

A LIFE FOR SCIENCE: RONAN PADDISON (1945-2019)

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Abstract: Professor Ronan Paddison, co-editor of the Journal of Urban and Regional Analysis (JURA), died suddenly a few months ago on July 8, 2019. He departed at an age when he had sufficient energy to continue his life-long enthusiastic research and editorial duties. The latter included not just JURA, but also the highly regarded Urban Studies. This editorial work not only supported the diffusion of high quality knowledge. Shared and collaborative experiences with journals' co-editors and contributors were also invaluable in pinpointing future research directions within both the geographical world and wider social or environmental regimes. However, we should not underestimate his on-going dedication to original research and contribution to knowledge.

Key Words: *Urban Analysis, editor JURA, Ronan Paddison*

Ronan Paddison and the story of JURA

Cumbers and Philo (2019) have discussed Ronan's legendary contribution to Urban Studies' considerable reputation. Less well known is his essential role in the founding of other journals. He helped founding Space & Polity in 1997. A second one was JURA where Ronan was its co-editor continuously since its inception.

Ronan developed friendly and collaborative relationships with human geographers from several universities in Romania, focussing in particular on social-cultural changes of Romanian urban areas after the fall of the communist regime. Among his first collaborative links, there were those with the Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca (Voicu Bodocan and Vasile Surd), the University of Oradea (Alexandru Ilieș), the Western University of Timișoara (Remus Crețan) and the University of Bucharest (Ioan Ianoș). A delegation of Romanian geographers, especially from Cluj-Napoca, participated in the IGU Congress in Glasgow and it benefited considerably from Ronan's moral and logistic support. Personally, I first met Ronan at an International Conference organized by the University of Oradea in 2002, but I forged my strongest link through a visit, together with three other colleagues, to the University of Glasgow in 2008. We had two meetings there, both in his office, which was loaded with books, journals and manuscripts. He discussed the geography department's work and he provided details of his activities as editor of Urban Studies journal, giving us different printed issues of this prestigious publication.

Having proposed setting up a journal focusing on both urban and regional affairs, I recall Ronan asking me in a friendly way if I realised the complex task of soliciting high quality contributions, vetting their accuracy anonymously, and enhancing the journal's reputation. With the typical enthusiasm of a beginner, I confess that I had not thought through all these issues. With his support and advice, I gained some extremely useful advices. However, I soon realised that Ronan's exceptionally professional talents would be crucial in driving JURA's success. Having secured his participation as co-editor, we focused on selecting a title for the journal, oscillating between JURAnalysis and JURAffairs. Finally, we selected the current name, and

we assigned the entire editing process to CICADIT. Almost simultaneously, we decided to focus on elaborating the journal's development strategy and again Ronan's contribution was extremely important, starting with shaping its purpose. Our focus on high-quality processes was crucial in delivering a sustained increase in the quality of the published works. This, in turn, cemented JURA's growing reputation and its inclusion in such well-known international databases as Scopus (2014) and Clarivate Analytics – ESCI (2018).

A Performant Editor

Ronan's high status as a performant editor for both Urban Studies and JURA rests on his great abilities at a very difficult task. As he himself points out, it is not easy to be a journal editor. First, one needs to check if submitted articles fall within the journal's realm, which must remain true to purpose. Secondly, one must ensure that submitted articles meet the required technical-scientific requirements, whether theoretical, procedural, analytical and so on. Thirdly, it is crucial to appoint relevant referees who are leaders in the relevant field of study (Paddison 2003). Nor is it easy to ensure the regularity of publication, which can be impacted adversely by the lack of a steady stream of relevant article submissions. In addition, editors need to be alert to new research trends in terms of content, analytical methods, and inter-disciplinary participation.

Some remarks on his academic research

In addition to these outstanding contribution just discussed, Ronan Paddison established himself through his own publications as a distinguished researcher on urban affairs. The quality of his scientific work reflects his focus on defining and developing new concepts either alone or working with other researchers. These include "the post-colonial city; urban planning and governance; post-industrial city; city marketing strategies and place competition in city regions; and post-political city" etc., as highlighted and exemplified by Cumbers and Philo (2019: 2611).

While many of his articles were published in Urban Studies (Cumbers and Philo 2019), more of his innovative ideas for research on the city or on other aspects of urban, social, cultural and political geography were published elsewhere. Other journals include: Geoforum, Area, Progress in Planning, Scottish Geographical Magazine, and the Scottish Geographical Journal. Some of this work focused on the analysis of the social and cultural space of representative cities in North Africa, such as Tunis and Rabat, revealing their particularities with effects in their structuring mode.

Ronan's clearly expressed his vision for Urban Studies in one of his last contributions to the development of knowledge in this extremely attractive field (Paddison 2019). However, at the same time he acknowledged many unknown dimensions. Given his particular contribution to maintaining the field as a "vibrant" one, there was probably no other researcher more suited to writing a theoretical synthesis of this field, in the most recent and prestigious encyclopedia: *The Willey Blackwell Encyclopedia of Urban & Regional Studies* (Paddison 2019). In his opinion, urban studies cover several social and humanistic disciplines, offering a wide field of reflection from a multidisciplinary perspective (Paddison 2019). The formidable dynamics of the field led him to formulate a multitude of questions, which have remained unanswered or with partial answers so far. Moreover, he sought to develop another focus of study that connects urban studies to the current social, technological and scientific dynamics. The multitude of debates on the urban research and their interdisciplinary character demonstrates the complexity of city forms and life and it explains their repositioning in the field of contemporary research. New theoretical concepts and research methods emerging in a variety of urban studies have also

contributed to a better understanding of the mechanisms shaping the structure and life of cities. They, in turn, demonstrate the multi-disciplinary nature of urban studies, drawing Paddison's (2015) earlier work about the dynamics and complexity of urban studies.

For his fundamental contribution to the founding of the Journal of Urban and Regional Analysis, for the extremely efficient involvement in the management of this journal, for the generosity shown by offering a part of the issues of the Urban Studies journal to the library of CICADIT, the editorial board and myself, as co-editor, send sincere condolences to the family, keeping a vivid memory of Professor Ronan Paddison.

References

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