

Change is Our Only Certainty

Professor Martien Molenaar stepped down as rector of ITC in the Netherlands on 1st January 2010, a position he had held for nine years. My interview with him (page 6) emphasises the embedment of ITC in the University of Twente with effect from the same date, the way this came about and the consequences.

Anyone familiar with Martien knows how full he is of great ideas and concerns. One of his biggest worries, he tells me, is how many National Mapping Agencies (NMA) go on too long sticking stubbornly to their traditional role, seemingly reluctant to anticipate changing societal needs.

"Don't think that because you have existed for decades, or even centuries, you will be in existence for ever," Martien warns. The position of NMAs is often legally protected and this gives a false feeling of protection and everlasting life. But a single stroke of a ministerial pen is enough to turn the wheel through 190 degrees. Society no longer needs maps, the traditional NMA activity, only registration of what is where; information is required on what is happening where.

This is about the dynamics of long-term processes such as deforestation and evolution in biodiversity, or short-term processes such as earthquake and flood. The systems needed to capture dynamics are on the ground, but NMAs are not equipped to process and disseminate the data. Others fill the gap, rapidly reducing to nearly nought the role of NMAs. To reinstate themselves NMAs have to rethink the role of geo-information in society. "It would be a pity were NMAs to become extinct; a lot of specialised knowledge would be lost. My advice is not to expend effort on improving the specifications of topographic maps, but to think in terms of services." One of the elements of a service might be a product, but service is far more than products alone.

Read the full interview to learn more about Martien's concerns, ideas and vision.

And now for something completely different! Durk and Meine, I should like on behalf of all freelance contributors to GIM International to congratulate you on bringing the magazine back into private hands. I am sure your enthusiastic guidance and effort will bring a boost to the journal. Quality has always been and will continue to be the motto of *GIM International*.

Confession

I have a confession to make to you, dear reader. I wrote a series of 'endpoints' while biking through Europe and Turkey, a tour lasting three months. Milestones: Black Sea, Istanbul and Kayseri (central Turkey). Please note that 'bike' here really means bicycle; it is not shorthand for motorbike. In the meantime I have archived my adventures in a 160-page book. The language is Dutch, but the 150-plus B/W and colour photos and six maps can be read in any language.

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