

Brian Robson, 1939-2020.

Brian Robson OBE, Emeritus Professor of Geography and Founder of Centre for Urban Policy Studies (now the Spatial Policy Analysis Lab) at the University of Manchester, died on 5th June 2020.

Brian had a long and distinguished career as an urban geographer. He was awarded a scholarship to the Royal Grammar School, Newcastle-on-Tyne, from where he moved as an Exhibitioner to St Catherine's College, Cambridge, in 1958. After completing a PhD at Cambridge, he secured the first of a series of academic appointments with a lectureship at Aberystwyth and a Harkness Fellowship in urban studies at the University of Chicago, before returning in 1967 to Cambridge as a Fellow of Fitzwilliam College. Brian played a leading role in applying quantitative methods to urban geography, publishing the landmark studies *Urban Analysis* (1969) and *Urban Social Areas* (1975)

In 1977, Brian was appointed Professor of Geography at Manchester, where he was to spend the rest of his academic career. It was at Manchester that Brian's reputation for policy-focused urban research was cemented. He founded the Centre for Urban Policy Studies in 1983, embarking over the subsequent decades on a series of research projects exploring the local and national impacts of urban policy initiatives. In 1988, his book *Those Inner Cities* set out his agenda for future urban policy, challenging the government approach of the time. His subsequent work for government on the creation of an index of deprivation was critical in determining the allocation of government resources. In 2010, Brian was awarded an OBE for his work on urban policy and regeneration.

Brian played an important role in leading Geography as a discipline. He served as President of the Institute of British Geographers, and of the Geography section of British Association for the Advancement of Science. He was editor of both *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* and *Area*, and joint editor with David Harvey of the Edward Arnold series on social structure and social change. He chaired the committees overseeing three Economic and Social Research Council programmes. In 2000, he was awarded the Royal Geographical Society's Founder's Gold Medal for his services to urban geography.

Alongside his contributions to Geography, Brian was committed to interdisciplinary research, working closely with colleagues in town planning and across the social sciences. He was a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences and the Royal Society of Arts. In 2014, he was appointed a Lifetime Honorary Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute.

Brian had a distinguished career as a university manager, holding a succession of leadership roles at Manchester. After serving as Head of the School of Geography, in 1988 he was appointed Dean of the Faculty of Arts. From 1993-97, he was Pro-Vice Chancellor, with responsibility for external affairs.

In his later years, Brian was busy writing papers and books based on his long-held passion for historical cartography and city plans, with particular reference to Manchester. At the time of his death he was actively writing a new book on the history of Newcastle told through maps.

Outside the university, Brian was a passionate advocate of voluntary service. He was a supporter of a number of local charities, serving as chair of the Manchester Council for Voluntary Services and the Manchester Settlement.

He is survived by his wife Glenna.

Written by Iain Deas with input from Cecilia Wong, Martin Dodge and Andreas Schulze Baing