

Tribute to Christian Wichmann Matthiessen



1945-2018

President of IGU Urban Commission 2008-2012

I was shocked when I received last Sunday evening, the email from his son Mads Wichmann announcing that Christian passed away. I transmitted to the list and to the IGU executives without understanding what I was doing, and then a rain of messages arrived, that were both saddened and wishing to testimony to his carrier and his great kindness. The messages came from all the parts of the world (see below) demonstrating the print he left everywhere he went, creating sympathy and friendship.

Christian was the President of the IGU Urban Commission from 2008 to 2012 called "*Emerging Urban Transformations*". He managed it with a high professional skills, raising the scientific level with a great open mind to all academic schools and encouraging all colleagues and in particular the young scholars.

He never boasted about his recognitions like the *Knight of the first order of the Dannebrog* he received in 2010 and the numerous high positions he occupied including: President for the Danish National Committee of Geography (1998-2012), Danish delegate to the International Geographical Union (1998-2012), Member of the board of directors for the Royal Danish Geographical Society (1986-), vice president (2007-), member of the board of directors European Institute of Comparative Urban Research (1988-2012), European Network of Universities in Capital Cities (1990-2007), member of the board of directors Center for Regional and Tourism Research (2003-), president 2006-, Wonderful Copenhagen (2003-). Member of Academia Europaea, member of the Danish National Committee of International Committees of Scientific Unions (1998-2012). Director & chairman Institute of Geography, University of Copenhagen 1986-90, 1996-99. Vice-president for the European Commission COST action: land use and transport (1996-2001). Member of the Danish Government Commission on Infrastructural Investments (2006-2008). Danish-Swedish Bridge-builder of the year 1994, Bridge-building Award 1994, University of Helsinki Medal 1999.

This long list attests of his full involvement in the scientific community, in the Copenhagen planning, and in the building of Europe.

These charges nourished his scientific carrier and inspired him for the great papers with some of them will remain seminal (for a [complete list](#)):

- 2014: with Andersson, DE, Gunessee, S & Find, S 'The geography of Chinese science' *Environment and Planning A*, vol 46, no. 12, pp. 2950-2971
- 2011: Research nodes and networks. in DE Andersson, ÅE Andersson & C Mellander (eds), *Handbook of creative cities*. Edward Elgar Publishing, Incorporated, Cheltenham, pp. 211-228.
- 2010: with Annette Winkel Schwarz and Søren Find: World Cities of Scientific Knowledge: Systems, Networks and Potential Dynamics. An Analysis Based on Bibliometric Indicators, *Urban Studies*, Vol 47, Issue 9, pp. 1879 - 1897
- 2010, The Øresund region and Baltic Sea area in an international urban system perspective: roles and networks. in A Olshov (ed.), *The Location of Nordic and Global Headquarters 2010*. 1 edn, Øi Service, Malmö, pp. 10-45.
- 2007: Denmark's national urban showcase: the Öresund area regional development in Leo van den Berg, Erik Braun, Jan van der Meer (eds.): National policy responses to urban challenges in Europe, Ashgate
- 2002: with Schwarz, AW & Find, S, 'The ups and downs of global research centers' *Science*, no. vol. 297, no. 5586, pp. 1476-1477.
- 2000: Bridging the Öresund: Potential regional dynamics. Integration of Copenhagen (Denmark) and Malmö-Lund (Sweden). Across-border project on the European metropolitan level' *Journal of Transport Geography*, vol 8, pp. 171-180.
- 1999: with Schwarz, AW. Scientific Centers in Europe: An Analysis of Research Strength and Patterns of Specialisation Based on Bibliometric Indicators, *Urban Studies*, Vol 36, no. no. 3, pp. 453-477.
- 1999: Potential Integration of Copenhagen and Malmö-Lund: A Cross Border Project on the European Metropolitan Level. in *Proceedings of the Øresund Link Dredging and Reclamation Conference*. Øresund Link, Copenhagen, pp. 1-10.
- 1992: Urban Population in Denmark: Patterns of Location and Change in a Long-Term Perspective. In *Innovation and Urban Population Dynamics: A Multilevel Process* (pp. 11-30). Aldershot: Avebury.
- 1991: *Denmark on the European urban scene. A crossroad location. Copenhagen: The centre of Growth*. København: Danmarks Nationalleksikon.
- 1986: Greater Copenhagen: deindustrialization and dynamic growth based on new business activities. in *The City: the Engine Behind Economic Recovery*. vol. 1, Rotterdam, pp. 1-30.
- 1976: 'Land use development in greater Copenhagen' *Geografisk Tidsskrift*, vol 75, pp. 65-69.

This short sample of his publications outlines how far his interest touched many fields: cities, demography, Copenhagen, cross-border region of south Scandinavia, transportation, science, clusters (Medicon Valley), China... He knew that planning of cities and planning of transportation were linked to economic, technologic and scientific development and he embraced all these topics in order to better understand the future of the world, the future of Europe and the future of his cherished country Denmark.

Beside his intellectual curiosity and open mind, his generosity and his great lovingkindness will be the thing we will remember of him. He respected all kinds of scientific work and always searched for compromises. I will always remember these 14 hours in a bus from Hyderabad to Bangalore, with hot temperature and boring time... Christian stayed smiling about the situation...

Christian, we will never forget you in our commission. We acknowledge your high contribution to Urban geography, nourished by multiple sources of new scientific trends, new techniques and new policies. But overall, you were our father, our brother, who supported and comforted everybody, always pleased and smiling... You stay alive in our minds and hearts...

Celine Rozenblat

President IGU Urban Commission 2012-...

From Prof. Yukio Himiyama, IGU President, Hokkaido University of Education, Japan

I regret to hear from Niamh that Professor Christian Wichmann Matthiessen has passed. He has been involved in IGU activities for many years, and contributed particularly to the progress of the Commission on Urban Geography. I would like to express my heartfelt condolences to his family and friends.

From Prof. Vladimir Kolosov, Former president of IGU, Russian Academy of Science, Moscow

Please, accept our most sincere condolences and pass them to the family of Professor Matthiessen. It is a big loss for the world geographical community. We have always highly appreciated his contribution to the activity of IGU and its Commission on Urban Geography.

From Prof. Jerzy Parysek, Adam Mckiewicz University, Poznan, Poland

With great sadness we have received a message about Christian's death. I met Christian at the beginning of the 90s, when we signed agreements on the mutual exchange of student groups for summer practices. Later, he organized twice my accommodation and arranged my meetings in Copenhagen during my academic stay (travel grant and scientific project (local development and local planning). Together with my wife, who visited me during my stay in Copenhagen, we spent one day at Eva and Christian's house. We remember the great location of their home, the kind atmosphere of the meeting and delicious herrings - served in 8 ways. Next there were only meetings at the IGU

Urban Commission conference. Three years ago, Christian offered me to spend holidays (with my wife) on Bornholm and participation in some of researches (as a part of a grant from the University of Copenhagen), but it was not possible on our part. In these difficult days, we join in sadness with Eva, Christian's family and those who were close to him. He will stay in our memory and the photos from Christian's house, they find their place in our family album.

From Dr Rohtas Godard, Govt. PG College, Panchkula, India

It is a moment of grief for the entire community of IGU on the sad demise of Prof Christian Wichmann, the former President of Urban Commission. Prof Wichmann was a wonderful person and a great scholar. I pay my heartfelt condolences to the great personality and pray to the almighty that the departed soul may rest in place.

From Prof. Richard Knowles, University of Salford, Manchester, UK

Very sad to hear about Christian's death. We were research colleagues and friends for a considerable time with several co-authored publications on Scandinavian transport, regional development and urban change. Christian also cooperated with me in establishing joint activities between the IGU Urban and Transport Commissions when he and I became the respective IGU Commission Chairs. He will be remembered and sadly missed.

From Prof. Anthony Yeh, The University of Hong Kong, China

It is very sad to hear about the passing away of the former president of the IGU Urban Commission, Professor Christian Wichmann Matthiessen. The Urban Commission was doing well under his leadership. He will be remembered by all of us doing research on urban geography. May he rest in peace and please send our deepest condolence to his family.

From Samuel Rowcheal, University of Jos, Nigeria

Wichmann Matthiessen, though I never met him in person but his contributions surely impacted my life, an erudite schooler. Indeed the people that know him will surely miss him of whom I am one. Prof, you left great foot prints on the sand of time. It is a big loss to the community of geographers. My prayers are with the family.

From Dr. Dan O'Donoghue, Vice-President IGU Urban Commission, Canterbury, UK

This news was received with great surprise and shock. Christian was a valued researcher, scholar, colleague, friend, dedicated family man and gentleman who made a great contribution to our Commission. He provided stable, professional and polite leadership at a time when it was needed. He has left a lasting impression on our Commission, the IGU, the world of urban geography, and geography more generally. He will be missed. At this time our thoughts, prayers and condolences go to his family and friends in Denmark and around the world. May he rest in peace.

From Prof. Liliane Buccianti Barakat, Saint Joseph University, Beirut, Lebanon

It's really a very sad new and a very big loss for the scientific community. He was always so cheerful and smily face all the time.

From Prof. Izhak Schnell, Tel Aviv University, Israel

I am sad to hear about Christian death. He was a friend and a scholar who contributed a lot to the commission, the IGU and the Danish academy. His research about geography of knowledge was an important contribution to the discipline. We will all miss him and remember him.

From Dr. Virendra Nagarale, Professor and Head. Department of Geography, SNDT Women's University

Please, accept our most sincere condolences and pass them to the family of Professor Matthiessen. We have to remember Geography contribution of Prof. Matthiessen and pass to next generation. It is a big loss for the entire geographical society.

From Dr. Medjadj Tarek, Institut de Gestion des Techniques Urbaines, Université de M'Sila (Algérie)

Our most condolence to members of IGU Urban commission and thanks to pass them to the family of Professor Matthiessen.

**From Prof. dr. Ioan Ianos, Bucarest Univ., Romania
President of the Professional Association of the Romanian Geographers**

It's very bad news! I have known Prof. dr. Matthiessen for 24 years, and we have had many discussions together during the Commission's meetings until 2001. It's a huge loss for the entire geographical community and especially for the Urban Commission and Danish geographers. Passing away, I would like to express to his family sincere condolences on behalf of myself and the Professional Association of Romanian Geographers.

**From Dr. Joos Droogleever Fortuijn, Vice-President IGU
Department Geography, Planning and International Development Studies, University of Amsterdam**

This is sad news indeed and a great loss for the Urban Geography Commission and urban geography globally.

**From Dr. Niamh Moore-Cherry, University of Dublin,
President Geographical Society of Ireland**

The Irish geography community would like to express our sincere condolences to the family of Prof Matthiessen and indeed the Danish geographical community on his passing. As a young scholar, I very much respected and appreciated Christian's

leadership of the IGU Urban Commission and his warm personality. He will be missed by many across the globe.

From Prof. and Dr. XUE Desheng, Dean, School of Geography and Planning, Director, Center for Urban and Regional Studies, Sun Yat-sen University

This is really a bad news! It's a huge loss for the Urban Commission of IGU and the whole society of urban studies in the world! I would express to his family sincere condolences on behalf of myself and the School of Geography and Planning, Sun Yat-sen University.

From Prof. Petros Petsimeris and Prof. Susan Ball, Professor, Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne

It was with great sadness that Susan and I received the news of Christian's departure from this world. We echo the sentiments exchanged between colleagues during the course of the day, which are testimony to how highly he was regarded by members of the Commission and how our fond memories will live on. He was both a gentleman and a scholar, and with good humour played a key role in helping the Commission to continue its work. We wish strength to his family at this very difficult time.

From Prof. Larry Bourne, University of Toronto, Canada

This note is to confirm that we have just learned of the recent passing of Christian Matthiessen. We were shocked and deeply saddened by this news. Through the work of the IGU Urban Commission we have known Christian for many years and have valued his many scholarly contributions and his warm personality. He was a wonderful man with a strong commitment to urban research and to the discipline of urban geography. He will be fondly remembered and never forgotten. Our sincere sympathies go out to his family, friends and colleagues.

From Dr. Haitao MA, Associate Professor, Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research, Chinese Academy of Sciences

It's really a very sad new and a very big loss for urban geography and the scientific community globally.

From Dr. Xin Gao, Associate Professor, School of Geography and Tourism, Chongqing Normal University

I am very sad to hear this, It is really a big loss for our committee and the whole urban scientific community. and it is the hardest time for his families. I hope they will come out from the pain of losing their loved ones as soon as possible.

From Andre Horn, Professor, University of South Africa

On a small table next to my bed lies a 6 x 6 inch glossed tile. On the tile are painted pictures of a bottle, a glass and grapes. This tile was given to me by Christian and Eva in

2002. Every morning I put a cup of hot chocolate on the tile and think of them. I did it again this morning, but with sadness. Christian was more than just a friend.

From Manie Geyer, Director, CRUISE, Department of Geography, Stellenbosch University, South Africa

Christian was a great person and academic and will be sorely missed!

From Yongchun Yang, College of Earth and Environmental Sciences, Lanzhou University, China

It's really a very sad new ! This is a huge loss for the Urban Commission of IGU and urban geography and the scientific community in the world!

I would express to his family sincere condolences on behalf of myself and the School of Geography and Planning, Lanzhou University.

From Prof. Rubén Camillo Lois Gonzalez, University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain

A very sad news. Christian was a pillar for the continuity of a well urban Commission to the future.

From Dr. Zhigang LI, School of Urban Design, Wuhan University, China

So sad to see the news. It is so huge a loss of the Commission, the family and everyone.

From Dr. Masoud Minaei, Department of Geography, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran

I would like to express to Christian's family sincere condolences on behalf of myself and the Geography Department of Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran. We wish strength to his family at this very difficult time.

From Debnath Mookherjee, Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA, USA

It's a sad news. With the passing of Professor Christian Matthiessen, Geography community has lost one of our most distinguished scholars.

From Jun Yamashita, Kyushu University, Japan

I am deeply saddened to hear the loss of Professor Christian Wichmann Matthiessen. He was the honorable representative of IGU Urban Commission, excellent scholar and respectable gentleman. I would like to offer my deepest condolences to his family and friends.

From Ludger Basten, Professor, Technical University of Dortmund, Germany

I was deeply shocked and saddened by the news of Christian Wichmann Matthiessen's passing. I very fondly remember the numerous encounters during meetings of the IGU Urban Commission anywhere between China and Germany over the last roughly two decades. During these encounters he "oozed" of kindness and warmheartedness and they often contained a healthy and most welcome dose of humour: Christian was a wonderful person to spend time and share ideas with. His obvious love of his family and his scholarly productivity impressed upon me - when I was a "young researcher" - the realization that "even in academia" one could have a career and still be a loving family man and a truly human being. Christian, you will be sorely missed. Eva and family: I feel your pain.