

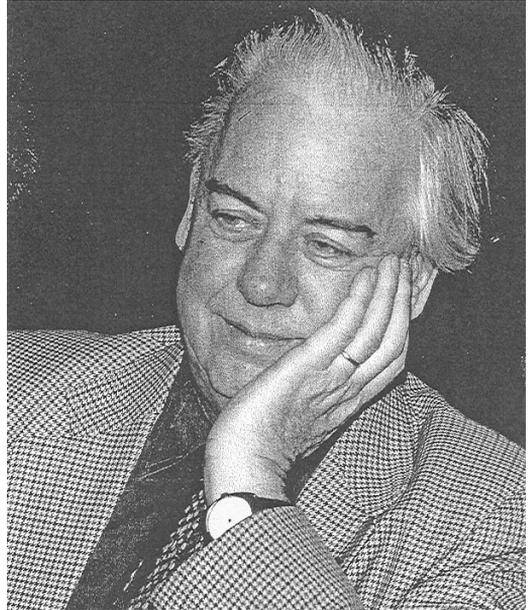
TORSTEN HÄGERSTRAND 1916–2004

Torsten Hägerstrand, the most influential Swedish human geographer of our time, has died. He was born on 11 October 1916 in Moheda parish in Kronoberg county and died on 3 May 2004 in Lund. From the beginning of the 1930s his academic base was the Department of Geography at Lund University. He was Professor at the Department between 1957 and 1971, and held a personal research chair from 1971 to 1982. He remained active as Professor Emeritus and retained his contacts with the national and international research communities. Under Hägerstrand, the Department assumed a prominent position on the global stage, and became internationally known and renowned as the Lund School.

Hägerstrand's scholarly expertise was exceptional. It encompassed a thorough grounding in the geographical discipline but also spanned and transcended traditional disciplinary borders. He had an exceptional talent for seeing pattern and order where others saw chaos and randomness. One can identify two central themes in his research and teaching which ran parallel but between which he moved freely. One encompassed the development of concepts and innovative basic research, the other concerned applied research with a more immediate social relevance.

A major focus of Hägerstrand's early research concerned migration and the quantitative analyses he developed in this field turned out to be paradigmatic. His doctoral thesis *Innovationsförloppet ur korologisk synpunkt* (1953) was to become a classic within the geographical discipline. The manner in which an agrarian population in southern Östergötland propagated innovations became the exemplar for doctoral theses and textbooks the world over. The use of the Monte Carlo method to emulate this propagation in models created new developmental possibilities within both human and economic geography. When foreign researchers and doctoral students came to Lund in the 1960s and 1970s to more closely acquaint themselves and draw inspiration from Hägerstrand, he had already moved on in his research interests.

As was intimated above, Hägerstrand had an em-



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inent ability to scrutinise our world and daily life. His exceptional talent made it possible to connect the material with the abstract and to illustrate fundamental ideas on society and nature with manifestly everyday phenomena. This was to find its most lucid manifestation in a model called time-geography that embraces a conception of the world which Hägerstrand consistently and continually developed. Time-geography was initially developed within the framework of a major research project funded by The Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation. He has pointed out, however, that the underlying ideas had been with him since the mid-1940s. The model of thought was subsequently formalized with the development of a conceptual apparatus and a notation system, the latter being perhaps time-geography's most well-known and enduring component. This happened during the final ten-year period of Hägerstrand's tenureship, then holding a personal professorship. As was the case with Hägerstrand's earlier work on innovation waves, time-

geography was to become a considerable source of inspiration for a new generation of researchers.

Hägerstrand's applied research more directly pertaining to Swedish planning helped to create an employment market for geographers at both the central state level as well as at district and municipal levels. The co-ordinate method, for example, created the potential for utilising the increasingly powerful computers that were developed during the 1960s for advanced spatial analyses. Among the major official commissions which occupied Hägerstrand and other geographers were those that provided the basis for municipal boundary reforms, new district delineation's, a diverse range of locational questions and the Öresund issue of connecting Denmark and Sweden across The Sound.

Between 1965 and 1974 Hägerstrand worked on localization questions in his capacity as a member and advisor to an expert group for regional development (ERU). With funding from the then newly established Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation and from the then Ministry of the Interior, Hägerstrand was involved with and led a large national research programme studying processes of urbanisation. One result of an investigation lead by Alva Myrdal on how future studies could be utilised was the creation, in 1974, of two parallel committees: a quasi-governmental secretariat for future studies and a non-political research related delegation for long-term motivated research (SALFO).

Hägerstrand was appointed chairman for the latter and came to personify the ensuing work in establishing co-operation between talented researchers from various disciplines. Throughout this period he further developed the ecological focus within time-geography. SALFO's work has become germinal for scientific co-operation projects and has contributed to relaxing boundaries between the traditional disciplines.

During his life-time Hägerstrand was awarded numerous honours and distinctions. He was, however, fairly reticent on such occasions. He was a member of The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, The Royal Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, The Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences in Sweden, The Academy of Sciences in Norway and Finland; the American Academy of Arts and Science, Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy, and a member of Société de Géographie in France. He was one of the founding members of Academia Europaea and he played an influential role within the European Science Foundation and the International Geographical Union. He was awarded numerous medals both in Sweden and abroad, and was an honorary doctor in Bergen, Trondheim, Bristol, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Ohio.

Hägerstrand has written or co-written approximately 300 publications. His scientific production has had an unusually wide dispersion through numerous periodicals and books among a broad spectrum of disciplines and he certainly came to personify the integrative potential of his own discipline. By way of conclusion, it must be emphasized that his influence and inspiration has not only been disseminated through the written word, but perhaps to an even greater extent through personal conversation and in meetings with visiting researchers, and himself as guest professor at various universities and at seminars and conferences. His students and colleagues can testify to the intellectual radiance that always surrounded him.

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