction of the subject.

Two sessions of papers, with a total of eight papers, were listed for the Commission on the History of Geographical Thought. Alas, only three speakers appeared to present their talks. Patrick Armstrong presented an account, jointly written with Sarah Lumley (both of Australia) on "Some of the nineteenth century origins of the sustainability concept". Concentrating on Anglophone writings, they analysed the various components of the notion of sustainability, and showed how many of them could be identified in the work of nineteenth century thinkers such as Darwin, Mill, Paley, and Malthus, and that these writers profoundly influenced each other. S Popit (Slovenia) gave a paper entitled "A critical review of approaches in higher education geography in Slovenia" in which she emphasised the manner

in which for the last few decades geographical studies in Slovenia had been dominated by factual, rather than conceptual material. Laws, definitions and facts had dominated the curriculum to the virtual exclusion of critical evaluative material. J. Garcia-Alvarez (Spain) then spoke on "Imperial memories: the last Spanish colonies in Africa, as seen through the geography textbooks from the time of Franco's dictatorship". It was shown, for example, that schoolbooks from the period 1939-1975 were highly influenced by the dominating political and racial views of the time. A useful discussion followed the papers.

P.H. Armstrong,  
University of Western Australia

#### **Forthcoming meetings :**

##### ***History of geographical thought and Historical geography (Mérida, Mexico, April 21-24, 2003).***

Symposium organised within EGAL 2003 (Encuentros de Geografos de America Latina).

As a follow-up of the symposium held within the XXIst International Congress of History of Science in July 2000, when the relations among science, history and cultural diversity had attracted attention, the Mérida Symposium will focus on the joint examination of the history of geographical thought and of historical geography in order to see how it can help us to better understand the evolution of geography in the world.

For information, see : [www.igeograf.unam.mx](http://www.igeograf.unam.mx)  
or contact : Héctor Mendoza Vargas  
[hvargas@servidor.unam.mx](mailto:hvargas@servidor.unam.mx)

##### ***Political Geography and Geopolitics : Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow (Moscow, June 1-7, 2003).***

International conference organised by V. Kolossov and V. Gorbanyov under the auspices of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russian Federation and the Institute of Political Geography of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

A previous meeting originated by the Commission of Political Geography and cosponsored by the Commission on the History of Geographical Thought had already celebrated the 100th anniversary of the *Politische Geographie* by Ratzel. Now, the objective is to evaluate the evolution of political geography, its status within the discipline of geography as well as its potential status as an autonomous subject. The meeting will be interdisciplinary, drawing largely from political science and international relations studies. The focus will be on topical theoretical and modern applied issues of political geography and geopolitics.

Abstracts should be sent by March 1, 2003.

For more details, see *the web site of the Commission*, or write to the conference secretariate :

Mr Boris Bykov (for organisational matters)  
MGIMO, Prosp. Vernadskogo, 76  
119454 Moscow, Russia  
fax: (095) 434 94 53  
or Dr Nadezhda Borodulina (for scientific matters)  
IGRAN, Staromonetny per., 29  
119017 Moscow, Russia  
fax: (095) 959 00 33

***The work and thought of Jean Gottmann (Paris, end of 2003, or 2004).*** Symposium organised by Luca Muscara (initially planned for 2002, and then postponed).

A multi-disciplinary conference dedicated to the works and thought of Jean Gottmann will be held by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France and the Département des Cartes et Plans (Paris), cosponsored by the Commission on the History of Geographical Thought and the Société Française pour l'Histoire des Sciences de l'Homme. The conference will focus on revisiting the work of Gottmann, with particular emphasis on his theoretical model of the genesis of space partitioning as an explanation for current geographical transformations. Participation is open to all interested : historians, geographers, geopoliticians, political scientists, philosophers, sociologists, economists, environmentalists and urban planners are all welcome.

For further information, contact Luca Muscara :  
[muscara@unive.it](mailto:muscara@unive.it)

#### **Other meeting of interest :**

***"Friedrich Ratzel Centennial Conference: The Spaces of Ratzel's Geography"***. Organised by the Institute for Regional Geography (Institut für Länderkunde) in Leipzig, Germany.

One century following his death, Friedrich Ratzel's work and legacy continue to merit reflection and debate. The oeuvre Ratzel produced is situated on the border-edge of two centuries, five continents and numerous disciplinary fields. With this First Call for Papers, the conference organizers solicit queries from potential contributors to a two day conference to be hosted in Leipzig November 19-20, 2004 at the Institute of Regional Geography (Institut für Länderkunde). Abstract proposals of 300 words are sought that promise to address any of the following three areas:

— The significance of Ratzel's work in the contexts of contemporaneous developments and debates within the discipline of geography in Germany and elsewhere;

— The impact of Ratzel's work on other cognate disciplines as well as the significance of his own transdisciplinary forays for geography;

— The contributions of Ratzel's work to contemporaneous understandings of the earth's regions and the possible import of them and his spatial imaginary for contemporary conceptions of regional geography.

Select papers will be published following the conference. The conference languages will be German and English. Pending funding efforts, some travel money for participants may become available.

Send queries or abstracts by June 30, 2003 to the conference organizers, Wolfgang Natter [wnatter@uky.edu](mailto:wnatter@uky.edu) and Ute Wardenga ([U\\_Wardenga@ifl-leipzig.de](mailto:U_Wardenga@ifl-leipzig.de)).

*(This call for papers is available in German on the web site of the Commission.)*

#### **International Congress of Geography, Glasgow, Scotland, 2004**

All IGU commissions will hold sessions during the main congress at Glasgow in 2004. The Commission on the History of Geographical Thought will hold several sessions. Three of them have already been planned and will illustrate its activities. Two sessions will be devoted to "Ratzel and Mackinder: 100 years later" (co-sponsored by the Commission on Political Geography), and the third one will more explicitly focus on the achievements and prospects of the Commission. Proposals of papers are wellcomed for the other sessions, under the general theme "Histories of geography in international perspective". The History of Geography Group of the IBG will cooperate in the organisation of several ses-

sions. Please note that not all submitted papers might be read, since a selection may be necessary as a consequence of stiff time constraints within the main congress.

Contact Mark Bassin (mbassin@mail.geog.ucl.ac.uk) or V. Berdoulay (vincent.berdoulay@univ-pau.fr)

**N.B. : International Congress of History of Science, Beijing, China 2005** (organised by the IUHPS). In preparation.

**Geographers: Biobibliographical Studies** is published under the auspices of the Commission by Continuum, simultaneously in London and New York. This series treats of a wide variety of individuals who have influenced the development of geography and geographical thought, with a summary of their contributions and brief bibliographies. Volume 22 was published in 2002: it contains essays on authors who have influenced the development of geographic thought. Amongst them are R.P. Beckinsale from the United Kingdom, and J.K. Wright from the United States. From colonial Africa comes Samuel Baker. Other interesting figures depicted include the Russian-Australian N.N. Miklocho-Maclay, the influential geomorphologist Armin K. Lobeck, and Governor George Grey, who profoundly affected developments in South Africa, New Zealand and Australia. The editors are always happy to receive suggestions for figures who might be described in a chapter. Potential authors should contact either of the editors.

Geoffrey J. Martin                      Patrick Armstrong

Southern Connecticut State University    University of Western Australia

**News from Brazil :**

In October 1998, several professors and post-graduate students from different parts of Brazil gathered together to form a working group on the history of geographical thought in Brazil. Since then, the group has encouraged the debate among researchers and has consolidated it as an academic field in Brazilian geography.

A visible face of the efforts already taken in that respect has been the organization of different activities, like the

1st National Meeting on the History of Geographical Thought (Rio Claro, São Paulo, 1999) or the sessions and workshops organized in the XII and XIII National Meetings of Geographers (Florianópolis/2000 and João Pessoa/2002, respectively). In terms of future activities, the group is organizing the session about Brazil (Geographical Thought and Territorial History) for the 9th Meeting of Latin American Geographers to be held in Merida, Mexico, April 2003 (during the joint sessions with the Commission on the History of Geographical Thought), as well as the IInd National Meeting on the History of Geographical Thought.

The group also publishes *Terra Brasilis*, a journal organized around selected topics which are developed in each issue. The first one focused on geography as part of the school curricula. The second one dealt with the interrelation between geography and the Brazilian social thought. The third issue presents a dossier about the geographical knowledge in Latin America. A fourth issue is under preparation and deals with strategies for territorial management in Brazil.

*Terra Brasilis* shows a clear inter-disciplinary perspective, trying to bring over geography and other social sciences through a dialogue on shared topics (notably, the role of geographical configurations on the Brazilian historical development and the shaping of the social imaginary in the country). The journal also tries to establish a turning point in the tradition of the discipline, whose emphasis on the material aspects of spatial organization – although relevant and, in many instances, productive – has been shown to narrow the comprehension of certain aspects of reality. It is also worth to note the effort of *Terra Brasilis* in maintaining studies on the geographical thought produced in Brazil and, whenever it is possible, in other countries; trying by that means to contribute to the debate over the past, present and future of geography as a scientific discipline.

The Brazilian colleagues belonging to this group and *Terra Brasilis* would be pleased to exchange ideas and experiences with colleagues from abroad. For contacting us, use the following e-mails of some of the members of the editorial staff:

Sergio Nunes (snunes22@hotmail.com)

Leticia Ribeiro (pleticia@alternex.com.br)



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