

Obituary – Professor Dr. Hans-Georg Bohle



Prof. Dr. Hans-Georg Bohle at the farewell ceremony to his retirement from the University of Bonn, 12th July 2013

(Picture: Friederike Pauk, GIUB)

Professor Dr. Hans-Georg Bohle died suddenly and unexpectedly in September 2014. He was 66 (*03.03.1948 †20.09.2014). As an internationally known human geographer and expert for social vulnerability research, he dedicated his academic life to decipher the socio-spatial production of poverty and exclusion in the Global South. We lost a captivating teacher and advisor, inspiring researcher and a dear supportive friend.

We would like to offer our sincere condolence to his family and close friends.

Hans-Georg Bohle's academic career began with studies in Geography in Göttingen where he also completed his PhD in 1979 on the green revolution in the Cauvery Delta in South Asia. After his habilitation on South Asian farmers market system in 1985, he held a professorship for Cultural Geography in Freiburg (1989-1995), a professorship for Geography of South Asia in Heidelberg (1995-2004) and a professorship for Cultural Geography and Development Geography in Bonn (2004-2013). Hans Georg Bohle retired in 2013 and lived in Freiburg until his death.

Hans Georg Bohle's academic work has decisively shaped the field of Geographical Development Research over the last 25 years. His theoretically informed and empirically grounded research focused on vulnerable people in critical regions. His conceptual work on social vulnerability has been a fundamental contribution for the development of the field of risk and hazard research. Inspired by Amartya Sen, Bohle's work not only discloses the spatial dimension and social production of poverty, hunger marginalization and vulnerability, but seeks to identify people's potentialities for human security and thus a life in self-determination, freedom and dignity.

As an academic he taught generations of development researcher and practitioners to think critically about the world. He had the gift to vividly explain complex processes and illustrate them with examples from his numerous empirical research projects in South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal) and Africa (Tschad, Sudan, Ghana, Egypt). He challenged his postgraduates to be innovative and to move beyond the frame of established thinking. He was a helpful, fair, constructive and sincere superior for this staff and associates. Among colleagues he was respected for his constructive and pragmatic problem solving attitude and his theoretical and regional expertise. We look back gratefully to enriching scientific discussions, exciting times on field trips and the many sociable events and feasts that we celebrated together.

His retirement in July 2013 enabled Hans-Georg Bohle to start anew and enjoy his life in absolute self-determination, freedom and dignity in his home in Freiburg, his beloved cottage in the Black Forest and on numerous travels to near and far places in the wide world. Hans-Georg Bohle was in the middle of life and left us much too early. We keep him – the brilliant scientists, dedicated professor and friend – with gratitude and joy in our hearts.

Patrick Sakdapolrak, Benjamin Etzold, Irene Hillmer, Theresa Fabian and all members of the 'Development Geography' section at the University of Bonn's Geography Department; Bonn, 25.09.2014