

CHRONICLE

In memoriam Arild Holt-Jensen (1937–2022)

The sad news arrived to the editorial office of HGB that Arild HOLT-JENSEN professor of human geography at the Department of Geography, University of Bergen, and old friend of Hungarian geographers, passed away on 2nd of April 2022 at the age of 85. Professor HOLT-JENSEN grew up in Horten near Oslo, and his road to geography was paved by such childhood memories as the arrival of five volumes of the National Geographic Magazine in his post-box in 1945 after the end of the war, that was ordered by his father before the Nazi occupation, and Thor Heyerdahl's Kon-Tiki expedition in 1947. He became fascinated by geography, explorations and reading maps, thus, it is not surprising that he chose this discipline for his studies and academic career. After graduating in geography at the University of Oslo in 1963 he took an assistant job at the University of Aarhus, Denmark. It was there he met his wife Elisabeth with whom he shared the rest of his life. In 1965 the Holt-Jensen family moved to Bergen, where Arild was employed as lecturer in geography at the University of Bergen, and he served the university for the rest of his academic career. In 1986 he defended his PhD, and in 1991 he was appointed professor in human geography at the University of Bergen and stayed in this position until his retirement in 2008.

Professor HOLT-JENSEN published numerous books, among them the well-known *Geography: History and Concepts* (Sage Publications) that was first published in 1999, and its fifth edition appeared in 2018. The book has also been published in Spanish, Chinese and Persian. This textbook is an excellent introduction for students to geographical thought with a unique approach that encompasses environmental, historical and social perspectives of geography and the study of human-nature interaction. The book became an essential student companion to the discipline worldwide. Arild was amazingly prolific in several fields of geography, and he published excessively journal articles and book chapters on environmental, urban and regional planning issues.

Arild HOLT-JENSEN was also very active on the research front, and after the fall of the Iron Curtain he became interested in the mechanisms and outcomes of post-socialist transition in East Central Europe. He coordinated the NEHOM (Neighbourhood Housing Models) project financed by the EU 5th Framework Programme between 2000 and 2004, with 11 partners from eight European countries, including Hungary



and Estonia from the post-socialist part of the continent. This project was later followed up by the Nordic Neighbourhood Project, financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers, with 12 partners from seven Northern European countries, including the Baltic States. The main result of this project was the edited volume 'Urban Sustainability and Governance; New Challenges for Nordic and Baltic Housing Policies' published by NOVA, New York in 2009.

His academic achievements were rewarded 'Modeens Minnemedalj' by the Finnish Geographical Society in 2000. The most significant recognition of his many achievements was the Johan August Wahlberg's medal in gold from the Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography in 2018. The medal, which was awarded by Crown Princess Victoria at Stockholm Palace, was given for his comprehensive view of geography as a science and his contribution to geography's orientation towards social planning.

Next to his academic achievements Arild was always very active in local and national politics from the start of his university studies: as member of the Norwegian Liberal Party he headed its Environmental Commission between 1968 and 1975, he was member

of Bergen City Council (1971–1979) and later served as Chair of 'Landås City District' Board (his local neighbourhood) for 12 years. From 2004 he shifted to membership in Bergen Socialist (Labour) Party. Arild was always very sensitive towards questions of social and environmental justice, which became more and more the centre of his academic interest. He questioned the functioning of neoliberal capitalism with severe criticism. Beyond his outstanding professional achievements as university teacher, researcher and politician Arild was also active in public life, and for many years he was voluntary cabin guard in Turnerhytten in Mount Ulriken, where he made pancakes and coffee for hungry hikers over the week-end. Another hobby he dedicated his free time together with his wife was dancing. He was a great lover of dancing, he was member of the folk dance club at Ervingen and he was always the first on the dance floor during conferences.

Arild visited Hungary regularly after 1998, where he gave lectures and set up collaborations with the younger generations of Hungarian geography. He was always very curious about the political and socio-economic development of Hungary and the troublesome pathway from state-socialism to global capitalism. But he was also open to discuss both global and local challenges and the future of our discipline and Planet Earth. We will all miss his cheerful attitude, generosity and dedication to geography.

ZOLTÁN KOVÁCS