



In Memoriam

In memoriam: Lennart Schön, 1946-2016

Lennart Schön, professor of Economic History at Lund University, passed away in January at the age of 69. His death is a great loss for the community of Swedish and European economic historians.

Lennart grew up in the county of Jönköping, in a landscape blessed with deep lakes and wild forests reminiscent of an old fairy-tale. Lennart would often refer to this beauty as inspirational for his later work. He came to Lund as an undergraduate student in the late 1960s, but always remained true to his birth place. This was especially apparent in his great interest in ice hockey. He was a devoted supporter of the team HV71 Jönköping and would sometimes drive up to Jönköping from Lund overnight just to get a chance to see them play in their home arena. After every one of their games, Lennart would wear their pin on his jacket. In his youth he had been an athlete and a prominent amateur boxer.

Lennart received his PhD in Economic History from Lund University in 1979, based on a dissertation about the role of the textile sector in Swedish industrialization under the supervision of Lennart Jörberg, a leading economic historian. In his thesis he laid the foundations for a reformulation of the industrialization process in which internal forces played a larger role than had been previously thought. Lennart turned out to have an exceptional talent for writing Economic History. By combining deep theoretical knowledge and quantitative skills with an interest for language and writing his publications were unusually clear and enjoyable, even for a broader audience.

Lennart took over the Chair of Economic History at Lund University after the retirement of Lennart Jörberg. He was an admired teacher and supervised several PhD students at the Department. He also was an active member of the group of scholars who started the European Historical Economics Society in 1991, and during the period 2005-2007 he served as president elect of that society. In 2004, he was a co-founder of the interdisciplinary Centre of Innovation Research in the Learning Economy (CIRCLE) at Lund. He was a visiting fellow at several universities, including the University of Southern California and Universidad Carlos III de Madrid. Together with his Lund colleague Jonas Ljungberg, he contributed to launching the inter-university Master in Economic Development and Growth in cooperation with Carlos III and Warwick (now Groningen) universities.

It would not be exaggerated to claim that Lennart Schön has been probably the most distinguished scholar in Swedish Economic History since the times of Eli Heckscher. His research, mainly devoted to the study of long-term economic transformation, was not only relevant but also highly original and inspiring. One of his major undertakings was the construction of Sweden's historical

national accounts 1560-2010 (<http://www.ekh.lu.se/en/research/economic-history-data/shna1560-2010>), initially alongside Olle Krantz and later on leading his own team. This empirical work was framed within the theoretical tradition of Swedish economists such as Erik Dahmén, whose concept of "development blocks" (formed by complementary activities around innovations) was particularly useful for the development of Lennart's views. Although his publications were of course many, his recent book *An Economic History of Modern Sweden* (Routledge, 2012) is perhaps the most comprehensive synthesis of the research program on technological, structural and cyclical transformation that occupied most of his professional life. The book came out in Swedish for the first time in 2000 and was awarded the Swedish *Pro Lingua* prize in 2007 for best scientific book in the Swedish language.

Lennart was not only a leading scholar, but also an extremely generous person with whom it was easy to sympathize. He was an outstanding host to his international colleagues and helped to create the cosmopolitan intellectual environment of Lund's Economic History Department. His former Lund students all bear witness of Lennart's incredible knowledge, interest and generosity in each aspect of meeting with young students. Despite a tight schedule of meetings and obligations, Lennart would always drink his morning coffee at the department together with his colleagues. These daily coffee moments with Lennart developed into a cherished ritual at the department. Although Lennart never forced himself into the center of attention, his kind and knowledgeable personality made him a natural center point. Wherever Lennart was, people around him thrived. As such, he was the solar that everything else would orbit around, but he did not only shine, he also brought a lot of warmth into the room. Lennart's presence is thus therefore deeply missed by everyone at the Department of Economic History.

A memorial event was held at Lund University on May 30th. A collection of essays, *Structural Analysis and the Process of Economic Development* (edited by Jonas Ljungberg), has just been published by Routledge in memoriam of Lennart Schön. Lennart is survived by his wife Marianne, his daughter Anna and his son Carl and a recent grandson. We warmly wish them hope and strength in this difficult moment.

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