In Memory of

Tamás Rapcsák

1947 - 2008

Tamás Rapcsák, outstanding researcher of our Institute, kind colleague, and dear friend to many of us, passed away on 24 March 2008 at the age of 61.

Tamás graduated as a mathematician from Lajos Kossuth University of Sciences, Debrecen, Hungary, in 1970. He then started his career as a researcher at the Department of Operations Research, Computer and Automation Research Institute, Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA SZTAKI).

He obtained his Ph.D. degree in 1974 at Lajos Kossuth University of Sciences, Debrecen, and his degree of Candidate of Sciences in 1985. Tamás completed his Habilitation at the Technical University of Budapest in 1995, and, in 1998, he obtained the degree of Doctor of Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences. From the very beginning of his career, the Computer and Automation Research Institute, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, was his main place of employment, although, as an internationally acknowledged researcher, he made many grant sponsored research visits abroad to work with colleagues, and as an expert lecturer and visiting professor.

Tamás led the Department of Operations Research, Computer and Automation Research Institute, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, from 1989, and, from 1991, also led the Laboratory and Department of Operations Research and Decision Systems. His persistent efforts to establish and locate at MTA SZTAKI a Department of Decisions in Economy, a unit of Corvinus University of Budapest, was met with success. From 1995, he served as Head and Professor of the Department. Tamás made a special point of establishing the educational quality and reputation of the Department, and gave prominence to providing a superior university experience that was based on an application-oriented approach.

His research activity embraced two major fields. The first one comprises the structural issues of nonlinear optimization and equilibrium systems. He made important original results in applying differential geometry and related tools to nonlinear programming which are referred to frequently. In this field, he is considered one of the most well-known scientists. He summarized his research results in his book, Smooth Nonlinear Optimization in Rn, published by Kluwer Academic Publishers (1997).

His other major research field covers decision support systems and spatial decisions problems. He is the author of numerous essential papers that describe theoretical and methodological approaches of multi-attribute decision problems. The development of MTA SZTAKI's group decision support software system, WINGDSS, was headed and led by him. He supervised numerous application-oriented projects that used WINGDSS. The scope of such applications is wide, ranging from the decision support of tendering processes, both from the government and large enterprises, to modeling and solving complex, multi-attribute environmental and spatial problems.

Tamás' research results are summed up in 111 scientific papers, all published in international journals. He authored or edited nine books and book chapters. In recognition of his research and teaching activities, he received several prizes and awards, among them, Gyula Farkes Prize (1978), ANBAR Citation of Highest Quality Ranking (1996), "Széchenyi" Professor Fellowship (1999-2002), Gold Medal of Corvinus University of Budapest (2003), Bolyai Farkas Prize, Hungarian Academy of Sciences (2003), and, in a number of occasions, the Institute Award of the MTA SZTAKI and the Institute Publication Award.

Tamás always undertook his considerable service for professional associations and committees with great seriousness. As a founding and resolute member of the Hungarian Operational Research Society, he served as Vice-President (1991-1994), President (1994 to 1996 and 1998-2000), and a member of the Board from 2006. For the Committee for Operations Research, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, he served as Vice-President (1996-1999) and President (2000-2005). He served as a member of many scientific groups: From 2001, the Doctorate Board of Mathematics, Hungarian Academy of Sciences; from 1997, the Scientific Council, MTA SZTAKI; from 1996, the Faculty Board of the Faculty of Economics, Corvinus University of Budapest; and the Jury of Mathematics, Hungarian Scientific Research Fund, and Habilitation Committees.

He was a member of the editorial board of several international journals: Journal of Optimization Theory and Applications, Journal of Global Optimization, Central European Journal of Operations Research, Pure Mathematics and Applications, Alkalmazott Matematikai Lapok, Journal of ICT, Optimization Letters.

Tamás served in a variety of capacities for many national and international conferences—chairman, member of the organizing committee, member of the program committee, and plenary lecturer. He, as well as his many Hungarian colleagues, took special pride in the Hungarian Operational Research Society (HORS) hosting of EURO XVII—17th European Conference on Operational Research—held in Budapest in July 2000. Tamás, in his capacity as President of the HORS, had a major role in the organization and running of EURO XVII.

Upon the death of Tamás, we lost a friend and a man of distinguished scientific achievements, an ever reliable and faithful colleague, one who cared for the rights of individuals and groups, the epitome of Hungarian Operations Research and scientific life, and a scholar of science who was acknowledged all over the world.

We honor and pay tribute to Tamás Rapcsák.

We will keep his memory!

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