

IGU  
International Geographical Union – Union Geographique Internationale

GLOBILITY COMMISSION

“Global Change and Human Mobility”  
“Les échanges mondiaux et la mobilité des populations”

Chair's greetings

Dear colleagues and friends

Together with Yoshitaka Ishikawa I am delighted to welcome you again aboard of Globility. I would like to offer few considerations on the work done in the past and to present some proposals for the programme of the International Geographical Union (IGU) Commission on Global Change and Human Mobility for the term 2009-2012.

In the year 2000 in Seoul, Korea, IGU has decided to establish a new Commission in order to consider the processes of change our societies have faced from the beginning of the new century. Our lifestyles, our enterprises, our cities, our institutions are evolving in order to adapt to all the new elements of the process of change. Globility has recognised human mobility as one of the key elements in the current social and economic transformations. Research is vital in order to understand the ongoing changes, essential is to confront the results of our studies with scientists from all the regions and the continents.

Since the year 2000 Globility tried to keep informed colleagues from most of the universities and research institutes all over the world. The Globility Web Site – set up thanks to the support of Kyoto University – has helped to establish and maintain a scientific network of more than one hundred scientists from all the continents. In the period 2000 – 2008 Globility has organised eleven conferences in Korea, Italy, USA, South Africa, Mongolia, Spain, United Kingdom, Australia, China and Tunisia. In order to widen as much as possible the participation in particular of young scholars and colleagues from Africa, Asia and Latin America, Globility has never requested – whenever it was the only responsible of the meeting organisation – a conference fee; on the contrary, several services and facilities have been made available free of charge. This was possible due to the commitment and the intense activities of the local organisers-Globility members.

The Globility Commission considers issues that are quite innovative and not always included as such in the research agenda of geography departments and faculties. Globility studies are hindered by the difficulty in correctly detecting and researching the phenomenon at a general level. The phenomenon can be better analysed on a local scale. Every territory activates original mobility processes with characteristics and implications which do not occur in the same way elsewhere. If each place is a separate case, then at international level general qualitative conditions can be identified, but certainly not homogeneous definitions and characteristics in quantitative terms. The local level and the territory become the favoured parameters for the observation of global flows. Indeed, at this level it can be better assessed to what extent the economic development of a location determines the activation of population flows – whether temporary or permanent – and vice versa, that is, to what degree these flows contribute to development process in its various stages.

For all these reasons it was considered appropriate to only partially renew the Globility Executive. William Clark (USA), Tamara Galkina (Russia), Russel King (UK), Yoshitaka Ishikawa (Japan) and myself offered to contribute to the Commission Executive also for the next term. New persons accepted to join from Africa: Brij Maharaj (South Africa), America: Helion Povia Neto (Brazil), Asia: Boris A. Portnov (Israel), Europe: Krisjane Zaiga (Latvia) and Christian Vandermotten (Belgium).

During the 2009 meetings in Gran Canaria, Spain (June), and in Bratislava, Slovak Republic (August), it was decided to favour as much as possible exchanges of ideas, methodologies, and concepts in order to contribute to the building of a Globility methodology. It has been also suggested to circulate, if possible, programmes for project proposals, draft questionnaires, systems for merging the results of qualitative and quantitative analysis. The web site – under the responsibility of Yoshitaka Ishikawa at Kyoto University – has been since the launching of Globility a perfect instrument of information for new comers and of communication for members. It will continue at its high standard level and will be regularly updated. At least a meeting a year will be organised for Globility members and for those interested in its methodological approach. Also during the period 2008-2012 a major effort will be made in order to reduce costs – as for instance organising meetings in university premises – and to cover general uncontrollable costs al local level – as for instance asking the assistance of sponsors – in such a way that it will not be necessary to request fees for participation. During the year 2010 a meeting will be organised in Israel during the IGU Regional Congress. Other possibilities have been considered for the years 2011 and 2012 and

further information will be circulated later. In 2012 Globility Sessions will be organised during the IGU Congress which will be held in Cologne (Germany).

Globility membership has been continuously expanding. More than 100 members from 50 countries represent well scientific approaches of different cultural traditions. Supported by the achievements of the previous (2004-2008) activities, Globility has kept the mission to answer the following questions: (i) what are the necessary conditions for a change in the dimensions and characteristics of international mobility? Is there sufficient empirical evidence of this change? (ii) is there an indication of the need for a new dialectic between the global and local dimensions? Is it possible to create a model to interpret how human mobility constitutes an element of connection between the local and global dimensions? (iii) what are the implications of the new forms of mobility? What are their causes and effects? (iv) what are the characteristics and dimensions of the changes relating to mobility? (v) what are the interactions among the identified forms of mobility? Is it possible to found a new theory of human mobility? Can a satisfactory empirical analysis be conducted on the basis of this new theorisation?

Finally, I would like to thank the colleagues who have been contributing to the programme of Globility and who actively participated in its management for the work carried out. I wish you all the best for this new term and a major success in your scientific career, hopefully boosted by the results of our common activities.

Looking forward to meeting you all at the next Globility meetings.

Yours Sincerely

Armando Montanari, Chairman