Book of Remembrance

Ronald van Kempen

1958 - 2016
Sadly, our colleague Ronald van Kempen, professor of Urban Geography at the Faculty of Geosciences of Utrecht University, passed away on Sunday 21st February 2016.

He was a well-known member of the ENHR, served as a Vice-Chair (2000-2004) and was a member of the Coordination Committee (1996-2004). For many years he was one of the coordinators of the Working Groups "Metropolitan Dynamics: Urban Change, Market and Governance" and "Minority Ethnic Groups and Housing" (and its predecessors).

See also www.uu.nl/staff/RVanKempen
Although I was aware of the illness of Ronald van Kempen, the news of his passing away during a short holiday in Italy on Monday morning made a great impression on me. I knew that Ronald was in a fight he could not win. I was impressed by the way he managed to cope with this awful situation and the way he communicated about his destiny during the last days of his life.

Ronald and I were almost of the same age and our careers were quite comparable. Because of that, Ronald and I met frequently during the last decades. For several years we were both members of the editorial board of the Journal of Housing and the Built Environment and of the Coordination Committee (CC) of the European Network for Housing Research. Ronald played an important role in our network. During the years between 1996 and 2004 he was a member of the CC and the last four years he was vice-chairman. For many years he was one of the coordinators of the Working Groups “Metropolitan Dynamics: Urban Change, Market and Governance” and “Minority Ethnic Groups and Housing” (and its predecessors).

I will remember Ronald as an excellent scientist and great colleague. Of much more importance however, is that Ronald was a very amiable person who was not only chasing after his own success. He had a great interest in the work and the development of other scholars and young researchers he met during his rich scientific life. For many of us, Ronald will forever be in our thoughts and hearts and an example of an admirable scientist and above all, a good person.

Peter Boelhouwer
Chair of the European network for Housing Research
Chair of the Department of OTB - Research for the Built Environment, TU Delft
Ronald with Richard Turkington and Peter Boelhouwer at the ENHR Conference in Lillehammer, Norway, June 2012
In memory of Ronald van Kempen

It is not easy to choose between the many occasions when I have spent time together with Ronald. I remember the ENHR conferences where he was not only speaker and organizer of workshops but also participant in all funny moments (and whatever happened during the long evenings and nights he – as a Dutchman – had always a last glass of beer).

The following pictures, though, show Ronald as the founder and leader of RESTATE, a very successful FP5 project on comparative research of large housing estates. This was his other strength: organizer of international research projects. Many of us remember him from these projects which were also seed-beds for many young researchers to understand what rigorous comparative work means. It was a life-long experience for us to understand how can the three or four years’ of work of a group be organized in such a way that the outcome is not only high-level publications but also unforgettable friendships...

The first three pictures were taken in Warsaw in September 2005 at the final meeting of RESTATE: this was the (quite unusual) moment when the group organized a „cake of thanks” to Ronald, the main organizer of the research project.
Needless to say, this was not the end of the project: for Ronald it was always very important to prepare high-level final outputs. The last picture was taken two months later in Utrecht to where Ronald called together an editors’ meeting to prepare the Handbook of the Restate project – one of the outputs which is on the shelves of many European research centres and city governments ever since..

We have lost with Ronald a great researcher, an extraordinary scientific organizer/manager and a very good friend...

Iván Tosics
Metropolitan Research Institute, Hungary
We at IBF in Uppsala are deeply sad about the news on Ronald’s death. We knew that he suffered from a hard disease and that he had been struggling bravely for overcoming it.

My personal memories of Ronald are very nice. I remember him as a very kind man, generous with his response to younger researchers, solidary with his colleagues, and committed with a social science sensitive for social inequality and injustice. He was a very good friend of the Swedish researchers, especially the team at IBF. It will be very difficult to fill the emptiness left by his fare. As the head of our institute, I want to leave our most sincere condolences to Ronald’s family and friends.

Irene Molina
on behalf of the Institute for Housing and Urban research at Uppsala University,
Sweden

I first participated in an ENHR conference in 2001 in Pultusk, Poland, participating also in its pre-conference for young housing researchers in Warsaw. It was my first scientific conference and I was quite nervous about my presentation. I presented a paper on residential segregation of immigrants in the Minority Ethnic Groups working group, hosted by Ronald van Kempen and Sule Özüekren. What really surprised me was that Ronald had actually read my paper very carefully and written it full of his own notes. He gave this copy with all his useful notes to me, which greatly helped me to finish the paper, leading to my first paper published in an international scientific journal. This unexpected kindness towards a beginning doctoral student is what I mostly remember Ronald for, although he was always a very kind person also in our later encounters.

Timo Kauppinnen
National Institute for Health and Welfare Finland
Liberté, égalité, fraternité
Ronald van Kempen

Of course I will remember Ronald as an excellent scholar.
Of course I will remember Ronald as an excellent advocate for the good cause ‘human geography.’
Of course I will remember Ronald as an excellent colleague in joint work.

Well, for some time.
All this will fade away.

Why?

These aspects do not differentiate.
Differentiation is based on uniqueness.
Uniqueness may become a brand.
Valuable brands are scarce.
Scarcity is remembered.

Ronald was a valuable brand.
Ronald was a valuable companion.

He scored hundred percent on the Golden Circle of Sinek.
Grand Brands always start from the inside out.
‘We the people’ recognize them firstly by Why, secondly by How, and thirdly by What.
I have lost a companion who was motivated by a better world for mankind.
I have lost a companion whose acting seemed to be based on liberté, égalité, fraternité.
I have lost a companion who liked to share his scientific work with common folk.

And I have lost a companion ...
Drinking beer in the Uithof-Inn and pubs at ENHR-conferences.
Senseless men talk.
Weekends in Euverem-Gulpen.
Lost squash matches.
A vague remembrance of a weekend in Gent.
Stepro (Depro)-meetings.
And so on and on and on.

And this all really sucks.

Dr. Roland Goetgeluk (PhD)
Utrecht/Amsterdam

Ronald will be remembered as a great researcher and very productive urban geographer. However, I will remember him most as a good friend, always with a smile on her face.

One of my absolutely best memory of Ronald is our closing dinner in Vienna of the EU project SOCOHO. What a nice night we had, without the project leaders. Now Ronald finally had the opportunity to talk about the meaning of the concept of social cohesion, without being rejected, as he was in the final SOCOHO report.

Lena Magnusson Turner
Norwegian Social Research, Norway
I am extremely saddened and shocked to hear of Ronald’s death – in fact I can’t really believe he is not here anymore. My happiest and most memorable times I have with him were during the time when I was early career researcher in the first year of my PhD. I first met Ronald at the ENHR colloquium in Ljubljana and remember my first ever conversation with him over dinner on a wonderful open terrace on a very warm July evening. Like many early careers PhD students he was and continued to be an important inspiration to me. I remember him encouraging and giving me the confidence to submit a paper to the main conference which I did in Istanbul. In Istanbul, I remember being with him and other members of the conference sailing on the Bosporus on a beautiful sunny evening on our way to dinner looking over the river – in fact I have photos that I took that evening.

I also have fond memories of being with him at the Housing Studies Association Conference at the University of York and later again in Lillehammer when a group of us went for dinner in the centre of the town. I remember our conversation on the walk to the restaurant from the hotel; we were discussing his work and that of other academics and their perspectives on urban spatial segregation and polarisation and social cohesion; work which I have continued to draw on in my teaching. I will always remember him as larger than life and someone who was able to combined his academic intellect with being a down to earth person, inclusive, not in any way pretentious and generally someone whose company I really enjoyed.

It is indeed very sad for his family and that he is not here anymore.

Martin McNally, M.A., Ph.D,
University of Chester, UK
I was shocked and very saddened to hear that Ronald had died.

I had known him for the best part of 30 years, and we were interested in the same areas of work. He was a good scholar, a hard worker, and a very decent man.

He will be sadly missed by his many friends and colleagues across Europe and beyond.

Keith Kintrea
University of Glasgow, UK

Ronald’s paper at one of the first conferences (in Amsterdam 1988, I believe) made a big impression on me. He was a bit shocked and laughed when I mentioned this to him about 20 years later - and I am sure that I am not alone in remembering that he did have a good laugh. But to the conference paper: the topic was very interesting and new for me but what I remember the most, was that it was so very clearly presented. Ronald was very engaged in the details of the neighborhood he had studied but placed all the findings in the context of urban research at the time – just the kind of report a young researcher, as I was then, should be presenting. Some years later we both became involved in the ENHR and in its Coordination Committee, a period that served only to re-enforce my first impression of Ronald. He will indeed be missed.

Lawrence Teeland
Gävle, Sweden
Memories of Prof. Dr. Ronald van Kempen

Ronald van Kempen had a central position in the academic field of geography, both in the Netherlands and internationally. In that role he was a colleague to many of us, but he will also be remembered as a good friend; in fact, for many he was a good colleague and a good friend. His passing away, on February, 21st, 2016, came as a shock and is a big loss, in the first place to his family, but also for the field of urban geography and for his colleagues and friends.

Ronald studied human geography at the University of Amsterdam and always maintained a special relation with a lot of geographers in that place, including me. Personally I learned to know Ronald after he had moved to the University of Utrecht, while he worked on his PhD thesis, and afterwards when we both held chairs in urban geography. While, in the past, there was strong rivalry between the geography and planning departments of the universities of Utrecht and Amsterdam, with the appointment of Ronald the last remnants of that rivalry were kicked out, while the relationship between ‘Utrecht’ and ‘Amsterdam’ changed into a more collaborative, constructive, and friendly one. This was illustrated by the fact that Ronald and I got together from time to time, had a good dinner, and discussed what was going on in both our environments and in the field of urban geography internationally. I cherish the memories of these meetings.

Ronald will be remembered as a geographer who significantly contributed to the discipline. He covered a wide array of topics related to urban geographies, ranging from globalization to post-war housing estates; from ethnic segregation to urban restructuring; from social cohesion to social exclusion; and so on. Ronald had a strong interest in urban policy as well and therefore was involved in many policy debates on urban restructuring, housing, renewal, urban governance and poverty. Yet, Ronald was also a champion in combining serious and hard work and making fun while managing to find the right balance.

Our collaboration started in 1989 and therefore lasted for 27 years. In that period we worked together intensely in several large European research programmes, such as URBEX, UGIS, Restate and Cost-Civitas. During these programmes we discovered European cities. I am happy to have had the opportunity to work and write together with Ronald.
Ronald loved to share his work with others, which was also visible in his numerous presentations at meetings and workshops or seminars and at big conferences in the Netherlands and abroad; he also firmly contributed to literally establishing things, reason why he organized a large number of international conferences, seminars and workshops and why he was enormously active for organisations such as the European Network for Housing Research and for large research programmes including the recent Diversities programme.

Ronald had to leave us way too early, but not unnoticed. Many colleagues and friends, across the globe, will have fond memories of what he did. Let us take that with us. He has had an impact in the field and will continue to do so.

Sako Musterd
University of Amsterdam, Netherlands

I am really sorry to hear about this devastating news about Ronald. I know him for a very long time - since 1993 - from my first ENHR conference in Budapest and Wassenaar seminar for young housing researchers from different universities in Europe. We have been seeing one another for the past 20 years at ENHR conferences - or other urban and housing related events - in different European cities. Ronald was always such a nice and friendly colleague, full of energy, knowledge and wisdom. I will keep him in my memory. Please pass my condolences to his family.

Nataša Pichler-Milanovič
University of Ljubljana
We first met Ronald van Kempen at the 1997 ENHR conference that was held in Piran, Slovenia. Ron, as we called him from then onwards, was, at that time a member of the Coordination Committee. Being the youngest among them all (at least so he looked) he, right away, attracted our admiration. At the meetings we (the three main conference organisers) had with the Coordination Committee, he presented himself as a very pleasant communicator.

Later on, we had the opportunity to closely work with Ron and to get to know him even better. He invited us to participate in an EU funded research project, popularly known as RESTATE. The RESTATE project consortium was composed of 17 research institutions from ten European countries. According to any standards, this was a fairly huge research project. As project leader, Ron had the responsibility of organising and coordinating the work of all these partner institutions. At the end of the project, he demonstrated his affection for Slovenia by entrusting us with the task to organise and host the final project conference in Ljubljana. Most importantly, however, during the three year period of the implementation of the research project, Ron excelled, not only as a top-class academic, but also as a very capable leader.

Outside work, there were also numerous occasions of socialisation and fun. Among these we will, especially, always remember a very pleasant evening we had with him in a certain pub, together with some other friends, celebrating Richard’s birthday, during the 2003 Tirana ENHR conference.

Sadly, none of this will happen anymore. It was nice to know you Ron. We will miss you.

Your friends from the Urban Planning Institute of Slovenia
Barbara, Kaliopa, Richard
RESTATE, kick-off meeting, Utrecht 2002
Left to right: Roger Andersson, Nicole Commerçon, Franck Chignier-Riboulon, Ronald van Kempen, Barbara Černič-Mali, Eva Öresjö, Gerzegorz Weclawowicz, Montserrat Pareja Eastaway, Irene Molina, Christian Abrahamsson, Richard Sendi, Manuel Aalbers, Peter Lee, Éva Gerőházi, Sako Musterd, Brechtje van Boxmeer, Wim Ostendorf, Silvia Mugnano, Alan Murie, Ellen van Beckhoven
RESTATE meeting, Birmingham, 2005
Left to right: Wim Ostendorf, Ružica Boškić, Roger Andersson, Sako Musterd, Ronal van Kempen
RESTATE meeting, Ljubljana, 2005
Richard Sendi, Teresa Tapada Berteli, Thomas Knorr-Siedow, Grzegorz Weclawowicz, Silvia Mugnano.
RESTATE meeting, Ljubljana, 2005
Left to right: Karien Dekker, Ronald van Kempen, Manuel Aalbers
RESTATE Seminar, Barcelona, 2005
RESTATE Seminar, Barcelona, 2005
Ronald van Kempen, Iván Tosics
RESTATE, Final meeting, Warsaw, 2015
Ronald addressing the group
RESTATE, Final meeting, Warsaw, 2015
Celebrating the successful conclusion of the project
Ronald van Kempen, 1958 – 2016
In the mid-1980s the research programme Urban Networks started, financed by the Dutch Ministry of Science. The Ministry identified Amsterdam, Utrecht and Delft as the core university cities in Dutch urban research. During six years a program committee was active, first chaired by Bert Kruijt (University of Amsterdam), later by Frans Dieleman (Utrecht University).

One of the projects which was subsidized was ‘Trapped between urban labour markets and housing markets’, initiated by Frans Dieleman and me. We found two promising PhD students: Ronald van Kempen (UU) and René Teule (TUD). We started a fruitful collaboration in which Frans and I were supervisors for both students and Jan van Weesep was their daily supervisor.

Ronald achieved his Dr. title on November 27, 1992. Theme: ‘Trapped on the urban housing market, dealing with low-income households in post-WW2 housing areas in Amsterdam and Rotterdam’. René Teule did several other projects in between and finished his PhD-study in September 30, 1996.

The European Network for Housing Research started officially in 1988. Frans Dieleman and I were the Dutch members of the first Coordination Committee. When Frans left the CC, Ronald was elected as a new member. Together Ronald and I could continue the Dutch input in ENHR.

In several periods Ronald and I, sometimes together with Sako Musterd, collaborated in research projects and in international publications. When I look at my output specification I see that the article ‘Revolution in social housing in the Netherlands: possible effects of new housing policies, Urban Studies, 2002, 39 (2), pp. 237-253, written by Ronald van Kempen and me, was the most quoted article in which I was involved (Scopus: 64 x quoted; Google Scholar: 122 x quoted; accessed in July 2015). Also high on the list is the article ‘Towards undivided cities: the potential of economic revitalisation and housing redifferentiation’, written by Sako Musterd, Ronald van Kempen and me (Housing Studies, 1999, 14 (5), pp. 573-584. So the collaboration with Ronald not only increased the quantity of our research output, but certainly also the quality of it.

Later on I got involved in the international research project ‘Restate’, chaired by Ronald, which dealt with the deterioration of post-war social housing in several European cities. This program can be considered as a follow-up of a publication by Niels Prak and me (1986), ‘A model for the analysis of the decline of post-war housing’, International
Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 10 (1), pp. 1-17. As a result of ‘Restate’ this contribution was cited recently quite frequently.

When OTB was formed in Delft, in 1985, I hoped that Ronald would move from Utrecht to Delft. Utrecht University adopted a very effective counter measure: they arranged the chair Urban Geography for Ronald. And because Ronald’s wife Veronique Schutjens also worked at Utrecht University, there were additional logistical complications for Ronald to consider a move to Delft. But, as everyone knows, distances in the Netherlands are small, so it was easy for Ronald and for several researchers at OTB, including me, to continue the collaboration with Ronald. We all have enjoyed it: Ronald was a very competent researcher on housing and urban issues, always closely connected with current societal and political issues. Ronald was always in a good spirit, always dynamic, energetic and creative, taking initiatives and a real friend in academic collaboration. His death occurred much too early. After his administrative duties as a dean and other academic functions Ronald looked forward to intensify and restart academic research in the area of social integration, housing and urban dynamics. We are sad that it is not possible anymore to collaborate with Ronald and to take advantage of his inputs. In the same time we are very grateful for the inspiring role Ronald has played in specific research programs and academic collaboration in general. We wish Veronique and children much strength in the coming hard period.

Hugo Priemus
former member of the ENHR Coordinating Committee
retired Professor of Housing, OTB
Delft University of Technology, Netherlands

That it is a very sad news!
May his soul rest in Peace!

Doris Andoni (MSc.)
National Housing Agency, Albania
Vale Ronald van Kempen
Ronald van Kempen was one of my ‘promotors’ (supervisors) when I undertook my doctoral studies at Utrecht University between 1999 and 2003. Ronald was a very attentive supervisor, generously sharing his prodigious knowledge of housing systems and research processes, and with a careful eye for good drafting.

One of my strongest memories of the time is of Ronald’s valuable advice early on that the success of my thesis would hinge on my finding the ‘red thread’ or ‘lief motif’ – that enduring theme which would bind my ideas and arguments together and direct me to a useful conclusion. This astute counsel rescued me many times throughout the four years, guiding me on how to keep my thesis on track and bring it to fruition.

Perhaps others received similar advice as well. I have never forgotten it and have passed it on to my students.

I am shocked and deeply saddened by Ronald’s untimely passing but I feel privileged to have known and worked with him.

Dr Vivienne Milligan
University of New South Wales, Australia

I was deeply saddened to learn of Ronald’s passing. He was among that group of academics whose incredible work commitment reflected their passionate concern for their subject. I saw this at first hand on a European Commission-funded project in the early 2000s, and as a colleague on the ENHR co-ordination committee.

Mark Stephens
Heriot Watt University, UK
Two memories. First, I still remember the day when Ronald approached me at a ENHR meeting telling me – with pleasure – that the CC has approved my suggestion to create and chair a Working Group “Poverty Neighbourhoods”.

Major and more important memory: Ronald invited me as Guest Professor to the Geography Department at Utrecht University, where I taught in the Summer term 1998. We had many discussions and spend much time together.

I will keep his memory as a charming friend and an excellent scholar. Please, give my best regards to his wife.

Best wishes

Jürgen Friedrichs
University of Cologne, Germany

I first got to know Ronald at the ENHR New Researchers conference in Ljubljana in 2006. He was there as a mentor for a group of inexperienced researchers, including myself, helping us out with our first steps in academia. Since then, we met many times during conferences and events, yet I never stopped thinking of him as the critical, but friendly, advisor he was during those Slovenian summer days. He was a great scholar, a comrade in geography, and an excellent drinker of drinks. He will be missed.

Wouter van Gent
University van Amsterdam, Netherlands