



## **Colloquium of the Commission on the Sustainability of Rural Systems of the International Geographical Union**

# **Sustainability of Rural Systems: Balancing Heritage and Innovation, Liege (Belgium, 17-22 July 2016)**

We are pleased to invite submission of proposals for communication at the next meeting of the IGU Commission on the Sustainability of Rural Systems. The 24<sup>th</sup> Colloquium of the Commission will take place in Liege (Belgium) from the 17<sup>th</sup> July to the 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2016, under the title “Sustainability of Rural Systems: Balancing Heritage and Innovation”.

Belgium is a highly populated country with a long history of land exploitation. The landscape is modified through human impact, shaped by diverse agricultural practices, early urbanization and industrialization, the exploitation of quarries and mines and the dense development of canals, railways and motorway networks. Nevertheless, rural areas are important because farming activities, which are increasingly mechanized and technologically based, contribute to economic activity, especially to Belgian exports. Agriculture plays an important role in maintaining open space and offering many services, which may be called agroservices, to the new residents of the countryside and people seeking recreation. Due to this long history and sophisticated technological responses to different issues, Belgium is a suitable place to reflect on sustainability and how to balance cultural and natural heritage and innovation with special reference to the ecological and social dimensions.

### **Thematic sessions**

The thematic sessions will address the following six themes: New technologies and the new rural ways of life; Agronomic innovations and their social and environmental impacts; From ecosystem services to agroservices; Energy issues in rural areas; Multifunctional forests and countryside; Tourism and recreation.

#### **1) New technologies and the new rural ways of life**

*Key words: NICT – remoteness – new rural way of life*

With the development and proliferation of new information and communication technologies, the remoteness of some areas of the countryside is less important than heretofore. New economic activities are possible including, for instance, those relating to light industry or to call services. New consumption of services is also possible. These technologies change daily life and rural culture. This session aims to bring together international case studies and theoretical reflections concerning this transition in order to shed light on the new rural ways of life including new opportunities, risks and challenges for the countryside.

## **2) Agronomic innovations and their social and environmental impacts**

*Key words: research and innovations – sustainability – preservation-inclusiveness*

Agricultural practices, including organic agriculture, are increasingly linked with agronomic research and innovations. This session aims to discuss the social and environmental impacts of these innovations in order to attain more effectively the sustainability of countryside systems. Innovation impacts on the landscape and leads to consideration of the preservation of some landscapes as heritage. It may also have an important impact on rural society, including the extent to which farmers are included in rural life.

## **3) From ecosystem services to agroservices**

*Key words: agroservices – agroecosystems*

The concept of ecosystem services is acknowledged nowadays as an important way to promote sustainable development and increase awareness of the roles of nature in human activities. The session aims to reflect on the importance of agriculture to human activities and to consider the pertinence of the concept of agroservices.

## **4) Energy issues in rural areas**

*Key words: energy production – smart development - landscape*

In recent decades energy production has assumed renewed importance in the countryside after a period of marked centralization. However, due to the distribution of wind, solar, and water power resources, some rural areas are experiencing significant reuse of land, which is both an opportunity for the local economy and an injustice if it results in spoiling the rural landscape in order to produce energy for cities and industrial areas that may be located a great distance away. Case studies including smart developments are particularly welcome.

## **5) Multifunctional forests and the countryside**

*Key words: rural capital – functions – management*

In many regions both forests and agricultural lands are multifunctional. Different activities are based on the services these forms of rural capital can offer. For instance, besides the economic function of the forest, recreation and environmental functions are increasingly acknowledged in forest management. The countryside is a place of production and commodification where the symbolic value of 'countryside' is in debate.

## **6) Tourism and recreation**

*Key words: touristic innovation – visitors in rural areas*

Tourism and recreation are becoming important activities from an economic point of view in many parts of the world. An increasing number of people spend considerable time and economic resources on these activities. Tourism is seen as an opportunity for many rural areas; however the positive impacts may not be so evident. What kind of innovation (social, economic, technological) could enhance the satisfaction of the visitor and ensure a positive impact for the rural community? Case studies and proposals for a research agenda should enrich this session.

## **Fieldwork**

Three days of fieldwork will deal with the above themes and include one-day discussion at the Libramont agricultural, forestry and agri-food fair that welcomes more than 200,000 visitors each year.

## **Location and venue**

Liege is an historical city and an urban agglomeration of 400.000 inhabitants. It is the main city of Wallonia (French speaking Belgium). Liege is situated 100 km south east of Brussels and next to the borders of The Netherlands and Germany. Several airports are connected by train to the city: Brussels airport, Brussels-South-Charleroi airport (mainly European low cost airlines), Frankfurt, Düsseldorf, Köln, Amsterdam and Paris Charles de Gaulle. Several types of accommodation are available, from luxury hotels to youth hostel and rooms in the university residence.

## **Calendar 2016**

Proposal of communication by March 1<sup>st</sup>

Communication of the decision of acceptance March 21<sup>st</sup>

Registration before May 31<sup>th</sup>

Early bird Registration by April 15<sup>th</sup>

## **Abstracts**

Authors are invited to submit abstracts under the themes given above but are not limited to these themes. Abstracts will be sent for review and participants will be informed by 21<sup>st</sup> March whether an abstract has been accepted. Inclusion of an abstract in the Colloquium Handbook is dependent on receipt of the Registration Fee by 31<sup>st</sup> May.

Abstracts of no more than 300 words in length should be sent to Charline.Dubois@ulg.ac.be by March 1<sup>st</sup>, using the following format:

Language: English or French

Font: Times New Roman 12pt

Spacing: single spacing

Alignment: all text should be left aligned

Title of paper: Uppercase

Title and name of author/s: in bold; title, first name followed by surname in capitals; followed by the institutional address in plain text; and email address in italics

Corresponding author: if different from the first author, write in brackets after the name

Institutional affiliation: the institutional affiliation of each author should be given

Endnotes or sub scripts: should not be used

Please note: faxed abstracts will not be accepted

## **Registration fee**

Full registration: 500€ (Participation of the Conference and Fieldwork, Conference materials, Daily Coffee Breaks, Daily lunches, Welcome Reception and Conference Dinners)

Early Bird: 390€ (by April 15<sup>th</sup>)

Early Bird: PhD Student and scholar from UN developing regions 300€ (by April 15<sup>th</sup>)

## **Proceedings**

Following the colloquium, and subject to peer review and selection, an opportunity will be given to include papers in two special issues of *Belgeo* and *BSGLg* in 2017. Both Belgian journals are peer reviewed and indexed by Scopus. Details relating to submission will be circulated later.

The book of abstracts will be published on-line.

## **Outline Timetable**

The conference starts on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> July with the registration of the delegates, an introduction to the Belgian context, and a walking tour of Liege

Monday 18<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> July will focus on the paper sessions and a first field visit to the Pays de Herve, a multifunctional green area inside the urban ring where a dynamic process of transformation is in progress with regard to food production.

Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> July will be dedicated to the region of Ghent, with a focus on managing agriculture and nature in the urbanized Flemish landscape. A short walking tour of Ghent will be included.

Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> July will be allocated to the study of multifunctional forests in the Ardennes (around Vielsalm)

Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> July will provide opportunities for discussion with actors during the agricultural, forestry and agri-food fair of Libramont.

## **Organizing Committee**

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