

FROM THE GERMAN SOCIETY

80th Birthday of Prof. Dr.-Ing. habil. Dr.-Ing. E.h. Walter Wittke, Honorary Chairman of the German Geotechnical Society

It was 10 years ago now that Professor Nußbaumer as Chairman of the German Geotechnical Society (DGGT e. V.) wrote in the "geotechnik" 2/2004 on the occasion of the 70th birthday of Professor Wittke: "Retirement is a word which Professor Wittke does not know yet."

Today, 10 years later, on his 80th birthday, this statement is still highly topical. We - members, board and management of the German Geotechnical Society - are happy to congratulate Prof. Wittke cordially on his 80th birthday. Also the past 10 years were characterized by tireless creativeness, enthusiasm as well as challenging events and projects.

Thus, Professor Wittke was appointed tunneling specialist in the arbitration process for the challenging infrastructure project "Stuttgart 21" in the South of Germany in 2010. As expert of the project proponents he could decisively contribute to the acceptance and feasibility of Stuttgart 21 with good arguments due to his sound knowledge about the local geology as well as the opportunities and risks of tunnel construction.



With the handing-over of the building permission by the city of Weinheim / Bergstrasse shortly afterwards in December 2011, the move of the 1980 founded WBI Prof. Dr.-Ing. W. Wittke Beratende Ingenieure für Grundbau und Felsbau GmbH from Aachen to Weinheim started, a move from Aachen to Weinheim into a 3,000 m² large company building with attractive offices, geotechnics laboratory and lecture hall. On 23rd April 2013 the new office building was inaugurated with numerous guests from Germany and abroad and the presentation of a lecture program. With the new office close to the Frankfurt International Airport and to the projects of infrastructure development in southwest Germany, Professor Wittke thus made the right decisions for the further corporate development as family business. And the chances are good that, after nephew, daughters and son, also the grandchildren will follow in the footsteps of the visionary and enthusiastic engineer Walter Wittke.

Walter Wittke was born in Hamburg and studied civil engineering in Hanover. After having finished his studies, he went to Prof. Leussink to the Institute for Soil Mechanics and Foundation Engineering at the Technical University of Karlsruhe. There, he graduated in 1962 with his thesis on a soil-mechanics topic and with a rock-mechanics work he got his qualification as a university lecturer in 1965.

In 1974, exactly 40 years ago, the exceptional academic career continued with his appointment to the Chair and as Director of the Institute of Foundation Engineering, Soil Mechanics, Rock Mechanics and Waterways Engineering at the RWTH Aachen University. As a pioneer of rock mechanics he started already in the 1970's to record as realistically as possible the load bearing characteristics of rock mainly with numerical models. With the investigation and determination of the load-bearing behavior of buildings in soil and rock he contributed significantly and intensively to the safe and economic design of buildings as impressively shown by a considerable number of national and international projects.

Professor Wittke's exceptional position in rock mechanics and geotechnics is also reflected by the fact that he was elected President of the International Society for Rock Mechanics (ISRM) from 1979 to 1983 and Chairman of the German Geotechnical Society (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Geotechnik, DGGT) from 1990 to 2002.

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Already from 1972 to 1991 Professor Wittke was the head of the Special Section for Rock Mechanics (Fachsektion Felsmechanik) of the German Geotechnical Society and his name is inseparably linked with the Symposium for Rock Mechanics and Tunneling (an event of the DGGT section for rock mechanics), which will be held for the 21st time this year. As internationally recognized leading scientist in rock mechanics, he was able to host the 7th International Congress of the ISRM 1991 in Aachen and to bring the 14th International Conference on Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering (ICSMGE) of the ISSMGE 1997 to Hamburg.

Due to his outstanding merits for the DGGT Professor Wittke was appointed Honorary Chairman of the DGGT in 2002. This is one of many appreciations of his wide-ranging merits and activities in national and international professional societies and committees. A special honour for him was the awarding of the honorary doctorate by his Alma Mater, the Leibniz University Hanover in 1998.

The exceptional international charisma of his work is documented by the Rock Mechanics Award of the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical and Petroleum Engineers (1977), the Ruper H. Myers Award in Material Engineering of the University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia (1983), the appointment as member of the Academia Nacional de Ciencias Exactas, Fisicas y Naturales in Buenos Aires, Argentina (1989), as Professor honoris causa of the Escuela Militar de Ingenieria, La Paz, Bolivia (1989) and the bestowing of the Manuel Rocha Award in Lisbon, Portugal (2002).

His wide experience in the field of geotechnics is also reflected in a large number of publications, in the "Taschenbuch für den Tunnelbau" and as co-editor of the renowned magazine "Numerical and Analytical Methods in Geomechanics" as well as in his standard work "Rock Mechanics" which will appear in a new edition after translations into English, Chinese and in extracts into Russian.

We wish Professor Wittke good health and that his enthusiasm and vigour will be with him for a long time yet. For him personally and for the WBI Prof. Dr.-Ing. W. Wittke Beratende Ingenieure für Grundbau und Felsbau GmbH all the best and a lot of success for "Worldwide Engineering".

Georg Heerten

Prof. Dr.-Ing., Chairman of the German Geotechnical Society (DGGT)