

## INTERVIEW

### INTERVIEW OF THE FIG PRESIDENT'S UNIV. PROF. HOLGER MAGEL



#### Biography of Univ.-Prof. Dr.-Ing. Holger Magel

Prof. Dipl.-Ing. Dr.-Ing. Holger Magel, born in Neuburg/Donau on 3 May 1944. graduated in Geodesy from the Munich Technische Hochschule in 1968. In 1977 obtaining the degree of a Doktor-Ingenieur.

He held several positions in 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.

President of the Bavarian Academy "Ländlicher Raum" (Rural Areas) since 1994.

Advisor of the European Commission for Rural Development in Eastern Germany in 1992/93; chairman of the German Bund-Länder Team for Village Renewal from 1984 - 1995; member of the board of the European Association for Rural Development and Village Renewal.

Acting as an expert in Eastern- and South Europe as well as in Asia and South Amerika. More than 200 expert publications and books on land consolidation, Village renewal and rural Development. Various lectures at home and abroad. Member of several scientific institutions.

President of the International Federation of Surveyors, 2003-2006.

Since 1 Jan. 1998 Full Professor and Director of Institute of Geodesy, GIS and Land Management at the Technische Universität München in Munich.

#### 1. Would you please present the FIG in few words to the Moroccan professionals?

All Moroccan professionals can read a short description of FIG on our excellent website [www.fig.net](http://www.fig.net). There they can also find my president's speech at the opening ceremony of the FIG working week and 125th anniversary in Paris 2003. In this speech I have stated our main principle: "as a neutral well-balanced technical-scientific organization we do not interfere with internal affairs, but we feel an obligation to say what we think to the best of our knowledge and belief". To say what we think means e.g. that we try to support our over 80 member associations and representatives of more than 110 countries developing and enhancing surveying disciplines and professions at home and in general. The planned "Round table on surveyors' education in Africa" in Marrakech is a very current example!

As there are some other international surveyors organizations like ISPRS, ICA or IAG let me underline why FIG is a really unique body: It is the only international body that represents nearly all surveying disciplines from cadastre, land administration and land management via GIS, spatial information management, hydrography, positioning and measurement to engineering surveys, spatial planning and development in urban and rural areas, valuation and the management of real estate and finally construction economics and management. At the moment we are going to update the FIG definition of surveyors in order to respond to technological and structural changes and to attract more academics in the field of geodesy. It is more and more our intention to act in a decentralized and regional way e.g. as we will do at our 2nd Regional Conference in Morocco. Our hope is that all Arabic and many African member associations and universities with surveyor education will come to this conference which is dedicated to an extremely important topic "urban-rural-

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interrelationship for sustainable development”.

2. The FIG had celebrated its 125th anniversary this year. During this period, what would you select as the most outstanding contributions to enhance surveying profession?

It is very hard to point out single outstanding contributions of FIG to enhance surveying profession in the last 125 years. Each time has needed and has got the right answers – therefore I would like to say that FIG at every time has enhanced the profession. It has – especially in the member associations which have had the FIG leadership or organized the FIG events – brought a lot of engagement and commitment to our profession.

Nevertheless, if I have to mention some I would like to say: the most outstanding success was without any doubt the foundation of FIG itself in 1878 and in the following times the continued strengthening of FIG towards a well-known and highly respected global player – thanks to all FIG councils or bureaus, all member associations and all commission officers and members who had special responsibilities!

At the end of our anniversary year and of my first year as the President I am quite sure to select two other outstanding contributions:

FIG has succeeded to form a global surveyors family with a very good atmosphere, with supportive family members who are willing to help everybody when it is needed and with an increased self confidence and competence!

And:

FIG has succeeded becoming acknowledged as a leading global NGO cooperating with many UN agencies and several other international and regional institutions. Our 2nd Regional Conference in Marrakech is an impressive example of this close and fruitful collaboration!

A result of my recent meeting with Prof. Töpfer, Executive Director of UNEP, in Nairobi in May 2003 was to intensify the cooperation in a new field of global importance: disaster and risk management. Marrakech will be the start up for this new initiative. I'm sure that many countries will benefit from this FIG-UNEP approach. Or look for example at the very intensive and long lasting relationship with UN-Habitat with cooperation in the fields of urban-rural interface, sustainable settlements, secure tenure, land administration etc. The establishment of the Habitat Professionals Forum with FIG and sister organizations as active members is a clear evidence of the mentioned outstanding success!

3. What attracted you most in selecting Morocco to organize the 2nd FIG Regional Conference?

My answer is very clear: First of all it was the kind invitation of our Moroccan friends and ONIGT with excellent professionals and cooperative partners. Secondly it was the deliberation to set a focal point of our activity in a country which is really multifaceted and which stands for a lot of unique characteristics like an Arabic country with French language and high professional standard and location in (North-)Africa with a

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bridging function to north, east and south! An ideal place! Thirdly it is the most attractive venue Marrakech, which gave the whole country its name. All participants from all over the world will learn that in this part of the world a high urban cultural and living standard has already existed at a time when other countries or continents just had started to develop an own urban culture. It is a place to show and to appreciate how early and how intensively Arabic culture and spirit has influenced other countries and continents!

#### 4. What is the FIG strategy in terms of education (initial and continuing)?

I can answer very clearly to this question too: Besides the other technical commissions which are responsible and interested in a high academic education and continuing professional development (CPD) in their own fields we do have a dedicated commission working on education namely commission 2 "Professional Education" with Prof. Pedro Cavero, Madrid, as current chair. FIG concentrates on both university education and CPD. A lot of joint activities in many countries around the world or in connection with working weeks or regional conferences and together with the other FIG commissions or international partners could help to exchange and discuss the curricula or syllabi and thereby help to rise the quality and level of university education or professional development. On this background it makes much sense to get many universities as academic members of FIG building an own academic network and benefiting from the continuous contact with the practitioners! This was the reason why recently the President of the University of Technology in Kingston, Jamaica during the meeting with me has immediately decided to apply for the academic membership! Now his university can use our education data base or can ask for the assistance of the professionals in close contacts with our FIG commissions. More and more this field of professional "training" or - better- of lifelong learning will become the third pillar of universities besides traditional education/teaching and research work. I am very glad that the Institut Agronomique et Veterinaire Hassan II and here its surveyors have already joined the academic family of FIG with already more than 60 academic members!

#### 5. In which respect did the technological advances affect the surveying profession?

That is very clear: the technological advances have affected the surveying profession very deeply, some people even say, they have affected surveying so strongly that some activities and many jobs and surveyors have disappeared. We have got "black boxes" and total stations: What in former times was made by academics nowadays can and will be done by people with lower education level and by people who are not any more surveyors. Look for example at the GPS: You can use it everywhere; it is not a surveyor's privilege! But we have got new exciting opportunities as well like 3D-measurements, laser scanning, more and more time based measurements and navigations, new GIS, spatial data infrastructure and remote sensing applications in the field of urban or rural development, in the field of environmental monitoring or for example for location based services etc. As an answer to the technological advances the surveyors have to respond in these two directions:

- a) A better education with even more theory and a broader general knowledge. My motto as teacher and Professor therefore is: The students should become a "well grounded specialized generalist".
- b) A broader range of activities in a higher ranked position.

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My opinion is: The surveyor should not only be a measuring, gathering and modeling expert, he even should move on to a more “planning, shaping and deciding role” in the whole field of “property, land and construction managing”-based on his skills in data and information management. This means that surveyors should make more decisive contributions to sustainable development in all fields of society. It means too that he should be more aware of the changes and developments in our world and societies toward a civil society and towards the implementation of modern and democratic good governance.

6. From your point of view, to what extent have these technological advances narrowed or broadened the surveyor attributions (attributes)?

As I have already expressed it in the previous question it depends mostly on the surveyor himself when or if technological advances narrow or broaden his activities without getting new chances. In neutral sense both have happened: narrowing and broadening!

But this happens to other professions as well. Change happens everywhere and at any time: Our challenge is – as our motto for 2003-2006 expresses it – “to shape the change”. I still believe it and teach it to my students and say it to practitioners as well: The profession of surveying is one of the most attractive and fascinating disciplines and activities. Our motto at Technical University of Munich is: We deliver important contributions from the single parcel to the planet Mars! This is the message, which we must bring to the public, to politicians, citizens and media. All leaders in countries in transition or all post-communist, reform or developing countries with hope on funding by the World Bank, European Union or international donors know it now: first of all they need cadastres and secure property and tenure systems, sound land administration, land consolidation, land markets, accurate and up to date surveying and mapping documents etc. and finally multifaceted infrastructure in urban and rural areas to start a successful and sustainable economic growth. They need the help of “well-grounded specialized generalists”, the help of surveyors! To bring this good news to the public we have to organize and offer such big events like the Regional Conference in Marrakech! It would be an extreme success if many Moroccan politicians, policy decision makers, media and even teachers and students of high schools could attend our conference!

I am looking forward to an inspiring, unforgettable and surely very successful conference in one of the most attractive cities of the world.

Interviewed by :  
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