



IN MEMORIAM: MICHAEL WEGENER (1938-2024)



Photo by T. Komornicki

On 2nd February 2024, the world bid farewell to Professor Michael Wegener, an outstanding representative of the spatial sciences and long-time close collaborator of our Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Born in Bremen, Michael Wegener did his studies at the Technical University in Berlin, where he graduated in architecture in 1966. After a few years of work at that University as a Research and Technical Assistant, he moved on to Frankfurt am Main, to take up the post of Research Group Leader at the American-owned Battelle Institute. From 1977 on he was associated with the University of Dortmund as, successively, Project Leader and Deputy Director of the Institute of Spatial Planning; while from 1991 he was Professor at the Faculty of Spatial Planning.

He spent a few years in Japan, lecturing at the University of Tokyo, and Gifu University; before more recently serving as Visiting Professor at the Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis, University College London. In the 1990s and beyond, Prof. Wegener maintained scientific contacts with the Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization, Polish Academy of Sciences (IGSO PAS), as a very active participant of the *Warsaw Regional Forum* Conferences, as well as partner in several

international projects within the ESPON framework. He later worked closely with the IGSO PAS while at Spiekermann & Wegener Urban and Regional Research. His participation on projects concerning the spatial consequences of the enlargement of the European Union (ESPON 1.1.3) and the territorial effects of the development of European transport networks (ESPON TRACC) are worthy of mention from the point of view of Polish science. He has also published in our journal *Europa XXI*¹.

Michael Wegener's main field of scientific enquiry was urban modeling. He is the author of what are acknowledged to be among the world's most-advanced dynamic urban development models, as well as being an international expert on operational simulation land use-transportation interaction models. His related research interests and numerous scientific publications are focused *inter alia* on international urban systems and evolving spatial-policy goals. His concepts, not least those concerning Europe's polycentric development, formed the basis of the European Spatial Development Perspective drawn up in 1999. He was co-author of the SASI/IASON model and numerous works relating to transport accessibility and its impact on socio-economic development. Following Poland's accession to the European Union, it was the latter that inspired the Institute's development of the Polish Multimodal Transport Accessibility Index – as still used in the evaluation of infrastructure projects.

Both professionally and privately, Michael Wegener displayed a great deal of involvement in, and concern for, global ecological issues. He resided in a modest house adapted to his needs, located in one of the post-mining neighbourhoods of the Ruhr conurbation. In travelling to Warsaw, he would take the night train from Cologne. Conversations with him were apt to be long and multi-stranded; and he will be remembered as, not only an excellent scholar, but also a very friendly and warm-hearted human being. We will long treasure the hospitality with which he received guests from Poland over there in Dortmund.

Meetings and discussions with Michael Wegener were ever-special, and interesting. It was always clear to us that issues we raised would extend beyond those of the project at hand, into such areas as the role of the state in the economy, the desirability of building new road infrastructure, and the future of the energy industry globally. These were core topics at the time of Poland's transformation, so opinions might well differ. Prof. Wegener would always try to convince us out of our view, in his direction. In that he was maybe not too successful, but the questions posed were surely valid – and remain so to this day; ever inclining us to evaluate critically what we think, as we think it. Those discussions will be sorely missed.

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¹ Wegener, M., Komornicki, T. & Korcelli, P. (2005). Spatial Impacts of the Trans-European Networks for the New EU Member States. *Europa XXI*, 13, 27-43.