

STATEMENT BY THE EGU EXECUTIVE BOARD (02.06.2017)

The Executive Committee of EGU is aware that the issues aired during the SSS DBM have raised concerns amongst some of you about how the various issues were handled, their impact on the division, the discipline more generally and the wider community of geoscientists. We thank you for your suggestions and input to date.

While we accept that the new set of minutes, circulated with this email, may be a fair reflection of what was said during the DBM, it is important to note that we do not consider them to be fair reflection of the facts and issues that EGU have had to deal with. Rather than expending a lot of energy on debating these points, we feel it would be more productive to look to how we can ensure that the division and the wider community can move forward in a positive and constructive way, building on lessons learnt.

2017 SSS Division meeting, amended version

25 April 2017

Awards

Duchaufroure – Pete Smith

Von Humboldt – Johan Bouma

Outstanding Student Posters – Marco Jiménez-González, Werner Mayerhofer, Pauloma Hueso González, Ali Samet Öngen

Best convener 2016 – Anna Smetanova

Best course coordinator 2016 – Artemi Cerdà

Best oral talk 2016 – Julian Campo

Best poster 2016 – Mutez Ali Ahmed

Best pico 2016 – Jie Xiang

Young Scientist – Victoria Arcenegui

Honourary member of SSS8: Jaume Bech

There was discussion of citation stacking issue related to Artemi Cerdà.

The president of the Soil System Science division, **Saskia Keesstra** said she will propose to the EGU council that there should be an ethics committee at EGU that is independent from the EGU council and the publications committee so that the person being accused is judged by people other than those who made the accusations.

Furthermore, the division was informed that Artemi Cerdà was removed from his sessions, short courses and townhall without discussing this with the president of the responsible division. And that the council has decided to give him the penalty that he is not allowed to have any organizing or official role in the EGU for two years.

Discussion followed with comments from members of SSS. Support was expressed for an independent committee, clear procedures for the investigative process, and a chance for the accused to speak on their own behalf. Irritation was expressed over the anonymous nature of the accusations, the opinion was offered that the anonymous emailing itself was unethical, and there was a feeling that the EGU council should speak out against the nature of the anonymous accusations. In the following section of the minutes the discussion is reflected:

Manuel Seeger commented the following:

- IMHO, the so called "issue" is the result of having a look to much on the figures resulting from "measurement" of publication activity.
- it is also my opinion, that in all the judgements given about Artemi Cerda and his "misbehaviour", there has never been a mention on the enormous work looking at papers, giving some really useful comments etc. that have been done by him. His work, and the way he did this was, at least during some long period of time, very useful for all the journals mentioned in all the reports.

Tammo Steenhuis stated:

Tammo suggested to the EGU president that we as the soil science group should have decided on the outcome of the investigation for Artemi.

Tammo also complained about the procedure that was used in the investigations of Artemi and that he was upset about taking into account an anonymous email. He also said that he often cites papers in reviews that he is familiar with. That are the only ones he remembers.

He also said that he likes to get suggestions for papers that he was not aware of including those that the reviewer might have written. Reviewers are chosen because they are knowledgeable in the field. In those cases that Artemi, as editor, suggested some papers, they were extremely helpful and he used some of these suggested references several other times in other manuscripts.

Peter Fiener stated:

- There is a strong need for an independent committee (or an ombudsman) at EGU where people (especially young scientists) can report potential scientific misconduct. This committee/ombudsman must treat such reports absolutely confidential.

- The discussed scientific misconduct is most difficult for young scientist because for them (i) it is difficult to report such misconduct and (ii) it may negatively affect their career in a competitive scientific environment.

Lily Pereg talked about the unfortunate high impact of the anonymous “McDonald report”, which eventually was proved to be wrong for the majority of the named individuals, but highly affected their lives. She called on the division not to give importance or to blindly believe any report that is not substantiated and have no one standing behind it with concrete evidence to support its content. She said that the general scientific community should totally ignore such messages similarly to what they would do if these were not peer-reviewed research data. The entire purpose of this “report” was malice and hurting people’s career and at the same time their personal lives, and we should not let it happen. The only ones who had the responsibility to investigate and indeed undertook an investigation were the concerned parties, such as the EGU officials and the journals named. She also supported the need for a committee that will deal with issues of malpractice but pledged that concerned scientists will approach the committee in confidence until there is any proof that an action should be taken (and even then, most cases can be dealt with in confidence).

Heike Knicker said:

- It is unethical to anonymously accuse somebody

- such accuses should be ignored and if there is an official reaction the accused person should be informed first.

- It should be avoided to put the process of finding the truth into the public if it is not necessary and if it is, only if enough proof is given. The damage for falsely accused victims is too big and cannot be eliminated.

- She supports an independent ethic committee with given rules of acting

Evgenia Blagodatskaya (Jane) stated she is surprised that nobody mentioned the role Artemi Cerdà has fulfilled in all the years he was working for the division. He was always active and helpful for everyone. Trying to make everyone happy and appreciated.

Christine Muggler said that Artemi had been the most important person for SSS since its founding.

Boris Jansen indicated that he strongly supports the call for a truly independent ethics committee of the EGU to handle this type of sensitive issues and ensure that all sides in a potential conflict are treated fairly and impartially. In addition, he expressed his concern about accusations that are communicated via anonymous e-mails and proposed that we ask the EGU board to openly condemn such forms of

communication. Should someone feel insecure to openly express an opinion in a sensitive matter, they could approach the ethics committee and express their concerns confidentially there. "

Jerzy Weber supported establishing the Ethic Committee by the EGU. He also expressed a strong belief that the Committee should consist of several moral authorities not involved with either the EGU nor Copernicus, and that the case of Artemi Cerdà should be the first one to be considered by the Committee. Results of the procedure should be sent to the SSS community as soon as available.

Artemi Cerdà provided a statement concerning the situation and his perspective on the situation:

Artemi Cerdà apologized for the problems caused. He informed the people that he was in silence for three months to offer the first reply at the EGU. He clarified that he did not have the chance to reply before as the accusations by the EGU did not give him the opportunity to reply. He thanked the SSS president for giving him the option to reply now. After this he explained the nightmare this has been for him and his family.

Artemi Cerdà clarified that for the EGU publication system he was a reviewer, not a referee, and that the executive editors were responsible for the decisions of acceptance or rejection. He contributed to improve the papers but not to make the last decision. Most of the papers arrived in his hands with poor quality, and this is why he suggested to read more and improve the papers. A paper rejected in the EGU publication system is there forever, and kept in public, and this is why he put so much effort to improve the papers with recommendations to read (not to cite) large lists of publications in 50 % of the papers reviewed. And that his reviews are all open and he always signed his reviews or it can be seen in the pdf files who is the reviewer. So, the reports of the EGU only show what is and was always public. And that it (the accusations) was shown in such a way that it was a very bad accusation, and Artemi could not reply to this.

Artemi Cerdà complained about the issue that he was investigated without being informed. He also claimed that the accusations, the judgement and the punishment came from the same organization without any independent committee to be the judge. This is not fair, actually, this is not legal he said.

Artemi Cerdà said that his name was removed from all his work for the EGU GA 2017 without being informed that this was done. He insisted that the authors selected his sessions, but that his name was removed without due process. And this is not how a scientific society should work. Artemi Cerdà also informed the audience that the accusations of malpractice were developed by Copernicus without the EGU being informed. And he said it seemed that EGU works for Copernicus and not on the other way around.

Artemi Cerdà informed Huub Savenije of the accusation of him of the malpractice issue, and Huub as the Chair of the Publications system was not informed before. This then looks like an initiative of Copernicus putting EGU, who is responsible for the publications apart. He also requested information from similar issues as what he was accused of in Cryosphere Journal and HESS journal that are known by the scientific community, but that are not clarified by the EGU. These issues were treated as internal affairs, but what he did was put in public.

Artemi Cerdà complained of the fact that EGU replied to an anonymous report. Serious scientific societies only reply to claims with a known source, meanwhile the EGU is doing the contrary: replied to an anonymous report and did not investigate the source, even though it affects a large number of its members, but did not reply to other accusations that were made but their members (who do put their name).

He also protested about the fact that the SSS is treated as a second class division as it has a large number of abstracts, but has only one medal.

He also mentioned during the SSS division meeting that Copernicus was behind the accusations and he was investigated for three months following the request of Johan Six but without informing the EGU (Hubbert Savenije as Chair of the Publication Committee). During this three months (November and December 2016 and January 2017) he was invited to review papers. If he was investigated the invitations to review papers were not to solve the problem, it was use to get proof of his style to review papers, which is to help the authors, and this means to ask them to read more. Why if in November it was known that his reviews were not of the quality requested was he was invited to review and manage papers for the EGU journals?? Why in January and February 2017 were the invitations still coming to him... one invitation after another??? He was also invited many times after the announcement that the EGU did about the malpractices. Why was Solid Earth inviting him daily to review papers after the announcement?. Why one day did he find that all the members of the EGU received a message about his work as a reviewer being malpractice and the week after he received two invitations to manage papers for Solid Earth? In his opinion this was done to get proof and make the problem bigger instead of to solve the problem. He informed the Chair of the Publication committee of the EGU about this issue and the President of the SSS division to request to Professor Savenije to stop this. Finally he decided to not inform anymore about this disgusting situation as the invitations did not stop reaching his mailbox when his name was put in public as a fellow that was malpracticing the task of reviewer..... on February 20th 2017, almost four months after Johan Six and Copernicus investigated carefully and surveyed in public the reviews.

Reply of Marti Rasmussen.

(1) Artemi handled in total 84 papers as topical editor for the journals ESurf, SE, and SOIL. ESurf and SOIL papers have had a final decision by an Executive Editor since the beginning and SE adopted this only in 2016. For 68 SE papers handled by Artemi, no Executive Editor took a final decision and Artemi was fully responsible for the final decision. In these 68 papers without EE decision, he suggested 466 additional references. SE started only in 2016 to make the reports of the peer-review completion after the discussion public. Before, these reports were NOT public. Artemi stated that everything was public.

(2) Some of the SOIL EEs asked us in November to compile an analysis of the editorial behaviour of a number of editors, this was NOT limited to Artemi. It was planned to inform the EGU Executives once the situation was clear and the SOIL EEs had an action plan. Artemi was approached in early February by one of the SOIL EEs and stepped down after this. We published a news item referring only to a case of editorial malpractice and NOT naming Artemi. Only after the McDonald report publicly accused 7 scientists, we compiled a full report together with the EGU to clarify the situation. In that report, we publicized the names and all editors were cleared except for Artemi.

Artemi Replied: He insisted he did not know that Solid Earth was taking his reviews as definitive and he insisted he was not informed. He is a founding editor, attended all the meetings of Solid Earth and never was informed. If the decision is in the hands of topical editors why do you need executive editors and editors-in-chief?

John Quinton provided a response on behalf of SOIL, stating that three of the executive editors initiated an investigation in the late summer of 2017. This was because they noticed citation irregularities: two papers were attracting large numbers of citations, most of which were originating from Solid Earth and

Land Degradation and Development. The Editors had to act to protect the reputation of SOIL. Once the editors had carried out their initial investigation they passed their findings on to Copernicus and asked for their help to investigate more fully. For SOIL, Artemi Cerda acted as thematic editor for six publications. For four of them he recommended 30 references, 13 of which were to Land Degradation and Development, so although SOIL instigated the investigations its exposure to citation irregularities was not as great as some other journals.

President of EGU, **Hans Thybo**, provided a response on behalf of EGU. He emphasized that the discussion here is important because it makes us, as individuals, aware of potential ethical problems, and therefore the discussion can make the EGU stronger. He stated that that he did not like or agree with the way the anonymous allegations were made but he had to act on EGU's behalf despite the fact the charges had been submitted anonymously. He and the executive committee would have acted in an irresponsible way if they had not checked the allegations. Martin Rasmussen from Copernicus made the check for EGU and submitted two reports. The reports freed most of the persons accused of the allegations, but the allegations were confirmed for one person. This made it necessary to take action. Based on facts and not based on the many rumours, the executives made their decision, which was confirmed by Council.

Thybo also confirmed that the EGU council is discussing an ethics committee. He proposed to council to form an ethics committee more than one year ago, but the proposal was turned down, probably because the concrete content should be improved. The current proposal was made prior to the start of the General Assembly on Sunday by Shaun Lovejoy, and Thybo appreciated that Saskia Keesstra is now also in favour of the idea.

Thybo finally stressed that we all as members of EGU should appreciate that the present discussion holds potential to strengthen the EGU. We should all contribute to avoiding making it a big fight and, instead, take a forward look to learn from the experience from the present case. Although it may be felt unpleasant now, we should use the discussion to strengthen the science and the ethical standards and practices of EGU.

After this discussion the remainder of the SSS issues were presented:

Outstanding Young Scientist and Philippe Duchaufour medal committees for 2017 were announced.

Early career researcher award committee - Saskia Keesstra (chair), Paulo Pereira (2015 winner), Agata Novara (2016), Vicky Arcenegui (2017)

The president of SSS explained that the selection of the Early career researcher in the SSS division organized in a similar way as the Duchaufour medal. The chair is the division president, with the last three awardees as members of the committee. In most other divisions this is not the case, there the division president decides on the awardee alone.

She also stressed the importance of people to nominate their best colleagues that deserve this award. If someone is not nominated they cannot get the award.

Duchaufour medal committee- Jerzy Weber (chair), Ingrid Kögel-Knaber (2015), Heike Knicker (2016), Pete Smith (2017)

There will be a vote for a second SSS medal at the autumn EGU committee meeting. There is a proposal for a name and scope. Name: Howard or Kubiena or some other name: call for proposals was made, scope – middle age active scientist. Duchaufour medal would be for life accomplishments.

The number of abstracts submitted to EGU grew again, more than 1,000 more than last year. SSS abstracts also grew to 1896, a 494 abstract increase over last year. SSS is now the second largest division at EGU in terms of abstract submissions.

Antonio Jordán gave a brief report on SSS News and Outreach, but time was running short. He also announced that a new person is needed for News and Outreach.

Members were asked to think about ideas for next year. Also ideas for splinter meetings, short courses, topical conferences, etc.

The skeleton program for EGU 2018 will be organized in May-June with publication of the skeleton program and open call for sessions in mid-June. The program will be finalized in September.

The SSS division structure was reviewed:

President – Saskia Keesstra

Deputy President – Antonio Jordán

OSP Coordinator – Taru Sanden

Secretary for News and outreach – vacant

Science officer – Claudio Zaccone

Science officer – vacant

Honorary member of SSS8 – Jaume Bech

Young Scientist Representative – Taru Sanden

Publications – vacant

Subdivisions (Update. The committees were updated later in the EGU week and will be posted on the website as discussed, but this is how it was presented at the meeting)

1. History, Education and Society of Soil Science

Chair – Bradley Miller

Committee member – David Lindbo

Committee member – Martin Tinnefelt

2. Soil Erosion and Conservation

Chair – Panos Panagos

Committee member – Tani Taguas

Committee member –

3. Soil as a Record in Time and Space

Chair – Daniela Sauer

Committee member – Ian Simpson

Committee member – Marc Oliva

4. Soil Biology, Microbiology and Biodiversity

Chair – Lily Pereg

Committee member – Evgenia Blagodatskaya

Committee member – Johan Six

5. Soil Chemistry
Chair – César Plaza
Committee member – Ruben Sakrabani
Committee member – Raul Zornoza
6. Soil Organic Matter
Chair – Heike Knicker
Committee member – Sebastian Dötterl
Committee member – vacant
7. Soil Physics
Chair – Horst H Gerke
Committee member – Jaromir Dusek
Committee member – Angelo Jaramillo
8. Soil Pollution and Reclamation
Chair – Elena Korobova
Committee member – Maria Manuela Abreu
Committee member – Miriam Munoz Rojas
9. Soil, Environment and Ecosystem Interactions
Chairs – Anna Smetanova/David Finger
Committee member – Velibor Spalevic
Committee member – Pablo Tittone
10. Soils, Forestry and Agriculture
Chair – Giuseppe Provenzano
Committee member – José Gómez
Committee member – Joao Pedro Nunes
11. Soils: Informatics and Statistics
Chair – Ana María Tarquis
Committee member – Beate Zimmermann
Committee member – Alice Milne/Sibylle Hassler
12. Material and Methods in Soil Science
Chair – Paolo Tarolli
Committee member – Thomas Iserloh
Committee member – vacant

There is a new procedure, EGU-SSS will have a President elect for one year to learn under the previous President. We need to find someone to run for President elect. Saskia Keesstra invites everyone that is interested to propose him or herself.

Next year's EGU GA will be 8-13 April, 2018.

Written by Eric Brevik and Saskia Keesstra