



*The Big Swing in Surveying explained
by FIG President Stig Enemark*

From Measurement to Management

GeoInformatics' editor Joc Triglav interviews FIG President Stig Enemark on the FIG's motto, upcoming activities, the modern art of measurement and more. "The combination of technical, natural and social science areas place the surveyors in a unique position in society for contributing to development and innovation towards social justice, economic growth, and environmental sustainability."

By Joc Triglav

Question: We started our first interview at the beginning of your term as the FIG President with a discussion about your motto. How successfully have the surveyors embraced it? How high does the surveying profession manage to fly today and how successfully does it keep its feet on the ground?

Answer: The motto of "flying high and keeping the feet on the ground" emphasises the need of having a big vision in relation to the global agenda and, at the same time, supporting the

member associations and the individual surveyors in their everyday tasks. The big vision is about contributing to solving the global challenges such as poverty eradication, climate change, and disaster risk management. FIG has made good progress with the "flying high" targets. I would like to mention only two examples on these activities: the joint FIG/UN-HABITAT seminar on "Improving Slum Conditions through Innovative Financing" in Stockholm in June 2008 and the joint FIG/World Bank conference on "Land Governance in Support of the Millennium Development Goals: Responding to

New Challenges" in Washington in March this year.

"Keeping the feet on the ground" means that FIG must be able to interact with politicians at national level to promote and improve the basic conditions for surveyors and their role in society. And FIG should of course interact in a dialogue with the member associations and the individual surveyors. This interaction has worked well even in the current situation of financial crisis. Indicators such as membership figures and attendance to our conferences look

good and the response from the member associations has also been very positive. But there is always room for improvement and we will still work hard to ensure that that FIG remains a proud icon for our profession.

Q: How and in which ways is the theme “Building the Capacity” of the current FIG Council for 2007-2010 taking shape in the daily reality of the global surveyor’s community?

A: FIG is providing an international forum for professional development and innovation in all aspects of surveying. FIG is “building the capacity” through conferences, commission work and seminars, publications, standards and guidelines. Capacity building is also about providing institutional support for both member associations and academic institutions. This kind of institutional support from the global surveying community can often convince national authorities on requests from our members. FIG has also established a Task Force on Institutional and organisational Development that will present its final outcome at the FIG Congress in Sydney, April 2010.

Q: We all sense through our daily practice that the role of surveyors in the global agenda is obviously changing, backed up or even forced by the rapid technological developments. Which steps should surveyors make to embrace these changes in order to prosper and be of better service to sustainable societies?

A: Professor Rudolf Staiger, Chair of FIG Commission 5 presented a very interesting keynote paper at the FIG Working Week in Eilat that is relevant to this question. He states in the conclusion that “The art of measurement was limited in the past to the precise acquisition of data (observations!). Today the data acquisition itself has become much easier, but this does not mean that the whole measurement process is easy to handle and free of errors! The measurement process today is much more complex than it was decades ago. Therefore we need surveying experts who are able to master the entire process of data acquisition and data processing. Each measurement task is different and has its own characteristics. We have to take special care with an independent check and proof of the entire measurement system and the final results. This exactly is the modern art of measurement”. I think this paints the picture very well.

Q: FIG is covering the professional history with its permanent International Institution for the History of Surveying and Measurement. In modern times of seemingly instant solutions, we witness a wrong but a growing belief even among professionals that only the future is important. Why do we need to know the history of our profession, skills and knowledge; why is it so important not to forget our roots?

A: I think it is important for any profession to know where it comes from. This will also allow for better to understand where we should be heading. The surveying profession has a proud history, and I am very pleased to see that interest in surveying history has increased. One example of this is that we have managed to get recognition to surveyors as part of our cultural heritage, when the Struve Arc was included in the UNESCO list of World Heritage.

But times are changing and the role of surveyors is changing as well. The big swing could be named “from measurement to management”. As mentioned above this does not imply that measurement is no longer important, but due to technology development, the role of the surveying is changed towards managing the measurements. The change also means that surveyors increasingly contribute to building sustainable societies as



FIG organised the first joint conference with the World Bank in Washington in March 2009: FIG President Stig Enemark, Inga Björk-Klevby, Deputy Executive Director, UN-HABITAT, Mark Crackler, Director, WB ARD, Klaus Deininger, WB and Paul van der Molen, FIG.

experts in managing land and properties where surveyors play a key role in supporting an efficient land market and also effective land-use management.

Q: Some years ago FIG has established the FIG Standards Network as the hub of FIG standardisation activities. Why are the standards becoming so increasingly important in the work of surveyors and how successful are surveyors in implementing them?

A: Surveying has become a global profession, which means that surveying and GNSS instruments and networks need common standards. Therefore it is natural that FIG is a partner of ISO with regard to developing and innovation and also distribution of information about the standards and their importance to our members. We have extended this work by proposing a standard for the Land Administration Domain Model (LADM) (Geographic Information – ISO 19152) that is now passing the ISO formal process.

Q: One of the goals of FIG is to connect its activities closer with the academics, to help them attend the FIG events, to raise the quality of the FIG conference papers and to create a bigger audience to the findings of their research. How far are the activities on realizing the idea of establishing a FIG virtual journal and which obstacles are there still on its way?

A: We introduced a peer review option for the FIG conferences in 2008. This model was well received by our members, not only by the academics but also surveyors from practice. This has increased the level of presentations in general - not only the peer review papers. At the same time the model offers academics the opportunity to get the credits that they need for their academic career. I think that the current balance between professional and scientific papers is just about right and should guarantee that FIG is the platform for gathering all surveyors. The issue of the FIG journal has been postponed for time being as we want to get the concept right before launching any initiative in this regard.

Q: The current deep economic and financial crisis is changing our perception of the global society and the paradigms of the future global development. In your opinion, how deeply and in which ways will these changes affect the global surveying community?



The FIG Congress in April 2010 will take place in Sydney.

A: FIG is well aware of the problems this economic crisis imposes on our members. But we should also look at the opportunities. Barack Obama said during his election campaign in the US: "You never want a serious crisis to go to waste". That means "no crisis should be overlooked with regard to the opportunities it provides as well". There is no doubt that the current financial crisis also affects the surveying discipline in our member countries throughout the world. But it also presents opportunities for the surveying profession e.g. in terms of arguing for the need and benefit of having sustainable cadastral infrastructures as a backbone for mortgage and systems for complex property commodities. Another opportunity is in the building of public infrastructures that are likely to be initiated as an incentive to boost the economy.

Q: Please, describe in the main outlines the current new activities of the FIG Commissions and their goals.

A: FIG has ten technical commissions that all run a highly ambitious agenda. I will mention only a few new projects started during the last years. These include the Commission 3 initiative on e-governance and spatial information toward managing mega cities; e-learning is a big effort in Commission 2; land governance issues are dominating in Commission 7 and 8 with a special emphasis on pro-poor land management tools and new tenure models; and in the more technical areas of Commission 5 and 6 there are big efforts on global positioning infrastructures and engineering surveys for construction works. In addition we have increased

our activities in Africa by establishing a special task force to address the problems in this continent.

Q: FIG is organising or participating in many regional and global events. Which are the highlights of the FIG events this year and in 2010?

A: This year FIG has three highlight events. The first was the joint conference with the World Bank in March on land governance in support of the MDGs. This was the first event of its kind and the feedback was overwhelming. The results will be collected in a report that will be launched at the FIG regional conference in Hanoi in October 2009. The second big event this year was the Working Week in Israel in May that attracted about 600 participants in Eilat in May. Despite the economic crisis the event was highly successful from professional, social and participation perspectives. The upcoming Regional Conference in Hanoi will be the third big event this year. The theme Spatial Data Serving People: Land Governance and the Environment is designed to support the surveying profession in South East Asia. As a result from a long term co-operation, UN-FAO has decided to organise its regional consultative meeting on "Voluntary Guidelines for responsible governance of tenure of land and other natural resources" as part of the conference.

The highlight of the current four year period 2007-2010 will of course be the FIG Congress to be held in Sydney 11-16 April 2010. The congress is expected to attract more than 2,000 conference participants, and will include a big

commercial exhibition as well as great social events. The technical programme will offer close to 100 sessions and workshops with 600 papers covering all hot issues of the surveying disciplines. This is certainly an opportunity not to be missed.

Q: I definitely haven't asked you everything you wanted to say to our readers. So, please, here's an opportunity for your closing word.

A: I always felt that the most fascinating feature about the surveying profession is its multidisciplinary profile. The combination of technical, natural and social science areas places the surveyors in a unique position in society for contributing to development and innovation towards social justice, economic growth, and environmental sustainability.

I would also like to emphasise the importance of getting involved in international co-operation - also with professionals that have a different background to your own. This is imperative in a globalised world. For the young generation international networking often offers work opportunities abroad, but even if you consider a more local professional career international collaboration has a lot to offer. Engagement in voluntary work in an international organisation like FIG will benefit your professional life and be socially inspiring as well. So the FIG congress in Sydney in April 2010 is really an opportunity of a lifetime.

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