

## PERSPECTIVE

**Odd R. Rogne (1942–2024)**Susan Barr<sup>1</sup> & Volker Rachold<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>Independent researcher, Norway; <sup>2</sup>German Arctic Office, Alfred Wegener Institute, Bremerhaven, Germany**Correspondence**Susan Barr, NO-1367, Snarøya, Norway.  
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Odd Rogne. (Photo: Susan Barr.)

Odd Rogne was quite a “polar outsider” when he first entered the scene as new Assistant Director at the Norwegian Polar Institute (NPI), appropriately enough on a winter’s day, 1 December 1979. After that he never looked back until retirement in 2006, when he partially moved to the warmth of the Canary Islands.

Rogne was born and brought up in the historical country district of Valdres in central southern Norway. His further education was in Bergen at the Royal Norwegian Naval Academy and the Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration (NHH), where he graduated with a master’s degree in economics and business administration. He worked as administrative officer then chief

librarian at NHH until, after 17 years in Bergen, he moved over the mountains to the Oslo area and the NPI.

The NPI was near Fornebu – then the main Norwegian airport – and from the institute’s premises one looked across the small bay to Fridtjof Nansen’s home, Polhøgda, currently inhabited by the Fridtjof Nansen Institute, a research foundation. Tore Gjelsvik was the NPI’s director – wartime resistance hero, geologist and man of many important connections at home and abroad (Orheim 2006; Goldman 2022). The two were a good match, with Rogne managing the NPI’s administrative and economic affairs and Gjelsvik with a firm hand on the wheel of the institute’s all-encompassing polar work. Whereas Gjelsvik could perhaps be too insistent towards the Ministry of the Environment, the NPI’s parent government agency, Rogne was good at smoothing over and fixing matters so that both sides could feel reasonably satisfied, and the budget proposals were always clearly presented. He also showed his talent for seeing cooperation possibilities and getting the right people to talk together and agree – a talent that was to blossom during the 1990s.

Rogne took an active part in the reorganization of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR), which led to the establishment of the Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs in 1988. This gave the directors of Antarctic programmes a forum that was independent of SCAR, which was led by scientists. Also in 1988, France awarded Rogne the Chevalier de l’ordre national du Mérite for his work to strengthen Norwegian–French research cooperation in the Arctic.

When Gjelsvik stepped down as director of the NPI at the end of October 1983, Rogne was appointed to the position, which he held until March 1991. This was the first, and so far only, time the ministry appointed a director who was not a scientist. His second six-year term came to be cut short by outside circumstances. At the same time as the institute was grappling with a campaign,

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started in 1990, to have it moved to Tromsø, in northern Norway, international attention directed to the Arctic was steadily increasing and science organizations were responding. Rogne's administrative capabilities were to bloom into something far larger than the institute.

Odd Rogne's biggest contribution to the polar area was most certainly as one of the initiators of the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC). The Antarctic Treaty System had its scientific committee, but there was no such forum for Arctic scientific cooperation. Political changes in the Soviet Union provided an opening for better scientific exchange in the North and Rogne's suggestion was to develop a circumpolar research cooperation rather than separate Arctic countries making bilateral agreements with the Soviet Union. In February 1987, the NPI hosted the first meeting of representatives of the Arctic nations to discuss such a forum. A working group comprising Odd Rogne, Fred Roots (Canada) and Jørgen Taagholt (Denmark/Greenland) was established, and Rogne devoted steadily more time to this project (Rogne et al. 2015). The organization was formally established in August 1990 and Rogne became its first executive secretary, starting 1 April 1991.

Rogne was not only the mastermind behind IASC, directing the organization for 15 years and making it the leading international science organization of the North. He was also the initiator of several other mechanisms and processes to further international scientific cooperation in the Arctic. In the early 1990s, he developed the idea of a planning process for the international Arctic science community to jointly identify research priorities. Since 1995, IASC has been coordinating this International Conference on Arctic Research Planning every decade. In light of the growing interest in the Arctic and the increasing number of organizations dealing with Arctic research, Rogne proposed an event

bringing the Arctic science community together once a year. This Arctic Science Summit Week developed over the years into the most important annual gathering of Arctic research organizations.

In the planning phase for the International Polar Year of 2007–08, Rogne was part of the dialogue with IASC's sister organization, SCAR, which resulted in a close partnership between the two organizations. Rogne also played an instrumental role in bringing IASC's initiatives to the attention of the Arctic Council. He was firmly committed to supporting the next generation of Arctic scientists and was an important mentor for many early-career scientists.

In the context of its 25th anniversary in 2015, IASC presented a special IASC Award for Service to Odd Rogne, recognizing his instrumental role in establishing and developing the organization and his outstanding dedication and contributions to the advancement of Arctic science. After he left IASC in 2005, Rogne acted as senior advisor for the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme. During this time, he developed the concept of the Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks project, a joint IASC–Arctic Council activity that promotes the vision of pan-Arctic observing and data sharing systems. He was a member of the board of the Fram Museum, in Oslo, for 30 years, from 1984 to 2014.

## References

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