

## IFSAM 2022 Award

### IFSAM Award for Excellence in Societally Relevant Management Scholarship

Winner: Professor Lorraine Eden

Interviewed by Professor Yingying Zhang Zhang

AI generated transcript; edited by Lorraine Eden

**Professor Eden, could you share with us your journey in this field of societally relevant management scholarship? What inspired you to focus on research that serves society?**

My family was an important factor. My father had been blinded in a car accident when I was eight and my mother had to go out to work. My father got a Seeing Eye dog and was not allowed to take the dog on buses in the Province of New Brunswick so one of the things he did (successfully) was to lobby for legislation to get this changed. I think from the very beginning when I was young, I realized that adversity happens to families and when these kinds of shocks happen to a family, the state and government policies can really be helpful.

A second important factor was that I was fortunate to have a variety of mentors over my life who were really world-class scholars. My dissertation chair at Dalhousie University was Carl Shoup who had just retired from Columbia University. Carl would talk to me about how important it was to be involved in public policy efforts and that, since we had received an education and could potentially make a difference, that we owed it to society to give back. I think my mentors were most proud, not of their A-level publications in journals, but rather of the impacts that they had been able to have over their own careers; for example, Carl's work in developing countries and Japan, and all the work that Ray Vernon did in terms of multinational enterprises. This was very influential for me, seeing people who near the end of their own careers, the things they felt were most impactful were not in the "Ivory Tower" and their publications but that they had actually made a difference in the world around them.

**Some of these key milestones, turning points you would say in this long journey in your career, is there any other turning point contribute to this recognition by IFSAM ?**

Let me give you some example of turning points.

Very early on (I had my first child, she was a few months old), I was elected vice president of the Canadian Economics Association. I took advantage of that role (and, as you know, also in some other associations when I've been elected to their executive board) to set up a networking group for women. I did this because I, like other women of my generation who are now Fellows of the Academy of International Business (AIB), had been the first woman in many roles. We suffered harassment in various ways and I realized that networking together was important.

I've had other opportunities like that. I applied for and won a Pew Fellowship to the Kennedy School at Harvard University, which brought me into a group of 125 scholars around the world who were really interested in active learning.

And I'll make a third link. The Academy of International Business, which brings to people together who are scholars from all over the world, all different cultures, nationalities, religions.

I think those are some of the things that have made my research and my interests maybe different from the traditional mainstream disciplines.

**Can you tell a little bit more, some other lesser-known stories or pivotal moment experience that has significantly influenced your work?**

Here is one story. I have, for most of my academic life, read *The Economist* because I think it gives you a good overview of economic policy and what's going on in the world. Early on, I got interested in *The Economist's* Big Mac Index (which estimates real exchange rates based on the price of a Big Mac hamburger in different countries).

My interest in indexes led me to write an article on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”, published in the *Journal of International Business Policy*, which has won three or four awards now.<sup>1</sup> What I did in the article, written with Fernanda Wagstaff, was to look at the gender indexes that are out there, what the problems of those indexes are, how you could fix those indexes, and the fact that they measure equality in the workplace and not empowerment of women and girls. I think that our work has been influential in paying more attention to the difference between equality in wages in the workplace and the empowerment of women.

Later that year, UNCTAD had a virtual panel on Multinationals and Women Empowerment at the World Investment Forum. They asked me to moderate the session, and the Secretary General of UNCTAD, the head of UN Women, and all these NGOs that were focused on SDG 5 were there. It was a wonderful opportunity.

Following one thing early on (the Big Mac Index), you can be surprised how it leads down the line to other opportunities. I think this has had other spillovers on my own work also; for example, my work on evidence-based policymaking came out of my work on gender indexes.

**So, what would be the most significant challenges that you faced in your research and career focused on societal relevance?**

In terms of challenges, I was valedictorian of my high school graduating class and had the highest grades in my class but my parents had very little income. I went to university through money raised from summer jobs and scholarships, and in the absence of those scholarships, I would not have been able to go to university. I credit the willingness of others to provide financial opportunities for young people in high school as being a really important factor in my own life.

A second challenge was looking at what happened to my own mother. Her husband was blinded and she had three young children, didn't drive, did not have the right to sign a checkbook, and had to go out and get herself a job and learn to drive. I took away from that experience the importance of education and of giving women the ability to be the best that they can be.

I believe a third challenge, which has always been a barrier for women, is getting the door open. One reason why I created WAIB (Women in the Academy of International Business) was exactly that. I realized that women were not being nominated for positions in our professional associations

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1. Eden, Lorraine and M. Fernanda Wagstaff. 2021. Evidence-Based Policymaking and the Wicked Problem of SDG 5 Gender Equality. *Journal of International Business Policy*, 4: 28-57.

(e.g., AIB), not being invited to give papers at conferences, and not being invited to be guest speakers in other universities. I think that was because they simply weren't on the radar of the men that were doing the invitations. Helping women to at least get invited, I think, has been a huge thing.

A fourth barrier for me – and there's nothing I could do about that - was that I did not go to an Ivy League university, which in the United States is a ticket to most university positions and most invitations. The stamp of approval of having gone to Harvard, Princeton or Yale, I didn't have that.

My point in saying this is that some barriers you can do things about, which can help others coming behind you. You must rely on your publications and your networks, which I think are as important as where your PhD is from. Still, “the good old boys network” remains a problem. It's always going to be a problem and that's why I'm a believer in DEI initiatives, because I think diversity, inclusion and equity matter.

**Which strategy or policy or particular tactic do you find in this process of navigating this challenge?**

Well, one strategy, very simply, is networking.

**So, reflecting on your career, what are some of the most important lessons you have learned?**

I think one of the lessons is that when opportunities come around, think hard about taking them. Do try to evaluate the benefits and costs of these opportunities. Talk them over with your family because your family is involved in these decisions too, particularly in decisions that involve moves.

Second, recognize that you are never going to maximize. You are going to satisfice, which means balancing multiple goals and all the things you have to do. Keep doing at least what you need to do to “keep all those balls up in the air”. Feel good about the satisficing.

A related issue is not regretting when things go wrong but focus ahead.

Also, I have always said that we need to celebrate the good times more. I don't think we do enough to celebrate the ordinary days for the joy that they bring to our lives.

**What advice would you offer to many of the scholars who aim to focus their research more on the societal relevance?**

I've had the opportunity to be a student of some truly wonderful professors and to be in departments with some of the world's most remarkable scholars. I'm sorry that I didn't co-author with many of them. I wish I had gone to Carl Shoup and said, Carl, let's write something together.

I wish I had taken more opportunities. I've listened to other women AIB Fellows talk about some of the opportunities they've taken and how influential they were in their careers.

Read The Economist. Try to spend some time engaged in the public policy debates that are important for your country and ask, what could you bring to the table that might help to solve these problems? I think we isolate ourselves in the university. We talk only to other university people. If you want to do societally relevant research, you have to talk to society. You have to listen to society and engage with them.

**So, maybe if I may, may I ask, any kind of recommendation do you have for assessing the impact of your research on the society-relevant management for the community?**

I do think I may be having an impact now. I'm sitting on the Subcommittee on Transfer Pricing at the United Nations and have been since 2022. That's a group of 28 of us, most of whom are from their national tax authorities. Of all the things I've done in my life, this may be perhaps the most impactful or have the opportunity to be most impactful.

I do believe the way to be most impactful is in a group. An individual publication probably isn't going to make it. The publication may be impactful in terms of generating citations and other people working in the area as you, but impactful in terms of public policy means you need to be working with public policy makers to actually affect policy. You can do that at the United Nations, for example, on a variety of committees. You can do that in your own hometown by getting on city council or the school board.

I think we need to start thinking, especially when we are senior academics, about wearing other "hats"; socially relevant hats where we can make a difference in a group with others. We join these groups as academics bringing our academic contributions to the table, but where we are talking and working with individuals who are actually "walking the walk", not just academics "talking the talk". For example, they are making tax policy and writing regulations inside their own countries.

**It's so great to listen to you. It's so inspirational, and I learned so much. Thank you very much, Professor Eden**