

John Virgo: Fond Remembrances

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Learning about John's untimely death came as a big shock, and I am honored to contribute to his memory. I do not exactly recall when we first met, but it must have been long before the International Atlantic Economic Conference in Vienna in 1999. Indeed, my interest and support for John's unique (non-profit) business model that he had built from 1973 onward arose the day I learned about the International Atlantic Economic Society and participated in a conference. This must have been in the early to mid-1990s.

John had spotted earlier than most that there was a pressing need for economists to interact globally. The Society focused on catering for this need from the outset. John's lasting contribution established a forum that brought together (at reasonable cost) academic, financial, and applied economists from all trades working all over the world. Thus, John saw and fostered the global dimension of intellectual interchange.

As a central bank economist responsible for the development and professional well-being of many bright, diligent, and hardworking economists, I found the IAES a perfect partner. The Society provides a reputable international platform for young economists eager to sharpen their professional and didactical skills in the mold of an integrated international network of likeminded colleagues. On top of that, the IAES offers an important social dimension. Over the decennia, IAES fostered the development of sustainable (to use a trendy word) personal friendships that span the globe.

Returning to the Vienna 1999 IAES conference, it was the first time that we collaborated in preparing a conference program. I remember, and very fondly so, John's enthusiasm, his drive to ensure a strong and state-of-the-arts program for younger economists and, as a friend of the arts and of classical music, his determination in putting together a varied and enticing cultural program where he and Kathy could also relax and rejoice for a few hours.

Later, between 2003 and 2006, as a member of the IAES board, I experienced John's superb organizational skills and his cutting-edge vision regarding emerging hot topics. He also was a driving force of innovation. John always was a leader of product innovation so that participants could get more out of their attendance and advance professionally. For example, participants were given the opportunity to

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publish their research in *International Advances in Economic Research*, one of the Society's journals, and young economists could enter a paper competition for students with the opportunity to win a check, plaque, and chance to publish their paper in the *Atlantic Economic Journal*. Once, one of my brightest collaborators nearly won. Product innovation, of course, also helped to keep the IAES abreast of the competition. Two more of John's skills need mentioning: his ability to entice leading economists, among them six Nobel Prize winners, to preside over the organization, and his gift to staff the organization with superbly able and dedicated collaborators.

Recalling John also means appreciating Kathy's immense contribution to the success of the IAES. John and Kathy were a perfect team. Kathy's continued involvement will ensure a strong evolution of the Society.

"Thank you John for all you have done," I think back with deep gratitude and joy.