

HONOURING SOCIAL SCIENCE

**BRAZILIAN ECONOMIST RICCARDO PAES DE BARROS
IS THE WINNER OF THE INAUGURAL EDITION
OF THE TWAS-CELSO FURTADO PRIZE FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES.**

One year ago, the Academy launched the TWAS-Celso Furtado Prize in Social Sciences. The Brazilian Government is providing a four-year programme of sponsorship for the prize in honour of the great Brazilian economist Celso Furtado. Each winner will receive USD15,000. The prize reflects the Brazilian government's strong support for TWAS and, more generally, for helping to build scientific capacity in the developing world.



working and living in a developing country for at least ten years immediately prior to their nomination. They must, too, have made an outstanding contribution in both understanding and addressing social science disciplines such as economics, political sciences and sociology.

The winner of the first TWAS-Celso Furtado Prize in Social Sciences was announced at the TWAS 23rd General Meeting in Tianjin, China. Ricardo Paes de Barros, an economist from Brazil, was selected from a very competitive field for his major contributions to understanding the problems of poverty and inequality in Brazil, and for his advocacy of evaluating and refining public policies aimed at alleviating these problems.

In recognition of his outstanding contributions to academia, a special volume of the *Brazilian Review of Econometrics* was published in November 2000 in Paes de Barros' honour. In the introduction to this volume, James Heckman, Nobel Prize in Economics (2000),

The TWAS-Celso Furtado Prize in Social Sciences is an important addition to the TWAS prizes programme," confirmed TWAS President Jacob Palis. "On behalf of TWAS, I want to express our deep gratitude to former Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso and his Minister of Science and Technology José Israel Vargas, who were both instrumental in securing the sponsorship."

Candidates for the TWAS-Celso Furtado Prize in Social Sciences must be social scientists who have been



describes how Paes de Barros' work has influenced the social sciences and politics worldwide:

“Through his quiet, but forceful, influence, Ricardo revolutionized Brazilian policymaking by creating and organizing a rigorous micro database that enabled Brazilian policymakers to understand the causes of poverty and inequality and effective approaches for alleviating them. By creating this culture of evaluation – of evidence-based policy analysis – Paes de Barros has forever changed the dialogue of Brazilian public policy and influenced the evolution of evidence-based policymaking throughout the entire Latin American region.”

Paes de Barros studied aeronautics at undergraduate level and went on to do a Master's in statistics at the *Instituto Nacional de Matemática Pura e Aplicada* (IMPA), Brazil, followed by a PhD in economics at Chicago University, USA, and further research at the Centre for Economic Growth, Yale University, USA.

From 1979 until 2011, Paes de Barros was based at the Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA), Brazil, where his research focused on social inequality, education, poverty, and the labour market in Brazil and Latin America. Between 1990 and 1996 he returned to Yale as a visiting professor; and from 1999

to 2002 he was at IPEA as director of its Board of Social Studies. Last year, Paes de Barros was appointed the Secretary of Strategic Actions at the Secretariat of Strategic Affairs of the Presidency of the Republic of Brazil in Brasilia, a position he holds to this day.

Paes de Barros has published many articles and books on poverty and inequality in Brazil, Latin America and the Caribbean and has received many prizes recognizing the significance of his work, including the *Haralambos Simeonidis* award and the *Mario Henrique Simonsen* award. In 2005, he was

admitted to Brazil's National Order of Scientific Merit and in 2010 he was appointed a member of the Brazilian Academy of Sciences.

Elisa Reis, chair of the selection committee for the prize and a TWAS member in the field of social sciences, confirmed that Paes de Barros was a worthy and appropriate first recipient. “His work is closely allied to the kind of approach and methods that Celso Furtado was advocating,” she said, “and at the same time he has

Paes de Barros revolutionized Brazilian economic policymaking, creating a micro database to understand the causes of poverty and equality.



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ELISA REIS COMMENTS

“The introduction of the TWAS-Celso Furtado Prize is a powerful symbolic demonstration that TWAS fully recognizes the social sciences as legitimate partners in its core mission.

Social scientists must become more and more active TWAS members. They should provide meaningful assessments of the costs and benefits of different development strategies, identifying their positive and negative consequences for society in economic, social, political, and cultural terms.

To help in the process of building science capacity in developing countries, social scientists can provide resourceful expertise in evaluating development strategies. Furthermore, they can be instrumental in designing public policies, whether these are aimed at promoting science and technology or directly oriented towards improving mechanisms to generate socio-economic benefits. Moreover, social scientists can play a crucial role in making clear the actual connections between the institutionalization of democratic institutions and values on the one hand, and long term socio-economic gains on the other.

Putting scientific knowledge to serve the goal of promoting better social redistribution of wealth is one of the major characteristics of Paes de Barros’ brilliant career as an economist. His successes in devising sound policies to reach such goals in Brazil and elsewhere, and the strong influence he has exerted on both academic and policy communities, make him a legitimate winner of the TWAS-Celso Furtado Prize.”

Elisa Reis is a TWAS Fellow in Social Sciences (2006) and was chair of this year’s TWAS-Celso Furtado selection committee.

made a very original and effective contribution to alleviating poverty in Brazil and elsewhere in South America.”

The Prize’s namesake, Celso Furtado (1920-2004) was a famous Brazilian economist whose research focused on the poor in Brazil and throughout South America. He emphasized the importance of economic policies that focused on building a strong industrial base for what he referred to as ‘peripheral economies’.

Creating a prize in Furtado’s name “is very much in line with TWAS’s mission to build scientific capacity in

poorer regions in order to stimulate sustainable development,” Palis affirmed, “and it also reflects an awareness within TWAS as an organization that social scientists have a great deal to offer the Academy in the pursuit of this mission.”

Indeed, the potential contribution that social scientists can make to building scientific capacity in the South was a theme that was warmly taken up by members of the prize selection panel, including Anthony Clayton (TWAS Fellow 2011), a UK-born and trained social scientist, who has been living in Jamaica for the

last fifteen years and is based at the University of West Indies, which serves 14 different Caribbean nations.

“Science policymakers often take it as given that if we can build strong scientific and technical capacity then people’s lives will improve,” Clayton explained. “However, as social scientists, we know that this is not entirely accurate, because entrenched poverty exists even in countries with advanced technical capacity. For example, many of the inhabitants in poor areas can be trapped in unemployment or marginal, low-waged jobs by a lack of marketable qualifications and skills. We know from many such examples that scientific and technical capacity is a *necessary* but not a *sufficient* condition for national development, and that we can’t just inject technology into a country and expect

developing countries depend on various aspects of the social sciences – education, training, people’s attitude to work and their private lives. Neither development nor capacity building can be done by science alone in a social vacuum.”



Anthony Clayton

Anthony Clayton agreed. “Probably the most important single determinant of whether a country will develop is not technology, but the strength and integrity of its institutions. If a country has politicized institutions and inequitable laws that serve only the interests of the elite,” he added, “it is far less likely to develop a strong and diverse economy.”

The *New York Times* bestseller and influential architect of the Millennium Development Goals, Jeffrey Sachs, has argued, on the other

hand, that much of the cause of poverty lies in geography and climate. Poor countries tend to be near the equator, where there is a combination of hostile conditions (endemic disease and poor soil, for example) but, Sachs has argued, with the right politics and intervention (in particular a huge investment in aid), poor nations can be pulled out of poverty.

However, this theory is being increasingly strongly criticized, as it has become clear that adjacent countries sharing very similar geography and climate can have markedly different economic and social outcomes. Clayton notes the case of the island of Hispaniola, which is shared by two nations. On the west side of the island, Haiti remains one of the poorest nations in the world, while on the east side of the island, the Dominican Republic is building a strong economy. Clayton argues that these very different outcomes reflect the crucial role of governance. “Without a reasonably competent system of government and a functioning economy, it is very hard for society to progress, no matter how much you invest in science and technology,” he concludes.

Paes de Barros will receive his award and present his work at TWAS’s 24th General Meeting, which will be held in Argentina in September 2013. ■

Neither development nor capacity building can be done by science alone in a social vacuum.



the situation to improve. This is where social scientists can help.”

Ratna Ghosh, also on the Prize selection committee and another newly elected TWAS Fellow (with expertise in comparative and international education), agreed: “TWAS focuses on problems of development. And development is about people. The social sciences are crucial to understanding people and their perceptions of how satisfactory their lives are, their standard of living and ultimately their happiness. In addition, TWAS’s efforts to build science capacity in