



**Belgeo**

Revue belge de géographie

**3 | 2003**

**First Belgian geographical Day**

---

## Foreword: 1<sup>st</sup> Belgian geographical Day

**Serge Schmitz**

---



**Electronic version**

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/belgeo/16572>

DOI: [10.4000/belgeo.16572](https://doi.org/10.4000/belgeo.16572)

ISSN: 2294-9135

**Publisher:**

National Committee of Geography of Belgium, Société Royale Belge de Géographie

**Printed version**

Date of publication: 30 September 2003

Number of pages: 227-230

ISSN: 1377-2368

**Electronic reference**

Serge Schmitz, "Foreword: 1<sup>st</sup> Belgian geographical Day", *Belgeo* [Online], 3 | 2003, Online since 30 October 2003, connection on 05 February 2021. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/belgeo/16572> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/belgeo.16572>

---

This text was automatically generated on 5 February 2021.



*Belgeo* est mis à disposition selon les termes de la licence Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International.

---

# Foreword: 1<sup>st</sup> Belgian geographical Day

Serge Schmitz

---

- 1 On March 12<sup>th</sup>, the Belgian Society of Geographical Studies (BEVAS/SOBEG) organized the first Belgian geographical Day. At the present time the different departments of geography are becoming more international. The aims of these «Geographical Days» are to bring together researchers from all Belgian Universities and to be aware of the diversity and richness of Belgian geographical research. The basis of the «Geographical Days» is to invite young researchers to present their research. A main theme is chosen and papers have to be focused on it.
- 2 This first geographical Day was organised in Liège on the centenary of the Geography Department of the University of Liège. We thank the «Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique», «la Fondation J.A. Sporck» and the «Ministère de la Communauté française» for their financial support. One hundred eighty geographers from all universities of Belgium but also from six foreign countries met in Liège. Around twenty-five papers were presented. We thank all Belgian colleagues for making this day a real success and we encourage Ghent University in the organisation of the second Belgian «Geographical Day» in 2005.
- 3 Finding a theme that permits the assembling of geographers who work more with colleagues from other disciplines than with other geographers is something both easy and complex. If different things were analysed by many geographical sub-disciplines such as water management, desertification, urbanisation, the choice of such themes would exclude a significant number of colleagues. We thought it was better to think about a point of view, about know-how. We therefore decided to choose the theme «Evaluating the capability of the milieu».
- 4 As geographers analysing a problem, we note something different from other scientists. Geographers look more at the context rather observing the problem itself in depth. If localising means determining a location, for geographer localising means rather determining which place the item occupies in different systems. These systems are often open. It is the milieu, a complex multilevel system. However, this open milieu

does not fit the scientific and technical way of thinking, which prefers studying a well-delimited area. Geographers seem to be comfortable with such milieu analysis. For analysing, understanding, planning, geographers often need to estimate the capability of the milieu.

- 5 Evaluating the capability of the milieu seems a geographical concern. The number of papers we received proved it. Nevertheless, if you read the introductory and the six selected papers of this special issue of *Belgeo*, you will grasp how this usual «know how» is difficult to explain. As we look at the twenty-five papers, we listened during this first «Geographical Day», this theme «evaluating the capability of the milieu» may be understood from two main points of view.
- 6 In the first case the geographer analyses the milieu in its entirety, evaluates and proposes, in term of opportunity, different scenarios. Capability is interpreted as opportunity. Geographers by their analysing knowledge, determine the best place for different activities.
- 7 The second case focuses on limits. What is the capacity of a specific milieu? Whatever the main components of milieu are; physical, social or economic, why, when and how a stable system begins to change? Here, analysing the network system replaces the questioning about place. The capability analysis is not more holistic as in the first case. It is limited to a specific angle and at least to some factors. Direct applications are rare. However, results of these researches enrich the knowledge of the milieu and permit a better way of intervention.
- 8 Thinking about the way we evaluate the capability of the milieu may be a first step to a more efficient geography and a better communication between geographical sub-disciplines.

---

AUTHOR

**SERGE SCHMITZ**

Guest editor