

Newsletter

Dear colleagues,

To summarize the activities of 2023, a USF General Assembly is scheduled, in the Metropolis of Lyon, France, on Saturday March 23, 2024, in the morning followed by a meal in common at noon. It will be an opportunity to discuss ongoing actions, analyze difficulties encountered and organize future projects. Non-affiliates are welcome as long as they pay the fee.

Following the visit of USF President Jean Ruffier to Argentina, he met with a higher education specialist from that country and explained his vision after the election of the new President of the Republic. A Greek colleague expresses his opinion on the new law on private universities. A colleague from the University of Geneva then raises the question of academic integrity after the emergence of AI in the training and supervision of doctoral students. Below you will find in this issue a research announcement for PhDs in goinformatics for the University of Tartu in Estonia.

Wishing you a good read.

Prof. Robert Laurini, Editor of the USF-AWB Newsletter. ■

Situation in Argentina: provoking a cultural revolution

During his trip to Argentina, Professor Jean Ruffier, president of USF, met with a higher education specialist in Argentina. This is his perspective since Milei's election.

His diagnosis: Argentina is in a situation close to that of 1970 (i.e. before the military coup). In 1970, Argentina was as rich as Spain. Since then, it has only descended relatively to Spain. The country gives the impression of a permanent revolution, but in fact it is extremely stable. A former head cook of the presidential residence pointed out: «the presidents change regularly, but those who come to dinner are always the same» (ed. even during the military period). The status quo was very solid and is a model of impoverishment by creating all kinds of rents for the dominant groups. Trade unions receive 3% of total wages. Big business leaders have done a lot to close the economy. Pressure

groups are so powerful that governments are tempted to buy them for peace; there is no other way but to reduce the cost of such crippling privileges. The idea is, to separate from these rentiers of the social movement and to reduce these incomes, opening the market of the labor and that of the products.



Basically, owners will be able to directly choose their employees without going through an agency, the products will no longer be sold by monopolies. Most of the laws were drafted by the military in all of aviation and space. Which means we're no longer competitive. The same goes for communications. Private groups are obliged to pass through a monopoly that

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controls and taxes the other actors of the domain. Royalties are taken on all activities. The navy is also a monopoly, as a result of Argentina having virtually no fishing industry, at least not competitive. He then quotes Gramsci: Gramsci said that, in order to win power, socialists must begin by taking over universities, culture, NGOs, trade unions. I deduce that for Milei's team Peronism is the objective, but not the only objective: there are also the army and the pressure groups of the historical national capitalists. The adviser contradicts me saying that he has nothing against the Peronists, the army, etc., who simply wants to blow up a cultural system that makes the price of fertilizers double in Argentina than in neighboring countries. For him, this government was chosen to put on the table things that until then were taboo. The first result is that a wall of silence has fallen. Debate has begun over the need to question the system. The President strikes hard, but it remains within the framework of democracy: in democracy all views are correct, but there must be debate and voting. Argentina is not used to this debate.

The strategy to reduce the blocking system by unions, and rentier monopolies: all uncommitted combat is lost, and therefore with the means it has, the government will carry out all the struggles it can to open this system to the idea of an end to rents and privileges. It intends to attack directly the system resulting from history and assumes that the progress achieved will be enough to reverse the trend towards more debate and, above all, more political effectiveness.

He also believes that Argentina is the country where people refuse to discuss politics between the two main Peronist and anti-peronist political tendencies. Even the Chinese are used to debating political positions by narrowly opposing friends, and without too much risk of being heard. In Argentina, to remain friends, we must not say that we are on the other side. People can be friends knowing they have different political ideas, but they cannot discuss them between Peronists and anti-peronists.

In conclusion, I found the focus of this specialist more culturalist than strategic. It seems that Milei is satisfied with the constant dissemination of transgressive ideas, and that goes in the sense of a cultural vision: they want to make a cultural revolution. Perhaps this is their main weakness: to think that they are capable of provoking a cultural shock without directly attacking pressure groups that

are apparently so well installed. But, well, it remains to be seen what they will do.

For further information and discussions, please contact Professor Jean Ruffier, <jean.ruffier@usf-awb.net>. ■

Greece, a new law allowing private universities

In Greece, on Friday 8 March 2024, the Greek Parliament voted and approved a law authorizing private universities, with 159 votes in favor, 129 against and 11 abstentions. This law, in effect, allows the establishment of private higher institutions/ private universities (possibly renowned) in Greece, as well as the opening of the annexes of private foreign universities in Greece. The granting of titles equivalent to those of public institutions is evident. It should be noted that this law was part of a set of laws that also affected public universities. It should be noted that this law was part of a set of laws that also affected public universities. This law does not have the approval of a significant number of professors and students from universities, and a large part of Greek society. However, it is difficult to say whether the majority of society/ students/professors are for or against this law. This does not prevent that thousands of students have expressed their opposition to this law with demonstrations in Athens, Thessaloniki and other cities of Greece, as well as with occupations and temporary closures of some public university institutions (e.g. the University of Athens, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, etc.). One of the opposition's arguments is that this law violates article 16 of the 1975 Constitution, which provides that higher education is provided exclusively by public institutions.



The Government hopes to attract foreign investment and students and allow more young Greeks to study at universities abroad (through its subsidiaries) without going abroad to study. According to UNESCO (data 2022), 40,395 Greek baccalaureate holders have gone abroad to study. Greece has in the

European Union (EU) the highest number of students abroad, proportionally to its population (Greek population 10.5 million). The institution of private universities exists in several countries in Europe, the United States and the world in general. The Government calls for the establishment of private universities to be determined according to criteria and requirements similar to those of public institutions with rigorous controls.

For more information and discussions, contact Professor Dimos N. Pantazis, University of Western Attica <dn pantazis@uniwa.gr>. ■

Understanding the emergence of AI in the training and supervision of our doctoral students: what about academic integrity?

The objective of the study carried out at the Institute for Research and Action on Fraud and Academic Plagiarism (IRAFPA) in Geneva in Switzerland is to take stock of the perception that doctoral students have of generative AI, when they were unfamiliar with these tools during their master's studies. The aim is also to clarify the use of these tools in their daily work and the attitude of tutors in this regard.

The aim is to offer these two audiences - doctoral candidates and supervisors - a reliable, transparent, generous, useful speech... Therefore, a formation of integrity in continuous evolution. But the extremely rapid change in AI structurally clashes with the length of training of future researchers: three years of doctorate is short to root academic integrity in everyday practices.

Certainly, the solution is not a mandatory MOOC for doctoral students (which has the merit of existing) or the fact of delegating education to integrity to ethics specialists «outside the earth». And the thesis supervisors are not necessarily the best placed, while the directors of doctoral schools observe that the diploma of Authorization to Conduct Research (HDR²) is given to people who have not received any training in integrity.

Our individual and collective responsibility is anchored in this question of knowing how to train their doctoral students in doubt, in a critical spirit, in the spirit of synthesis that will be needed more than ever.

² In some countries, diploma to be candidate for positions of university professors.

An open survey was conducted among doctoral candidates and doctoral thesis directors from French universities. We analyzed 115 responses from doctoral candidates and 40 from thesis supervisors. The responses of a complementary sample of thirty-three directors of doctoral schools were then analyzed to ascertain the means available to them to mobilize tutors on general integrity issues. They responded extensively to our open questions analyzed by inductive method of sense extraction.

Our survey reveals that many professors are between denial and fear, and that they delegate to other instances to take into account this new situation. The parallel of the leak to the software of detection of textual plagiarism is the very example of this fear of the mobilization of some and others.

So, in the face of the AI revolution - and although training in academic integrity remains superficial, our preliminary results show that we must return to the fundamentals of pedagogy:

- 1) It was found that doctoral students were seeking explicit, not tacit competences.
- 2) Supervisors are sensitive to a pedagogy of the experience (or multiple experiences) of members of the academic body (cf. The theatre of situations).
- 3) Heads of doctoral schools often lack the means and time to understand the ongoing phenomenon.



It remains to define the action of acculturation to integrity by assimilation in a world disturbed by AI. Indeed, IRAFPA is working tirelessly to ensure that this acculturation does not proceed by "segregation" (ethics courses in the field taught by "specialists"), by "risky integration" (at the will of the different managers), and much less by "marginalization" (there is no talk of integrity and ethics). But how to define and implement

this "acculturation to integrity by assimilation"?

On this subject, a colloquium on Academic Integrity «Challenges and uncertainties of academic integrity in the era of artificial intelligence» is organized at the University of Coimbra (Portugal), on 20 - 22 June 2024. See <https://irafpa.org/colloqui-2024coimbra/presentation-2024/> . USF will participate.

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Search for PhD students in geoinformatics at the University of Tartu, Estonia

The Landscape Geoinformatics Lab at University of Tartu is looking for 4 new PhD students for 4 topics:

- Topic 1: A systematic approach to re-gridding and data integration with Discrete Global Grid Systems for machine learning readiness
- Topic 2: Detection of small-scale landscape elements located on agricultural fields with deep learning
- Topic 3: Spectral diversity metrics and machine learning for spatially predictive biodiversity modelling (in collaboration with Tartu Observatory)
- Topic 4: Assessment of carbon stock in hemiboreal forests from multi-static synthetic aperture radar data (in collaboration with KappaZeta Ltd)



Qualifications:

If you have MSc or you are graduating MSc this spring-summer in Geospatial Sciences, Remote Sensing, Computer Science, Physics, Quantitative Ecology or related fields.

Deadline 20th of March, 2024

How to Apply:

Please see more information about the positions here: <https://lnkd.in/dvVKwjDF>

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https://www.etis.ee/CV/Evelyn_Uuemaa/eng
<https://landscape-geoinformatics.ut.ee>. ■
