

Académie Royale de Belgique
Comité National Belge
de
GEODESIE et de GEOPHYSIQUE



Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van België

Belgisch Nationaal Comité
voor
GEODESIE en GEOPHYSICA

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<http://bncgg.oma.be>

Annual report 2016

Comité National Belge de Géodésie et de Géophysique

Belgisch Nationaal Comité voor Geodesie en Geofysica

1. Short introduction on the subject of research and the goals of the Committee

The BNCGG serves as a link between IUGG and the Belgian scientists working in the fields of Geodesy and Geophysics. This activity reaches a climax every four years at the IUGG general assemblies. The BNCGG is then charged to propose to the Academy the national delegates to IUGG and to its eight Associations:

- International Association of Cryospheric Sciences (IACS);
- International Association of Geodesy (IAG);
- International Association of Geomagnetism and Aeronomy (IAGA);
- International Association of Meteorology and Atmospheric Sciences (IAMAS);
- International Association of Hydrological Sciences (IAHS);
- International Association of the Physical Sciences of the Ocean (IAPSO);
- International Association of Seismology and Physics of the Earth Interior (IASPEI);
- International Association of Volcanology and Chemistry of the Earth Interior (IAVCEI).

In the meantime, the BNCGG organises regularly conferences by known Belgian or foreign scientists.

The BNCGG tries also to encourage the participation of young scientists to the IUGG General Assemblies by attributing grants.

Belgium was among the 9 countries who established the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics (IUGG) on July 28, 1919 in Brussels. The Belgian National Committee for Geodesy and Geophysics (BNCGG) was created shortly after in 1921. The running expenses were covered until 1950 by the National Cartographic Institute and later on by Royal Academy of Belgium, now split into "Koninklijke Vlaamse

Academie van België voor Wetenschappen en Kunsten" and "Académie Royale des Sciences, des Lettres et des Beaux-Arts de Belgique".

In parallel with the BNCGG there exists since 1955 an "Association sans buts lucratifs de droit belge" called "Comité National Belge de Géodésie et de Géophysique, Bruxelles". It is charged to administrate the finances of the Committee.

2. Member list

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3. Meetings of the Committee in 2016

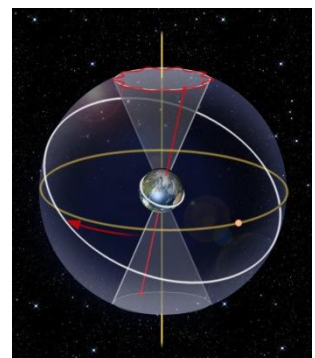
3.1 General Assembly and introductory conference, January 21, 2016

The traditional annual BNCGG General Assembly has been held on January 21 in the Nicolet room of the Royal Belgian Institute for Space Aeronomy (BIRA-IASB). The introductory conference was given by Dr. Véronique Dehant, Royal Observatory of Belgium.

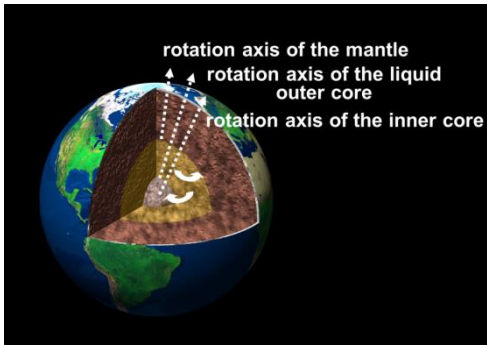
Study of the rotation of the Earth and application to Mars

Véronique Dehant, Royal Observatory of Belgium
January 21, 2015

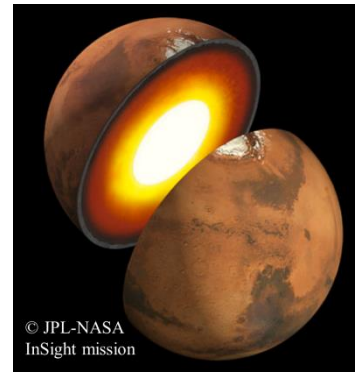
Our fundamental understanding of the interior of the Earth comes from geophysics, geodesy, geochemistry, and geomagnetism. Measurements in these fields have revealed the basic internal layering of the Earth, its thermal structure, its gross compositional stratification. In particular, the **rotation and orientation of the Earth (precession and nutation)** are used to obtain essential information on the deep Earth interior. They are subject to irregularities induced by global mass redistributions with time and external forcing such as the gravitational pull of the Sun and the Moon. The term ‘precession’ describes the long-term trend of the orientation of the axis of spin, while ‘nutation’ is the name given to shorter-term periodic variations. The rotation axis of the Earth is moving in space at the level of 1.5km/year due to precession (as seen from space in a plane tangent to the pole) and has periodic variations at the level of 600 meters. With the advance of observation precision, the causes of Earth orientation changes are progressively being identified by geodesists and geophysicists. **The present observations allow scientists to measure these at the sub-centimeter level enabling them to identify further physics of the Earth’s interior** to be taken into account in the Earth orientation models such as the coupling mechanisms at the boundary between the liquid core and the viscoelastic mantle, as well as many other factors (sometimes not yet definitely identified). The existence of a liquid core inside the Earth and all the coupling mechanisms at the core-mantle boundary play indeed an important role in nutation amplitudes. An everyday example of the



influence of the physical state of the interior on the rotation is that raw (liquid) and cooked (solid) eggs rotate differently.



This brings us to the idea of using observation of **rotation and orientation of Mars** for obtaining information on its core, and in particular on its dimension, composition, and physical state. In 2016 and 2018, there will be two missions, the NASA InSIGHT mission and the ESA ExoMars mission involving landers at the surface of



Mars that contain a direct-to-Earth radio system and this will allow us to performed radioscience. These future observations will allow us to perform measurements of Mars deformation, rotation and orientation with an unprecedented accuracy.

[3.2 Duo-conference on precipitation and flooding, 6 October 2016](#)

A second BNCGG meeting was organized on October 20 at the Royal Observatory of Belgium with two conferences given resp. by Dr. Laurent Delobbe ([Rainfall observation and nowcasting at fine scale - recent progress and challenges](#)) and Dr. Patrick Willems ([Urban flood modelling and nowcasting](#)).

[4. Contribution to IUGG General Assemblies](#)

None were organized in 2016.

[5. Other activities](#)

[5.1 Joint conference with Belgian National Committee on Antarctic Research, 29 April 2016](#)

The Belgian National Committee on Geodesy and Geophysics (BNCGG) and the Belgian National Committee on Antarctic Research (BNCAR) organized in collaboration with the Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO) a one-day scientific workshop entitled '**Unlocking a continent: research activities at the Belgian Princess Elisabeth Station, Antarctica 2008-2015**' on 29 April 2016 at the Palace of the Academies in Brussels. The purpose of the workshop is to give an overview of current Antarctic scientific activities, with a particular focus on results from the period 2008-2016 in the vicinity of the Princess Elisabeth Station, Antarctica.

GUEST SPEAKER: Prof. Martin SIEGERT, co-director of The Grantham Institute for Climate Change, Imperial College London and Bristol Glaciology Center, UK. 2013 recipient of the Martha T. Muse Prize for excellence in Antarctic science and policy.

The symposium consisted of 38 oral and poster presentations on Antarctic research activities in the wide range of fields of geophysics, glaciology, biology, meteorology, climatology... While the focus of the symposium is on research activities at and in the vicinity of the Princess Elisabeth station, a session was nevertheless dedicated to Belgian Antarctic research activities in a broader context (marine sciences, sea

ice ...) with a limited number of oral presentations. The full abstract booklet is appended to this Report (BNCGG_BNCAR_SYMPABSTRACTS.pdf).

6. Future perspectives

6.1 Planned meetings of the BNCGG in 2017

- The next BNCGG General Assembly is planned on Thursday January 19, 2017.
- At a TBD date probably in the beginning of May a number of grouped conferences is planned on the theme of climate change in the polar regions.
- At a TBD date in the autumn of 2017 an international workshop is planned on the climate of tropical regions.

6.2 Planned international meetings

- The next European Geophysical Union (EGU) conference will be held from 23 to 28 April 2017 in Vienna, Austria.
- Next Scientific Assemblies of the IUGG Associations are
 - o IACS, 13-17 February 2017 Wellington, New Zealand
 - o IAG/IASPEI, 30 July-4 August 2017, Kobe, Japan
 - o IAGA/IAMAS/IAPSO, 27 August-1 September 2017 Cape Town, South Africa
 - o IAHS, date on discussion, Port Elizabeth, South Africa
 - o IAVCEI, 14-18 August 2017, Portland, USA
- The next American Geophysical Union (AGU) meeting is planned from 11 to 15 December in New Orleans, USA.
- The next IUGG General Assembly will be held in Montreal, Canada in 2019.