

# NEWSLETTER

OF THE EUROPEAN MATHEMATICAL SOCIETY



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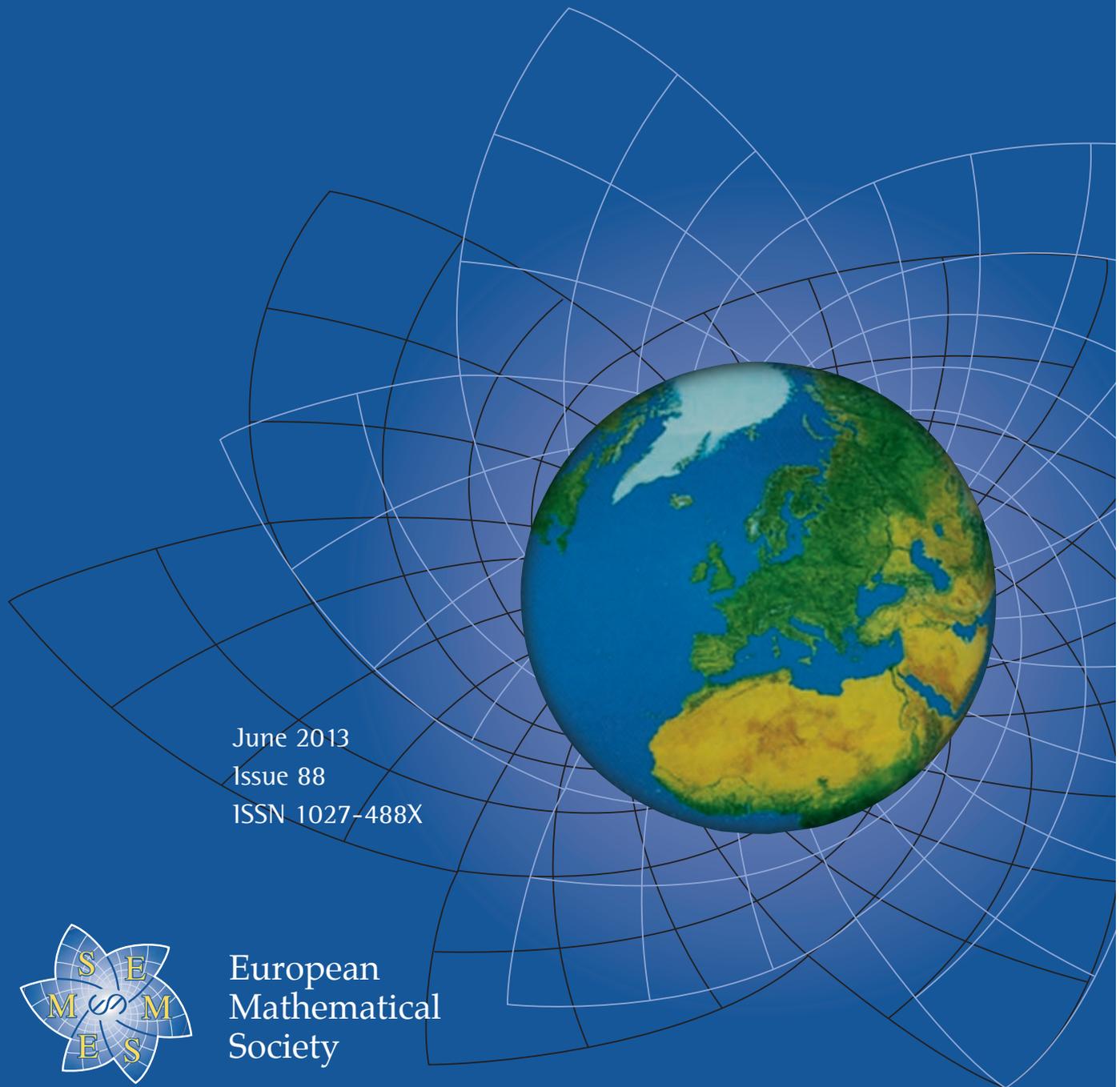
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# Across the Board: Meeting Point for European Societies

The Editorial Board has recently decided to create this new section as a focal point for Europeans to know each other better. Little did we know during our discussions that we would start it with news of a criminal fire that has destroyed the Città della Scienza, a scientific museum in Naples, which was the pride of the entire city (that has already been touched by social and economic difficulties). In Italy, this criminal act has caused great emotion and mobilisation of many colleagues, intellectuals and citizens, who are collaborating to rebuild the museum as quickly as possible and to establish the primacy of culture and civil society over illegality.

## “Città della Scienza” in Naples Burned in a Fire

Ciro Ciliberto (Università di Roma Tor Vergata, Italy), President of the Unione Matematica Italiana

On 4 March 2013, the “Città della Scienza” (Science Centre) in Naples burned in a fire. The Science Centre was located in the Bagnoli area, on the coast, in the northern part of Naples, at the border with the city of Pozzuoli. The area occupied by the Science Centre was part of a huge industrial environment devoted to a steel plant which closed down in 1992. The whole area, of about 120 hectares, has been abandoned since then, with the only exception being the Science Centre, which has been a great driving force for the cultural and economic rebirth of the whole neighbourhood and a mark of distinction and excellence for the city of Naples. The Science Centre was a Science Museum, opened to the public in 1996 thanks to the collaboration between scientists and people of culture, the Idis Foundation, the managing agency of the centre, the Italian Ministry of University and Research, Local Institutions, etc. The Science Centre, visited by more than 300,000 people, especially schoolchildren, included a planetarium, a theatre (the Galilei 104 Theatre), a conference centre and a science store, and it hosted children’s workshops, international activities, exhibitions, conferences, etc. These activities were highly recognised at an international level, with the partnership of UNICEF, UNESCO, ANMS (National Association of Natural Science Museums), ECSITE (European Network of Science Centres and Museums) and Hands on! Europe (Association of children’s museums), etc.

The Science Centre was an attempt to create in Italy a centre of distinction for high level popularisation and diffusion of science, at a level comparable with the best international experiences in this field. Its location in Naples, in the south of Italy, a region which particularly suf-

fers from economic depression, was also meaningful as a sign of commitment to cultural and social development. Its destruction is therefore a grave event for the Italian scientific community and for the entire society.

The Science Centre burned on a Monday night, the day in which the centre is closed. This is seen as a sign of malice. Hence, the suspicion that we are facing arson is very high. If so, one might be tempted to think that somebody, to be identified, wanted to destroy an institution which was important not only from a cultural but also from a social and economic viewpoint. This would be further evidence of savagery to which too often our society exposes us. Against it, as human beings, and citizens and scientists, we have to raise our voices and fight.

The Italian Mathematical Union has put the problem on its agenda, in order to study possible actions to encourage the reconstruction of the Science Centre and to show that the will of knowledge can be fostered even amongst the ruins.

Meanwhile, the Science Centre appeals to the goodwill of people for concrete help; see <http://www.cittadellascienza.it/news/rebuilding-citta-della-scienza-lets-join-our-efforts/?lang=en>.



*Ciro Ciliberto teaches geometry at the University of Roma “Tor Vergata”. His scientific interests are devoted to algebraic geometry.*