

Commission on the Sustainability of Rural Systems (IGU CSRS) Report 2021

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A. Membership

A1. Structure of the Current Steering Committee

- Co-Chairpersons
 - Serge Schmitz Belgium s.schmitz@uliege.be
 - Valerià Paül Spain v.paul.carril@usc.gal
- Secretary
 - Fiona Haslam McKenzie Australia fiona.haslam-mckenzie@uwa.edu.au
- Members
 - Suk Kyeong Kang Turkey ecoksk@gmail.com | skang@ohu.edu.tr
 - Hualou Long China longhl@igsrr.ac.cn
 - Aleksandar Lukić Croatia alukic@geog.pmf.hr
 - Lou Angeli Ocampo the Philippines ocampo_louann@yahoo.com
 - Cornelia Steinhäuser Germany cornelia.steinhaeuser@uni-muenster.de
 - Marcin Wojcik Poland wojcik.moskwa@gmail.com

This structure is the consequence of two successive IGU CSRS Steering Committee (SC) meetings held virtually on 19 May and 11 September, 2020. In those meetings, five of the current members were appointed to join the IGU CSRS SC and one of the Co-Chairs and the Secretary were elected. Three issues are highlighted:

- i. Some of the previous SC members had served for eight years and/or had been previous Co-Chairs and in line with the leadership guidelines were required to resign in 2020. A previous Co-Chair, Ana Firmino, unfortunately passed away in May 2020. In recognition of her passionate quest to recruit young PhD students, the SC decided to name the annual IGU CSRS scholarships for participation in colloquia targeting PhD students from UN classified developing countries, the “Ana Firmino Scholarships”.
- ii. Previous Co-Chair Holly Barcus was elected as IGU Vice-President in mid-2020.
- iii. For the approval of the IGU Commissions/Task Forces — and their respective Chairs and Steering Committees — by the IGU Virtual General Assembly held on 21 August, 2020, the IGU sent two suggestions for the IGU CSRS SC composition:
 - a. Invite members from South/Southeast Asia, Africa and/or Latin America.

b. Observe the gender balance.

In 2021, the IGU CSRS SC met three times (10 March, 8 April and 14 July, 2021) to discuss the ongoing problems for the annual colloquia induced by the pandemic. It was repeatedly unclear whether to continue with the plans for the meetings, or to maintain *sine die* the colloquia as virtual. There are pros and cons with every decision taken and the IGU CSRS SC is trying to balance health issues while maintaining opportunities for IGU CSRS members to participate in academic opportunities through different forums. The key decisions focused on celebrating the 28th IGU CSRS Colloquium virtually from Croatia in 2021 and the proposed 2022 meetings in Egypt, Croatia again and Paris, as detailed in this document.



A2. Corresponding Members

The number of corresponding members of the IGU CSRS, as of 10 January, 2022, is 930 in total from 58 countries. This is calculated by means of the e-mailing list (see D2).

Country	Number	Country	Number
Afghanistan	2	Malaysia	1
Australia	28	Mexico	1
Austria	4	Morocco	1
Bangladesh	1	Netherlands	8
Belgium	7	New Zealand	6
Brazil	21	Nigeria	3
Burundi	1	Poland	4
Cameroon	2	Portugal	8
Canada	56	Romania	9
Chile	2	Russia	3
China	18	Saudi Arabia	1
Colombia	1	Serbia	2
Croatia	1	Singapore	1
Czech Republic	7	Slovakia	1
Egypt	2	Slovenia	3
Ecuador	1	South Africa	7
Finland	1	South Korea	24
France	18	Spain	45
Germany	28	Sri Lanka	1
Greece	1	Sudan	1
Guinea	1	Sweden	5
Haiti	1	Syria	2
Hong Kong	1	Taiwan	2
India	151	Thailand	4
Iran	6	Turkey	3
Ireland	17	UK	17
Israel	4	USA	248
Italy	10	Vietnam	5
Ivory Coast	1	Others	5
Japan	115	Total	930

B. Meetings

The annual IGU CSRS colloquium is the most important activity of the commission since its inception (originally as a Study Group “Rural Systems”) at the IGU Conference held in Washington in 1992. They are a unique opportunity for academic collegiality and the interchange of experiences between worldwide rural geographers. Importantly, they always contain a 3/4-days fieldtrip developed in rural locations to know initiatives, experiences, economic activities, transformations, conflicts, etc., which are understood as living laboratories to explore and, in parallel, as arena for in situ academic debates regarding sustainability in rural areas. Typically, colloquia are progressively held in a different continent, each year trying to alternate Global North and Global South.

The 28th was expected to be held in Croatia in August 2020, following the IGU Conference organised in Turkey, the location being chosen, among other reasons, because of the geographical proximity and the good air transport connections between Istanbul and Zagreb. However, the Covid-19 pandemic caused the postponement of the latter, ultimately held virtually in 2021, in line with the IGU Conference in Istanbul also being postponed. 2020 was the first year since 1992 that the IGU CSRS annual colloquium has not been held. Logically, the IGU CSRS also participates in the IGU conferences, commonly by means of special sessions. This was the case in Istanbul in 2021.

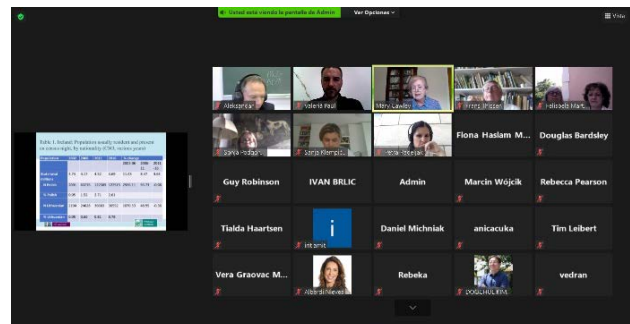
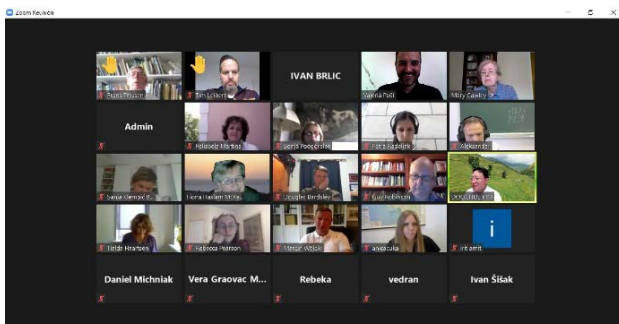
B1. 28th IGU CSRS Colloquium: Croatia (2021-2022)

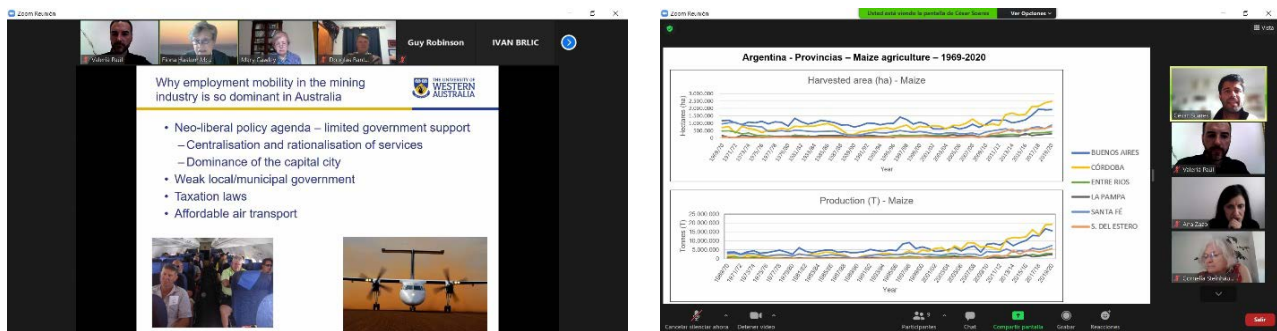
Website: <https://www.pmf.unizg.hr/geog/rural>

This colloquium was themed *Rural on the Move: Transitions, Transformations, Mobilities and Resistance*. The event was organised by the University of Zagreb and chaired by Aleksandar Lukić. The principal intention was to discuss the notion of rural change, primarily its dynamics, intensity, persistence and interconnectedness. The countryside is seen as an area experiencing rapid transitions and transformations (in different domains: economic, social, technological, political, cultural, environmental, etc.), mobilities (traditional and novel) and resistances to change (conservative and progressive).

The virtual event, held from 23 to 25 August, 2021, from 11 am to 3:45 pm Western European time, enabling presenters’ participation in Eastern Asia and Australia at the beginning of the sessions and by presenters from the Americas later, at the end of the sessions. For most of the sessions there were two Zoom rooms in parallel. The arrangements were effective with 55 presentations from 26 countries. In most of the sessions there was intense discussion after the presentations.

The colloquium took place at a very turbulent time. The ongoing global coronavirus pandemic has prevented us meeting for the last two years. It is a stark warning of the fragility and volatility of human society. Moreover, while disasters such as fires and floods are natural phenomena, their increasing geographic spread and severity are indicative of human impact on nature evolving into threatening scenarios, not only for the environment, but also for economies, communities and policy. Political unrest and rising socio-economic inequalities with devastating consequences for many people around the globe also remain a reality. All of these matters are of central interest to geographers of course, underscoring the importance of enabling meetings in whatever way possible. For those reasons, the 2021 IGU CSRS online colloquium was our contribution to raising global awareness and offering possible answers to rural sustainability issues.





There will be an *in situ* fieldwork seminar in rural Croatia (part of the 28th Colloquium of the IGU CSRS) preceding the IGU Centennial Congress to be held in Paris, 18-22 July 2022. This was decided given that many IGU CSRS corresponding members want to explore rural Croatia, confirming the utility of the IGU CSRS tradition of holding an annual fieldwork opportunity.

B2. Participation in the IGU Conference in Istanbul (2020-2021)

The IGU CSRS convened two scientific sessions for the IGU Conference held virtually from Istanbul in August 2021, as follows:

1. *Food Market: From Global to Local and Vice Versa*, chaired by Serge Schmitz and Valerià Paül. The purpose is to document the world diversity of food processing, distribution and consumption patterns, with an increasing disconnection between producers and consumers, but at the same time acknowledging the initiatives “relinking” them. There were five presentations from China, Europe and India.
2. *Global Countryside and Local Development: Facing Rural Problematics*, chaired by Eugenio Cejudo, Ana Nieto and Francisco Navarro. The aim is to discuss the different practices of rural development according to various spatial contexts, applicable frameworks and underlying philosophies. Eleven presentations were held, attracting people from Australia, China, Europe, India and Russia.

B3. 29th IGU CSRS Colloquium: Nile Delta (Egypt) (2022)

This colloquium is themed *Necessities and Implementations for Sustaining Rural Systems in both Developed and less Developed Environments* and organised by the Department of Geography of the Faculty of Arts at the Menoufia University (Egypt), together with the Egyptian Geographical Group for Rural Development (EGGRD) of the Egyptian Geographical Society. The main hypothesis of the colloquium is as follows: Benefiting, not repeating, the experiences of developed rural communities could set up successful sustainable rural systems in the Global South. The main themes are as follows:

1. Promoting approaches for current Rural Geographies, able to conceive renewed issues in rural areas to achieve more fruitful Rural Studies.
2. Promoting the integrated fundamentals of rural environments: territorial, economic, social and physical through regional case-studies.
3. Smart Rural Innovations guided by the three lenses of innovation: desirability, feasibility and viability.
4. Challenges and compromises of rural-urban equilibrium, with expected contributions regarding the mutual recognition of agriculture and urbanisation as policy priorities for many world countries, principally in peri-urban environments, and their conflict in local case-studies.

The conference is expected to be held from 28 February-4 March 2022. The first call for papers was opened in 1 August 2021. The second call, in 1 September 2021. The pre-registration and submission deadline was 1 October 2021. In November the Organising Committee notified the acceptance of the abstracts. In early December the Organising Committee reported that 30 abstracts and 40 pre-registered scholars had been accepted. The countries of provenance are: Egypt, Argentina, Belgium, China, France, India, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, South Korea, Spain, Turkey and the USA.

The IGU CSRS SC and the local Organising Committee will aim to present the colloquium as normally as possible despite the inevitable pandemic impacts.

B4. Participation in the IGU Conference in Paris (2022)

In late 2021, the IGU CSRS submitted three sessions that were accepted:

1. *Rural Geography Avant la Lettre and the Development of the Sub-Discipline*, devoted to considering the history of the Rural Geography sub-discipline, in the context of the congress celebrating the IGU centenary. The first chair of this proposed session is V. Paül.
2. *Is it still Relevant to Speak of Sustainability of Rural Systems in the 21st Century?*, devoted to the ongoing discussion on sustainability of rural areas. The first chair of this proposed session is S. Schmitz.
3. *Considering, Protecting and Promoting the Night-Time Environment: A New Interface of Tensions and Projects Between Cities and the Countryside*, devoted to studying the rural regions that are managing their environments to avoid night-light pollution related to their neighbouring urban areas. The first chair of this proposed session is J. Milian.

Additionally, E. Cejudo chairs a session *The Covid-19 Pandemic: An Opportunity for Rural Areas?*, devoted to consider the impacts of Covid-19 in rural areas which was not been classified as an IGU CSRS session but with obvious interest for the IGU CSRS.

The deadline is 18 January, 2022, so there is still no data available regarding the number of submitted potential abstracts for these four sessions.

B5. Plan for IGU CSRS Colloquia 2023-2024

- The 30th colloquium (2023) will be organised in Poland by the University of Łódź and chaired by Marcin Wójcik.
- Currently, there are two bids for the 31st colloquium (2024), both in the Global South. The decision will be made in July 2022, as usual two years before. The colloquium in 2024 will be important as the IGU CSRS will need to be officially renewed by the IGU General Assembly, together with new Chairs and Steering Committee members. The colloquium is expected to be held before the IGU General Assembly (to be held in Dublin, Ireland, 25-30 August 2024) in order to meet the commitments regarding the official renewal.

C. Networking

The IGU CSRS collaborates with other IGU commissions and related international, intergovernmental or inter- and multi-disciplinary groups. These include:

- Serge Schmitz is an editorial member of the journal *Geography and Sustainability*, an initiative largely supported by the IGU, and has contributed with a chapter on farming to the book *Geography and Anthropocene*, coordinated by Barbaros Gönençgil, Vice-President of the IGU. He has also collaborated on the publication of a special issue at *Belgeo* initiated by the French Rural Geography Commission.
- Since 2019, IGU CSRS corresponding members from Poland are part of the DESIRA (*Digitisation: Economic and Social Impacts in Rural Areas*) initiative, a EU H2020 Project coordinated by the University of Pisa on improving the capacity of society and of political bodies to respond to the challenges that digitisation generates in rural areas, agriculture and forestry in the next ten years (<https://desira2020.eu/>). The project has been granted for the period 2019-2023.
- In early 2020 a EU H2020 RISE project on sustainable development in mountain areas was granted (<https://www.highlands3.eu/>) for the period 2020-2023 (potentially extended to 2024 due to the covid-19 pandemic). In this project, IGU CSRS corresponding members from different Romanian and Spanish universities cooperate.
- On 22 June 2020, the Alliance of Poverty Reduction and Development (APRD) was officially approved by the Alliance of International Science Organisations (ANSO). This is a non-profit, non-governmental international scientific organisation founded in 2018 by the Chinese Academy of Sciences and 36 other international science and education institutions from around the world. On 17 November 2020, IGU CSRS SC/corresponding members participated in the Inaugural Conference of Alliance of Poverty Reduction and Development, ANSO & International Conference of Global Poverty Reduction and

Sustainable Development, held in Lincang, Yunnan Province, China, and presented the following keynote addresses:

- o Holly Barcus: “From Local to Global: Considering the Importance of Place and Local Knowledge in Rural Sustainability”.
- o Hualou Long: “How to Measure the Efficiency of Targeted Poverty Alleviation in China: A Perspective of Third-Party Assessment”.

D. Publications and Dissemination

Academic dissemination has been a central concern of the IGU CSRS since its origins. Most of the early colloquia derived in conference proceeding books but some of them took considerable time to publish after the respective colloquia. Furthermore, in many countries a proceedings book is not considered a legitimate scientific publication. For these reasons in previous conferences it was decided that the results of the presentations held in the colloquia might be published by means of peer-reviewed conference proceedings and peer-reviewed papers in ranked scientific journals (commonly, by means of a special issue). The main weakness of the latter is that they appear after the event and they depend on the *ex post* submission of papers and the reviewing timing of the respective journal.

All these publication systems have been intensively discussed in the last years by the IGU CSRS SC. Hence, the current publications reflect different choices made between the IGU CSRS SC and the respective local organising committees.

D1. Publications Derived from Previous Colloquia Appeared in 2021 or in Process of Edition

- In 2021 the 26th IGU CSRS Colloquium held in 2018, the book of proceedings was finally published on the Internet: https://www.usc.gal/libros/en/social_sciences_and_law/495-infinite-rural-systems-in-a-finite-planet-332663-.html#/29-formato-pdf/34-transaccion-free .
- From the 27th IGU CSRS Colloquium held in 2019, two publications are in the process of completion (expected for mid-2022):
 - o A special issue of the *Geographical Review* entitled “Sustaining Rural Systems: Rural Vitality in an Era of Globalization and Economic Nationalism”, edited by Holly Barcus and William Moseley, and expected in early 2022. The papers are beginning to be available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/utgr20/current>
 - o A book entitled *Rural Transformations: Globalization and its Implications for Rural People, Land, and Economies* (ISBN 9780367626464), will be published in March 2022 at Routledge, edited by Holly Barcus, Roy Jones and Serge Schmitz. This book is organised around the three core themes of demographic change, rural-urban partnerships and innovations and landscape change. The twelve case studies represent both the Global North and Global South and underscore the complexity and multi-scalar nature of these contemporary challenges in rural development, planning and sustainability. More information is available at: <https://www.routledge.com/Rural-Transformations-Globalization-and-Its-Implications-for-Rural-People/Barcus-Jones-Schmitz/p/book/9780367626464>
- From the 28th IGU CSRS Colloquium held virtually in 2021, a total of nine manuscripts have been submitted following a post-colloquium specific call by the organising committee. The academic journal will be the *Croatian Geographical Bulletin* and the special issue containing these nine articles is expected to be published in late 2022/early 2023.

D2. Digital Networking

Website <https://igu-csrs.github.io>

In mid-2020, we set up a new website of the IGU CSRS. In 2021 it was updated, including a section on previous publications from the commission and another on previous reports from the IGU CSRS SC available at <https://igu-csrs.github.io/reports.html>.

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/ruralgeography/>

E-mail list igu-csrs@okayama-u.ac.jp
<https://ml.okayama-u.ac.jp/mailman/listinfo/igu-csrs>

E. Archival Contributions

The IGU CSRS is committed to transmit to the IGU archives publications of recent years produced by the IGU CSRS and which are available as hardcopies. However, it is still unclear to the IGU CSRS SC the location of these IGU archives, despite the requests sent in this respect in previous years. Clarification in this respect is kindly requested.

F. Accountability

The IGU CSRS Co-Chairs managed the IGU funds received for 2020 and 2021 as follows:

- The Ana Firmino Scholarships in the context of the 28th IGU CSRS Colloquium, held virtually, were decided to be given in a different way than in the previous colloquia: all the PhD candidates with accepted abstracts were absolved from paying a registration fee, irrespective of their country of origin. This was an exceptional decision taken by the IGU CSRS SC together with the Organising Committee.
- Funds for updating the IGU CSRS website for the years 2021, 2022 and 2023 have been earmarked. In 2024 it is expected that one of the current co-chairs resigns, implying that the website will be transferred to the next co-chairs.

Currently, the funds for 2022 have been not transferred, implying that the Ana Firmino Scholarship for the 29th IGU CSRS Colloquium has not been granted. According to the local Organising Committee, there are four potential candidates that the IGU CSRS Co-Chairs will consider when the funds are transferred.

Submitted by Co-Chairs



Serge Schmitz



Valeria Paül

Liège and Santiago de Compostela, 13 January, 2022