This special issue of the Bulletin of the Italian Cartographic Association contains a set of papers deriving from presentations in occasion of the IV EUGEO Congress, held in Rome on 5–7 September 2013, and particularly during the Session S04 on “Cartography, Geography, Geographic Information. Representation, Visualization, Analysis”. Such session was organized by members of the Executive Board and of the Scientific Council of the Italian Cartographic Association, and was intended to gather contributions for members and non-members of the Association, both at national and international level.

A selection of the oral speeches presented was submitted as original papers in this special issue of the Bulletin of the Italian Cartographic Association and accepted for publication after a peer-review process of selection, as a standard procedure adopted during the last few years.

This special issue and the session that originated it, represented an opportunity to examine the link between Cartography and Geography, considering in particular the revolutions intervened with the advent of Geographic Information technologies (GIS, Remote Sensing and Global Navigation Satellite Systems) and, more recently, with the development of ‘Web 2.0’ and its geographical implications (Neogeography, Volunteered Geographic Information, etc.).

Geography and Cartography have been always tightly coupled together, in particular as Cartography allows the representation of geographical entities and processes. To-date Cartography is enhanced and integrated by Geographical Information instruments, now widely used and manageable by researchers and scholars. Some of the issues related to geographical data are being solved, thanks to the recent initiatives from the public sector (Open Data, Spatial Data Infrastructures), the private one (i.e. Google Earth) and the so-called Volunteered Geographic Information (i.e., Wikimapia, OpenStreetMap), possible through the wide diffusion of electronic devices containing geo-referenced information. Such availability of data and software allows scholars and researchers to cope with many issues concerning geographical analysis and representation. However, such availability raises also new challenges and open new issues in geographical analysis. The Eugeo 2013 S04 Session on “Cartography, Geography, Geographic Information. Representation, Visualization, Analysis” and the special issue therefore represents an opportunity for scholars to exchange ideas and experiences on issues related to geographical analysis and reasoning on the cartographic representation and visualizations that can originate from that.

This special issue is opened by the invited paper by prof. Christian Vandermotten, on “The Geography of the European Left from the end of WW II: national homogenization or permanence of the regional political behaviors?” in which the spatial pattern of European elections in time is analyzed, with reference to phenomena
as regional contrasts, homogenization, hysteresis and permanence. The analysis is mainly focused on the results of the Left parties, and the paper is based on a question as: Can the geography of the Left be explained, in a global European perspective?

Afef Saada presents a paper on “The cartographic image of the Tunisian space seen from ‘the West’ in the modern age: historiographic and quantitative approaches (from XVI to XVIII century)” where she addresses the perception of the Tunisian space from a Western point of view, by means of the cartographic representation in the modern age, using a storiographic and quantitative approach. The evolution of modern Cartography is analyzed thanks to software for the analysis of the distortions of maps realized in different times and the comparison with the map models.

Yoann Doignon and Sebastien Oliveau focus on “Territorial grids in the Mediterranean: space versus population”, where the authors focus on international comparisons on a Mediterranean scale for demographic and geographical themes. The paper in particular focuses on the use of grids for collecting and representing geographical themes and phenomena and for comparing them over a homogeneous and comparable tessellation of space, if compared to other forms of regionalization.

Joan Carles Membrado tackles the urban expansion and sprawl in Spain in the paper “Costa Blanca: Urban Evolution of a Mediterranean Region through GIS Data”. The author highlights in maps the landscape transformation following the real estate ‘bubble’ in the country and the links with lifestyle migrants that move to Spain from Northern Europe, causing changes in the urban structure and landscape of many locations in the country.

An overview of the Romanian activities in the field of Cartography, Geography and Geographic Information is provided by Florin-Constantin Mihai, who is present with two different papers on “Accessibility of waste collection services in Romania: a multi-scale analysis in EU context using thematic cartography” and on “Spatial distribution of rural dumpsites parameters in Romania”. In the first paper a multi-scale approach of the population access to waste management system is analysed, in order to estimate the environmental impact of the new EU regulations on the Romanian situation. The second paper studies the spatial patterns of rural dumpsites in Romania related to the different geographical conditions observable in Romania, by crossing statistical geographical data with on-field observations.

Alessandro Ricci tackles the iconographic representation of the Dutch ‘lion’ in historical maps, in the paper “Maps, Power and National Identity. The Leo Belgicus as a Symbol of the Independence of the United Provinces”. The paper is focused on how the (cartographic) ‘lion’ helped building the Dutch national identity.

Raffaela Gabriella Rizzo and Luca Simone Rizzo focus on the “Religious heritage in Italy: websites and geolocalization. A new appraisal”. Here GIS databases are the backbone of a system aimed at displaying through websites the religious heritage of churches, sites and other religious elements that populate Italian cities and places. A website displaying images, maps, geographical locations and descriptions of such sites is realized and presented.

This special issue therefore represents an opportunity for a certain overview on the state of the Cartographic production and reflections within Geography. Also, without presuming of having covered all of the aspects related to cartography, it is an occasion, once again, for showing the different domains and applications where Cartography can play the role of the main character.