

IN MEMORIAM TO DR. PATRICIO ARTURO BERNAL PONCE (1945-2022)

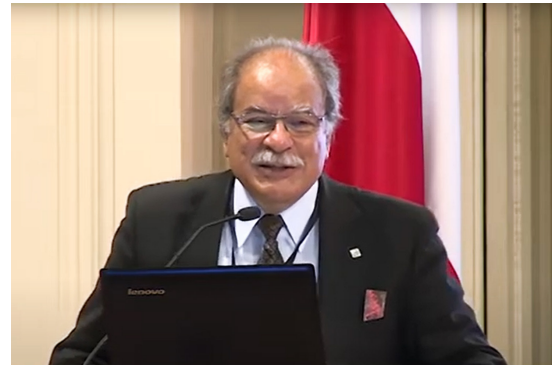


Patricio Arturo Bernal Ponce was born on September 7th, 1945, at Valparaíso, Chile and passed away on October 11th, 2022 at Santiago, Chile. He was one of two brothers: Juan Bernal Ponce, 8 years older than Patricio, was a prominent architect artist engraver that passed away in Costa Rica in 2008. Data obtained from Patricio's wife Araceli de Tezanos indicate that he attended David Trumbull and Eduardo de la Barra schools, both in Valparaíso, and The Mackay School in Viña del Mar. Later, he was part of the first cohort (1964-1968) of Marine Biology students from Montemar, University of Chile. Then, he departed to the USA in 1971 to pursue doctorate studies at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California, San Diego, where he graduated as Ph. D. in 1980. His thesis on the California

Current was awarded the Carl Eckardt Prize, the only Chilean that has ever received this honor. He soon joined the academic staff of BIOTECMAR Department of Universidad Católica de Chile, Talcahuano campus.

Patricio and I became good friends soon after his arrival in Talcahuano. We spent everlasting nights talking about philosophy, science, politics, and arts; listening to music and drinking good wines, especially reds. He also organized great dancing parties at his home with almost no scientists invited, but rather young bohemians of diverse origin. He was a gentle human being and deeply stimulating. Patricio was a science promoter rather than a scientific-paper producer. As an example of his academic endeavors is the founding of the Chilean Society of Marine Science in 1980 and the organization in 1981 of the first International Summer Course on Biological Oceanography UC-Talcahuano, with students from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Perú, and Uruguay. Several of the attendants are currently well-known Chilean oceanographers like Rubén Escribano, Humberto González, Silvio Pantoja and Osvaldo Ulloa, among others. I was there too, but did not become an oceanographer. Patricio was also a stimulating teacher for students of the Marine Technician Program, among whom I especially mention Rodrigo Bustamante. He also hired the first cohort of students of the Marine Biology Program of the University of Concepción, as faculty of the BIOTECMAR Department. In 1982, Patricio organized an international Oceanography meeting at the Universidad Católica de Chile in Santiago. I still recall the astonished faces of the ecologists attending, who had no background on the subject.

Apart from being the director of the Oceanography laboratory in BIOTECMAR, Patricio became the Executive Director of the Institute of Fishery Promotion (IFOP) during 1990-1994 where, again, he transformed the data gathering spirit and technical report machinery of that institution into a research-oriented one, something that was not well received by the rather bureaucratic staff. Later, in 1994 Patricio was designated as Undersecretary of Fishery Affairs, position from where he again promoted the scientific spirit by empowering the Scientific Committees of the Research and Aquaculture Fisheries Fund (FIPA), thereby incorporating well qualified members from the academy. In 1998, Patricio became an Assistant Director General of UNESCO and the Executive Undersecretary of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), based in Paris, France, within the United Nations framework he also led the development of the World System of Ocean Observation. Patricio was also an external member of the Academy of Sciences of the Russian Federation since 1999.



His most important contributions to scientific knowledge were in biological and physical oceanography of California and Humboldt Current systems. After retiring from IOC, in 2009 Patricio came back to Chile, where he became the Scientific Director of the Coastal and Ocean Program of CSIRO Australia-Chile. Finally, a cancer initially detected during his stay in California during the 1970's, won the battle that Patricio fought with all his strength by accepting experimental medical treatments. In one of our last conversations held during June 2022, he told me that the treatment was showing "good signs" of success. He was wrong, and I have no more words to utter for such a splendid and irreplaceable scientist and friend.

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