

Preface



Bijit Bora (pictured), a highly regarded economist, academic and international public servant, died suddenly in Adelaide in October 2006, aged 45.

We dedicate this volume to his memory.

Its contributors include friends and colleagues from around the world. We have also included a couple of papers that Bijit was drafting at the time of his death.

Listed below is a summary of Bijit's published work. His interests ranged across trade policy, sectoral studies and empirical work, but investment remained a major theme.

A milestone in that respect was the release of Bijit's edited collection, published by Routledge, on research issues in foreign direct investment. A reviewer of the volume said that it was "essential reading for anyone with a serious interest in theoretical, methodological or government policy issues associated with foreign direct investment."¹

¹Thomas L Brewer (2004). *Transnational Corporations*, 13(3), 141–145.

We thank especially Patrick Low and Bijit's colleagues in the World Trade Organization (WTO) for their help in identifying the set of papers associated with his name.

Many of Bijit's friends have already dedicated collections of papers or reports to him, for example, the Kiel Institute/CEPR Trade Policy Monitoring Paper 1 on "Monitoring Trade Policy: A New Agenda for Reviving the Doha Round," reports of work on second-hand clothing markets in Africa in which Bijit was involved,² the WTO's World Trade Report of 2007 and the book *Trade and Health: Seeking Common Ground*, which included Bijit's paper on tariffs on malaria nets.

We add our collection to this list. We think he would like this compilation, one which reflects his own diverse interests, his work on data and his interest in policy.

Bijit's life and work truly spanned the globe. At the time of his death he was living and working in Switzerland as a researcher at the WTO Secretariat.

His work covered trade and development issues across Africa, Asia, the Indian subcontinent and Latin America.

He was born in India but grew up in Canada, spending most of his life there before moving to Adelaide in 1991 to take up a position in the Economics Department at Flinders University.

This role, and his joint research and teaching with colleagues at the University of Adelaide, put him in touch with many of the city's students of economics in the 1990s. They still ask us about him.

For Bijit and his family, Adelaide became their nominated home, and it stayed their home even after more than eight years of living in Geneva.

While in Adelaide he and his Canadian-born wife, Laura, became Australian citizens and their family grew to include two daughters and a son.

From his base at Flinders University he contributed to international economics and economic development. This took him on a path to the Asia-Pacific region and eventually to the United Nations Conference of Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the WTO.

²See <http://sds.ukzn.ac.za/files/RR71%20Velia.pdf>.

Working through the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council, a network of regional scholars, business people and officials from 23 Asia–Pacific economies, Bijit helped to bring new ideas to the region, particularly on investment. These ideas contributed directly to initiatives adopted by APEC ministers. Mari Pangestu in her chapter in this collection recalls her work with Bijit in these settings.

This work took Bijit on secondment to UNCTAD in 1998 to contribute to the World Investment Report. He stayed until 2001, when he took a permanent appointment in the Economic Research and Statistics Division of the WTO Secretariat.

Bijit was a young and popular figure in these international networks. He brought a special enthusiasm and openness to his relationships that reflected his honesty. Added to that was a sometimes innocent optimism about work and life. These values drove his work and his engagement with others, but could lead to disappointments as he struggled with systems or bureaucracies that seemed to him to be driven by other forces.

Yet he maintained his enthusiasm for his work. He moved between ministers, ambassadors to the WTO and struggling trade officials in the least-developed countries of the world with the same “can do” attitude and sense of respect.

Sport was important to him and he was ready to try most things. For a short time in earlier years he played on the professional tennis circuit. He had a passion for triathlons, which he developed at the Meteors Triathlon Club in Adelaide, and a few months before his death he competed in the Monaco Ironman competition.

He enjoyed life, seeking out new experiences and chances to engage with new people. Travelling with him was a delight. He was always ready to talk — on the flight, in the airport, and over dinner and afterwards.

He became a lively and engaging presenter at conferences and workshops. He was sought after for panels with senior colleagues, and, like a good teacher, his enthusiasm and knowledge of the material brought people along with him.

We have tried to capture some of these dimensions of Bora’s life in the title of this book.

Lighting the lamp refers to scoring a goal in the popular Canadian sport of ice hockey — so a commentator might scream that the scorer “squeezed the stick, pulled the trigger and lit the lamp!” And that’s what he did in his work and life with us.

Bijit had returned home to Adelaide one last time in 2006 to bring his knowledge and experience to two weeks of teaching at the School of Economics at the University of Adelaide.

He is survived by his wife Laura, herself an international public servant, daughters Kendall and Katie, and son Zac.

Christopher Findlay, Mari Pangestu and David Parsons