

GIM International Interviews Prof. Dr. Holger Magel, President, 'An Obligation to Say What We Think'

The FIG Working Week, held in Paris, France from 13th to 17th April 2003, gave occasion for Prof. Dr. Holger Magel for the first time really to address the FIG community. Driven by his long experience in the surveying and land management profession, a desire to contribute to emerging civil societies world-wide and awareness of the successful work of previous FIG councils and FIG achievements in general, Professor Magel urged his audience not to 'rest on our laurels'. The need was instead to work together and look to the future. GIM International interviewed Professor Magel during the ensuing week.

By Christiaan Lemmen, Contributing Editor, GIM International

His style is open, clear, to the point and with a feeling for humour. During the Working Week in Paris in which the 125th birthday of the FIG was celebrated (see the July 2003 issue of GIM International) the message of the opening address from Professor Magel was 'He who is not aware of the past cannot cope with the future'. He thus embarked upon a new presidential period with the new Council from Germany, responsible for the Munich congress in 2006.

What are the most relevant issues for the FIG community in the coming years?

Our motto is 'shaping the change'. This is appropriate because the world and its societies are changing rapidly and so is the profession. The most essential changes for FIG are the continuing processes of democratisation world-wide and increasing commitment of the profession to sustainability and more equity in the world. This must occur in coincidence with the well-known principles of good governance and developments towards civil society. To protect and to develop the profession in both the international and national arena and to assist in the transition towards

of work for the council and the administration and plans of work for the ten technical commissions. It is, however, the Council that has overall responsibility for fulfilling this plan in its role as executor, facilitator or co-ordinator.

The new Council set out some guiding principles to implement this. One clear message and principle for our member organisations is that we do not interfere in internal affairs but we feel an obligation to say what we think, to the best of our knowledge and belief.

Guiding principles?

Yes, guiding principles and ideas. We want to play our part in ensuring that the presence of FIG will be felt to the greatest possible extent in all regions of the world. A serious social responsibility rests on us, as a well-balanced technical and scientific association. We feel a moral and ethical obligation in the intensified co-operation sought with the institutions of the UN. We have as a target promotion of the profession of surveyors in FIG



Prof. Holger Magel and Christiaan Lemmen at the FIG Working Week in Paris

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member countries, both in public and private practice, where we give a lot of attention to education. We believe that we can bring a lot of experience to the subjects of both urban and rural land development and sustainable management. We have to work with other disciplines to accomplish more than we could do as surveyors alone. Seeking contacts with politicians is of vital importance. We have to work on all this.

Contacts with the UN are relevant here. How are you going to organise this?

The Millennium Declaration is the framework that all nations and international and national organisations should aim for. This declaration recognises that we all have collective responsibilities. In its details we find many links to the surveyor's work: administration and management of land and natural resources, creating an environment conducive to development and the elimination of poverty are among them. Also access to land and secure tenure, improvement of the lives of slum dwellers, development of partnership with private sector and civil organisations, development of water management strategies, conflict resolution and bringing Africa into the mainstream of the world economy.

On the global level, the main partner of FIG is, of course, the UN. We already have intensive contacts and, as a non-governmental organisation without any economic interest and with a strong relation to the main tasks of the UN, we have a good approach.

How should we attract the attention of politicians in national governments? I mean, land-related issues are becoming more and more important world-wide and politicians have a short-term horizon.

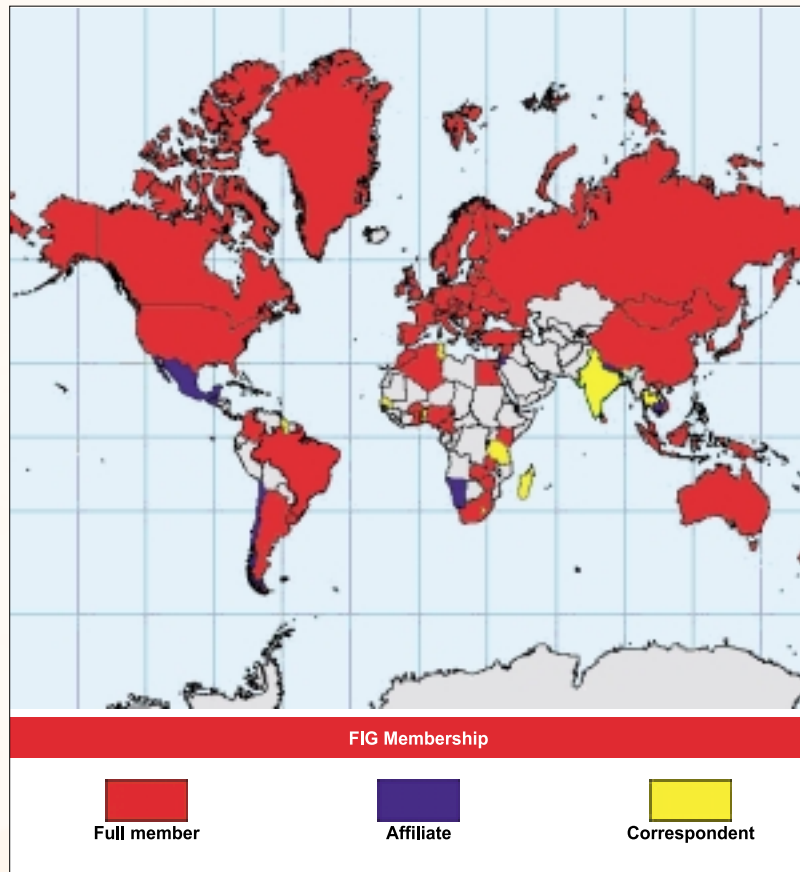


FIG membership

We want to encourage the communication abilities not only of the FIG but also of as many surveyors as possible and, in particular, to improve the regular contact with the media and important social opinion makers. When we hold a major FIG event anywhere in the world we accordingly seek, as a matter of course, contact with politicians. I am really very concerned that we must better bridge the academic and the worlds of practitioners and politicians, otherwise we risk the academic-based profession of surveying or geomatics becoming more and more split apart until finally it perishes. Against the background of my former position at a state ministry, I would like to point out that FIG must stop this trend by bringing together all parties - and I am sure that all parties will finally benefit. A very relevant issue in relation to politicians is Land Administration. We, the partners contributing to a sound Land Administration in our countries, are all responsible for providing a service fitted to demand. We need to understand the customers needs. Good practises learnt from Land Administration

activities in each of our countries have to be compiled. There is another example: in the future, four additional main activities have to be realised in the field of spatial data management. These are specialist and co-ordinator of the workflow for geodatasets, infor-

Biography of Prof. Magel

Prof. Dr. Holger Magel graduated in Geodesy from the Munich Technische Hochschule in 1968. He held several positions in the field of Land Consolidation, finally as director general for rural development in Bavaria. He was appointed honorary Professor for Rural Development at the Munich Technische Universität in 1993 and became an Advisor to the European Commission for Rural Development in Eastern Germany in 1992/93 and chairman of the German Bund-Länder Team for Village Renewal from 1984 - 1995.

He has acted as an expert in eastern and southern Europe, as well as in Asia and South America. Professor Magel has to his name about 210 expert publications. Since 1st January 1998 he has been full-professor for Land Readjustment and Land Development and director of the Institute for Geodesy, Geoinformation and Land Management at the Technical University Munich, where he is Programme Director of the masters programme 'Land Management and Land Tenure'.

Professor Magel is Chairman of the working group for land readjustment and land markets of the highest German scientific institution, the German Geodetic Commission (DGK), and has since 1st January 2003 been President of the International Federation of Surveyors.

mation manager, including databases and Web information, quality manager for geodata and expert in consulting and support for integrating business data and geodata across different professionals, for purposes of generating geoinformation for decision making.

Further, I would like to say that it is our aim to fill up blank areas on the map of FIG membership.

Good education is a key issue worldwide. How may capacity be built?

Of course, first of all we must start with our own future-oriented education and training in order better to understand our partners and ourselves play an efficient role. This means that our surveyors' education at universities and schools must be broadened to include the whole wide range of surveyors' activities. At my own university our ideal is as follows: to offer an academic education in all fields, starting from the single parcel of land and even up to the planet Mars. Our second ideal for young surveyors' education is to get them well grounded as specialised generalists. I know that it is very hard to implement these ideals at the universities all over

the world but I am convinced of its necessity; otherwise we risk surveyors' education disappearing from the academic scene. There is already a degree of concrete danger here. The consequences of this for the image and practical situation of surveyors would be awful. This could never happen to lawyers.

It is one of the most important goals of the FIG-council to better contact and come together with those academic colleagues at our universities who up to now are not integrated or interested in FIG. The first step in this approach will be a revision of our FIG definition of surveyors.

You conclude?

Surveyors have always been deeply involved in economic development. Their contributions are widespread. Important is the bridging role between general public and professions. We should consider this: the business of surveying, mapping, registration of land or land use planning and land management etc. is a team-oriented business. It requires co-operation within the surveying profession, as well as co-operation in particular between the profes-



Prof. Magel with his wife Ansi at the celebration of FIG's 125th anniversary in Versailles

sions of lawyers, land economists, agricultural experts, civil engineers etc. and surveyors. Our profession has to build bridges to the general public. A profession has to look for a sustainable contribution to society instead of a quick win. Only those products and services that really serve the customer or public demand will justify the long-lasting existence of our profession. FIG has therefore worked out and published its own FIG Agenda 21. I am very proud of it! Those professions that contribute to a further improvement in society develop far better than do others that are reluctant to change. Therefore the motto of the current FIG-Council is 'Shaping the Change'. All of us are contributing to an ecological, economic, social and cultural improvement of our society. We feel committed to a more sustainable and more equitable world. The customers and the public will feel the benefit from our service and they will know about it.

Web-site

FIG Working Plan, www.fig.net ♦

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Aim

The aim of FIG is to be the premier international non-governmental organisation representing the interests of surveyors and users of surveying services in all countries in the world. It is a Federation of member associations all of whom seek excellence in the services that they deliver.

Objectives

The objectives of the Federation, as defined in its Statutes are:

1. Provision of an international forum for the exchange of information about surveying and for the development of fellowship between surveyors
2. Collaboration with the United Nations and other international and regional agencies in the formulation and implementation of policies affecting the use, development and management of land and marine resources
3. Promotion of the disciplines of surveying, particularly in developing countries and countries in economic transition
4. Promotion of the role of the surveyor in the management of natural and man-made environments
5. Promotion of the development of national associations of surveyors and of professional standards and codes of ethics and the exchange of surveying personnel
6. Promotion of high standards of education and training for surveyors and facilitation of Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
7. Encouraging the development and proper use of appropriate technology
8. Encouraging research in all disciplines of surveying and dissemination of results.

Mission Statement

The Mission of the International Federation of Surveyors is to ensure that the disciplines of surveying and all who practice them meet the needs of the markets and communities that they serve.