

Professor Colin Tod Welch

16 February 1937 - 27 September 2015

Die sleutel tot sinvolle stedelike omgewings is multi-dissiplinêr. Dit lê erens tussen argitektuur en stads-en streekbeplanning, en behels veral ook stedelike ontwerp. Dit was die oortuiging van Professor Colin Tod Welch, wat tot sy aftrede in 2001 vir 20 jaar aan die stuur gestaan het van die destydse Departement van Stads- en Streekbeplanning aan die Universiteit van Stellenbosch, eers in die Wilcocks- en later in die Van der Sterr-gebou. Gedurende dié periode het hy vir baie jare op die destydse Stellenbosse Estetiese Komitee gedien waar hy soms ongewilde aanbevelings gemaak het in lyn met sy beginselvaste visie vir die dorp. Sy insette was altyd goed en deeglik nagevors en duidelik uitgebeeld. Hy het goed verstaan dat 'n balans tussen ontwikkeling en bewaring belangrik is ter wille van historiese kontinuïteit en die integriteit van die erfenislandskap.

In 1955 he matriculated from Jeppe High School for Boys, Johannesburg, where he excelled in swimming and shooting and, in line with his Scottish heritage, became pipe major in the school's highland band. His tertiary education included a Bachelor in Architecture from Wits (1961), an Urbanism Certificate through a French exchange programme (1965) and a Post Graduate Diploma in Town Planning (1970), also from Wits. He later also obtained a B.A. through Unisa (1988), having studied Sociology, Psychology & Geography, which he deemed essential to the understanding of town and regional planning. As an English speaker, Professor Welch was also fluent in Afrikaans and competent in French. In 1977 he was part of a French study tour organised by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Before joining the National Building Research Institute of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in 1962, he worked as architect for distinguished Johannesburg Modernist architect, Norman Hanson. He left the CSIR as Head of the Research Application Division in 1971, to join the University of Port Elizabeth as Senior Lecturer in Architecture and Town and Regional Planning. By 1978 he had advanced to full Professor, in 1979 he was promoted to Head of Department and in 1980, he took on the position of Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Economic Sciences. During this time he remained involved with practice through consulting for Stauch Vorster & Partners Architects and inter alia was responsible for the redesign of Port Elizabeth Market Square (1981).

As researcher at the CSIR, editor of the Journal of the South African Institute of Town and Regional Planners, and through his own research publications and conference presentations, he contributed to knowledge production and critical academic discourse on a diverse range of topics including housing, planning, urban design and heritage.

Professor Welch was registered both as Architect and Town and Regional Planner. He was a member of the South African Institute of Architects and served a term as President of the South African Institute of Town and Regional Planners.

Gedurende sy 20 jaar termyn as Professor en Departementshoof van Stads-en Streekbeplanning aan die Universiteit van Stellenbosch, het hy, saam met sy kollegas, Dr Willem Pienaar en Dr Piet Claassen, 'n Magister-kursus gebou met nie alleen 'n sterk wetgewing- en beplanningsfokus nie, maar ook gebou op ontwerpmetodologie en –denke. Die kwaliteit en karakter van omgewings is in die kurrikulum beklemtoon. Van sy voormalige studente beklee tans sleutelposisies in plaaslike en nasionale regeringsdepartemente, privaatpraktyk en selfs die akademie.

During his retirement he pursued his Bonsai hobby, winning awards at the annual shows of Boland Bonsai Kai several times for the category 'Creativity and Innovation'. Professor Welch will be remembered for his perfectly crafted pencil notes in the margin, his fine observation and genuine attention to detail, his outspoken principled views on controversial issues, his meticulously formulated thoughts and views, his discreet care, respect and consideration for others, his contagious passion for heritage and design, his expansive general knowledge and an always enquiring mind, his delight in the joys and achievements of his family, his modest and unassuming professional conduct and his witty and intelligent sense of humour.

Colin passed away on 27 September 2015, leaving his wife, Joy, three married children, Matthew Welch (Washington DC, USA), Alison Bucholz (Stellenbosch) and Diane Welch Wertlen (Yarmouth, Canada), and 4 grandchildren.

Bydra deur Jolanda De Villiers Morkel, voormalige student en kollega.