

Baveno, GMES and Copernicus

Last month, I attended the 20th anniversary of the Baveno meeting which established the GMES programme which has now become Copernicus. The Baveno Manifesto was a landmark document put together by representatives of Europe's space agencies under the guidance of the European Commission. EARSC was there represented by our then chairman Claes Goren Borg. It was great meeting up with so many friends (I shall not say old friends!) who were also there in 1998 and especially comparing notes on our respective perspectives of what happened 20 years ago.



GMES, for those who may have forgotten, stands for "Global Monitoring for Environment and Security." The change to Copernicus came a few years ago in 2014, and I shall always recall an EC official proclaiming how changing the name to Copernicus meant that we now have a programme with a name that meant something! GMES was preceded by an initiative called GES (Global Environment System) which was supported by the then Research Commissioner Edith Cresson, and GES played its role by focusing the space agencies on the need to act. So, when the then Satellite Applications Institute (SAI) led by Rudolf Winter prepared to hold their annual Remote Sensing scientific meeting at Baveno in 1998, Herbert Allgeier, who was the Director General of the JRC at the time, took the opportunity to host a lunch with key representatives of the earth observation sector; the space agencies plus EARSC.

Those present agreed on the need to act and to prepare the document which became the Manifesto. It was followed by several months of passing draft versions back and forth – although only 3 formal drafts existed. This was a slower process than it would be today as mostly these were sent around by fax as email was not universally used!

Even detractors had a role to play to validate the efforts, and the result was the Baveno Manifesto which we celebrated 20 years later at Baveno 2018 on 21st June. Several of the "drafters" talked about the process. Alan Belward showed some of the draft text with mark-ups. Josef Aschbacher showed a powerpoint slide with changes to key points. But the highlight was the presentation made to the "fathers of Copernicus" who were many of the actors around the table at the famous lunch 20 years ago.

I must reserve a particular mention for Herbert Allgeier. If any one person could be called the Father of Copernicus it is he. One rather nice photo was taken (by Rainer Horn) at the Baveno celebrations. It features Herbert on the right, in the middle is Gerard Brachet and on the left is Pieter vanNes who was Herbert's right-hand man at the time. These three played a major role in the creation of what is now the world's foremost Earth Observation programme.

I don't think any of us really knew what we were launching that day. There were a number of different views on what was needed which over the months of drafting were forged into a collective vision for Europe. This has been progressively sculpted into the Copernicus programme which exists today.

An appeal was made at Baveno 2018 to develop a renewed vision for Europe in Space. The EC has recently published its proposal for an EU Space Programme and I certainly hope that this can provide the framework under which a similar vision can develop and that this can include an industrial perspective and ultimately an industrial policy to really secure the programme. There is a reasonable budget associated to the proposal but, as it becomes more detailed, we should ensure that enough is allocated to develop the services and applications which justify the infrastructure investment.

The EC proposal covers the next 7 years. Let's try to ensure that it leads to a vision for the next 20 years. See you in Baveno 2038!

Ps: Just a final, special word as the 21st June was the day when one of our EARSC key people (they are all key!) gave birth to her first daughter. So, in 2038 she will be 20 years old and I am sure that if Natassa has anything to do with it, Artemis will be a true space girl maybe celebrating at the 40th anniversary of the Baveno Manifesto. Who knows?