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Editorial

Christian Vandermotten



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Editorial

Christian Vandermotten

- 1 The idea of creating an association of the geographical societies of the EU countries was launched in 1994 by our Italian friends. The publication of the EUGEO by-laws in 1997 made that project official. When we met in Rome in 1994 for our first contact, 6 Societies were represented, gathering Belgian, German, Dutch, Portuguese, British and, of course, Italian representatives. Today, EUGEO counts 15 members : all the Europe of Fifteen's countries, except Luxembourg and Greece, while both Italy and Spain have 2 member associations.
- 2 Such international rapprochements, whose primary purpose consists in making the geography of Europe and, simultaneously, the interest of geography better understood by the European decision-makers and civil society, have to be driven on, from the start, by a strong wish to succeed but, at the same time, they have to progress carefully, without hurting the sensibilities, and with a high regard for the uniqueness and the features of the different national organisations. In every country, the geographical societies have completely different backgrounds, practices and positions. We had to learn to know one another.
- 3 Nowadays, the process is on the right track. This is why, as EUGEO president, I am only too pleased to sign the Editorial of a special issue of *Belgeo* on the occasion of the IGU Glasgow Congress. This issue is one of the first concrete expressions of the work accomplished by EUGEO : the presentation by the member Societies of their situation and of the state of geography in their respective countries summarizes the work of reciprocal understanding achieved up to now.
- 4 But this is obviously only a preliminary step. Indeed, I hope the activities of EUGEO will soon produce new concrete results : a validated presentation of the European geography on the EUGEO website, providing links with the national monographies on the web sites of the different member Societies ; the organisation, in 2007, by our Dutch partners of the KNAG, of a conference that should offer the opportunity of a dialogue between geographers and the potential users of the applications of geography, in particular the European authorities ; new joint publications or exchanges of papers between the journals of the member Societies ; etc.

- 5 Now that its structures are well established, EUGEO is also ready to open up to other Societies from countries in which the structuration of geographical societies and of the world of geographers is more complex. We are especially eager and hopeful, on the occasion of this Congress, to welcome the Societies from the new member States of the European Union.
- 6 Before concluding this editorial, I would like to express my warmest thanks to the first 2 presidents and EUGEO pioneers : Henri Nicolaï and Jean-Robert Pitte, as well as to the 2 successive EUGEO secretaries : Armando Montanari, who played a key part from the very beginning, and today Rita Gardner, thanks to whom the EUGEO secretariat can make the most of the impressive and efficient logistics of the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG).
- 7 Let's hope that EUGEO's future will be just as brilliant and will contribute to the valorisation and the diffusion of the geographical thought in the same way as the great geographical Societies founded in the 19th century in the different European countries did.

OBITUARY

Torsten Hägerstrand (1916-2004)

Anne Buttmer, President of the International Geographical Union

On 3 May, 2004 Torsten Hägerstrand died in Lund aged 87 years. Thousands of colleagues worldwide will mourn the loss of this uniquely-gifted scholar and a deeply cherished friend.

Born to a school-teacher's family in Småland, Torsten became one of Sweden's most internationally influential geographers, pioneering fresh directions not only in scientific research but also in rendering its fruits relevant for regional development policy, environmental management and urban planning. Earning his Fil. dr. degree from Lund University in 1953 he became Professor of Geography there in 1957, and after 1971 assumed a personal professorship with the Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences (HSFR). With the exception of a few sojourns abroad, his long and fruitful career was spent entirely at Lund University ; in fact, his work helped to make Lund a kind of Mecca for geographers around the world.

Torsten Hägerstrand's name is renowned for his pioneering work in time geography, human migration, diffusion of information and technology, geocoding, urbanisation and modelling of processes involving society and environment. Within Sweden he contributed to the work of many Government Commissions on issues related to regional policy (1977-83), and from 1974 chaired the Committee on Future Oriented Research (SALFO) and the Swedish Council for Planning and Coordination of Research (FRN). Abroad he was member of the Council of Europe project *Europe 2000* (1968-75), member of the EFTA Working Party on Regional Policy (1966-68) and chair of the EFTA Working Party on New Patterns of Settlement (1972-73). He was President of the Regional Science Association (1968-69), Vice-President of the European Science Foundation (1978-83), Vice-

President of the International Geographical Union (1968-1976) and was founder member of *Academia Europaea*.

He travelled widely in Europe and America and has been the recipient of several awards, including honorary doctoral degrees from Universities of Glasgow (1971), Edinburgh (1974), Bristol (1985), Ohio State (1985), and the Norwegian School of Economics (1986). He was awarded the Charles P Daly Medal of the American Geographical Society (1966), the Outstanding Achievement Award of the Association of American Geographers (1968), the Vitus Bering Medal of the Danish Geographical Association (1970), the Anders Retzius Medal of the Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography (1973), the Victoria Medal of the Royal Geographical Society (1979) and *Laureat d'Honneur* of the International Geographical Union (1984). He was a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, the Royal Academy of History, Letters and Antiquities, and the Royal Academy of Engineering Sciences. He was honorary member of the Norwegian Academy, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Finnish Academy of Science and Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy.

Throughout his career Torsten worked tirelessly to build bridges between the natural and the human sciences as well as to promote international cooperation on issues of environment and development. I had the privilege of working closely with him on several projects since 1971, the most ambitious of which was an International Dialogue Project initiated in 1978 which invited reflections on career experiences by scholars and professionals in a wide range of countries. This project enabled fresh approaches to one of his life-long concerns about problems related to sector specialisation in science and planning and his genuine wish that societies could learn from each other's experiences. In all his endeavours he could always count on the generous support of his wife Britt who welcomed so many of us at their home in Lund. He will be sorely missed by her and by his three children Eva, Karin and Stig and their families.

Torsten Hägerstrand's generosity, courage and cordiality – no less that his brilliant intellectual leadership – have bequeathed an invaluable treasure and challenge for many generations to come within the international geographical community.
Requiescat in pace.

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