

## **MATS SEGNESTAM**

### **European Practitioner Achievement Award in Applying Environmental Economics, 2008**

The best economists are outliers, not members of the consensus club. We question received wisdom, insist on knowing about costs and benefits, understanding incentive effects, and tend to be obsessed about efficiency and markets. And we are often ungrateful and sometimes ungracious when policy design - which is always a product of compromise and interest group accommodation – does not fit our ideal. In a word, we are not always easy to get along with, and can seem ungrateful when someone tries to help us.

The last thing most bureaucrats want is embarrassment, questioning of policies favoured by politicians, proposals that indicate that key constituents should pay. And so they often avoid our profession, and in particular wouldn't dream of funding us.

But fortunately, some bureaucrats are outliers, who go out of their way to support our field and its practitioners. As Senior Policy Advisor/Head of the Environment Policy Division at Sida (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) (1988-2008). Mats Segnestam has strategically initiated, developed and supported a number of important activities and institutions in the environmental economics field. These include:

- Strategic support to London Environmental Economics Centre (LEEC) UN-WIDER and Beijer International Institute of Ecological Economics;
- Environmental economics methodology and indicators development at the World Bank e.g. Adjusted Net Savings, Wealth of Nations.
- Support to environmental economics methodology development within OECD DAC e.g. Environmental Fiscal Reform, Strategic Environmental Assessment;
- Support to the Environmental Economics Unit, University of Gothenburg capacity building in developing countries (selected results: 22 PhD theses, 150 students in shorter Ph D courses);
- Environmental economics work at the World Resources Institute, WWF's Macro-economics Program Office
- Support to development of regional and sub-regional environmental economics networks in developing countries e.g. EEPSEA, LACEEP, SANDEE and RANESA in Asia, Latin America and Africa.
- Support to Environmental economics applications at UNEP in a follow-up support program to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2005
- Support to participation in EAERE conferences by researchers from developing countries.
- Support to Natural Resource Accounting in Southern Africa
- Support to the establishment of environmental economics centres via the Environment for Development-initiative in China, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, S Africa and C America.

He has done this consistently, year in year out, with the focus firmly on the rising worlds of Asia, Africa and South America, where most of the economic dynamism and environmental challenges will originate. Most of us stick to the familiar OECD-centric worlds of Europe, America and Japan, only addressing the rest in the context of climate change, or perhaps biodiversity. But this world is far more than that. By supporting the creation of a cadre of economics expertise and research, he has helped assure that our profession's voice will be heard in the decision-making processes there, and that evidence-based research as a key decision support tool will be part of the policy mix.

He achieved this over two decades by influencing Swedish government policy towards integrating environmental economics ideas and methods in development assistance. He has also played an important leadership role within the international aid community, in relation to environmental aspects of development in general, and environmental economics in particular.

As is clear from the above, this support has not been nationalistic or chauvinistic. While he has supported the work of our hosts for this conference - Environmental Economics Unit at the U of Goteborg, and other Swedish centres of excellence, he has sought out capacity building talent in environmental economics wherever it is to be found.

In an earlier life he led the largest environmental non-governmental organisation in Sweden (Swedish Society for Nature Conservation) and also worked in various key capacities with the World Wildlife Fund and IUCN. It has been through his support that our recent World Congresses have a non trivial presence of scholars from the developing world. His contribution will grow over time and multiply, as the seeds sown by his endeavours take root and mature.

Frank Convery

Chairman of the Prize Selection Committee