

In memoriam: Barbara Czarniawska

Last April a group of colleagues at the Bristol Leadership and Change Centre, University of the West of England, met to reflect on the legacy of our dear friend and colleague Barbara Czarniawska, who sadly passed away on April 7, 2024. The mood was understandably sombre, but our shared reminiscences were also reason for celebration of the life of this exceptional person. In the annals of organization studies, certain figures shine brightly, leaving an indelible mark not only on their field of study but also on the lives they touch through their inspiration and scholarship. Barbara Czarniawska stands as one of these rare and remarkable individuals.

We discussed Barbara's extensive intellectual contribution to so many fields of study. She leaves a published legacy of more than 120 scholarly articles and over 50 books; a prolific output by anyone's standards. Her multifaceted and multidisciplinary work is a vital source of grounding and inspiration for those theorizing, researching and teaching in the fields of organization and management studies. In terms of this journal's aims and scope, of course, her original thinking with respect to narrative research and qualitative study is of unparalleled significance. One of Barbara's most enduring legacies must surely be her advocacy for qualitative research methodologies. At a time when quantitative approaches dominated the landscape of social science, she championed the importance of narrative inquiry, ethnography and case studies in illuminating the lived realities of individuals and organizations. Amongst many other innovations, for example, she was a pioneer on disseminating "shadowing" as an organizational research methodology.

In our conversation, we remembered the enthusiastic reception that Barbara received when she visited us in Bristol in 2013. As Bruno Latour suggested when she received her EGOS honorary membership, any circumstance was an opportunity for Barbara to engage in intellectual exchange on a diverse range of topics. She could converse with equal ease and expertise on matters of literature, film, social theory, philosophy, history, anthropology and, of course, organization studies. We still remember vividly and with great affection our discussions on the writings of Scavi, Calvino, Borges, Rorty, Knorr Cetina, Spivak and very many others. When in Bristol, she was curious about the rapid expansion of the city, expressing interest in its street art and the city's geographical status as a borderland space between England and Wales. She enjoyed the afternoon tea ritual one day when visiting nearby Bath and was enthusiastic about an outing to the Brunel floating harbor. The latter trip turned into a peripatetic opportunity for her to engage with colleagues about their research and future academic careers whilst, in the margins, commenting on the urban artistic expression she chanced upon.

This was a typical way of encountering Barbara. She was a mentor to several of us here in Bristol; an exceptional academic who also became a cherished friend and confidante. Barbara transcended the usual bounds of collegiality, being someone whose uncompromising commitment to ideas meant that she would not hold back from intellectual confrontation and critique, but always in a spirit of unconditional support and service to others.

We know how profoundly Barbara was affected by the passing of her close friend and colleague Bruno Latour in 2022. Some of us were also drawn into her sadness and shared her sense of loss. For Hugo, the event coincided with his starting to discuss with Barbara the intricacies of researching the pressing challenges of the Anthropocene through organizational narratives. He recalls that Bruno was always in her thoughts during these conversations.



Though she will never again walk around Bristol's floating harbor or visit the Royal Crescent in Bath with us, Barbara's works and words live on; inspiring and informing our academic endeavors. Hers will surely be an indelible legacy for generations to come.

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