

Professor Max Henri Boisot

(1943–2011)

It is with great regret and sadness that the EGOS community (along with many others) reports the death of Professor Max Boisot who died from cancer on September 7, 2011. Max was a scholar who embraced a wide range of disciplines and who could weave them into a rich intellectual tapestry which the academic world quickly came to expect (and to take delight) from Max's presentations and his writings. He was a polymath, able to discuss architecture, systems, strategy, philosophy, mathematics and politics to name but a few. These were also likely to feature in the same sentence or discussion and his written work exemplifies this rich tapestry of scholarly thought and inter-relationships. This ability made him a brilliant essayist, linking Einstein's and Hofstede's contributions, for instance, in the same essay.

His academic background began as a student of architecture and city planning (at the University of Cambridge and MIT) and he continued to hold a keen interest in the built environment and its relationship to both social and physical spaces. But it is for his work in the general field of knowledge, systems and strategy that endeared him to the EGOS community, where he was a vital and vigorous contributor. His book *Knowledge Assets* was awarded the Igor Ansoff prize for the best book on strategy in 2000 and is an essential keynote text for any researcher who wants to examine knowledge, organization and strategy. His approach and his analytical probing of the broad knowledge area, led to discussions at the University of Warwick (and elsewhere) which formed the foundations of the *Cynefin* project and the intellectual contribution of *Knowledge Assets* was a strong foundation for this project. Typically (for Max), this project brings together research in a wide variety of areas including cognitive, anthropological and narrative approaches alongside the work of complex adaptive systems to examine the interrelationships between the individual, experience and context as they relate to strategic decision making, policy and communication.

Much has already been written about Max's background, his many affiliations and his works.* From the perspective of the EGOS community, Max's death means that we have lost a key figure whose scholarly values and practices were excellent examples of the EGOSian ethic. Inquisitive, analytical and not afraid to cross disciplinary boundaries, Max could always simultaneously bring intellectual rigour and novelty to bear on a research topic. In many ways he was the perfect EGOSian. It may be of some comfort to those of us struggling to publish in top rated US journals that one of the top five US journals turned down one of Max's papers (which went to be a key part of *Knowledge Assets*) because it was deemed to be too theoretical and too broad. Max was to prove those reviewers wrong as he did on many occasions. But Max would have proved them wrong with a twinkle in his eye, because he also was blessed with that most rare of characteristics – self-deprecatory humour. This meant that everyone from the most junior scholar to the most senior professor felt immediately at home in his company. EGOS and the scholarly world are a polymath poorer, and our most sympathetic thoughts go out to Max's family who have lost a warm and devoted human being.

David Wilson
EGOS

* http://www.cognitive-edge.com/blogs/dave/2011/09/max_boisot_19432011.php
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Max_Boisot