



Bridging the GAP: Survey and Planning

Jack Dangermond, president and founder of the ESRI, is a very special man. Well-timed for his sixtieth birthday, he has received an honorary doctorate from the State University of New York for his exceptional achievements. He has become an exemplary figure for an entire generation throughout the world. Apart from all his technological, socio-political and humanitarian achievements, he sets an example in a particularly important scientific and practical area, namely that of 'bridging the GAP'.

The Reverse Way?

He is responsible (together with his leading colleague Mike Weir) for having established within the framework of the annual ESRI User Conferences the 'Survey Summit' with the express motto 'Survey and GIS – Bridging the Gap'. His own impressive personal life story could perhaps unfold yet another beneficial exemplary effect: Jack Dangermond is a trained planner, a landscape planner who with the aid of GIS searched for, researched and in consequence came to found the ESRI. But why should not the reverse way also be possible, namely, from GIS to planning? In many countries it is less a matter of the more typically American problem of a gap between survey and GIS, and more a matter of a gap between survey and planning. Far too many surveyors restrict themselves to and content themselves with the role of a supplier of data and models; or at best with the role of

data analyst. They do not involve themselves in the further chain of creating values and decision making. This position is naturally entirely to the liking of traditional planning disciplines; a new rival in the field of regional planning is always unwelcome. But particularly in view of the high GIS competence of surveyors and the use of GIS, which is promoted in rural and urban development, in environmental planning and so on, it is time for universities and practitioner colleagues to exert themselves more strongly in these fields. They must do so in order to render the surveying profession more attractive and more influential.

Bachelor and Master

Surveyors must involve themselves with politicians and other decision-makers in commerce and in administration, as well as with UN authorities concerned with planning, such as UNEP or UN Habitat. Above all, they must make their presence felt within higher structural and planning contexts. Students and practitioners must be educated and trained for this. Here they require not only specialist capabilities in the application of their tools and methods; they must also be given the foundation for successful development of their personalities. It is to be hoped that the bachelor/master structure of studies now established in Europe will take account of this perception.

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