

Consumers, Policy and the Environment
A Tribute to Folke Ölander

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FOREWORD

Professor Folke Ölander celebrates his 70th birthday the 21st of July 2005. With this "Festschrift", Folke Ölander's colleagues and collaborators over the years want to honour him and to express their appreciation of his life-long contribution to research, especially research within the themes reflected in the title of this volume: Consumers, Policy and the Environment.

Having established close collaboration with European economic psychology's grand old man, Karl-Erik Wärneryd, already during his PhD study, Folke Ölander became an active contributor to the development of economic psychology as a research field in Europe. When the International Association for Research in Economic Psychology (IAREP) was founded in 1982, Folke Ölander was present, and he was president of IAREP in 1989-1991. Folke Ölander has played an equally influential role in European and international consumer policy research. Together with Gerhard Scherhorn and Norbert Reich, he was a founding editor of the *Journal of Consumer Policy* in 1977, a position he has held until 2005. Folke Ölander has also been very active in Nordic consumer policy and in Nordic consumer research since the 70s. He played a crucial part in the Nordic workshop "Consumer and Society" in 1978 and organized the workshop on "Road to consumer influence" in Helsinki in 1986. He has been a member of the Nordic Consumer Committee under the Nordic Council of Ministers since 1994. In this committee he has taken part in the development of a Nordic consumer research programme, and in organising the program since 1996. As the chairperson of an Expert Committee for Consumer Affairs, set down by the Danish Minister of Trade and Industry 1999-2002, he has put additional marks on Danish consumer policy research.

It is a characteristic trait of Folke Ölander that he has never been very eager to get credit for his achievements. What matters to him is furthering knowledge and research. Especially after he got his chair in Economic Psychology at Aarhus School of Business (ASB), Denmark, in 1975, he has been determined in his effort to support the building of viable and thriving research communities and to facilitate and tutor the research of others, especially younger colleagues. In these past 30 years, he has served as member and often chairperson of several research-granting bodies, in Denmark, Norway, and at the Nordic level, including a period as chairperson of the Danish Social Science Research Council. He served as Associate

Dean for Research and Chairman of the Faculty Research Committee at the Faculty of Business Administration at ASB for 14 years. Also, many younger researchers at ASB and elsewhere, among them several of the contributors to this volume, are immensely indebted to Folke Ölander for his competent and empathetic mentoring and tutoring.

Folke Ölander's research can be classified into four broad (and overlapping) phases. In the first phase, Folke Ölander studied psychology at Stockholm University, Department of Psychology where he received his doctoral degree in 1963. In his dissertation work, Folke Ölander focused on the theory and measurement of preferences. His supervisor was the founder of economic psychology in Scandinavia, professor Karl-Erik Wärneryd, Stockholm School of Economics.

After his doctorate, Folke Ölander continued his work in Wärneryd's group at Stockholm School of Economics where he was affiliated until 1972, followed by a couple of years at the International Institute of Management at the Wissenschaftszentrum, Berlin. In this period, Folke Ölander's research focused on core subjects in economic psychology, such as consumer saving, as well as on subjects of interest for the field of marketing, such as consumer reactions to prices, new products, and advertising. He also studied more basic issues of human behaviour, such as reasons why attitudes and behaviour are not always consistent, how to inform the public in an ethically sound and effective way, and various methodological issues. Last but not least he engaged in – and organized a symposium on – consumer action research, a topic which contributed to the first agenda of the *Journal of Consumer Policy*.

Since the mid 1970s, approximately from the time when Folke Ölander moved to Aarhus School of Business and into a Chair in economic psychology, Folke Ölander's main research interest has been consumer policy, though there have been changes in the specific issues he focused on. During the whole period he has been Editor of the *Journal of Consumer Policy*. Among more specific subjects, he produced important contributions to the understanding of consumer satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and complaint behaviour in the late 70s and early 80s. Later in the 1980s, the consumer and consumer policy-relevant aspects of the newly emerging electronic media and electronic means of payment became another important research area for Folke Ölander. His active interest in all these subjects continued well into the 1990s.

However, since the early 1990s, Folke Ölander's main research interest has been problems related to the interplay between consumer behaviour and the natural environment, still very much with a consumer policy angle. Based on the view that consumers have an interest in a non-polluted environment as well as rights and responsibilities in this connection, his research in this period focused on ways to empower

consumers and facilitate their active contribution to conservation and environmental protection. Other signs of his commitment to environmental research are that Folke Ölander served four years as a member of the board of the Centre for Social Science Research on the Environment in the second half of the 1990s and that since 1996 he has been a member of two Programme Committees for Research on Sustainable Development set down by the Norwegian Research Council.

The contributions to this volume are written by people, who feel indebted to Folke Ölander, by people who want to show their respect and appreciation for what he has done to further the field. However, the various chapters are also intended to make scientific contributions to those fields which over the decades have been of interest to Folke Ölander.

The contributions to this volume fall into five loosely defined groups. The first “group” consists of a reprint of one of Folke Ölander’s own articles, where he argues that consumer psychology is not necessarily, and not predominantly, a manipulative science. The empirical basis for this conclusion is a content analysis of a decade of articles published in the *Journal of Consumer Research* and the *Journal of Economic Psychology*, considered leading journals in the field in North America and Europe, respectively. No single publication can do justice to Folke Ölander’s life-long contribution, but this one is in many ways a signature publication reflecting Folke Ölander’s commitment to research and its responsibility to society.

The second group contains five contributions that in different ways put a historical perspective on consumer research. Mathios and Meyer analyse how research on environmental issues has been represented in the *Journal of Consumer Policy*. Wärneryd’s analysis of how the consumer has been portrayed by thinkers over the ages extends the historical analysis even further. Using historical data from Dutch and German households, Brandstätter explores the personality roots of an important economic activity, consumer saving. Neuner, Raab and Reisch also perform a historical and comparative analysis, but this time of what may be considered the reverse of saving, namely compulsive buying, which they analyse as a consumer policy issue in East and West Germany after the reunion. Finally Friedman provides a participant-observer report on the role of behavioural research in the congressional hearings on the “truth bills” (truth-in-packaging and truth-in-lending) in the USA.

The third group consists of two contributions discussing individuals’ dual interest as a consumer and a citizen. Uusitalo discusses consumers as citizens in the light of three approaches to collective consumer problems and Grønmo discusses relationships among consumer interests and other interests and their implications for consumer policy.

The fourth group contains six contributions dealing with the politics of consumption in its broadest sense. Rask Jensen discusses the politization of consump-

tion with reference to the Brent Spar and other similar incidence(s). Julander and Söderlund discuss and investigate whether physically attractive models in advertisements still have the positive effects on attitudes towards the advertised product that they were found to have in the 1960s, in a historical setting where equality between the sexes was a much less dominating value than in present day Scandinavia. Maynes gives a critical account of present day marketing, which he characterizes as a consumer disaster. Imkamp investigates whether “better” companies provide “better” products and services. Hansen discusses the consumer policy problems related to market transparency on the Internet. Finally, Kemp investigates the consumer psychology of what he calls “near-money”, which is another means of facilitating exchanges than money such as points in a barter circle and the miles and bonus points issued by flight companies.

Contributions in the fifth and final group deal with consumers and the environment. In the first of these chapters, Beckmann suggests a macromarketing approach to sustainability issues seen from the perspective of the consumer. Scherhorn proposes a path to joined sustainability of consumption and production, where the market no longer functions as a collective action *against* but *for* sustainability, where consumer sovereignty works as a guideline for producer behaviour, and where sustainability is backed by a differentiated understanding of competition. Thøgersen discusses environmental regulation from an economic psychology perspective arguing that it is important to be aware of possible side effects of the chosen means of regulation. Finally, Stø, Throne-Holst and Vittersø discuss the role of consumers in environmental successes based on four Norwegian cases reflecting different degrees of success.

A lot of people have contributed to making this book possible. First of all we want to express our gratitude to the authors without whom there would be no book. Secondly we want to thank Birgitte Steffensen for her competent and enthusiastic effort with regard to perfecting the language and producing a camera-ready manuscript for the publisher from a quite diverse set of manuscripts. Thirdly, we want to thank the Faculty of Business Administration at Aarhus School of Business for funding the secretarial and technical assistance needed to produce the book. Finally, we want to thank publishing house Kluwer (now part of Springer), long-time publisher of the Journal of Consumer Policy, for enthusiastically agreeing to publish this book.

Together with the authors we want to congratulate Folke Ölander on his 70th birthday and wish him health and happiness in the years to come. We hope and expect to continue to benefit from Folke Ölander’s stimulating inputs also when he has taken on his new position as Emeritus.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Professor Fil.lic., Dr.h.c. Folke Ölander

Personal data: Professor Dr. Folke Ölander, born 1935 in Sweden, married to Marlene Ölander.

ACADEMIC AND PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

Studied psychology at the University of Stockholm ending with a PhD degree in 1963. Positions at the Stockholm School of Economics and the International Institute of Management at the Wissenschaftszentrum, Berlin until 1975 where he became Professor of Economic Psychology at Department of Marketing, later Department of Marketing, Informatics and Statistics, at Aarhus School of Business, Denmark.

Visiting Foreign Scholar (invited by the Social Science Research Canada), University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada, 1982; Visiting Professor, The Norwegian Fund for Market and Distribution Research, Oslo, 1988; Visiting Scholar, Department of Psychology, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand, 1999; Visiting Scholar, Ludwigshafen University of Applied Sciences, Germany, 2004.

Former President of the International Association for Research in Economic Psychology (IAREP), 1989-1991.

Editor of Journal of Consumer Policy, published by Springer, from its inception in 1977 to 2005.

ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE

At Aarhus School of Business, Folke Ölander was Associate Dean for Research and Chairman of the Faculty Research Committee 1989-2003.

Member of the Danish Social Science Research Council, 1976-1984, and Chairman of the Council, 1983-1984.

Chairman of the Expert Committee for Consumer Affairs, set down by the Danish Minister of Trade and Industry 1999-2002.

Member of the Executive Board of the Danish Institute for Social Research (SFI), 1982-1984, and member of the Board of Forskningsinstitut for Human Ernæring, Copenhagen, a Danish government-sponsored multidisciplinary research

unit in the area of human nutrition, 1986 – 1996. Member of the board of the Centre for Social Science Research on the Environment under the Danish Environmental Research Programme 1997 – 2001. Member of the Nordic Consumer Committee under Nordic Council of Ministers since 1994 and a member of two Programme Committees for Research on Sustainable Development set down by the Norwegian Research Council since 1996.

TEACHING AREAS

Consumer behaviour.
Consumers and the environment.

ACADEMIC AWARDS

Honorary doctorate at the Stockholm School of Economics in 1999.
Received the Reinhold W. Jorck Prize for Scientific Research in 1986, and the Danish Industry Prize for Research in Marketing in 1990.