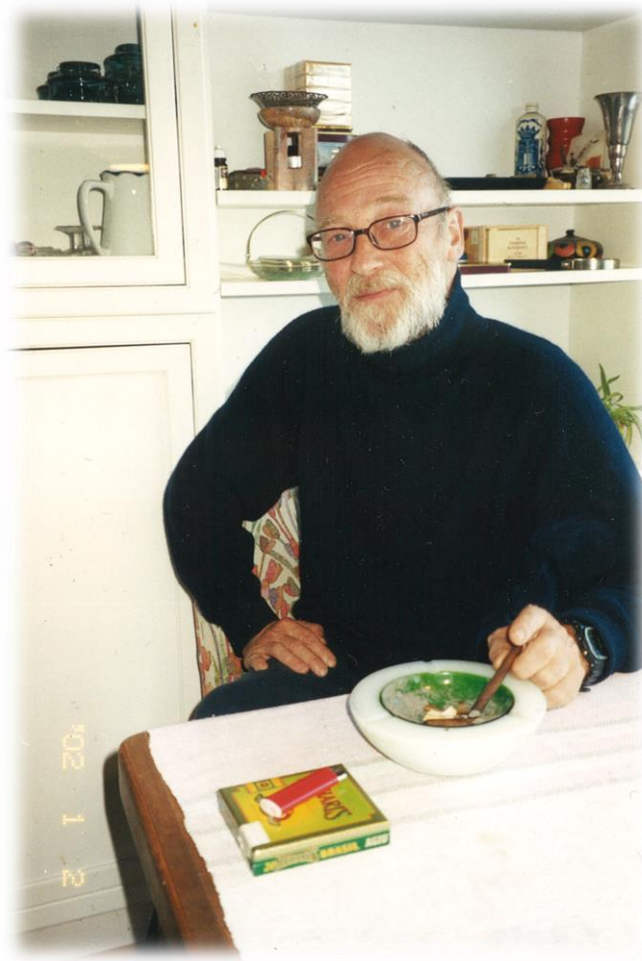


## OBITUARY

### Juha Partanen (1936–2013)



One of the key persons in Finnish social research on alcohol and drugs, Juha Partanen passed away in early November 2013 after a short period of ill health. Juha was a statistician, mathematician and sociologist by training. In 1964 he was recruited to the Social Research Institute for Alcohol Studies to conduct statistical analyses of the heritability of drinking behavior based on data about adult twins [1]. The 1960s with its radical social changes gradually transformed the statistician into an imaginative social scientist. In that capacity he co-wrote in 1977 an important work titled “The limits and structure of democracy: A study of the Finnish political regime and its economic basis” (in Finnish) [2]. This study can still be regarded as an exceptionally thorough account of the power structures of independent Finland.

Because of his curiosity Juha easily crossed disciplinary boundaries without caring about academic rituals. In the 1960s he was working on a doctoral thesis about the logic of data analysis in terms of abstract algebra. The project flopped, but contributed to making Juha intellectually a lone wolf. Years later, as an experienced researcher, he presented his doctoral thesis, whose title reflects Juha’s enquiring and wide-ranging mind: “Sociability and Intoxication: Alcohol and drinking in Kenya, Africa, and the Modern world” [3]. One part of this work is dedicated to one of his favorite themes, i.e. the elaboration and development of a theory of intoxication.

Several punchy expressions, some of them culture-specific, others more universal, originate from the research done by Juha and his colleagues. "The great migration" describes the massive movement of Finnish inhabitants in the 1960s and early 1970s from the countryside to towns and cities. "The generativity in [alcohol] education" points out that alcohol education should be regarded as a way of generating collective thoughts and action rather than a way of simply transmitting knowledge to individuals. According to Juha, mind-expanding, masculine "heroic drinking", in turn, fitted better into archaic societies than into technologically developed Western cultures with their endless supply of entertainment. "The second drug wave" has become a standard expression catching characteristic trends in Finnish drug use and policies. "Wet high", again, tells us that, contrary to common illusions, the use of alcohol and the use of drugs are certainly interconnected. Finally, "narcophobia" implies that popular attitudes towards drug use and users are correlated strongly with anxieties grounded in ignorance.

In the 1990s and 2000s Juha was increasingly interested in drug research. In 1997 he tried to grasp the peculiarities of Dutch drug control practices, making observations of Rotterdam's drug scenes [4]. After his retirement in 1999 he gave some courses in drug research at the University of Helsinki and participated in a regular drug research seminar run by his former research unit. What probably interested him most were the mind-expanding qualities of drugs and their social meanings, i.e., themes relating to his theory of intoxication. He visited international Psychonauts conferences and prepared a book about Timothy Leary, believing that something essential was missing from the existing literature in the field.

Thanks to his conversational talent and surprising ideas Juha was a popular discussant, teacher and opponent. He developed a personal style of writing, short and sweet, matter-of-fact and unexpected, never soporific. His inquisitive mind kept him on track until the end. At the age of 70 he published a short text titled "Who am I?" (in Finnish) [5] concluding with: "We have entered the modern world, being together as individuals. We depend on each other, united by joy and sorrow. Let us be ready every moment to change, ready to be filled and to be emptied, to be filled and to be emptied, let us be ready to turn unique. Let us learn to guide our life, its course and its pulse. Let us do without fear."

Besides Juha's career his personal humour comes out in an extensive and most amusing interview in *Addiction* in 2006 [6]. One telling example: "[As a child] I always preferred plants to birds because they do not fly swiftly from one place to another." Juha's style of investigating the world required rest, preferably a sofa. At the same time his mind, and occasionally his body, took giant steps outside Finland, to Stanford, Russia, Kenya, Namibia, Japan, Singapore, etc.

As a true epicurean, Juha, while retired, made a few journeys around the world on different kinds of vessels, spent several winter seasons in Paris, and always returned in spring to take care of his beautiful garden and original stone and frog collections at his house in the countryside outside Helsinki.

Missing our inspiring teacher and friend,

*Christoffer Tigerstedt & Pekka Hakkarainen*

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