

Lars J. Munkholm

This issue of ISTROINFO includes notes from the last ISTRO board meeting, a presentation of Xinhua Peng as new Editor-in-Chief for Soil and Tillage Research and updates on planned meetings and events – especially the 2018 ISTRO conference in Paris. Sadly, this issue also includes obituaries for two prominent scientist within our area of research who passed away late 2016; Miroslav Kutilek, who served as Editor-in-Chief for Soil and Tillage Research for more than 20 years and Wilfried Ehlers, a long-term very active member of ISTRO and contributor to Soil and Tillage Research.

## ⌘ Notes from the December 2016 ISTRO mid-term board meeting

The ISTRO board met in Paris on 7 December 2016. This meeting followed directly after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Global Soil Security Conference (Paris) and thus several board members were able to off-set travel costs of attending the board meeting. The only board member unable to attend was Treasurer Steve Prior who was caught up in a major evaluation panel review conducted by USDA-ARS.

As many of you will know the ISTRO board is geographically diverse – with members from (west to east) U.S.A., Uruguay, Ireland, U.K., France, Nigeria, Denmark, India and China. Unfortunately the current board has no gender diversity – something that hopefully can be remedied in the board elections to be held next year.

With the financial statements on temporary hold the agenda moved into upcoming and on-going ISTRO activities. Lars Munkholm (Assist Sec-Gen) reported the regular dissemination of ISTROINFO. Upcoming activities included the tri-branch conference in Croatia (Please see details below). The board approved financial support for this conference. Board members reported that the Nigerian and Iranian branches were also planning activities. The board has also agreed to support the Visual Soil Examination and Evaluation working group who are holding a meeting in Ireland (Please see details below).

Past-President Xinhua Peng provided a review of the 20<sup>th</sup> ISTRO Conference in Nanjing focusing on the budget outcomes. Attendance was lower than

hoped, possibly due to the large number of soil events, meetings and conferences held around the *world for the International Year of Soils*.

Participants came from 35 countries, including several that are normally not represented at ISTRO meetings. Through our scholarships ISTRO supported the attendance of 4 young researches. On the upside there were several generous sponsors and by careful venue selection the conference balanced the books. Thanks again Xinhua and his team for their organization.

President Jean Roger-Estrade then provided an outline of the plans for the 21<sup>st</sup> ISTRO Conference in Paris. Topics covered included everything from context, topics and scientific programme through sponsorship and communication strategies to accommodation and transport. Thanks to Jean for his patience as I can report that the board focused careful questions on all the schedules and arrangements. The next morning Jean gave board members a tour of the venue – which looks excellent. I will leave it to Jean and his team to keep members updated – but start planning for 24-27 September 2018 in Paris!

As members will be aware our journal “Soil & Tillage Research” is managed by Elsevier, the Editors-in-Chief and an editorial advisory board. Elsevier are a major supporter of ISTRO. One of the great things about the Nanjing conference was that Young Wu from Elsevier not only attended, but made a presentation to participants on how Elsevier works. In particular she highlighted some of the newer communication methods such as graphical abstracts that can generate extra interest in papers published in Soil & Tillage Research. The board discussed ways to ensure that the relationship between ISTRO and Elsevier continues to mutual advantage.

The final item on the agenda was that President-Elect Nick Holden gave some first ideas for the 2024 conference in Dublin.

Blair M McKenzie

## ☞ ISTRO Conference 2018



Just to remind you of the ISTRO Conference 2018 to be held between Monday the 24<sup>th</sup> and Thursday the 27<sup>th</sup> of September 2018. The conference has got a great logo and a conference website will be launched in a few weeks. The organizers have selected these conference topics.

1. Soil conservation
2. Soil compaction and structure remediation
3. Soil ecology and Ecosystem services
4. SOC sequestration and management
5. Biogeochemical processes in soils
6. Advances in soil structure characterization
7. Tillage and smart farming
8. Tires, tillage and seeding equipment design
9. Design and assessment of soil tillage strategies

## ☞ Introducing New Editor-in-Chief for Soil and Tillage Research

Prof. Dr. Xinhua Peng obtained his PhD degree in soil science at the institute of Soil Science, Chinese Academy of Sciences (ISSCAS) in 2003, and then worked in Germany and Ireland as granted by Max-Planck fellow, DFG research fellow and Marie Curie experienced researcher.



He has been appointed as a full professor of soil

physics from ISSCAS since 2009. He was the President of International Soil Tillage Research Organization (2012-2015) and is currently chairman of Soil Physics Society of China (2012-2020). He has served as editorial board of CATENA, Vadose Zone Journal and Acta Pedologica Sinica journals. He has published over 60 peer-reviewing papers in ISI journals plus 5 book chapters. His main research interests are i) soil structure formation, stabilization, degradation and its functions on soil C sequestration, fertility and erodibility, and ii) hydraulic processes and their driving biogeochemical cycling in agricultural watershed.

### *Why did you take on being an editor of S&TR?*

My main research is soil structure formation, stabilization and degradation and its functions in ecosystem. This topic is within the core scope of S&TR Journal. Under the demand of food security and agricultural sustainability, the dynamics of soil structure as affected by tillage (conservation vs conventional), fertilization (inorganic vs organic) and water management (rainfed vs irrigated) and its functions on C sequestration and soil fertility have received increasing attentions. I enjoy my researches on this topic. One of my first scientific papers was published in S&TR in 2004. Since then I have published many papers in S&TR and also cited many articles from S&TR. I have served as a member of the editorial board of S&TR since 2007. In 2015, I was awarded as an outstanding S&TR reviewer. I served as the first guest editor of S&TR special issue volume 146. I also served as a president of ISTRO in 2012-2015. I really enjoy my service for S&TR and the ISTRO society. I wish my knowledge and service can help improving the reputation of S&TR in the Soil Science society.

### *From your research what stands out as giving you the most satisfaction?*

My work receives positive assessment from other scientists.

### *Who inspires you?*

Rainer Horn, who also serves as ISTRO president and S&TR editor.

## *Who were your mentors?*

In my career, I should mention three colleagues. Profs. Qiguo Zhao and Bin Zhang were my PhD supervisors at the Institute of Soil Science, CAS. Prof. Zhao made me love soil science, while Prof. Zhang taught me how to discover scientific questions. Prof. Horn was the host professor for my 4-year postdoctoral fellowship in Kiel. He, also as my friend, gave me many advices and helped on my way to become a soil scientist.

## *What 3 words sum you up?*

Hard to say, they may be “Love Soil and Life”.

## *What was the best advice you were ever given?*

The advice, “ as an early-career scientist, you should do an in-depth basic research at a small topic, not a wide topic, but with a shallow research”, was given from Prof. Yangzhu Zhang, my supervisor of my master degree, when I started my scientific career.

## *What do you do in your spare time?*

Play with kids, play badminton

## *What was the last non-work book you read and what is your favourite film?*

For non-work book, I like reading national geographic and historical books. For my favorite films, they are La vita è bella, Brave heart, The Lord Of The Rings et al.

## ☞ Obituaries

### **Miroslav Kutílek**

It is my sad duty to report that the very well-known



and famous professor, scientist, teacher, colleague and friend Professor Dr. Miroslav (Mirek) Kutílek passed away on 4 October, 2016 at the age of almost eighty-nine. Miroslav Kutílek, or Mirek, as we called him, was born on 8 October, 1927. He spent most of his student and

working life at the Faculty of Civil Engineering, Czech Technical University in Prague (CTU), Czech Republic. It was at this university where he obtained all his degrees. First came MSc. (Ing.) in 1951, followed by the PhD diploma in 1956. Then, ten years later (1966) he defended his dissertation and was awarded the highest academic title of DrSc.

Mirek commenced his very dynamic professional career in the Department of Drainage and Irrigation in the same faculty at the CTU. In 1952 he became a young teacher and within ten years had progressed to the position of Associate Professor (1962). Finally, in 1973, he was appointed full Professor of Soil Physics and Soil Hydrology. At this point I should highlight the fact that apart from his busy involvement in the CTU work Mirek was also active at many different institutions all over the world. They included Baghdad University, Iraq, University of Khartoum, Sudan, L’Institut de Mécanique, Grenoble, France, University of California, Davis, USA, Uppsala University, Sweden, Technical University Braunschweig, Germany, College of Soil Physics at the International Centre on Theoretical Physics, Trieste, Italy and University of Bayreuth, Germany. Moreover, he held a prestigious position as an expert for FAO and IAEA.

Mirek’s professional career at CTU ended in 1993 with his retirement. This, of course, did not mean at all that he stopped all his scientific activities. As could have been expected from this extraordinary man, he continued writing scientific books as well as articles, and he also wrote fiction under the pen-name of Marek Hofman. Additionally, he worked as an editor-in-chief of international scientific journals such as Soil Technology (1990–1991) and Soil and Tillage Research (1992–2013).

During Mirek’s life his work was honoured several times. In 1975 he was awarded the Silver Felber Medal of the CTU in Prague and in 2010 the President of the Czech Republic decorated him with the Medal of Merit, an award of the Czech Republic for service in science.

Mirek was very much involved in international scientific societies. He was president of the Soil Physics section of the International Soil Science Society (1986–1990) and, later, an honorary member of this society. Similarly, he had worked in the Czech Soil Science Society in which he also became an honorary member.

His research was focused on the following topics:

- ❖ Adsorption of water vapour in soils. Non-linear transport of water in soil.
- ❖ Distribution of soil pores according to retention curves and adsorption.
- ❖ Bi-modal and n-modal distribution of soil pores, and their consequences for unsaturated flow.
- ❖ Principles of the climatic change.

It is a pity that this list of Mirek's activities cannot strongly enough express his enthusiasm, his outstanding sense of humour which he spread around him, his energy which he applied in day-to-day activities as well as in professional and personal conflict situations. He was one of the scientists who supported relationships between scientists from different countries in the world outside any political and ideological divisions. He brought up his students in this respect. Regardless of any governmental and political regulations, he organised many international symposia, meetings and workshops in Prague, Bratislava and elsewhere which always turned out as a great success.

At this point I remember an interesting example of Mirek's unique sense of humour, his personality and also his way of dealing with daily life. It is a story involving his great-granddaughter, which Mirek once told me. This anecdotic dialogue was even published in an editorial honouring of Mirek's achievements in *Soil & Tillage Research* (Wendroth, 2014). It went like this:

Mirek's great-granddaughter: "Grand pappy, where are you going on your bicycle?"

Mirek: "To the cemetery".

Mirek's great-granddaughter: "Who will bring the bicycle back?"

This short story is documenting Mirek's manner of self-irony, humour and a deeply human way of thinking, his ability to keep things in perspective, to understand the children's straight and uncomplicated way of thinking. Actually the bike is not important here, what is important is that Mirek's great-granddaughter cannot miss her Grand pappy and he is supposed to come back to her every time.

Unfortunately, in October of 2016 this special wish cannot be granted anymore. Mirek Kutílek has left

not only his great-granddaughter on her own, but also all the people who loved him, all his former students, his colleagues, and friends around the world.

This end of story has left over a message for all of us that, sadly, this time Mirek will never come back from his journey on the bike to the cemetery . . . . . He will be missed by all of us.

**Source:**

This article was published in Miroslav Kutílek passed away, Vol. 169, Matula, S., Obituary, A1-A2, Copyright Elsevier (2017)

**Wilfried Ehlers**

In November 2016, the agronomist and soil physicist Wilfried Ehlers passed away in Goettingen, Germany. Wilfried obtained his doctoral degree in Goettingen in 1966. After a year at the University of California, Riverside, USA, he returned to his *Alma Mater*, and worked from 1968 until 2004 at the Department of Agronomy and Plant Breeding,



University of Goettingen. Dr. Ehlers was a renowned outstanding and productive scientist and respected professor. He was a great advocate of soil protection and stepped in for reducing soil disturbance by tillage and avoiding heavy machinery loads on soils that would otherwise cause irreversible soil degradation and endanger our soils through loss of essential soil ecosystem functions. Wilfried Ehlers became a very active member of ISTRO and supported its premier journal, *Soil & Tillage Research* through numerous reviews and as a prolific writer. His research was always very quantitative and integrated while it had a strong practical applicability. Towards the end of his career, Wilfried Ehlers and his colleague and friend, Michael Goss published the book "Water Dynamics in Plant Production" whose second edition came out in 2016. Dr. Ehlers advised 11 PhD students. He is survived by his wife Marie-Christine Ordnung, four children, and two grandchildren.

Ole Wendroth  
University of Kentucky, Lexington, U.S.A.  
Graduate Student of Dr. Ehlers

## ☞ Visual Soil Evaluation meeting 2017

on "Grassland and Tillage Visual Soil Evaluation"

The meeting is organized by the ISTRO working group on Soil Examination and Evaluation. There will be focus on subsoil compaction, grassland soil quality and the influence of water content on visual evaluation. August 30-31, 2017 in Ireland. More than 30 persons have registered for the meeting at the moment. If you are interested in participating, please register as soon as possible by sending an e-mail to Nick Holden ([nick.holden@ucd.ie](mailto:nick.holden@ucd.ie)).

More information available at:

<https://www.sruc.ac.uk/downloads/file/3226/meeting-on-visual-evaluation-of-grassland-soil-in-ireland-august-2017>

## ☞ 3rd International Scientific Conference

on "Sustainability challenges in agroecosystems"

On behalf of the Organizing Committee of Croatian Soil Tillage Research Organization (CROSTRO), Czech branch of ISTRO and Hungarian branch of ISTRO (HUISTRO), under the auspice of International Soil Tillage Research Organization (ISTRO) and many other supportive institutions, we are pleased to invite you to the International Scientific Conference that will take place in Osijek, Republic of Croatia, June 19-21, 2017.

Conference topics/sections

1. Sustainable land management
2. Coping with climate changes in plant production
3. Good agriculture practice and food safety
4. Precision agriculture, mechanization and renewable bioenergy
5. Facilitation of integrated crop protection
6. Challenges and opportunities of rural development

Webpage: [www.hdpot.hr](http://www.hdpot.hr)

## ☞ The 15th National Iranian Soil Society Congress

The 15th Iranian Soil Science Congress, welcomes soil scientists and researcher from all over the globe. It will create a stage for exchanging the latest research results and sharing the advanced research methods in soil and environmental issues. The congress will be held on August 28-30, 2017 in Isfahan , Iran.

Conference Topics

1. Soil, environmental hazards, floods, ground subsidence and dust .
2. Chemistry and soil fertility and plant nutrition
3. Role of chemical fertilizers, bio-organic
4. Physics and soil and plant water relations
5. Soil biology and biotechnology
6. Soil and water contamination
7. Soil and climate change
8. New technologies in soil science
9. Soil, drought and water efficiency
10. Conservation and sustainable soil management
11. Soil genesis and classification, evaluation and land use planning
12. Management and sustainable utilization of soil and water resources in Zayandehrud River basin.

For more information regarding the traveling preparations and visa processes is available at:, please visit the folloing link.

<http://iscoweb.iut.ac.ir/en/content/visiting-iut>

## ⌘ Upcoming Meetings and Events

### May 2017

The 15th International Symposium on Soil and Plant Analysis (ISSPA). May 14-18, 2017, Nanjing, China.

Webpage:

<http://isspa2017.csp.escience.cn/dct/page/1>

SUITMA-9 Congress - Urbanisation: A challenge and an opportunity for soil functions and ecosystem services. May 22-27, 2017, Moscow, Russia

Webpage: <http://www.suitma-russia.com>

### June/July 2017

1st World Conference on Soil and Water Conservation under Global Change – CONSOWA, 2017. June 12-16, 2017 in Lleida, Spain.

Webpage:

[http://www.swcs.org/index.cfm/6404/72691/first\\_world\\_conference\\_on\\_soil\\_and\\_water\\_conservation\\_under\\_global\\_change](http://www.swcs.org/index.cfm/6404/72691/first_world_conference_on_soil_and_water_conservation_under_global_change)

Global Soil Map 2017 International Conference.

July 4 – 6, 2017, Moscow, Russia

Webpage: <http://globalsoilmap2017.ru/en/Home>

Pedometrics 2017 Conference

June 26 -July 1, 2017 in Wageningen, the Netherlands.

Webpage: <http://www.pedometrics2017.org/>

### August 2017

7th World Congress on Conservation Agriculture.

August 1-4, 2017 in Rosario-Santa Fe, Argentina

Webpage: <http://congresoapresid.org.ar/en/>

OrgaTrop 2017 - International Conference on Organic Agriculture in the Tropics. Augst 20-24, 2017 in Gajah Mada University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Webpage:

<http://web.faperta.ugm.ac.id/orgatrop2017/>

### September/ October 2017

6th International Symposium on Soil Organic Matter “Healthy soils for sustainable agriculture: the role of SOM”. September 3–7, 2017, Rothamsted, Research Harpenden (United Kingdom)

Webpage:

<http://www.som2017.org/index.php?id=13531>

2nd Global Soil Biodiversity Conference

October 15-20, 2017, Nanjing, China

Webpage: <https://globalsoilbiodiversity.org/>

### August 2018

21st World Congress of Soil Science (WCSS) on the theme: “Soils to feed and fuel the world”. August 12-17, 2018 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Webpage: <http://21wcss.org/>

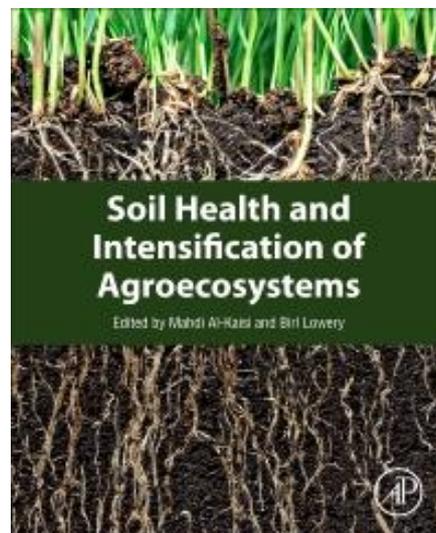
### September 2018

21st ISTRO Conference, Paris, France. September 24-27, 2018.

## ⌘ New Books by ISTRO members

### Soil Health and Intensification of Agroecosystems

Editors: Mahdi Al-Kaisi and Birl Lowery



Soil Health and Intensification of Agroecosystems examines the climate,

environmental, and human effects on agroecosystems and how the existing paradigms must be revised in order to establish sustainable production. The increased demand for food and fuel exerts tremendous stress on all aspects of natural resources and the environment to satisfy an ever increasing world population, which includes the use of agriculture products for energy and other uses in addition to human and animal food.

The book presents options for ecological systems that mimic the natural diversity of the ecosystem and can have significant effect as the world faces a rapidly changing and volatile climate. The book explores the introduction of sustainable agroecosystems that promote biodiversity, sustain soil health, and enhance food production as ways to help mitigate some of these adverse effects.

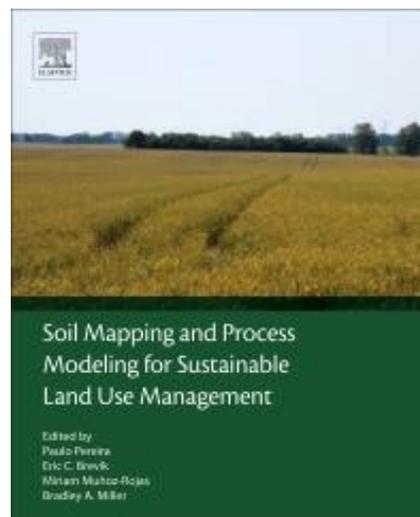
More information about this book:

[https://www.elsevier.com/books/soil-health-and-intensification-of-agroecosystems/al-kaisi/978-0-12-805317-1?start\\_rank=1&sortby=sortByDateDesc&cat0=agricultural-and-biological-sciences&cat1=soil-science&cat2=soils](https://www.elsevier.com/books/soil-health-and-intensification-of-agroecosystems/al-kaisi/978-0-12-805317-1?start_rank=1&sortby=sortByDateDesc&cat0=agricultural-and-biological-sciences&cat1=soil-science&cat2=soils)

## ⌘ Other new books

### **Soil Mapping and Process Modeling for Sustainable Land Use Management**

Authors: Paulo Pereira, Eric Brevik, Miriam Muñoz-Rojas and Bradley Miller



*Soil Mapping and Process Modeling for Sustainable Land Use Management* is the first reference to address the use of soil mapping and modeling for sustainability from both a theoretical and practical perspective. The use of more powerful statistical techniques are increasing the accuracy of maps and reducing error estimation, and this text provides the information necessary to utilize the latest techniques, as well as their importance for land use planning. Providing practical examples to help illustrate the application of soil process modeling and maps, this reference is an essential tool for professionals and students in soil science and land management who want to bridge the gap between soil modeling and sustainable land use planning.

More information about this book:

[https://www.elsevier.com/books/soil-mapping-and-process-modeling-for-sustainable-land-use-management/pereira/978-0-12-805200-6?start\\_rank=1&sortby=sortByDateDesc&cat0=agricultural-and-biological-sciences&cat1=soil-science&cat2=soils](https://www.elsevier.com/books/soil-mapping-and-process-modeling-for-sustainable-land-use-management/pereira/978-0-12-805200-6?start_rank=1&sortby=sortByDateDesc&cat0=agricultural-and-biological-sciences&cat1=soil-science&cat2=soils)

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