

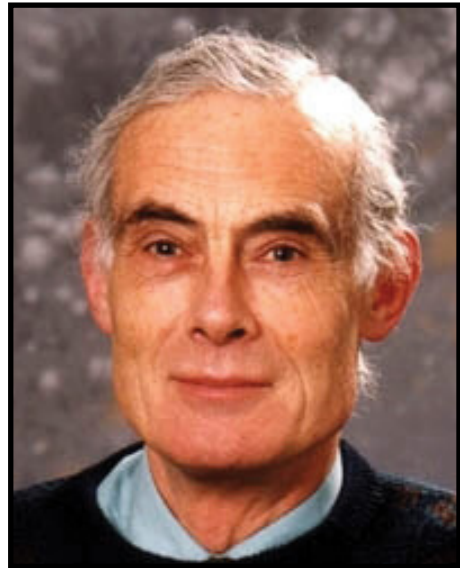
## In memoriam David Turnock (1938–2011)

I was proposed to give an overview of David's academic career, in particular, his contribution to understanding the changing geography of Europe. Nevertheless, dwelling upon my memories of our joint work and our chats about history, Eastern Europe, family and so many other things, I decided to write about the friend, who was a dedicated researcher, a tutor and also a kind, helpful colleague for all of us.

We all know his systematic way of exploring socio-spatial processes in his study-areas, such as in Leicestershire, Scotland, the Carpathian regions of Romania and in many other places... Nevertheless, he was always anxious to go deeper and understand the historical, social ("macro-") and environmental contexts of local processes. As he wrote in 1998, "...The distinctiveness of different world regions has always been the primary stimulus of my interest in geography, though such an inclination was hardly popular during my undergraduate years when overarching theories were very much in vogue and a focus on real world situations won few friends" (TURNOCK, D. 1998: 129). Nevertheless, in the milieu of theoretical plurality of the 1990s, when *agency* was a widely discussed issue, his view of socio-spatial processes that rested on understanding macro-structures through local actions and problems was increasingly appreciated. He found a sound basis for linking local and other scalar processes in the *realism*. From the mid-1990s, he focused largely on revealing global and national political, institutional and ideological context, as well as on the path dependency of regional and local processes, particularly, in post-socialist countries.

As a scholar, researching backward regions, he understood clearly how inequalities are reproduced in all spheres of everyday life. He acted as a moral man had to (as we all, social scientists should): he supported East European colleagues by sending and carrying books to them, and people living in the poorest regions of the Balkan (mainly, in Romania) by taking medical supply, blankets and toys year by year. His humanitarian activity had been supported by his wife, Marion for four decades; their blue Ford was always full of charity supply when they visited us in Békéscsaba. Their work in the Caledonian Society that supports Scottish culture reflected the same devotedness that tied up his professional and "civil" life (David got his first job as a university professor in Aberdeen).

David TURNOCK has been a well-known colleague and a friend to many East European geographers since 1970. He was one of the few scholars who did empirical research on the spatial logic of the centrally planned economy and of the political system of socialism. The primary field of his studies was Romania. His papers and books that revealed social inequalities and environmental conflicts under socialism, and their historical contexts rested on his field work and personal experiences, moreover, on the extensive network of



“local” academics that was kept working by David. We were often invited to check and criticise his papers – to interpret facts and processes always in the right cultural context.

It was David TURNOCK and his colleague and friend, Frank CARTER, who proposed to set up the *Socialist Geographies Research Group* within the Royal Geographical Society (RGS), to support academic relationships across the iron curtain. The research group did survive the collapse of socialism, now exists as *Post-socialist Research Group/RGS*, and still fulfils its function, linking geographers in the East and the West of Europe. His work was recognised by the RGS Edward Heath award in 1989.

In the transition period, his encyclopaedic knowledge, writings and academic relationships did shape the main streams of geographical research focused on East Central Europe and the Balkan. Working together with East European scholars (writing joint papers, editing volumes of studies) he studied key issues, such as the historical contexts of institutional transformation, foreign investments and uneven spatial development, the crisis of rural regions, environmental conflicts and cross-border relations. The joint work, in my experience, rested on mutual appreciation of each other’s knowledge and opinion, lacking the frequently experienced imbalance in East–West academic relations.

Who was David TURNOCK for us, East European geographers, and why do we miss him as a colleague, a friend, a mentor, a precise editor and in many other terms so much? By the pure facts, he was a scholar who accumulated and organised an immense and deep knowledge about our region. He presented his results on East Central Europe and the Balkan, moreover, on his other “long-term research projects” (e.g. on Leicestershire, and on the Scottish Highlands) in his more than 31 books (including 10 volumes of studies edited by him) and hundreds of papers. After finishing his studies at St. Catherine’s College, Cambridge, and getting his PhD shortly after, he was invited to teach at the University of Aberdeen. In 1969, he moved to Leicester, and worked at the University of Leicester until his retirement in 2003. His books (many of those were on the reading lists at the Department of Geography), moreover, his way of working together with students as a tutor inspired many young fellows to find their own way – and often, to study and to understand Eastern Europe. Being retired was not an end to his work, but having more time for exploring Europe and for writing his books: he had six synopses that had been accepted by major publishers in 2003. He left several manuscripts behind that he could not finish – when we lost him in a car accident on 10 May, 2011 in Rutland.

It was an enormous loss, and now we miss a dedicated colleague, a friend, a mentor – a good man...

TURNOCK, D. 1998. Globalisation and the East European transition. *Geojournal* 45. (1–2): 129–140.

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