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Article

Obituary

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Obituary

On the 21st of July, our co-editor Ansgar Belke died at his home in Münster. His unexpected death leaves us shocked and sad. We have lost a great friend and a superb partner in our editorial board.

Ansgar was born in 1965 in Münster, and although he was far-travelled and worked at many different places, he always gravitated towards his roots in Westphalia. Thus, he studied economics in Münster, did his doctorate and achieved his habilitation at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum, at the chair of Wim Koesters. In 2000 he moved to the Universität Wien, and 2001 he became tenured Professor at the Universität Hohenheim in Stuttgart. In 2007 he took the chance to return to Westphalia, as he received an offer from the Universität Duisburg-Essen. In 2012, he became (ad personam) Jean Monnet Professor. In these years, he spent time at prestigious researcher centers at Washington, Vienna, Brussels, London, or Tilburg, contributed, often as invited or keynote speaker, to numerous conference around the globe, and travelled to many places to give advice to politicians and managers. However, his life was always centered on his family and home.

In his work as an economist, he combined deep knowledge and understanding with a down-to-earth skepticism on what we can know about our complex world, and to what degree we can steer economic developments in the direction of certain political objectives. It was this healthy self-limitation combined with his imperturbable independent-mindedness and integrity that gave his advice so much value. Far from any wishful thinking, he dealt with the world as we experience it, and far from any ideological narrowness he worked in the public interest to find the best means to cope with it. He was pragmatic – in the best sense. Some might discover in this mindset some characteristics attributed to the people from Westphalia. If so, he was also outstanding in his farsightedness and humor. For all these qualities, we will miss him dearly.

Another saying on the “Westphalians” is that they are hard-working. Even against this background, Ansgar’s wide range of activities and contributions is awe-inspiring. He not only fulfilled the common duties within his respective universities with acclaim, supervised an impressive number of dissertation projects, and never shied away from taking responsibility in academic self-governance. He was also research fellow at the Center for European Policy Studies (CEPS) in Brussels and the Center for Data Analytics for Finance and Macroeconomics (DAFM) at King’s Business School in London, and advisor to the

European parliament and numerous other political and academic institutions. He collaborated with scientists and research institutions in many different countries, setting new topics and creating academic and public circles to discuss these topics.

Despite the ensuing tireless traveling activities, Ansgar created an incessant flow of publications. Thereby, he addressed not only the scientific community, but also politicians, managers and the general public. His research was heavily driven by data and empirical models. However, he never limited himself to the laconism found in so many econometrical papers. For him, research results were the reliable food for the public debates on economic policies. Ansgar was very outspoken in this respect. And he had an exceptional ability to clearly depict to different readerships and audiences his results and their economic and political consequences. Therefore, Ansgar was not only amongst the most productive European researchers in Economics. He also had a deep impact on many debates on political economy within Germany and the European Union.

Today, we are even more aware than before that all this could only have been accomplished with an immense willpower, and with a marked disregard to his own interest and health. What remains us now is to be thankful for his immense contributions to our journal, and for his friendship. We will miss him dearly.

*Hans-Peter Burghof and
Hendrik Hakenes*