



Jos Berghman

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IN MEMORIAM JOS BERGHMAN

Jos Berghman (born in Aalst on 5 July 1949), professor of Social Policy at the Centre for Sociological Research of the Catholic University of Leuven and also chairman of the editorial committee of this journal, passed away unexpectedly on 10 October, 2014. In homage to his scientific and social contributions and to the man himself, we present this overview of his career and his vision.

Berghman started his academic career in Antwerp. After completing his studies in political and social sciences at the Catholic University of Leuven, he became the first researcher at the new Centre for Social Policy (CSP) at the University of Antwerp in 1971. There he completed his doctorate on the development of the Belgian pension system. After leading the centre for a number of years, Berghman moved to the University of Tilburg to set up the Institute for Social Security Research. With the Tilburg Institute for Social Security Research (TISSER) he continued to expand this area of study. In 1998 he returned to Leuven as a professor of Social Policy at the Centre for Sociological Research (CSR). He also held the position of Delta Lloyd Life Professor of Pension Policy.

Berghman excelled in the formulating of a clear vision, based on a clear conceptual framework and in the effective dissemination and defence of his ideas. He thus established the case for a broad perspective of social policy in general and social security in particular.

Berghman was an advocate for a more sociological rather than administrative definition of social security, one in which the question of opportunities for improving the social security of individuals, families and the community occupies a central position. The value of this broader perspective formed the central theme of his inaugural speech in Tilburg, titled “The Invisible Social Security” (Berghman, 1986). He applied this vision in comparative overviews of national policy developments in their social contexts, as well as in detailed analysis of micro-data.

In his publications, in practice and in teaching, Berghman regularly called on researchers and policy makers to pay more attention to prevention (most recently in Berghman et al., 2013). Using insights from human damage teachings, he argued that avoiding social problems is more desirable than limiting the impact of these problems and then compensating for losses.

In Antwerp, Berghman analysed poverty from a sociological perspective, more specifically in terms of insecurity of existence. Based on panel research, he demonstrated the importance of dynamic analysis of the mobility patterns into and out of poverty. In Tilburg and Leuven he took this further, demonstrating the importance of structural characteristics, cultural factors and policy making processes for the development of social security systems and welfare states. His inclusive approach, which was not only directed at economic but also at social security, encompassed both Bismarckian and Beveridgean objectives. He continually emphasized the importance of equal consideration of the retention of living standards on the one hand, and an adequate minimum protection on the other.

In addition, Berghman made a significant contribution to the establishment of three successful international programs: the ERASMUS programme (later TEMPUS) on Social Security in Europe that he started and expanded with Professor Danny Pieters and his colleagues from the European Institute of Social Security (EISS); the Masters in European Social Policy Analysis (MESPA) with Professor Graham Room in Bath and Professor Seamus O’Cinneide in Maynooth; and the International Masters of Science in Social Policy Analysis (IMPALLA) with his colleagues in Luxembourg, Tilburg and Nancy. Berghman was able to interweave these programs with his own research network to form international consortia for teachers and students.

Berghman also blended his academic knowledge with management experience gained throughout his career. This combination was a basis for his success as chair of the editorial board of the Belgian Journal of Social Security. He not only understood, but also valued the manner in which the editorial office was able to ensure the production of the journal with limited means.

Berghman also played an inspiring and integrative role in wider society. He was the chair and consultant of various EU committees and of a number of other European committees and work groups involving social policy and social security in particular. He also served for fifteen years as the chair of the European Institute of Social Security (EISS) where he established stronger ties between legal professionals and social researchers.

Jos Berghman was a dedicated European and his scientific and practical contributions to international and national discussions on social policy will be sorely missed. Berghman’s power of conviction was reinforced by his heartfelt style and enthusiasm for entering into dialogue, involving others and bringing arguments to the fore. These qualities were especially pronounced in his pedagogical approach.

On Friday, 10 October 2014, the friends and colleagues of Jos Berghman had expected to spend an afternoon and evening in Leuven celebrating his professional contributions and his retirement. The sad news that he had passed away that same

morning thus came as a shock. At this family's request, a short ceremony was held in the old University halls. His colleague, Professor Wim van Oorschot presented Corinne De Vocht, his wife, with the Liber Amicorum which had been compiled in honour of his retirement (Van Oorschot et al., 2014). His children, Liselore and Michaël, gave the farewell speech that their father had prepared for this event (Berghman, 2014). The observance and the reception that followed, had a deep effect on everyone, as the attendees were part of what had become an unplanned ceremony of remembrance. Those who were able to experience the atmosphere that day will long recall the warm veneration that Jos Berghman's friends and colleagues bestowed upon him. Jos Berghman was a remarkable academic and a very good man.

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