

Commission on the Sustainability of Rural Systems (IGU CSRS) Report 2024

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A. Membership

A1. Structure of the Current Steering Committee (2024)

- Co-Chairpersons
 - Valerià Paül Spain v.paul.carril@usc.gal
 - Fiona H. McKenzie Australia fiona.haslam-mckenzie@uwa.edu.au
- Secretary
 - Aleksandar Lukić Croatia alukic@geog.pmf.hr
- Members
 - Suk Kyeong Kang Turkey ecoksk@gmail.com | skang@ohu.edu.tr
 - Hualou Long China longhl@igsnr.ac.cn
 - William Moseley United States moseley@macalester.edu
 - Lou Angeli Ocampo the Philippines laocampo@up.edu.ph
 - Serge Schmitz Belgium s.schmitz@uliege.be
 - Cornelia Steinhäuser Germany/Argentina cornelia.steinhaeuser@uni-muenster.de
 - Marcin Wojcik Poland marcin.wojcik@geo.uni.lodz.pl

A2. Structure of the Steering Committee post-2024

- Co-Chairpersons
 - Aleksandar Lukić Croatia alukic@geog.pmf.hr
 - Cornelia Steinhäuser Germany/Argentina cornelia.steinhaeuser@uni-muenster.de
- Members
 - Abhineety Goel India abhineety.goel@flame.edu.in
 - Suk Kyeong Kang Turkey ecoksk@gmail.com | skang@ohu.edu.tr
 - Hualou Long China longhl@igsnr.ac.cn
 - William Moseley United States moseley@macalester.edu
 - Lou Angeli Ocampo the Philippines laocampo@up.edu.ph
 - Valerià Paül Spain v.paul.carril@usc.gal
 - Marcin Wojcik Poland wojcik.moskwa@gmail.com
 - Giacomo Zanolin Italy giacomo.zanolin@unige.it

This structure was decided in the virtual meeting of the Steering Committee held on 10 September (see A3), in accordance with the IGU guidelines on gender and geographical (Global South/Global North) balance.

A3. Steering Committee Meetings

Three IGU CSRS Steering Committee (SC) meetings were held in 2024, one in the first half of the year and two in September. As dictated by tradition, one took place during the annual colloquium of the IGU CSRS (on 29 September in Mendoza, Argentina).



The first virtual meeting was held on 8 April in order to plan the forthcoming 31st IGU CSRS colloquium to be held in Argentina. Financial and organisational issues regarding this conference were discussed. The local organising committee was recognised for successfully attracting over 125 abstract submissions. The potential dates for the 32nd IGU CSRS to be held in the Philippines were initially discussed. Regarding an application by an individual scholar to be elected as IGU CSRS

SC member, it was re-affirmed that only those rural geographers having attended at least two previous IGU CSRS colloquia are potentially eligible for serving as IGU CSRS SC members. A discussion was held regarding Anna Firmino's Scholarships for Global South PhD students to be granted to attend the conference in Argentina. 'Global South' is defined according to the standard classification of countries by the United Nations, in particular the "Note on developed and developing regions" (available at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/>).

The second virtual meeting was held on 10 September, mainly to discuss the renewal of the IGU CSRS SC post-2024. The decision was taken in accordance with the IGU guidelines on gender and geographical (Global South/Global North) balance for the IGU commission's SCs. Dr. Aleksandar Lukić (Croatia) and Dr. Cornelia Steinhäuser (Germany/Argentina) were appointed as co-chairs, giving their strong commitment to Rural Geography and their regular participation in the IGU CSRS activities for many years. Dr. Abhineety Goel (India) and Dr. Giacomo Zanolin (Italy) were nominated for committee membership, pending acceptance. The resignations of Dr. Fiona Haslam McKenzie and Dr. Serge Schmitz were accepted, and they were sincerely thanked for their invaluable contributions. In addition, last minute details regarding the 31st IGU CSRS colloquium to be held in Argentina were discussed. Moreover, the first call for the 32nd IGU CSRS to be held in the Philippines was discussed, and the dates were set (1-6 December, 2025). The 33rd IGU CSRS was granted to the University of Genoa (Italy), with the fieldwork to take place in Cinque Terre and the Ligurian Alps, and the proposed and accepted dates were 22-26 June, 2026. The places for the colloquia to be held in 2027 and 2028 are still open to discussion but Southern Africa and Australia seem suitable. Once again, Anna Firmino's Scholarships were discussed, considering management challenges.



The third and last IGU CSRS SC meeting of the year was held during the 31st IGU CSRS colloquium in Argentina. The development of the event was assessed positively and warmly acknowledged. Other points of the previous IGU CSRS SC were informally discussed again. The forthcoming Rural Geography textbook (see section D2) was also discussed.



A4. Corresponding Members

The number of corresponding members of the IGU CSRS, as of 14 February, 2025, is 1,027 in total, from 62 countries. This is calculated by means of the e-mailing list (see section D3).

Country	Number	Country	Number
Afghanistan	2	Japan	115
Argentina	52	Malaysia	1
Australia	29	Mexico	4
Austria	7	Morocco	2
Bangladesh	1	Netherlands	8
Belgium	7	New Zealand	6
Brazil	24	Nigeria	3
Burundi	1	Norway	1
Cameroon	3	Poland	4
Canada	56	Portugal	9
Chile	5	Romania	12
China	18	Russia	3
Colombia	1	Saudi Arabia	1
Croatia	2	Serbia	2
Czech Republic	7	Singapore	1
Egypt	6	Slovakia	1
Ecuador	1	Slovenia	5
Finland	1	South Africa	8
France	20	South Korea	24
Germany	31	Spain	50
Greece	1	Sri Lanka	1
Guinea	1	Sudan	1
Haiti	1	Sweden	5
Hong Kong	2	Syria	2
India	154	Taiwan	2
Indonesia	1	Thailand	4
Iran	6	Turkey	3
Ireland	17	United Kingdom	17
Israel	5	United States of America	249
Italy	10	Vietnam	5
Ivory Coast	1	Others	5
		Total	1,027

In the 2019-2020 report, finished in early 2021, the number of corresponding members of the IGU CSRS was 924, from 59 countries. The increase during this four-years period has been +11% (+3 countries), with a noticeable gain in Latin America.

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. It represents a unique opportunity for academic collegiality and the interchange of experiences between global rural geographers. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, 2020 was the only year since 1992 that the IGU CSRS annual colloquium has not been held.

Importantly, annual IGU CSRS colloquia always include a three-four-day fieldtrip developed in rural locations to show initiatives, experiences, economic activities, transformations, conflicts, etc., which are understood as living laboratories to explore and 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.

B1. 31st IGU CSRS Colloquium: Argentina (2024)



The 31st Colloquium of the IGU Commission on the Sustainability of Rural Systems, titled “Contested Rural Spaces / *Territorios rurales en disputa*” took place from September 16 to 20, 2024, at the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, in Mendoza, Argentina. The conference programme included:

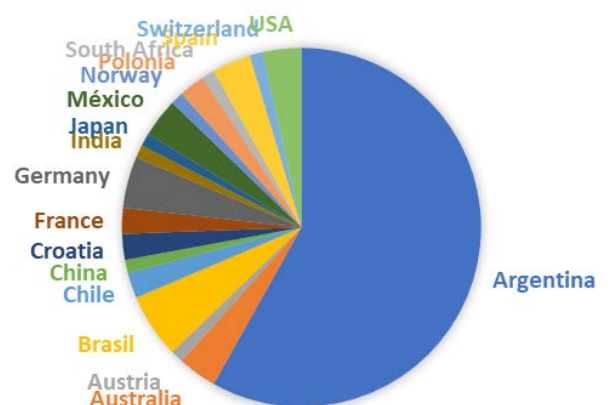
- September 16: Opening, Keynote Conference & Thematic Sessions & Free City Tour guiding. The opening lecture was held by Prof. Dr. Bernardo Mançano Fernandes from the Universidade Estadual Paulista (Brazil).
- September 17: Thematic Sessions, Keynote Conference & Closing Dinner.
- September 18: Valle de Uco field trip (Agroecology & Wineland), Trip to Malargüe.
- September 19: Transhumancy and native people territorial demands.
- September 20: Return from Malargüe to Mendoza City in the afternoon.

The central theme of the conference focused on the differing conceptions of “territory”, particularly in the Global North and Latin America. These variations raised important questions about the multiple constructions of geographic concepts and their real-world implications for rural transformation. Also, the colloquium addressed the interplay between external social structures and individuals’ inner worlds which are crucial for sustainable action and systemic change.

Thematic sessions were organised to four key sub-themes:

1. Regional productions/ecologies. Agroecology and alternative food networks. Experiences of resistance and transition towards agroecology and food sovereignty.
2. Rural-urban disputes. Youth and neo-ruralities linked to migration, tourism and the use of new technologies are challenging classical understandings of “the rural”.
3. Socio-environmental inequalities and environmental conflicts. Processes of soil, water and forest degradation and pollution, including desertification, are coupled with changes in rural labour.
4. Land ownership, tenure and planning. Issues related to transhumance, protected natural areas, the subdivision of properties and the territorial demands of indigenous peoples are just some of the topics on the current agenda.

Five time slots featured four parallel thematic sessions, each comprising approximately four presentations. Including the poster session, more than 90 academics and young researchers presented their work, the nationalities being represented in the graph. Importantly, Latin American scholars, mainly from the hosting country but also from Brazil and Chile, dominated, a world region which has been largely absent in the activities of the IGU CSRS.





The Ana Firmino's Scholarship provided travel, accommodation, and/or registration support to the Mendoza conference for 22 young researchers from the Global South, including PhD candidates not only from Argentina, but also from Brazil, Chile and Mexico.

The fieldwork, with about 40 international participants, explored the southern region of the province of Mendoza, beginning with the Uco Valley. There, they observed the "territorialisation" and impacts of the globalisation of viticulture, the expansion of agriculture into mountainous areas, and the problematic water usage in a dry environment, alongside examples of peasant resistance and alternative food networks. Continuing to Malargüe, the study examined livestock systems characteristic of arid and semi-arid regions, including transhuman goat herding. It also addressed socio-environmental conflicts related to mining and fracking, disputes over water access, and challenges surrounding land access for small-scale herders and Indigenous communities. Additionally, the study included visits to local initiatives promoting sustainable rural tourism.

The conference was supported by the Argentinean Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria (INTA), the EU project Highlands.3 (see section C) and the International Office of the University of Münster.

B2. 32nd IGU CSRS Colloquium: the Philippines (2025)

The first call for the 32nd IGU CSRS Colloquium to be held in the Philippines from 1 to 6 December 2025 was launched in early 2025. Under the theme *New Ruralities: Contestations and Iterations on Rural Spatialities*, it is an invitation to discuss the profound transformations experienced by rural areas due to factors such as globalisation, technological advancements, climate change, migration and shifting economic paradigms. These forces are assumed to challenge traditional notions of rurality and spatial organisation, compelling scholars, policymakers, and local communities to re-examine and redefine rural spaces. Additionally, while rethinking established concepts and approaches in the study of the rural, rural spatialities can benefit from the blurring of boundaries, the recognition of multiple rural relationalities, and the connections that are forged from these complex entanglements.

In short, the notion of "new ruralities" centres on the multiple meanings and dynamic character of rural systems, as tied to wider local, regional and international global and processes. "New ruralities" is about development trajectories that are created by new connections, opportunities and innovations. It is also about adaptation and resistance that facilitate the reproduction of rural identities and experiences. Lastly, "new ruralities" include new perspectives that illuminate unique spatialities of the rural across locations and contexts.

The thematic sessions will be organised but not limited to four key sub-themes, reflecting the complexities of rural areas and their evolving nature in the context of local and global challenges

1. Iterations: recurring patterns, practices and historical continuities.
2. Transitions: structural, socio-cultural, economic and environmental shifts.
3. Negotiations: navigation of policies, markets and socio-environmental changes.
4. Contestations conflicts over land, resources, identities and power.

The organising universities are the Philippines Diliman and the Philippines Baguio.

The 32nd IGU CSRS Colloquium is expected to provide a valuable platform for scholars, practitioners and policy makers to exchange ideas, share knowledge, and develop a deeper understanding of rural spaces to contribute to more informed and effective rural development strategies geared toward sustainability.

The field work is expected to occur in the Cordillera, a region in the northern part of the island of Luzon.

Abstracts are due to be submitted by April 21st, 2025 by <http://bit.ly/3CzPvzN>

For any queries please contact the organising committee at igu.csrph@gmail.com

The website is as follows: <https://sites.google.com/up.edu.ph/igu-csrph2025>

B3. Participation in the IGU Conference in Dublin (2024)

The IGU CSRS participated in the 35th Geographical Congress held in Dublin (Ireland) from 24 to 30 August 2024 with the following sessions:

1. Arboriculture and pastoralism: New territorial complementarities?
2. Industry sustainability and multifunctionality in the countryside.
3. More-than-human agencies in sustainable rural tourism.
4. *Réintégrer de l'agriculture et l'alimentation dans les villes : nouveaux modèles, métiers, compétences.*
5. Rural areas in a post-Covid-19 era.
6. Rural citizenship and civil society.
7. Three decades of rural geography around the world: Where are we in 2024?

Dr Fiona Haslam McKenzie chaired sessions 2 and 5, submitted together with Dr Valerià Paül.

In the context of this 35th Geographical Congress, the IGU CSRS was renewed for 2024-2028, until the 36th Geographical Congress to be held in Melbourne (Australia) in July 2028.

C. Networking

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

- The IGU CSRS and the Land Degradation and Desertification Commission co-organised with the University Zian Achour the international conference on “Land Degradation and Sustainable Development in the Steppes” held from November 18 to 21, 2024, in Djelfa (Algeria). Even though there were visa difficulties were encountered, 74 participants, mainly from Algeria, but also from Belgium, Egypt, France, Iran, Palestine, Slovenia, Spain, Tunisia and the UAE, discussed over two full days the issue of land degradation in Algeria and worldwide. Because the conference was multidisciplinary, it was an excellent opportunity to underline the geographical approach and to support the colleagues from Djelfa. Twenty-seven oral presentations, sixty-four posters and the field trip helped making the first multidisciplinary state-of-the-art and collect some smart practices. More information is available at <https://www.univ-djelfa.dz/ar/?p=18458>
- 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, extended to 2025 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The 31st IGU CSRS Colloquium held in 2024 has benefited from this project (see section B1). Several members of the IGU CSRS have participated in common research periods under this project in Malawi in early 2024 and in Cape Verde in late 2024.
- Dr Zhengfu Chen (China) and Dr Holly Barcus (United States) co-authored a paper “The Rise of Home-Returning Women’s Entrepreneurship in China’s Rural Development: Producing the Enterprising Self Through Empowerment, Cooperation, and Networking” published at the *Journal of Rural Studies* (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2023.103156>).
- Dr Douglas Bardsley (Australia) co-authored in 2024 with colleagues from Nepal Bishnu Hari Pandit and Naya Paudel “Is Rewilding Too Wild? Assessing the Benefits and Challenges of Forest Succession on Abandoned Land in the Mid-Hills of Nepal” and “Forest Livelihood Values and Management Opportunities to Support the Agrarian Transition in Nepal”, respectively published at *People and Nature* (<https://doi.org/10.1002/pan3.10772>) and *Journal of Rural Studies* (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2024.103253>).

D. Publications and Dissemination

Academic dissemination has been a central purpose of the IGU CSRS since its origins. Most of the early colloquia developed conference proceeding books which took considerable time to publish after the respective colloquia. Further, in many countries a proceedings book is not considered a legitimate scientific publication. For these reasons, in recent conferences it was decided that the outcomes of the presentations held in the colloquia would be published in peer-reviewed conference proceedings and peer-reviewed papers in ranked scientific journals (commonly, by means of a special issue). A weakness of the latter is that they

appear after the event and 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 recent years by the IGU CSRS SC. Hence, the current publications reflect different choices made between the IGU CSRS SC and the respective local organising committee of the colloquia that are annually held.

D1. Publications Derived from Previous Colloquia Appeared in 2023 or in Process of Edition

- From the 30th IGU CSRS Colloquium held in 2023, a special issue of *Czasopismo Geograficzne* (*Geographical Journal* in Polish) was published in 2024, available at <https://ptgeo.org.pl/en/2021-2/> (volume 95, issue 3, 2024).
- From the 31st IGU CSRS Colloquium held in 2024, a special issue of *Boletín de Estudios Geográficos* (<https://revistas.uncu.edu.ar/ojs3/index.php/beg>) is being prepared by a committee consisting of Dr Fiona Haslam McKenzie, Dr Aleksandar Lukić, Dr Valerià Paül, Dr Fernando Ruiz Peyré and Dr Cornelia Steinhäuser. Currently individual authors are being contacted in order to notice the willingness to submit their papers to the special issue whose publication is scheduled for mid-2016.

The IGU CSRS Co-Chairs kindly encourage the editors of these publications to send hard copies of these texts, if they do exist, to the IGU Archive in Leipzig (Archiv für Geographie, Leibniz-Institut für Länderkunde/Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography).

D2. Rural Geography Textbook

As reported in section A3, a textbook on Rural Geography produced by the IGU CSRS is under discussion, Dr Aleksandar Lukić (Croatia) acting as editor of this book with a deadline for 2026.

There are no multi-authored textbooks on Rural Geography embracing the main Rural Geography themes with authors from several countries and different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The structure will consist of 10-12 chapters, every chapter with a global reading list necessarily covering English and non-English references to embrace relevant citations at an international scale, considering both the Global South and the Global North. The book chapters will be co-authored.

D3. 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>. The website was updated twice in 2024 but the call for the conference to be held in the Philippines still need to be included (see sections B2 and F).

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

This social network is constantly updated by Suk Kyeong Kang (Turkey) to be contacted via ecoksk@gmail.com or skang@ohu.edu.tr

E-mail list igu-csrs@okayama-u.ac.jp

This e-mail list is maintained from Okayama University. The e-mails are filtered by Doo-Chul Kim (Japan).

F. Accountability

Part of the IGU funds received for 2020 and 2021 were earmarked for updating the IGU CSRS website up to 2024. This was done in 2024 twice and the pending payment for 2023 and 2024 to the technicians was delivered in due course.

The IGU funds received for 2024, plus the remaining funds of the IGU Commission Excellence Award 2021 granted in April 2022 administered at the University of Santiago de Compostela, were transferred to the local organising committee of the 31st IGU CSRS Colloquium held in Mendoza (Argentina) in 2024 to cover partially the Ana Firmino's Scholarships granted in 2024. From the University of Santiago de Compostela directly several

costs were covered via the travel agent, mainly the travel expenses of the Ana Firmino's Scholarships granted to two PhD students from Brazil and Mexico.

Submitted by



Valerià Paül



Fiona Haslam McKenzie

Santiago de Compostela and Perth, 14 February, 2025