



Dr. Christian Hoffmann

LIVING THE VISION

WITH ITS VISION TO MAP THE UNKNOWNNS OF HUMAN ACTIVITY, INNSBRUCK-BASED GEOVILLE GMBH HAS EVOLVED INTO A LEADING GLOBAL PROVIDER OF VALUE-ADDED EARTH OBSERVATION DATA. GEOCONNECTION SPOKE TO FOUNDER AND MANAGING DIRECTOR, **DR. CHRISTIAN HOFFMANN**, TO PROBE THE SECRET OF ITS SUCCESS

GeoConnexion (Geo): As GeoVille¹ celebrates the 20th anniversary of its founding, what do you see as its biggest achievement so far?

Christian Hoffmann (CH): For certain, we are very proud to be an independent company that is recognised as one of the leaders in satellite-based land monitoring with a global footprint. In the last 20 years, we have established a broad international client base and successfully participated in more than 440 national and international projects. During that time, the company has managed to grow in a sustainable way, by

combining technical excellence with a profound service and market knowledge.

Geo: You released the newest Copernicus High Resolution Layers (HRLs)² earlier this year. What has been the response from customers?

CH: Europe is a very dynamic area, where most of the economic value is created on the land surface. With the Copernicus HR Layers and the underlying Sentinel satellite data, decision makers now have access to timely,

comprehensive and accurate information on the land surface and its dynamics.

Such information is of the utmost importance in properly managing and sustaining the European environment and its natural heritage. But, as Copernicus is only at its beginning, we aim to provide even more in-depth information on the state of Europe's landscape in the coming years.

Geo: How has free and open access to Sentinel data changed the EO data and services market? And how much further do you see it changing?

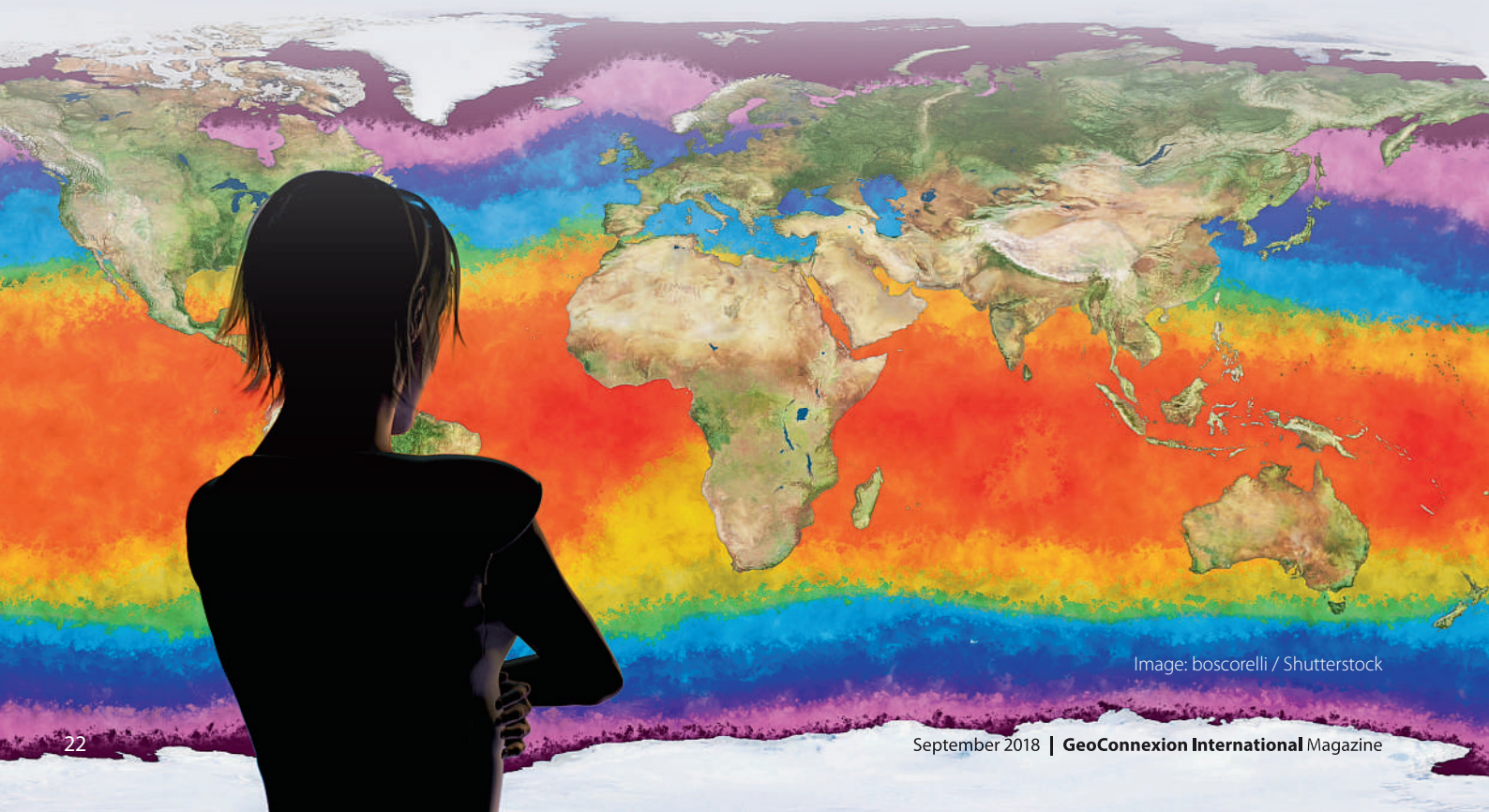


Image: boscorelli / Shutterstock



Adding value to land cover data acquired by Sentinel satellites for the Copernicus Pan-European High Resolution Layers (HRL) products

CH: The high quality of the Sentinel data, in combination with the open data policy, enables us to provide continuous and affordable commercial services to our clients. This has opened up many new business opportunities for user-driven downstream services and markets that were, due cost barriers, not servable with commercial satellite data.

In addition, we see a change in demand from classic EO products and towards numerical business intelligence services. That is why we are currently focusing on vertical integration of our services into specialised industries.

Just recently we have founded the company Geo4Agri B.V. in the Netherlands with the aim to deliver highly specialised EO based data streams to the AgroFood

industry to target the value chains surrounding the agricultural sector.

Geo: Where do you see the greatest opportunities for growth in the near future?

CH: I am sure that the future is driven by fully automatic B2B land monitoring solutions that are directly provided to the client IT infrastructures as API services. In this way, we enable continuous information feeds to web-based information systems and handheld platforms.

Geo: Is further development of the RegioCover land cover/land use mapping solution planned? And what features are likely to be included?

CH: RegioCover paved the way for our present capacity in high-resolution land monitoring. However, today we are already much further ahead. Years before the European Commission's Copernicus Data and Information Access Services (DIAS) initiative³, GeoVille invested into EODC⁴ a public-private-partnership to store and process Sentinel data since the beginning of the first Sentinel-1 mission.

Through this initiative, we have had a head start on how to employ machine learning techniques and combining EO with non-EO data streams from users to deliver continuous monitoring information solutions. To this end, we set up landmonitoring.earth⁵, a unique front end solution providing online access to our back end engine, designed along Space 4.0 standards, which in the last years provided the entry point for our production teams to efficiently implement major customer products.

Our experts can specify desired land monitoring data for any place on the globe for any given time period and receive a quality-controlled output within hours or days, depending on the required coverage and frequency. We are currently investing in a frontend suitable to the public.

Geo: What plans do you have to celebrate the company's anniversary?

CH: GeoVille shares the same birthday than the Copernicus Earth Observation programme. On this occasion, we will host an international conference in Innsbruck, organised under the auspices of the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the EU and entitled "European land monitoring at its crossroads – opportunities and challenges".

The conference will take place on the 8-9th of October this year where experts and users from 40 European countries will meet with decision makers from national to EC level to discuss the current state of the European public, scientific and industrial land monitoring capacities. During this event, GeoVille will celebrate the company's 20th anniversary with the launch of the public Land Monitoring Portal.

1. <https://www.geoville.com>

2. <https://land.copernicus.eu/pan-european/high-resolution-layers>

3. <http://copernicus.eu/news/upcoming-copernicus-data-and-information-access-services-dias>

4. <http://www.eodc.eu>

5. <http://www.landmonitoring.earth>



Population pressures, climate change, technological transformation and continuing austerity present multiple and complex challenges for public sector authorities. GeoVille enables them to fully exploit the potential of satellite applications to meet legal obligations, improve or create services, and make more effective policy decisions