

RIO+20 – UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

JUNE 2012, RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL

20 years after the first United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992) and 10 years after the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002), an important event in terms of future directions for a sustainable world took place in June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, known as Rio+20 – **the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, or Rio+20 Earth Summit**.

Two major themes were debated in Rio: the Green Economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, as well as the institutional framework for sustainable development, the Summit main objective being to renew the political commitment to sustainable development, to assess the progress obtained by the provisions stipulated in existing documents and to identify gaps in the implementation process, as well as to address new and emerging global challenges.

The Summit focused on 7 priority areas, actually the challenges that world society has to face nowadays: jobs, energy, sustainable cities, food security and sustainable agriculture, water, oceans and disasters, among the other key domains emphasis was placed on firm actions such as: climate change, forests and biodiversity, land degradation and desertification, mountains, chemicals and waste, sustainable consumption and production, mining, education, etc.

The main outcome of the Rio+20 summit was the document entitled “**The Future We Want**”, which comprises 283 issues focused on renewing the government commitment to sustainable development and to promote the sustainable future of the planet in terms of the three dimensions of the sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. The document recognise that poverty is the main global threat and that poverty eradication and hunger should be an urgent concern. The six parts of the Rio Summit outcome document refer to renewing the political commitment of the Rio principles and past action plans; green economy in the context of SD and poverty eradication; institutional framework, future actions and means of implementation.

There were more than 500 side-events organised in Rio de Janeiro associated to the Summit, one of them being attended by members of the Institute of Geography: World Symposium on Sustainable Development at Universities (WSSD-U-2012), June 5–6, 2012, attended by 120 participants from 26 countries. The event focused on the challenges universities worldwide are facing in order to achieve and promote sustainability principles, to document and disseminate information, ideas and experiences acquired in terms of curriculum innovation, research, activities and practical projects. The papers presented at the event were published in the volume “Sustainable Development at Universities: New Horizons” (the Peter Lang Scientific Publishers book series “Environmental Education, Communication and Sustainability”, 2012).

Mihaela Sima

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON “*GEOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH AND CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION WITHIN THE LOWER BASIN OF THE DANUBE*”

SEPTEMBER 20–23, 2012, EGER, HUNGARY

On September 20–23, 2012, Eger played host to the Second Romanian-Bulgarian-Hungarian-Serbian International Conference on *Geographical research and cross-border cooperation within the Lower basin of the Danube*, organised jointly by the Department of Economic and Social Geography of the University of Szeged with universities and institutes from Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia. The Institute of Geography of the Romanian Academy was one of the co-organisers. The first international conference on this topic had been organised by the University of Craiova, Romania, in the year 2000.

The Conference included several communication sessions. After the welcome address of the hosts, Tamás Hardi opened up the plenary session with an overview on urban network changes along the Middle and the Lower course of the Danube since the period of transition. Other communications discussed European Territorial Cohesion; the low flow of some Danubian tributaries; population trends and challenges in Serbia.

The Conference topics were grouped by three main sections: *Nations, Borders, Tourism; Climate Change, Hazard and Risks; People, Cities, Sustainable Development*. The participants presented their results on issues of cross-border cooperation and the role of tourism, floodplain management, sources of water pollution in the Serbian Danube Valley, competitiveness and sustainable development of small towns, estimations of the economic impact of climate change on human health, etc.

The posters section tackled complex issues, e.g. eco-efficiency of the energy system, considerations on the quality of life in settlements, development-induced displacement, socio-economic potential, the effect of urban vegetation, the mountain landscape, tourism development strategy, etc.

The event included a two-day trip. The first trip (September 22) took us to Eger – Aggtelek (dripstone cave / stalagmite cave) – Rožňava (sightseeing) – Betliar (Castle) – Bódvalenke (painted gypsy village) – Rudabánya (former open cast mine's lake) – Eger. The second trip (September 23) was devoted to sightseeing in Eger (city centre – Minaret – Castle).

The Conference, attended by scientific researchers and university staff from Hungary, Romania, Serbia, and Macedonia, closed with an invitation for the next meeting on cross-border cooperation within the Lower basin of the Danube to be held in Serbia in two-years' time.

Mihaela Persu