



UNIGIS Amsterdam Newsletter

Winter 2004

UNIGIS impressions from Henk Scholten

The time has come around again for another newsletter, and as we approach the end of the year we look back with pleasure at the many activities which have taken place since our summer newsletter.

In this issue you can read about, amongst other activities, our special summer schools in Salzburg, Goa, and of course in Amsterdam. Then we had a very fruitful event here in September when several of our MSc students made presentations of their work to alumni, family and friends.

This is also a good time to renew contact with old friends and colleagues. We would like to remind you all that (due to past admin problems) we have lost the contact details of some of our old students. If any of you are in contact with them, please ask them to mail us so that we can keep in touch with them in the future.

And finally we look forward to many activities and developments as we move into 2005. The dates which are already fixed for early in the year are shown below, but we know that there will be more on offer as the year proceeds so keep looking for new information on our website.

We wish you all a happy festive season and best wishes for 2005. For those of you actively studying with UNIGIS we also wish you success with your study.

Important dates:

Information session for new students

Friday, 4 February 2005, 14.00 – 16.00

Please let your colleagues know!

Introductory Workshop Intake March 2005

Friday, 11 March 2005, 09.00 – 17.00

Start of the new Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma course

UNIGIS Workshop II

May 23rd to 26th, 2005

Amsterdam Netherlands

www.feweb.vu.nl/unigis

UNIGIS Workshop III

June 13th to 16th, 2005 Amsterdam, Netherlands

www.feweb.vu.nl/unigis

Upcoming events:

International GIS Study Journey

"Geo-standardisation in the E-world", 13-16 March 2005 in the UK

Map India

4-8 February 2005, New Delhi, India

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Activities

Graduation ceremony and Alumni event

From Margaret Jones & Eleni Koulouki

MSc graduation Ceremony, September 2004

First and foremost in the meeting was the public defense of their research by four of our recent MSc graduates. We heard from:

Han Slotman - "The basis for basis registration"; Sjaak van Popering - "The quality of Geo-information in theory and practice"; Patrick Strootman - "The efficiency of a standardised geographical model"; Herman Schultz - "Financial consequences of changing the local zoning plan process".



They all duly received their MSc degrees, in front of their family and supporters. The Postgraduate Diploma was awarded to Frits Wegenwijs. Rosan van Wilgenburg gave a presentation on the subject of GeoMarketing.

After some discussion to round off the session, the afternoon closed on a social note, with drinks and snacks, together with the fresh MSc graduates, their relatives and friends and quite a number of UNIGIS alumni.



New Intake, September 2004

We had a new group of 8 students who started the Certificate/Diploma programme this September. They had a morning workshop at the VU, and after lunching with us they were invited to join the audience during the afternoon's Alumni Meeting and MSc Graduation ceremony.



News on InterGIS

InterGIS Standard Curriculum for GIScience Education **From S. Shahnawaz**

International cooperation for GIScience Education (InterGIS – www.gis-learning.net) is a project aimed at improving and standardising GIScience education in the European Union and South Asia. It is an initiative of the three UNIGIS-based European GIS-Labs from University of Salzburg, Austria (Coordinator); University of Girona, Spain and Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam, Netherlands in cooperation with Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India; Goa University, India and University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka. The project is co-funded by the European Commission under Asia Link Programme for 2 years beginning in May 2003 and completing in April 2005.

The 2 main objectives of the project are, (1) develop a standard curriculum for GIScience education; and accordingly (2) develop human resources at partner institutions and beyond. A series of activities is designed for achieving each objective by fostering direct and indirect participation of a large number of current and future educators from a range of educational institutions as well as the experts from related industry. Beginning with review of existing curricula and following further steps, the first draft of the common baseline curriculum has been completed. It has been widely circulated in South Asia and European Union for content and quality assessment and the feedback will be incorporated in the final version.

The curriculum addresses postgraduate level students having completed the first degree from any discipline with spatial perspective like geography, geology, planning, ecology, forestry, etc. The learners from other study programmes like computer science or social sciences will require to re-orient their previously acquired skills and to combine these with GIScience. The curriculum aims at imparting management level knowledge,

qualifying GIS-professionals as work-group, division and project leaders etc. The practical and operational skills are therefore of lesser importance than acquiring a broader expert perspective on GeoInformatics. The students are expected to develop a sound understanding about where and why to apply GIS and should be able to direct and/or lead others on the operational levels.

The current version of the curriculum is designed primarily for two-year Master-level courses taught in residential as well as distance learning modes. It contains nine compulsory “modules” each of which has 15 lessons with stated learning objectives. Each module includes 5-7 Self-assessed exercises and 5-7 Tutor-assessed assignments and will require a minimum of 90 student work hours (and valued at 8 credit units in the European Credit Transfer System). In addition, students will have to take a minimum of 2 optional modules and complete a Master thesis.

In order to ‘develop human resources’, 5 international learning/training events have been planned. Four of these have been completed the concluding one is scheduled from 6-8 February 2005 in Delhi, India.

You will read more about the completed events in the next sections!



Activities

Health Geography and GIS

From Mathilde Molendijk

We just finalised a brand new course on Health Geography and GIS for daytime students of BSc Health Sciences and MSc Biomedical Sciences (Infectious Diseases) of the Vrije Universiteit.

The students were introduced to the role that GIS and Geography can play within health sciences. They had to work out practical assignments on the use of GIS for the monitoring and prevention of malaria in Brazil; and on the use of GIS for the strategic planning of the distribution of healthcare in the Netherlands. As you can expect from us, the students had to present their results, they wrote papers and they made impressive websites on the topic. The course was evaluated very positively and seems to meet a new demand. Currently, we are preparing a plan together with the UNIGIS colleagues from the U.K. and others to prepare an UNIGIS module on GIS and Health. If you are interested in contributing in any way to this development, please don't hesitate to contact us. Your input will be greatly appreciated.



GIS conference 2004

Once a year ESRI Netherlands organise a GIS conference in Rotterdam. So there was in September this year a conference with the theme "Ruimte voor wonen"*. During two whole days GIS specialists had the opportunity to discuss Space and GIS issues, attend lectures, workshops and short sessions in the GIS Theatre. As always the discussions continued between the sessions, at lunch and among the exhibition stands and while visiting the Map Gallery. Naturally UNIGIS was there, together with our colleagues from the other Dutch GIS institutions to welcome our students and to inform new applicants about our programme.

On the second day ESRI was so kind as to allow us a special reunion in order to welcome our InterGIS colleagues from Asia and to bring them in contact with our (ex) students in the Netherlands.

* Space for Living

SPINlab organised a course on Location Based Services

The Spatial Information Laboratory (SPINlab) of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam in cooperation with Geodan Mobile Solutions organized a course on **Location Based Services (LBS)** on August 25th during the ANMI Summer School 2004.

During this full-immersion day with technology, market, and innovation experts, the course provided:



- a comprehensive understanding of the science, technology and developments in LBS
- the drivers and barriers to the introduction of location services
- the added value of these services
- the privacy issues related to LBS, and
- the direction of LBS developments in the research world as well as in consumer, entertainment and industrial applications.

The course included case studies of applications, testimonials from the LBS research and industry, as well as live demonstrations and applications of LBS. The course was organized with the cooperation of Oracle Corporation, CapGemini and telecom operators.

International GIS Study Journey "Geo-standardisation in the E-world" *13-16 March 2005*

After last year's successful trip to Germany (see our earlier newsletter, December 2003 for a report), ESRI Nederland, Geo-Informatie Nederland and of course UNIGIS, are organising a new Study Journey in 2005. This time the destination will be the U.K.

The trip will include working visits to the Ordnance Survey (national mapping agency) in Southampton, the Office of National Statistics, the City University in London and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

The trip will be particularly interesting for participants from organisations where the exchange of geodata is very important.

The application form can be found on the website: www.geo-info.nl

The Puzzle

Something different this time – a little word game, but really the language is not very important. Each column is a set of words, which are connected; they form a series from top to bottom. Look carefully at the letters, choose in each word two letters; once you spot the pattern you can fill in most of the missing letters to read a message in line 5:

then	celebrates	lesson	cup-tie
hospice	better	sheets	past
surf-shop	thumbprint	evidence	atmospherics
flag-days	bath-soap	deaf-mute	push
****	*****	****	*****
oratorio	intend	rodeo	importing

Hint 1: discover the pattern by starting with the two middle letters of the first words.



Workshops & Summer Schools

InterGIS Summer Schools

Digital Terrain Modelling

Salzburg

From Patrick Brooijmans

From 22 to 29 September the Digital Terrain Modelling Summer School was held at the Salzburg University. Because of the simple fact that digital terrain modelling serves many purposes in the military world we decided to participate in this Summer School.

On the Wednesday the icebreaker and introduction was held at the 'hotel' (a former monastery). All in all some 40 participants were present plus some tutors and students from Salzburg University. Prof. Joseph Strobl held an introductory talk and welcomed us to Salzburg.

The next day the program kicked off with an introduction to the Summer School and an overview of data sources and terrain data acquisition. This took the whole day, which was concluded with a city walk in the pouring rain. The walk finished at one of the many beer stubes in Salzburg where we socialised with the students of Salzburg.

Wayne Forsythe from Ryerson University, Canada spent the Friday morning on terrain visualisation and DEM cartography. The afternoon was spent in the GIS laboratory to get some hands on experience terrain visualisation using either Geomedia or ArcGIS software. In the evening a bus tour was organised and again the rain was pouring down.

Saturday morning started with a lecture on terrain analysis and the afternoon was spent in the GIS laboratory on terrain analysis using Geomedia or ArcGIS. In the evening one of the invited lectures

was given by Lucian Dragut of Cluj University.

Sunday morning there was time to do some sightseeing, but most participants slept in because of the long discussions on DTM on Saturday evening in one of Salzburgs many bars. The afternoon was spent in the GIS laboratory again. The group using Geomedia the day before was now using ArcGIS and vice versa. At the end of the afternoon there was an invited lecture by Guoan Tang from Nanjing University in China.

Monday morning kicked off with an industry lecture on photogrammetry and LIDAR by a company named Inpho. The afternoon was spent on getting hands on experience with SRTM data and a lecture on DEM production with ASTER data. Mahender Kotha concluded the day with a lecture on multivariate statistical methods from Goa University.

On Tuesday Bentley Corporation held a lecture on using digital terrain data in CAD software for engineering and construction purposes. Milap Chand Sharma from JNU, Delhi, concluded lecture part of the Summer School. The Summer School was ended by a group discussion on several DTM topics and this was one of the most interesting parts of the Summer School. In the evening a farewell party with barbecue was held at the University.

The Summer School was very well organised by Salzburg University, the standard was very good and there was a little bit of everything. There were lectures on DTM, practical sessions, industry presentations and invited lectures explaining the use of DEM's in research. We learned a lot about digital terrain modelling and try to teach our own organisation the advantages and disadvantages of digital terrain



Workshops & Summer Schools

modelling. We also had lively and fruitful discussions on all sorts of topics with the other participants, which were from 7-10 different countries. Most of the lectures can be downloaded from the Internet from the following website: http://www.zgis.at/ss_dtm.

GIScience for Coastal Zone Management

Goa, India

From Rosan van Wilgenburg



As an UNIGIS student I had the opportunity, together with Johan Keurentjes (Kadaster) and Mathilde Molendijk (UNIGIS Staff) to join the InterGIS Summer School in Goa. InterGIS is a project sponsored by the Asian link programme of the European Union. Three European and three Asian universities join the project. The aim of InterGIS is to establish co-operation and to draw up a general GIS learning curriculum.



This Summer School (Oct. 29 – 31) was hosted by Goa University and with approximately 60 participants from all over Asia and Europe we studied GIScience for Coastal Zone Management. The first day of the Summer School consisted of introductory lectures. Day 2 and 3 were spent on workshops: GPS, Erdas and IDRISI.

Apart from the extra GIS knowledge, the Summer School offered a great opportunity to listen to the experienced lecturers and to interact with GIS specialists with various backgrounds and cultures. Also speaking to other participants during the breaks and dinners gave a lot of insight into GIS education in other countries. And of course there was plenty of time to explore the Indian coastal zone!



Land Use Modelling

South Asian guests help model Dutch land use

Amsterdam

From Jasper Dekkers and Eric Koomen

The Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam hosted the second part of the InterGIS Summer School from September 30 to October 2. The first part of this *Summer School* was organised in Salzburg and is described in this newsletter by our two Dutch UNIGIS students who attended Willem Steenis and Patrick Brooijmans. The background to the InterGIS-project is described more extensively in a previous newsletter. The central theme of the Amsterdam workshop was “land use modelling”. It was attended by around 20 people, consisting of students, staff-members and employees from India, Sri Lanka, Austria, Spain and the Netherlands.

The first day, the participants of the workshop were invited to the annual



Workshops & Summer Schools

ESRI GIS-conference in Rotterdam. Afterwards, the group made a guided GIS tour around the world's largest harbour, which was highly appreciated by all participants.

The second day began with an introductory lecture on land use modelling in general: various concepts of modelling land use were introduced and some examples discussed. Next, the Land Use Scanner model was presented, followed by an individual hands-on exploration of the model. After some practice, most participants were able to alter the model settings and build their own scenario of future land use for the Netherlands.

On Saturday all participants had to actually demonstrate their knowledge. Therefore, the Unigis-method of testing the expertise acquired was adopted: the participants were divided into groups of three and had to complete and present a modelling assignment. The groups were asked to model the future of the Netherlands in 2030. Based on an extensive description of future developments, they had to select how to model these developments.

A crucial element in this assignment was the selection of the appropriate spatial data and the subsequent assignment of relative weights to these datasets. The results were impressive! Within one day and without any prior knowledge of either land use modelling or the Netherlands itself, the groups were able to produce plausible maps of future land use in our country. It was clear that groups with identical scenario's could come up with contrasting results, which taught us

something about the



importance of the 'human expert' factor in this type of modelling. The workshop was concluded with a certificate ceremony on a canal-boat trip. For our South-Asian guests especially, this was a highlight of their trip.

Workshops 2005

In the mood for your next workshop? In 2005 we will organize two workshops again, make sure to register on time and have finished the required modules!

Workshop II

from Monday 23 May 2005 to Thursday 26 May 2005

Workshop III

from Monday 13 June 2005 to Thursday 16 June 2005

Register now on the UNIGIS website!



MSc news

MSc students

From Margaret Jones

As reported already, our recently successful MSc students were invited to come to the University for a Graduation Ceremony. They each presented their work to an audience including both UNIGIS people (past and present) and their family and friends.

We have also had two more students successfully complete their studies, both from South Africa: Inge Netterberg and Richard Kaufholz. Inge researched the topic "GIS and Ecological Networks". She made a special trip here from South Africa to present her work. And Richard presented his dissertation on "Building Densities". Richard was working here for a year, and managed to complete the requirements for his MSc just before his departure.



There are other students busy working on their research, and some prospective students who may start soon.

News of an MSc graduate

From Richard Kaufholz

Since graduating, I have had three (sunny) months to reflect on my work done in Amsterdam. Most difficult, I have found, has been letting go of the entire experience and moving on to something new. In a positive light, this is a sure sign of the influence my study and time in Holland had on my life. I have also spent many hours debating what it is exactly that I would like to continue with (job, academics, etc.), but do realise what a wonderful array of options an MSc gives me. As I while away in the sun over Christmas, I am rather optimistic that I will stumble across a good opportunity and who knows, maybe I'll have to prepare to brave the cold of Europe once more!

Vrolijke Kerstmis en een gelukkig nieuwe jaar voor iedereen!!



People

New colleagues

We are **Diana Henriques** and **Paulo Rosa**, coming from Portugal, more precisely from sunny Lisbon. At the present time we are doing an internship (with the duration of 4 months) at the Vrije

Universiteit, working in a project related to Land use



research at the SPINlab, and also making an interactive CD for UNIGIS Amsterdam.

We completed our environmental engineering studies a year ago, in the New University of Lisbon, following the health-engineering branch. Afterwards we worked and collaborated in research projects related to environment and new information technologies in GASA (Environmental Systems Analysis Group of the New University of Lisbon), the Portuguese Geographical Institute and the company YDreams.

Time goes fast, so we only have two more months to enjoy and learn from this experience, which so far has been great.

Xevi left

For the last nine months, Xevi Turró I Palé from UNIGIS Spain was working at the SPINlab helping us design the new SPINlab website. Xevi created also the websites of some of our bigger projects.

In November Xevi returned to Girona where he is tutor and webmaster.

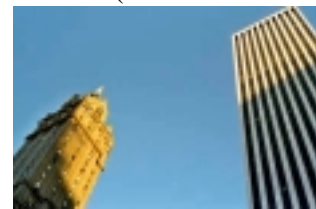
Eduardo in NY

*Start spreadin' the news, I'm leavin' today
I want to be a part of it, New York, New York*

The only difference between me and the start of the song is that I am already in New York. I left Amsterdam last month to embrace a huge challenge: To live in the big apple for a few months, while working at the United Nations in a border demarcation project. I am responsible for the high-resolution satellite imagery preparation. On my previous research in geo-visualization, I acquired some experience with high-resolution images. There, the main goal was to produce visualization alternatives that would aid geo-perception and spatial thinking. This time, the main issue is Accuracy!

I always thought of New York as an immense city, a hard world on its own. But living here I realized the city is very pleasant and, I almost dare say, small. Small in the good sense, the sense that we can walk almost everywhere and even meet the same familiar faces over and over again.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from Snowy New York (it's not snowing yet, but with this cold, by the time you read this NY will be dressed in white for sure).



Alumni news

Alumni snippets from Bart Kusse

Snippets, thoughts.

It is getting colder, days are getting shorter, getting darker, so, the time of the year to recap all that has happened this year and bring up some ideas for next year.

Last year we celebrated our 10th anniversary and tried to establish an alumni forum to provide the possibility for graduates to stay in touch with the UNIGIS programme. Especially since this *can* provide you with an opportunity to stay in touch with the development of the programme, relations with other universities, and also for new students to learn from your experiences. As you may have read in this newsletter there have been quite a number of events throughout this year, such as at the graduation ceremony in September, which was planned to keep you up to date and provide the forum for networking. However, it resulted that time was too short for the lecture and dialogue. Nevertheless, the alumni who were present had the possibility of networking.

Now looking forward into the future: what do we have in store for you next year?

Well, to be honest, this also depends on what **you** want, because we can provide you with the venue and the organisation, but you need to help us with the topic you would like to hear about and perhaps a speaker. There has already been one entry for this, so “let’s hear it”. Other applicants can register at the email-address below.



Furthermore I think the coming year will be an interesting one from the point of view of GIS. This because it is expected that in 2005 many innovative GIS projects will start. From the alumni point of view this is also particularly interesting, since we have been discussing the new GIS innovations for several years now and finally there seems to be a basis for this. For those of you who are still working with GIS, this can also provide some topics.

So from a GIS view a lot will be happening next year. I sincerely hope to see you next year and have a chance to speak to one another.

Happy holidays to you all and a GIS-full 2005.

PS: We’ll be expecting a lot of emails from you at unigis@feweb.vu.nl .



NEWS

❖ New telephone / fax numbers

From December 2004 the VU telephone and fax numbers will change. Our new numbers will start with **020-598** instead of **020-444**. We kindly ask you to use our new numbers from now on:

Phone: 31 20 5986099

Fax: 31 20 5986004

❖ FAQ section on the UNIGIS website

After five years of intensive use of the UNIGIS website and thanks to the feedback of our students we have created now a new section of **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**. Here the tutors and the UNIGIS administration will put all questions about the modules, assignments, software and practical things.

This way we hope that the students will get easier and faster an answer to their questions without having to contact the UNIGIS Amsterdam Office first.

However not all questions will appear in this section, so please do not hesitate to contact us if you have specific questions.

On behalf of the UNIGIS team
we wish you



Puzzle solution:

Take the middle two letters from each word, and they form the first and last letters of the next word downwards.

The hidden message:

GOOD HOLIDAYS FROM UNIGIS

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Your contribution

In future editions of the newsletter we would like to include input from our readers: students, ex-students (alumni), staff. So please write to us if you have anything to say relating to UNIGIS or the GIS world – we shall be happy to hear from you.

Send the input to unigis@feweb.vu.nl under the subject 'newsletter'.

Colophon

The UNIGIS Newsletter is published two times a year and is freely distributed among UNIGIS students and related companies all over the world.

Editors: Margaret Jones, Eleni Koulouki, Mathilde Molendijk