



International Association of Geomorphologists

International Conference
"Geomorphosites 2026 – Heritage Geomorphology"
and
Intensive Course on Geomorphosites for MSc and PhD students
Sion, Switzerland, 7–12 September 2026

Report

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"Mario Panizza would have loved that, this is the kind of work that he was doing" was the remark made by head organizer for the event, Dr. Emmanuel Reynard, regarding my current line of research¹ as I was introduced during the conference opening program as the recipient of the IAG Travel Grant for Young Geomorphologists in "Geomorphosites 2026": a week-long event on Heritage Geomorphology Celebrating 25 years of research on geomorphological heritage and a tribute to the late Dr. Mario Panizza. I never had the chance to meet Dr. Panizza in person, but his works on *geomorphosites* has been foundational to my initial interest in pursuing a geomorphological approach to geoheritage research, along with the works of Dr. Reynard, Dr. Brilha, and many researchers, who were in the room at that time, who have 'built' the field of heritage geomorphology over the years. I am very grateful to the IAG for awarding me the Travel Grant which gave me the opportunity to be in that room, to have learned from the leading experts in the field during the 2-day intensive course, to be able to share my research and be involved in the discussions during the 2-day conference, and, with additional support from my university, to join the 2-day post-conference excursions. It was both an enriching and enlightening experience.



In photos: Conference Program and the first session of the Intensive Course

¹ See "About the awardee" on the last page

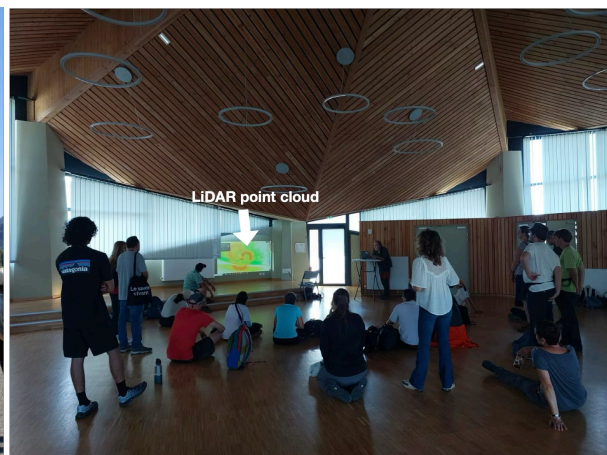
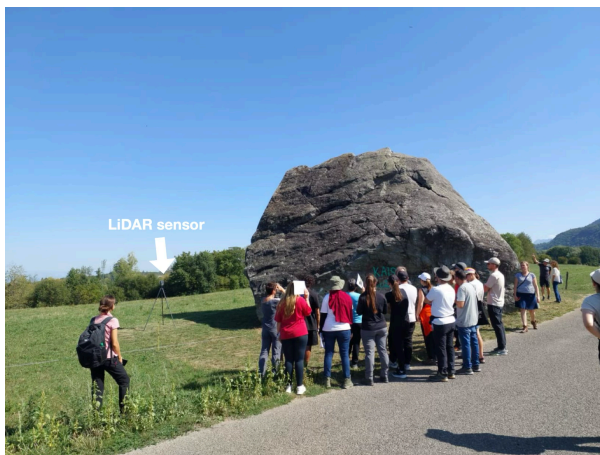


International Association of Geomorphologists

Intensive Course for MSc and PhD students:

I was very lucky with both the timing and the content of this intensive course. For my PhD, I have been working on expounding the concept of volcanic geodiversity, integrating conceptual frameworks from different disciplines to directly link geodiversity to geosystem services and georisk. In extension, I am currently developing methods to assess degradation risk of volcanic geodiversity sites. I found the lectures on 1) new conceptual and methodological frameworks for Heritage Geomorphology, 2) geosite degradation risk and mapping, and 3) geosystem services and disservices directly related and extremely useful for my dissertation. I am looking forward to incorporating the new things I learned from these courses into my research.

The examples of geoheritage projects with communities during the afternoon session of the intensive course has also been inspiring, and I could imagine how these can be replicated in my study areas as well. I also appreciated the demonstrations of LiDAR and Virtual Reality technology which we saw 'in action' the very next day during the Field Trip to Chablais Geopark. Stopping by to perform a quick roadside LiDAR survey on a glacial erratic, it was very cool to see the point cloud just an hour later during the lunch break!



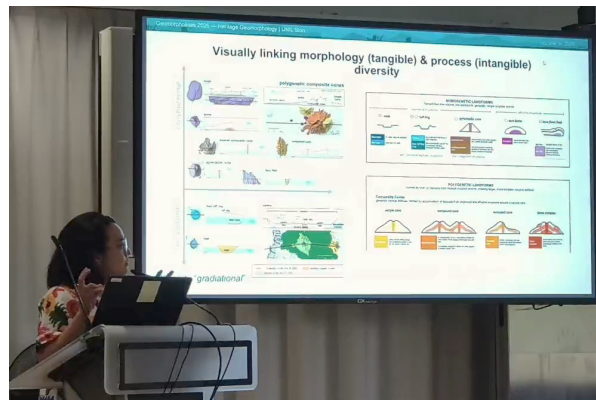
Photos from the intensive course field trip. (Left) LiDAR survey to create a 3D model of the glacial erratic. (Right) we saw the point cloud generated over lunch break



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International Conference:

I am grateful for the opportunity to present my research and be involved in discussions during the 2-day conference. I appreciate the positive feedback and the comments I got which inspired some new ideas for me to explore and extend this research further. I also thoroughly enjoyed listening to the other oral and poster presentations (and slightly sad that I couldn't attend both parallel sessions! There were so many interesting research being presented), and of course the keynote talks. I noticed that most presentations were research done in mountain and karst regions, while mine was probably the lone purely volcanic example. Nonetheless, that did not make me feel "out of place". It was very impressive to see the diversity of research being done with the same underlying concepts of geoheritage and geoconservation. At the same time, it was also interesting to recognize the differences in contextual and methodological considerations for different geomorphic settings. These reflections inspired me to further contemplate "the place of volcanic geodiversity" in the wider field of Heritage Geomorphology and how I can situate my work in the knowledge that we are all collectively building.



Photos of me during my presentation "Geomorphosite-based mapping of geodiversity for volcanic regions to facilitate geointerpretation and geosite evaluation"

Post-conference excursions:

With additional support from my university, I was able to extend my participation to the post-conference field trips at Mont Fort and the Aletsch Glacier. Though I personally do not work on glacial environments, this was also an enlightening experience for me. We learned that they are leaning towards 'experience' based geoeducation to stress the importance of these glaciers. Indeed, being able to walk on the ice 'crunch'-ing under our feet and hear the glacial retreat through the flowing water from the melting was a sentimental experience that grounded me to the glacier. Growing up in the tropics, I have only ever learned about glacial geomorphology through textbooks and digital media. This experience has brought me closer to landscapes that



International Association of Geomorphologists

I have never felt connected to before. It was a great reminder that protection of Earth's geoheritage is a global duty when our activities that contribute climate change are affecting landscapes we have never been to before and the people and habitats that depend on them as well. In similar sense, our visit to the Aletsch glacier the next day tells the same story of glacial retreat along with more familiar topics of managing heritage sites amidst rapidly changing landscapes with additional threats from development projects. These are all very common in my study areas where humans live with volcanoes, and the human-volcano interaction is a complex balance of resource-use, nature conservation, and dealing with geohazards.

Overall, it was a very great week to start the Autumn semester of my last year of PhD studies. Being with researchers of such diverse backgrounds and research fields, brought together by the same goal of protecting Earth's Geoheritage, has given me a renewed drive to continue doing the work that I do, with the comfort of knowing there is a great community to belong to in the field of Heritage Geomorphology.

Once again, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the IAG for making my attendance to these events possible, and to the IAG Heritage Geomorphology Working Group, the organizing staff, and all the participants who made this such a great experience: a fitting tribute to Dr. Mario Panizza and to his legacy which lives on through our science.



Group photo after the 2-day conference



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Photos from excursions

(Top: Chablais UNESCO Global Geopark, Bottom: Torin Glacier, Mont Fort)



About the awardee:

Naomi Irapta is a 4th year PhD Candidate at the Department of Physical Geography, Eötvös Loránd University (Hungary).

She works on Geodiversity of Volcanic Regions, though the lens of human-(volcano)geodiversity interactions. She takes a multidisciplinary approach to establish a conceptual framework that explicitly links Volcanic Risk and Volcanic Resources (social) to Volcanic Geodiversity (natural). Working within this framework, she is now developing morphology-based methods of geodiversity assessments specifically for risk-reduction and resource management purposes in volcanic regions.