



Environment and Development Economics: Essays in Honour of Sir Partha Dasgupta

Scott Barrett, Karl-Göran Mäler, and Eric S. Maskin

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(p.v) Preface

This is an unusual Festschrift, but it would have to be, for it is honoring a singular economist. Partha Dasgupta has devoted himself to more than research and writing, seminars and lectures. Perhaps because he was born in India and later lived and worked in England and the United States, Partha has endeavored to bring academics from these two worlds (the “South” and the “North,” we sometimes call them) into contact with each other. This book is a tribute to that enterprise.

The contributors to this book include Nobel laureates and young academics just starting out, professors privileged to work at the world’s top universities and people making the best of the opportunities afforded by their home institutions in developing countries. Many of the authors are his closest friends. They include his former teachers and students and his current and former collaborators. Unusual for a Festschrift, some other authors barely know him personally (we’ll explain why below).

Partha has long chastised development economists for neglecting the natural environment, despite its importance to the livelihoods of the rural poor. He has also leaned on environmental economists for thinking about the environment as an amenity, while overlooking its relevance to poverty. If the literature ignored the connections between poverty and the environment, he believed, then so would the lecturers and professors teaching these subjects in developing countries; and then so would *their* students neglect these issues. The economics they would learn would be divorced from the world in which they and so many of their fellow citizens lived. Together with one of us (Mäler), he launched an initiative with the Beijer Institute of Ecological Economics of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences to conduct teaching and research workshops in environmental economics for lecturers and professors living and working in developing countries. Partha’s convening power was such that faculty on these

workshops included some of the world's leading economists, many of them contributors to this volume. A better teaching and research program on this subject could not be found anywhere in the world.

The workshops were held "on location," in places like Elmina, Ghana; Kathmandu, Nepal; near Mount Kinabalu on the island of Borneo; and on the coast of Bahia, Brazil. The logistics of gathering everyone in these places were sometimes a headache, but the payoff was huge: by bringing together people from the same region—in most cases, for the first time—the Beijer workshops spawned a number of professional networks. These include the South Asian Network for Development and Environmental Economics (SANDEE), the Latin American and Caribbean Environmental Economics Program **(p.vi)** (LACEEP), the Centre for Environmental Economics and Policy in Africa (CEPA), and the Economy and Environment Program for South East Asia (EEPSEA). We relied on these networks in organizing this Festschrift.

We knew that the Festschrift had to coincide with the honoree's retirement, and we knew some of the people who had to be involved. What we didn't know was how we could bring everyone together. How could we fund such a gathering? It was at this point that we approached colleagues in the World Bank. Shanta Devarajan was especially helpful, suggesting that we try to piggyback on the World Bank's flagship Annual Bank Conference on Development Effectiveness (ABCDE). He also had the wonderful idea that we invite contributors based in developing countries, including alumni of the Beijer workshops. He reckoned that the Bank and those of us involved in the Festschrift would both gain from this exchange, and the Bank's Chief Economist, Justin Lin, agreed. The Bank would help pay travel expenses, and we would attract an accomplished and diverse group of economists to the conference. As it turned out, our side of the bargain was easy: everyone we asked jumped at the chance to come. They all wanted to be there to honor Partha.

Our next move was to ask the leadership of the aforementioned networks (Priya Shyamsundar of SANDEE, Francisco Alpizar of LACEEP, Rashid Hassan of CEPA, and Herminia Francisco of EEPSEA) to invite their members to submit papers for both the Festschrift and ABCDE conference. Some of these contributors did not know Partha personally, but such is his influence that no one was more than one colleague removed from him. Once we received these abstracts, we assembled session proposals and submitted these to the ABCDE's organizing committee. Selection was highly competitive, but we were fortunate; two of our proposed sessions were accepted. All these papers are represented here along with a couple of other chapters submitted to us separately in a subsequent round of solicitations. The other chapters in this volume were either given as plenary lectures at the conference or were prepared specially for this Festschrift.

The conference had the feel if not the appearance of a Beijer research workshop, with leading economists, many of them Nobel laureates, not only giving lectures but also acting as discussants for less famous researchers based in developing countries. In contrast to the usual academic conference, the developing country researchers weren't always able to apply the most advanced methods (such as randomized trials). They sometimes had to make do with limited data. But their research invariably unearthed information of great importance to their home regions, and the more famous economists recognized the value in these efforts. (We remember with particular fondness Joe Stiglitz's animated commentary on the perilous economics of home fires and cookstoves in the Himalayan region!) Their commentaries are included in this volume.

(p.vii) Production of this book would not have been possible without the cooperation of all the chapter authors, the editorial assistance of Jackson Barrett, and the support and patience of Adam Swallow and Aimee Wright of Oxford University Press. To all these good people, we are most grateful.

It was fortuitous that the 2010 ABCDE conference was to be held in Stockholm, home of the Beijer Institute. At the invitation of the Beijer's current director, Carl Folke, an intimate dinner was held in Partha's honor at Klubvilla on the grounds of the Academy. As with all Beijer events, the dinner was adeptly and, in this instance, lovingly organized by Christina Leijenhuvud. In addition to Calle and Christina (and her husband, Ivar), the people gathered for the dinner included Partha's wife, Carol, and many of the contributors to this book: Paul Ehrlich, Peter Hammond, Geoff Heal, Simon Levin, Dilip Mookherjee, Lin Ostrom, Priya Shyamsundar, Bob Solow, David Starrett, Joe Stiglitz, and the three of us. Though unable to come to Stockholm, Ken Arrow phoned in from Palo Alto to extend his warm wishes. Other guests included Sara Aniyar, Anne-Sophie Crépin, Mia Horn af Rantzien, Justin Lin, Jim Mirrlees (who provided commentary at the conference), Gayle Sawtelle, Thomas Sterner, Joakim Stymne, and Jörgen Weibull (and his wife, Karolina).

That evening, after a number of us had shared reminiscences, Partha told us all that he had never been ambitious. What he meant was that he had never been *personally* ambitious. He said he welcomed the approval of others, but for him the work was its own reward, especially when it enabled him to collaborate with friends. Those of us who have been fortunate to work with (and, in the case of one of us, study under) Partha know that this is true. But we also know that Partha's work—its subject and content—couldn't be more ambitious. We hope that this Festschrift pays tribute to both of these aspects of Partha's character—the high aspiration and brilliance of his scholarship together with the warmth and magnetism of his fellowship.

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