Intergeo Places People at the Heart of Digitalization

Intergeo is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, providing the perfect occasion for a brief review of what it has achieved so far. Even more importantly, it's an appropriate juncture for looking ahead – to the leading international trade fair for geodesy, geoinformation and land management, with its focus on digital topics. Industry experts from the realms of business and science gathered in Stuttgart at the end of May for a Round Table to share their experiences and expertise, true to Intergeo's motto: 'Knowledge and action for planet Earth'.

Reviewing how Intergeo has evolved over time, Christiane Salbach, managing director of the German Society for Geodesy, Geoinformation and Land Management (DVW), observes that "Intergeo has become far broader and more interdisciplinary, international and even dynamic in recent years." She adds: "We have been able to reflect trends at Intergeo much faster than before in recent years and have also become more data-driven." All in all, Salbach says the leading trade fair has become far more important – in Germany, but even more on the international stage.

The international dimension is also underlined by Daniel Katzer, member of the Hinte GmbH board of management, who says: "Today, Intergeo is a global event embedded in national and international networks, most recently attracting 645 exhibitors and more than 19,400 visitors over three days, approximately 50 percent international."

Digital planning and construction

Everywhere you look, the concept of digitalization keeps on cropping up in today's world – and it's firmly entrenched in the geoinformation sector, too. But what does this mean in practical terms? For Ralf Mosler, who leads BIM Transformation at Autodesk, the step-by-step progress of digitalization can be described very precisely from the perspective of the construction industry. As a matter of fact, it encompasses the entire spectrum from digital drawing boards and building information modelling (BIM) right through to all aspects of Industry 4.0. – cloud computing, robotics and artificial intelligence. Mosler says: "For us, this has changed value creation, and every customer has the opportunity to tap into the appropriate aspect of digitalization, depending on the relevant state of progress."

Michael Mudra, whose roles include leading Geosystems Central Europe at Hexagon, highlights the topic of digital reality. He believes digital transformation in all kinds of sectors of industry calls for representing reality in the form of a digital twin. Mudra sees enormous potential in this: "The new medium of information will act as the linchpin in such ecosystems in the future."

Linking the digital and real worlds

Professor Jochen Schiewe from HafenCity University Hamburg points out that, whatever digitalization has to offer, it's important to make the topic "practically usable" for applications. "We still have a great deal to do to link the digital world with reality," says Schiewe, who is also the vice president of the German Society for Cartography (DGfK). He continues: "This calls for developing tailor-made, on-demand solutions in conjunction with entirely different academic fields, such as social sciences."

Professor Roland Dieterle, director of studies for Smart City Solutions at Stuttgart University of Applied Sciences (HFT), thinks along similar lines, placing people firmly at the heart of digitalization. Dieterle says: "Every digital modification must tangibly improve the real world. Then we can talk of success."

Dietmar Bernert, head of strategic account management at Trimble, identifies considerable gaps that remain in the process of digitalization – particularly with regard to the availability of data. He reckons that although various initiatives exist, to drive forward broadband, for example, "We are still bogged down right now." Furthermore: "We need practicable, simple solutions for putting data to use." In this context, he points to the key field of analytics, which Trimble is currently engaged in. Ralf Mosler sums up the issue with the words: "Basically, it's a matter of improving how information is networked and making it usable."

The Round Table also concluded that if the geoinformation sector only talks about data without putting it to good everyday use, then users' acceptance of digitalization will wane. We need to counter this prospect by presenting the kinds of practical solutions at Intergeo 2019 in Stuttgart that are precisely tailored to meet people's needs. In other words – do everything to go digital, but with people on board.

Video interviews of the experts can be found here.

Our report of Intergeo 2018 can be read here.

Intergeo 2019 will be held from 17-19 September in Stuttgart, Germany.