

Report on the Tenth Biennial Conference of the IASCP, Oaxaca, Mexico

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The Conference was a tremendous success with 662 registered participants from 63 different countries congregating in Oaxaca, Mexico for a 5-day meeting of 128 panels, 9 side events, 35 poster presentations, 8 preconference workshops, and 11 field trips. Although not confirmed, we believe this to have been the best attended IASCP conference to date. This is a great achievement and testament to the global appeal of the conference's themes and of a very successful Call for Papers.

Latin American Perspective

This was the first time that a Latin American country had hosted an IASCP Biennial Conference, thereby providing a wonderful opportunity to encourage greater participation from Latin American scholars, researchers, indigenous groups and other local communities, and advance the study and understanding of common property and common pool resources across the region. Well, not only was this the best attended IASCP conference to date but one that also saw 35% of participants from Latin America – a massive increase on participation from this region over the previous two Biennial Conferences. That equates to approximately 155 registered participants and it is important to note that at least half of these were from outside Mexico. The availability of simultaneous translation certainly encouraged Spanish speakers to attend the meeting. Being able to present in their native language was a definite plus point for many participants and went a long way to breakdown language barriers that have limited Latin American participation at past IASCP meetings.

Conference Conduct

Using information accurate at the end of the conference, August 13, 2004, 507 paper presentations, 35 poster presentations, 8 workshops, and 9 Side Events took place during the week. *Panel Sessions* Panel sessions proceeded relatively smoothly given the extremely full program with early starts and late finishes. In total there were 14 panel sessions programmed throughout the three days proper of the conference, totaling 128 panels in all. The number of panels by conference sub-theme were:

Indigenous Rights, Traditional Knowledge & Identity 13

Governance, Conflict and Institutional Reform 45

Conservation and Management of Common Resources 20

Contemporary Analytical Tools, Theoretical Questions and Knowledge Development Processes 12

Environmental Services and Commons Management 16

The Impact of Geographic Information Technologies and 5

Environmental Information on the Commons

New Global Commons 6

Markets and Commons Management 11

Poster Sessions

Two poster sessions had a total of 35 posters. Posters were of a very high quality with a lot of interest shown by other conference participants. A three-person team evaluated all the posters being presented and certificates were awarded to the following three participants: Carlos Tejeda Cruz. Universidad Autónoma de Chiapa; Jenny Springer. World Wide Fund for Nature; Carl Rova. Lulea University of Technology. Our congratulations to each one of them. Thanks also to our evaluation team: Su Yufang,; Mariana Bellot and Martha Rosas.

Side Events

For the first time at an IASCP Biennial Conference, time slots were given up specifically for Side Events. These Side Events were intended to be longer, more flexible spaces for discussion than traditional panel sessions. All these events were well attended and received and the discussions were in general very fruitful. Nearly all commented that the format allowed for much more in-depth discussion than the panel sessions – a pointer for future conferences?

Workshops

As in past IASCP conferences, the meeting was preceded by a day of workshops. A total of 8 workshops were made available to registered participants. These workshops were well attended and received favorable comments. The presence of bi-lingual volunteers and simultaneous translation in each workshop was important. This allowed for increased interaction between participants, increased learning and maximized use of conference materials.

Keynote Addresses

Two keynote addresses were given; the first by David Kaimowitz, Director of the Center for International Forestry Research and then a second keynote address by Francisco VanderHoff of the *Unión de Comunidades Indígenas de la Región del Istmo*. These addresses were well attended and received, and Dr. Kaimowitz's address has been posted on the conference website.

Field Trips

A day of one-day field trips was organized for mid-meeting, whilst two multi-day trips were organized for the following weekend. All trips were fully subscribed and feedback was generally very positive. Oaxaca certainly helped by providing a wealth of interesting and varied places to visit but participants were also impressed by overall organization and the ability of the volunteer translators who seemed to do a great job. Field trips were organized in close conjunction with partners in Oaxaca – in particular *Centro para la Biodiversidad* and *Grupo Autónoma de Investigación Ambiental* – who helped with logistics in Oaxaca and contact with the host communities. The sites were selected to highlight the variety of CBNRM strategies that have been developed by indigenous and other local communities in Oaxaca to use, manage and conserve their common property resources. Many of these communities have since expressed to us their happiness and pride in playing host to so many interested participants from around the world.

Conference Publications

The decision was taken during early planning stages to produce both a fully detailed conference program (190p.) and a comprehensive book of abstracts (520p.) that featured all selected abstracts - the majority in both English and Spanish. Again, having texts available in both languages was very much part of this overall goal to maximize the impact of conference proceedings, both during and after the event, throughout both the English and Spanish-speaking worlds. Full papers were included in the CD-ROM that was made available in the registration welcome pack, whilst also being posted on the conference website (www.iascp2004.org.mx) and the Digital Library of the Commons (<http://dic.dlib.indiana.edu>). At the time of going to press, a total of 311 papers had been received and posted on the conference website.

Social Events

The welcome cocktail took place on the evening of Monday, August 9, after the pre-conference workshops and before the conference officially began on the Tuesday. The night began with a *Calenda*, a very traditional Oaxacan street procession, which was a lot of fun and seemed to get everybody in a relaxed mood. This procession began in front of Santo Domingo church and then proceeded through neighboring streets before ending up at the entrance to the main conference venue. Participants then moved onto the *Patio Herba Santa* for a cocktail of Mezcal and local “*botanas*” (snacks) made from local traditional varieties of maize. A very enjoyable evening. The conference banquet on the other hand was less of a success. Although many participants enjoyed the food and entertainment, for logistical reasons

the evening was somewhat disjointed. Lessons learnt from the dinner have been included in the main conference report that will be made available to future conference organizers. Nevertheless it is worth mentioning the remarkable dance that participants enjoyed. This was the “*Danza de la Pluma*”, a piece written in the 16th century by the Dominican priests who Christianized Oaxaca, and in which the story of the conquest of Mexico by Spain is represented. This was performed by the dancers and the band of the village of *Teotitlán del Valle*. These dancers normally only perform in the religious parties of their village (to fulfill a “promise” made to the saintly protectors of the village) but they danced for IASCP participants because of their appreciation of the Association’s work. They were not paid, but more than 60 people of *Teotitlan* were our guests at the party.

Summary

Overall, a highly successful event that paid testament to IASCP’s relevance both internationally and, most pleasingly, in Latin America where the Association membership rate had been traditionally low compared with other regions. Clearly, work over the past couple of years promoting the conference in Latin America has paid dividends. It is now extremely important that the Association capitalizes on this and continues to strengthen its links there ensuring a good turn-out of Latin Americans at the next Biennial Conference in 2006. Please note that a more comprehensive report of the event’s panel, poster and side event discussions will be presented in the December edition of the *Digest*. In addition, the conference website (www.iascp2004.org.mx) has been updated and now features the full list of participants, a number of panel presentations, the keynote addresses, more full paper submissions and lots of photos of the event.

Acknowledgements

The Conference Chair and the Conference Coordinator would like to take this opportunity to thank the whole of the Organizing Team, all conference sponsors, and our fantastic group of volunteers who, through their hard work, enthusiasm and support, helped to make this event a success. Special thanks also go out to IASCP’s Executive Director, Michelle Curtain, who provided great support and invaluable advice over the two years of conference preparation.