

## Editorial policy

The editorial policy of *Environment and Development Economics* is distinctive. It reflects the motives for founding a new journal at a time when almost all those associated with the venture agree that there are too many, not too few, journals. It may be summarized as follows:

- to publish research results that contribute to our understanding of the linkages between economic and environmental change, and that explore the scientific and policy implications of those linkages;
- to enhance research capacity in the field in developing countries in general (and in the low-income countries in particular) by encouraging and supporting submissions from those countries; and
- to assure the accessibility and relevance of the journal by presenting results in an appropriate way and, in particular, by presenting policy-oriented results in a way that is accessible to decision-makers.

The editor is assisted by three boards: a Review Board, an Advisory Board and a Policy Board. The functions of the three boards are slightly different. The Review Board has responsibility for protecting the academic standards of the journal, and is led by researchers with the highest international scientific reputation in the fields represented in the journal. Since *Environment and Development Economics* is an academic journal, this function is critical. It is all the more important however, given that one of the aims of the journal is to present policy papers in an accessible form. The Advisory Board has the function of assuring both the policy relevance of the journal and its complementarity with journals in related fields. It will alert the editor to policy issues raised elsewhere that have an environmental dimension, and will evaluate proposals for Special Issues and Policy Fora (discussed below). Finally, the Policy Board has responsibility for reviewing the overall direction of the journal.

The focus of the journal on the linkages between environment and development reflects our sense that an understanding of the complex relationship between environmental and economic change is amongst the most important challenges now confronting both the natural and the social sciences. It is a challenge that tests the boundaries between the sciences. It makes as little sense for ecologists to treat human responses to environmental degradation as exogenous, for example, as it does for economists to treat anthropogenic environmental change in the same way. Individual disciplines have undoubtedly achieved depth of insight by bounding their field of inquiry, but this has often been at the cost of ignoring important feedbacks within the system studied. Economics has developed deep insight into the allocation of scarce resources by focusing closely on the market mechanism, but it loses much of its power when markets do not exist or are incomplete. Externality may not be the Achilles' heel of economics, but it comes close.

Development economics and environmental economics both evolved as responses to the problems raised by missing or incomplete markets. The methods developed to deal with these problems have differed in each case. Development economics has tended to appeal to the methods and models of other disciplines to fill the gaps in economic understanding of resource allocation in non-market societies. Environmental economics, on the other hand, has tended to focus on the construction of markets to value external effects. Indeed this is almost the sole focus of one branch of environmental economics, environmental valuation. Increasingly, however, environmental economists are also appealing to other disciplines, not just to address the decision-making problem, but also to understand the physical processes that underlie environmental external effects.

For some countries, their endowment of natural resources has been altered by depletion—the mining of minerals, water, soils and biomass. For others, their natural endowment has been diminished by more subtle anthropogenic changes to environmental processes. For example, biodiversity loss due to arable and pastoral production has altered the carrying and assimilative capacity of many ecological systems. More importantly, it has reduced the capacity of those systems to respond to external stresses and shocks, their resilience. It requires an interdisciplinary perspective to understand the interaction between economic and environmental processes when most environmental consequences of economic activity are external to the market. *Environment and Development Economics* will publish the results of such interdisciplinary research.

Since much of the basic science on the interaction of social and environmental systems remains to be done, *Environment and Development Economics* will report the results of basic as well as applied research. But a major motivation for founding the journal was our perception that it is important to get the policy implications of environmental economics research into the hands of decision-makers in a timely and accessible way. Too many environmental policies and instruments of policy are basically flawed. While there appears to be a broad consensus among decision-makers on the policies and instruments required for financial prudence, there is no such consensus on the policies and instruments required for environmental prudence. In part, this reflects the fact that many indirect environmental effects of economic activities are still poorly understood. But it also reflects the inaccessibility of much academic policy-oriented research in environmental economics. The fact that research which satisfies standard academic criteria is seldom accessible to decision-makers has meant that many important results have had no effect on policy. *Environment and Development Economics* will certainly publish basic research results that satisfy normal academic criteria, but it will also publish policy-oriented results in an accessible form. Contributors to the policy sections of the journal will be asked to keep the main body of their papers as jargon-free as possible, and to consign mathematical arguments and econometrics to appendices.

The journal will include a section of Policy Discussion Papers as a regular feature. In addition, however, it will run occasional fora on policy-relevant issues raised in the environmental literature in both the natural

and social sciences. The first Policy Forum, in this issue, is based on a paper by Arrow *et al.* on the link between economic growth and environmental change, published in *Science* (28 April 1995; Arrow *et al.*, 1995). The second Policy Forum will be based on an original paper by Ehrlich and Daily on the epidemiological consequences of environmental change. Future fora will focus on papers that appear to have important policy implications regardless of their discipline. Indeed, papers with significant implications for the economics of environment and development deriving from science journals not normally read by environmental or development economists may be especially appropriate foci for future Policy Fora. In addition, *Environment and Development Economics* will have a Publications section that will comprise book reviews, review articles and regional surveys of recent literature on particular issues. It is anticipated that this last category will provide another means of alerting the journal's readers to regional policy debates that may not necessarily find their way into the international journals.

*Environment and Development Economics* is generally concerned with the linkages between environmental and economic change. These may involve global, regional or local processes. In this sense, the journal is as much concerned with the North as with the South. Nevertheless, one of the main motivations for founding the journal is to stimulate the capacity to address these issues in the developing countries in general and the low-income countries in particular. To this end *Environment and Development Economics* will pursue a constructive review process. This will be reinforced by the programme of research seminars, workshops and visiting fellowships run by the journal's sponsors, the Royal Swedish Academy of Science's Beijer Institute. This will enable some researchers undertaking revisions to a paper that passes a first screening to participate in the Beijer programme as part of the process of revision. Targeted support of this sort should be self-extinguishing if it is successful. However, it is expected that it will be an important feature of the journal in its first five years.

Since *Environment and Development Economics* has been founded to research the interactions between the economic and environmental components of a jointly evolving system, it would be surprising if the journal's own editorial policy did not evolve over time. Environmental economics is a rapidly developing field with increasingly close links with the other environmental sciences. As understanding of economy–environment linkages deepens, so perceptions of the nature and significance of environmental change may be expected to alter. Similarly, as environmental economics develops as a recognized research field in low and middle income countries, the importance of the capacity-creation objective of the journal may be expected to change. What is now clear, though, is that the importance of understanding the environmental consequences of economic activity is not an ephemeral or transient need. Both economic growth and the expansion of the human population will increase pressure on the carrying and assimilative capacity of environmental systems. In many cases they will force those systems to change and will feed back into the economy. The challenge to both the social and natural sciences is to develop the conceptual and methodological tools to understand this process,

and this is not expected to change. *Environment and Development Economics* is part of the response to this challenge.

Charles Perrings  
Editor

**Reference**

Arrow K., B. Bolin, R. Costanza, P. Dasgupta, C. Folke, C.S. Holling, B.-O. Jansson, S. Levin, K.-G. Mäler, C. Perrings and D. Pimentel (1995), 'Economic growth, carrying capacity, and the environment', *Science* **268**: 520–521.