



Belgeo

Revue belge de géographie

1 | 2014

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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/belgeo/12875>

DOI: 10.4000/belgeo.12875

ISSN: 2294-9135

Publisher:

National Committee of Geography of Belgium, Société Royale Belge de Géographie

Electronic reference

Maria João Alcoforado, « Homage to Anne Buttimer, Winner of the Vautrin-Lud International Prize for Geography, 2014 », *Belgeo* [Online], 1 | 2014, Online since 15 December 2014, connection on 20 April 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/belgeo/12875> ; DOI : 10.4000/belgeo.12875

This text was automatically generated on 20 April 2019.



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Homage to Anne Buttimer, Winner of the Vautrin-Lud International Prize for Geography, 2014

Maria João Alcoforado

- 1 Anne Buttimer has received the Vautrin-Lud International Prize for Geography in 2014. This prize, often known as the 'Nobel Prize of Geography', was awarded during the 25th International Festival of Geography that was held, as every year, at Saint-Dié-des-Vosges in Eastern France. The prizewinner was selected unanimously by the Vautrin-Lud jury, whose members acted on the advice of geographers from around the world who served as electors. This prize honours the career of an illustrious geographer whose work has been innovative in several ways and recognizes her service to science and her generous, strong personality.
- 2 Anne Buttimer was born in Cork (Ireland) and took her doctoral degree at Seattle (USA) in 1965, when she was a sister in the Dominican order. In her thesis, Anne explored the conceptual and methodological foundations of social geography. Her facility in several languages has assisted her career throughout the world. She has been professor emerita at University College Dublin since 2003 and is a member of several academies, including the Academia Europaea of which she is vice-president with responsibility for social sciences. She has been a member, vice-president and then president of the International Geographical Union, and is also a member of the Association of American Geographers and a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. She has received scholarly prizes from many countries, including the recent award of the Lifetime Achievement Honors of the Association of American Geographers.
- 3 Professor Buttimer is a remarkably active researcher and has written an impressive number of books and articles on varied topics, including social geography, urban and cultural geography, sustainable development, the history of geographical thought, and the human dimension of 'global change'. Her books have been translated into several languages. Her approach to geography is holistic and, while she is often considered to be a human geographer, she has always sought to study spatial problems from a broad point

of view, including 'social space'. Her approach ranges from study of the natural world, on one hand, to the 'noosphere' and the ideas of human beings, on the other.

- 4 A number of interesting features of her life path may be identified, her curriculum vitae being available on the internet: www.ucd.ie/gpep/people/professorannebuttimer/; http://www.ae-info.org/ae/User/Buttimer_Anne/CV
- 5 Anne Buttimer introduced the idea of values in geographical education, and argued that academic activity must be seen from a humanistic point of view.
- 6 She is interested in empirical studies of 'the human experience of space and mobility'. From 1968 to 1970, she worked on housing issues in Scotland that were to do with members of the impoverished working class who were resettled away from their old homes in the slums. In so doing, she developed new approaches to research, including environmental perception, networks of interaction, and the sense of belonging to a particular place.
- 7 Her book on 'Society and Milieu in the French Geographic Tradition' (1971) revealed her contact with the French school of geographers, with Jacqueline Beaujeu-Garnier being one of her mentors.
- 8 One of the greatest contributions of Anne Buttimer to the history and philosophy of science (particularly of geographical thought and practice) has been the 'International Dialogue' project, undertaken with Professor Torsten Hägerstrand of the University of Lund in Sweden. Undertaken between 1978 and 1988, this exercise was both innovative and enriching. Anne and her collaborators interviewed over 200 colleagues from 35 countries about their work, working methods and lives, with the aim of trying to 'discover several common denominators in varied careers, seek the bases of mutual understanding, and arrive at better communication between experts in the social sciences and in the biophysical sciences'. These published or videotaped interviews are of great scientific interest. Revealing diverse points of view about geography, philosophy of science, and the history of geographic thought, they are still used to assist intra- and inter-disciplinary understanding. Many interviews of famous colleagues are available on the internet through the 'IGU Channel', and are viewed by researchers, teachers and students.
- 9 Anne has directed her attention to the inter-relations of scientific knowledge and the practice of spatial planning. An example is provided by her work on the human dimension of global change, especially through her enquiry into the use of forest land in Sweden and Canada (1988-91). Subsequently, Anne directed two European projects on 'Landscape and Life: appropriate scales for sustainable development', and 'Environment and development on the periphery of Europe', where questions of scale in the application of European policies were raised, as well as the meaning of landscape and cultural policies in promoting better relations between researchers and planners, and between researchers and citizens.
- 10 Anne has dedicated much of her knowledge, time and energy to the International Geographical Union. She has been a member of the commission on the History of Geographic Thought since 1968. With several colleagues, she has encouraged a shift away from traditional bio-bibliographies toward contextualized analyses and critical reflections on the history of the discipline and on the craft of being a geographer. She was elected vice-president (1996-2000) and then president (2000-2004) of the IGU. During her presidency, she travelled a great deal and especially appreciated the contacts she was

able to make with young geographers in emerging countries. The IGU greatly benefited from her creative energies. One of her presidential objectives was to create occasions for 'face to face discussions', as Anne said at the International Geographical Congress in Cologne in 2012, between different researchers in the 'geosciences' (namely geologists and geophysicists as well as geographers) to advance knowledge of the planet (partially in the context of the 'Year of Planet Earth').

- 11 Anne Buttimer enjoys a global reputation for having inspired many colleagues, and not only geographers. At the various stages of her career, she has introduced innovations, stimulated thought about the practice of geography, advanced the notion of 'values' into scientific work, and demonstrated how an individual's biography influences the choices and working practices undertaken by geographers. She has also emphasised the role of geography in spatial planning and in solving problems, such as those associated with sustainable development and climate change. Her publications and lectures have guided several generations of scholars. By awarding her the Vautrin-Lud Prize, members of the international geographical community express their thanks for her remarkable devotion to the geographer's craft, and also for her many innovations, her publications, and her practice of geography as a 'humanistic' branch of knowledge.

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