



(Picture source: Alchetron.com)

I write this tribute with a heavy heart as I had never imagined that one day I would write about Patsy Healey in past tense. Her passing away in March 2024, at the age of 84 left planning communities across the world with a deep sense of loss and sadness. But as her commemoration in the AESOP conference in Paris showed, people who know Patsy wish to share their cherished memories of her and celebrate her life and achievements not only as a distinguished scholar but also as a remarkable caring and compassionate person.

There is much that I can say about Patsy from my own experience of knowing her for over thirty years as her student, colleague, and friend, but in the interest of brevity, I limit myself to a brief account of her key accolades.

After an undergraduate degree in Geography at University College London (UCL), Patsy was trained as a teacher and then a planner, following a Diploma in Town Planning from Regent Street Polytechnic (now University of Westminster). In the 1960s, she worked as a planning officer in the London Borough of Lewisham at a time when, as Patsy often recalled, there was a lot of planning without much clarity about its purpose.

Patsy began her Doctoral studies in 1969 at the London School of Economics and under the supervision of Derek Diamond. This was a turning point in her career as she embarked on an intellectual journey in the world of planning theories and ideas. Her PhD thesis, completed in 1973, focused on planning under the conditions of structural change in Venezuela and Colombia. This provided the basis of her first book published in 1974. Another significant milestone was 1988 when she joined Newcastle University as the third Chair of Town Planning and Head of the Department, having previously held the position of acting head and dean at Oxford Polytechnic (now Oxford Brookes University).

It was then when I first met Patsy as the first postgraduate student in Newcastle to be supervised by her; a distinction that I continue to cherish to date. She led our Department through a transformative period which included the merger of Planning with Architecture and the formation of a new

School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape. Her ideas, enthusiasm and tireless efforts inspired us all and significantly enhanced the international reputation of our school.

Patsy herself went on to become a leading figure in the world of planning education and research and an inspiring educator for generations of professional planners. Her huge contributions to the planning field has been widely recognised by several prestigious awards. In 1999, she was awarded an OBE (Order of the British Empire) for her Services to Planning. In 2006, she received the Royal Town Planning Institute's Gold Medal. She was the third person and the first woman to receive this award since its inception in 1895. In 2009 she was elected as a Fellow of the British Academy. Patsy also received honorary degrees from UCL (in 2006), Chalmers University (in 2015) and Newcastle University (in 2015).

Among all these accolades, what Patsy cherished most, as she often said, was the Honorary Membership of the Association of the European Schools of Planning (AESOP) which was awarded to her in 2004. As a co-founder of AESOP and its past President, Patsy was hugely supportive of the Association and passionate about its flourishing.

In 2002, she officially retired from Newcastle University to become even more active in terms of both publishing several of her influential books and expanding her community engagements. Patsy became an active member of her local community in the village of Wooler where she spent the last twenty years of her life. She served as Chair of the Glendale Community Trust in Northumberland and led the Trust through several successful initiatives to secure and develop its community assets.

Her community works gave her the opportunity to practice what she always believed in, i.e. people's untapped capacity for making better places. Her latest book on *Caring for Places* is a testimony to that belief and a mark of how much she cared for her local community. The book is also an indication of her caring attitudes towards others.

Patsy was, and will be, held in great respect and affection by her students, colleagues, and everyone whose paths crossed hers. On a personal note, I have always been deeply inspired by her intellect, integrity, modesty, generosity of spirit, and a unique capacity to bring out the best in those who work with her.

She will be greatly missed, but her legacy will live on for years to come and inspire future generations of planning students, scholars, and professionals.

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A tribute to Patsy Healey (1940–2024)

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