

THE COMMISSION ON ARTIFICIAL CAVITIES OF THE INTERNATIONAL UNION OF SPELEOLOGY

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After the 15th International Congress of Speleology, held at Kerrville (USA) in July 2009, the Commission on Artificial Cavities of the International Union of Speleology (UIS) was re-organized, and the task to give a new life to the Commission was appointed to the Italians, that in the years immediately preceding the Kerrville Congress were without any doubt among the most active and productive in this field of speleology. Italy, on the other hand, is worldwide known for the high richness of archaeological sites, that include many different types of spaces carved, dug or re-adapted by man in the underground environment. Such a great variety of typologies makes extremely stimulating, from one side, and highly complex, on the other, the study and analysis of artificial cavities. It was not a case, therefore, that the first efforts of the new Commission were addressed toward a definition of the classification of artificial cavities.

Among the main initial purposes of the Commission on Artificial Cavities we list the following:

- inventory and cataloguing of artificial cavities in accordance with procedures established and accepted at an international level;
- geographical documentation of each territory and its peculiarity;
- support and coordination during scientific research and exploration;
- to contribute in developing proper land management, integrating the tools and codes of the local governments;
- the protection and enhancement of the urban environment and the cultural heritage.

The above issues, and in particular the need to standardize a classification, were dealt with in 2012, with the organization of a specific international workshop, dedicated to “*Classification of the typologies of artificial cavities in the world*”, held on May 18-20, 2012, in Turin (Italy). The eleven invited lectures covering several aspects of the classification of artificial cavities, the additional 10 posters, and a final discussion devoted to establishing a general classification of artificial cavities, formed the basis of the workshop proceedings, that were published in a special issue of the journal *Opera Ipogea* (Parise, 2013).

Starting from the original classification proposed by the Italian Commission on Artificial Cavities during the late 90's, the interesting discussions at the Workshop in Turin brought the UIS Commission to adapt the Italian classification, with slight changes and improvements, as the official classification of artificial cavities (Parise et al., 2013). This was presented at the 16th International Congress of Speleology in Brno, within the framework of the session entitled “*Speleological Research and Activities in Artificial Underground*”. The session was very successful, receiving 18 abstracts from 10 different

countries worldwide, that were organized into oral and poster presentations, and included in the volume 2 of the Congress Proceedings (Filippi & Bosak, 2013).

Organization of this congress in Rome, under the title “Hypogea 2015” was the next step. Since the very restart of the UIS Commission we were looking forward to an event in Rome, that is, to us, among the most appropriate places in the world to discuss about artificial cavities, history and the underground. It was not easy, but, thanks to the hard works of several Commission members, eventually you have today in your hands this heavy book of proceedings, that is by itself a precious reward for the efforts we put into this adventure. The overall quality of the articles presented, accepted for publication after a careful peer-review process, satisfies us, and we hope all of you will eventually share our positive feeling.

Further, the new contacts established with other Commissions and Working Groups of UIS have to be mentioned. In our opinion, in fact, one of the weak points of the UIS Commissions is represented by the fact that in the past too often they worked individually, with very few attempts in putting together the forces among near themes or issues. Thus, the presence in Rome, at Hypogea 2015 of two Chairmen of different Working Groups of the UIS Informatics Commission (respectively, the Working Group on *Caver's Multi-Lingual Dictionary*, and the Working Group on *Survey and Mapping*) is important to testify the reciprocal will to co-operate, and to discuss these themes also in the fields of the artificial cavities, pointing out to the differences with natural caves, and the peculiarities of the man-made voids. The available version of the Caver's Multi-Lingual Dictionary (see <http://www.uisic.uis-speleo.org/lexintro.html>) could be integrated by adding terms typically used for artificial cavities. On the other hand, the basic cave mapping symbols for cave surveys, developed by the Survey and Mapping Working Group (see <http://www.uisic.uis-speleo.org/wgsurmap.html>) could be integrated by adding symbols related to artificial cavities.

To all of the above, contacts with another UIS Commission, that on *Pseudokarst*, need to be added, too.

In a few words, we are trying to link together cavers, scholars and scientists dealing with artificial cavities, from many different disciplines, and with a variety of expertise, strongly convinced that only through a multi-disciplinary approach the analysis of artificial cavities can be considered exhaustive.

To disseminate the activities carried out by the Commission Members, and to spread news about works in artificial cavities, publications, meetings and conferences, a Newsletter of the Commission

was created, starting from 2013. Realized in digital format, and edited by LUC STEVENS, it has been so far published once per year, distributed through e-mail services to interested people, and made available at the Commission website as well.

On the spur of the moment raised by Hypogea 2015, some colleagues have already proposed a follow-up of the Congress, to be organized within two years in Turkey (Hypogea 2017). The idea is fascinating, and goes exactly in the direction we were hoping, that is to give continuity to our activities, researches and meetings, in order to continuously discuss about artificial cavities. And we should not forget that in 2017 there will also be the 17th International Congress of Speleology in Australia, where we plan to be present with a specific session on artificial cavities.

As you can see, much work has been done, but there still is forward a long way to go... This means that help, in terms of new ideas and collaboration, are always

welcome in the Commission!

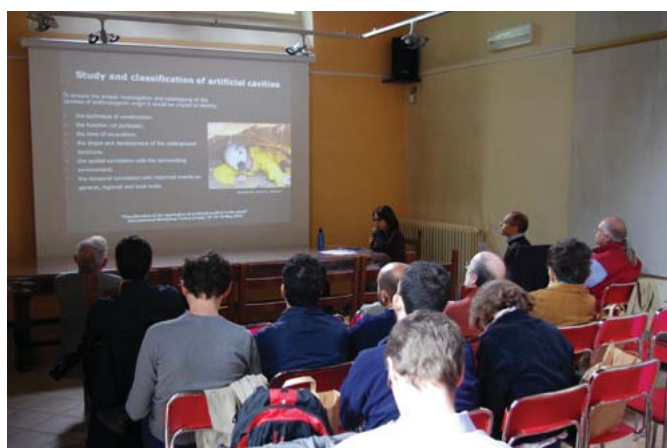
So far, the UIS Commission on Artificial cavities is formed by 12 members from the following 8 countries: Italy, Belgium, France, Great Britain, Ireland, Israel, Netherlands, Turkey.

References

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Turin, May 2012



Brno, July 2013

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