

The benefits of attending the 18th ISSMGE Conference Stacey Tucker¹

The 18th International Conference on Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering was in Paris, France the first week of September in 2013. I applied for a grant from the International Society of Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering (ISSMGE) while writing my PhD Dissertation at Texas A&M University. This conference provided the opportunity to attend the lectures of some of the current ‘Greats’ in Geotechnical Engineering and for the chance to expand ones professional network globally. Also, the location of the conference was enticing to gain some new cultural experiences.

The Great Amphitheater was a focal point of grand occasions, beginning with the opening statements from the President of the conference and the President of the society. The musical accompaniment of the opening session was certainly unique and a delightful component to excite the attendees for the week ahead. Following this, the opportunity to hear the Terzaghi, Ishihara, and Menard lectures in a row gave the audience stimulating and technical knowledge. In particular, I enjoyed Dr. Calebresi’s Tuesday lecture on “The role of Geotechnical Engineering in saving monuments and historic sites” for the Kerisel Honor Lecture. Historic preservation is a rising field across many disciplines and I found that this lecture specifically addressed the theme of the conference: Challenges and Innovations in Geotechnics. Considering all of the Honor lectures in the Great Amphitheater, the theme of the conference was covered very well, from case studies to in situ testing methods, and numerical to physical models.

Outside the technical lectures and discussion groups, were plenty of opportunities for networking during the coffee breaks and lunch. With over 1,000 attendees, it was impossible to track down every colleague of interest, though the challenge of doing so was exciting! Fortunately, as a volunteer at the ISSMGE booth helping to disseminate information from each of the societies, I was able to visit with many colleagues and create new professional relationships. This provided the perfect opportunity to discuss up and coming events and topics as well as to gain invaluable advice as a new faculty member. Expanding my professional network internationally has allowed me to view some subjects with new perspective.

The final benefit of attending this conference was technical mixed with some culture. Because the conference began on Monday, this potentially provided attendees with just enough time to explore some of the sights of Paris. From an engineer’s prospective, the opportunity to see and go up in the Eiffel Tower is a once in a lifetime experience. No picture does this structure justice, it is surprising how tall it is in person and a little daunting when looking down at Paris from the top. Also, the opportunity to briefly explore the Louvre, certainly one of the greatest museums in the World, was a sensational addition.

The benefits of attending the 18th International Conference on Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering will support my new career in many ways. The knowledge gained through the lectures and technical sessions and the professional networking will supplement a budding career in academia for many years. I look forward to the 19th International Conference in 2017.

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