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Obituary

In memoriam Ronald van Kempen 1958–2016

Ronald van Kempen, Professor of Urban Geography at the Faculty of Geosciences, Utrecht University passed away on 21 February 2016, after a very short period of illness. Ronald obtained his doctorate Human Geography from Utrecht University in 1992, after which he was an assistant professor of Urban Housing Market Processes. In 2002 he was appointed as a full professor of Urban Geography at Utrecht University, specialising in socio-spatial developments in major cities and metropolitan policy. In practice, his research covered a wider spectrum of subjects, like urban spatial segregation, urban diversity, housing for low-income groups, urban governance and its effects on neighbourhoods and residents, social exclusion, and minority ethnic groups.

Ronald was very active in both national and international debates concerning his research interests. He published more than 120 reports and articles in Dutch and more than 150 in English. He published 20 Edited Volumes (Books) and Special Issues (Journals). His most cited book (around 1000 citations) is *Globalizing Cities* (2000), which he co-edited with Peter Marcuse (Marcuse and van Kempen, 2000). In this book the editors try to answer the simple (but not easy to answer) question: *Is there something new, something different about the spatial patterns of the cities of today and tomorrow which differentiates them from the cities of yesterday?* He was also guest editor of two previous special issues in *Cities*. In 2012, with Michael Gentile and Titt Tammaru, Ronald co-edited *Heteropolitization: social and spatial change in Central and East European Cities* (Tammaru et al., 2012). The term heteropolis stands for an idealized, socially, economically, culturally and spatially heterogeneous, and complex, city. The editors indeed find evidence of increasing heterogeneity and complexity across urban space, but also conclude that socialist legacies still play a role in the spatial differentiations of today. In 2013, together with Gideon Bolt, Ronald published the special issue *Mixing Neighbourhoods: Success or Failure?* (Bolt and van Kempen, 2013) They conclude that policy makers tend to be overly optimistic on the role of social mixing policies in counteracting negative neighbourhood effects, but that there is more evidence to support the claim that social mixing may lead to a better quality of life. However,

this positive effect very much depends on the way mixing is produced, additional investments in community development and the wider context (e.g. economic recession and residentialisation of the social rented sector) in which mixing policies take place.

Ronald has coordinated several large projects, e.g. the EU 5th-Framework RESTATE project (the comparison and future of 29 post-WWII housing estates in ten European countries). Until his death he was the PI of the EU-FP7 project DIVERCITIES (Governing Urban Diversity). The principal aim of DIVERCITIES is to examine how European cities can benefit from diversity (see: <http://www.urbandiversity.eu/>). He was the driving force of the transformation of the DIVERCITIES consortium into an exceptionally stimulating, professional and warm network of researchers across Europe. Although he combined his leadership of the project with his position as Dean of the Faculty of Geosciences, he always managed to give the participants in the project the attention and guidance they needed. He was a stimulating, clear, empathetic and direct team leader. He will be sorely missed.

References

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- Tammaru, T., van Kempen, R., & Gentile, M. (2012). Heteropolitization: Social and spatial change in central and east European cities. *Cities* (pp. 291–299).

Gideon Bolt

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