



# BIOGRAPHY - TORBJÖRN LAHTI

President, *Sustainable Sweden Association (SSA)*

Senior Advisor, *Esam AB*

Co-Director, *Institute for Eco-Municipalities & Assistance (IEMEA)*

## BACKGROUND

Torbjörn Lahti is a community planner, founder and co-owner of the environmental consulting firm **Esam AB** (The Human Ecology Company) based in Umeå, Sweden. Torbjörn is the initiator and former coordinator of the Eco-municipality movement in Sweden and has been working professionally with sustainable development during the last thirty-five years.

Within Esam, he has done work, mainly trainings, in more than half of the 290 municipalities in Sweden and has assisted with the development of more than 70 Eco-municipalities. The training concept is based on the **concept of FSSD (Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development)**, a scientifically based consensus framework developed in Sweden for addressing environmental challenges.

Esam is one of the members in a non-profit organization called **Sustainable Sweden Association (SSA)**. SSA has during the last eighteen years carry through more than 25 of so called “**Sustainable Sweden Tours**” where people from other countries have been invited to take part of the experiences from the Swedish Eco-municipalities and learn more of how you can implement the FSSD concept in practice.

Torbjörn was born in the Swedish-Finnish border town of Övertorneå and completed his undergraduate and graduate studies in economics, administrative education and city planning at Umeå University. He worked as a **planner**, both at the regional and local level before he returned to his hometown to head its successful effort to combat unemployment and environmental deterioration, by combining economic and ecological development to become **Sweden's first "eco-municipality"** in 1983. In 1990, he facilitated **Sweden's first conference** (in Orsa), launching the **eco-village and eco-municipality movement**.

In 1990, he co-founded **Esam** and his work has included eco-villages, city housing, ecological building, waste management and recycling. He has also been adjunct to the **Swedish University of Agriculture** where his research focused on change processes in the eco-municipalities.

In August 2001, Torbjörn became the manager of a unique project in the municipality of Robertsfors called “**Sustainable Robertsfors**” where the ambition was to create a role model of sustainable development by using the experiences from successes Sweden.

Torbjörn's work with Eco-municipalities have got a **worldwide international acknowledgement**, and he is often invited to other countries (ex: USA, Japan, Canada, Kenya, Ethiopia, Mexico, Chile, Ireland, Germany, Italy, Spain, Estonia, Finland, Norway, Russia) to inspire communities and help them to start up their own sustainable processes. The model that was developed by Sustainable Robertsfors is called "Eco-municipality 5.0" and it's now implemented in countries like Kenya, Ethiopia, Italy, Chile and US. The concept is described in his book "*My Journey with the Eco-municipalities – How to Change the World through Local Action*", (CAmpus ReDesign, 2014).

## TALKS / WORKSHOPS / TOURS

Some of his latest assignments is:

### 2017 - 2019

- Speaker on a national Conference, Jimma, Ethiopia feb 2019
- Lecturer, Master Program, Arba Minch University, feb 2019
- Trainer/facilitator, 3-day workshop, Jimma, Ethiopia, aug 2018
- Trainer/facilitator, 3-day workshop, Arba Minch, feb 2018
- Trainer/facilitator, 1 day, workshop, Mekelle, jan 2018
- Trainer/facilitator, 3-day workshop, Axum Ethiopia, jan 2018
- Tour leader, 8 days, Sustainable Sweden Tour (SST), delegation from Arba Minch, may/june 2017
- Trainer/facilitator, 2 days' workshop, Axum Ethiopia, may 2017

### 2014 - 2016

- Tour leader, delegation EPA Ethiopia, jun 2016
- Speaker, National Conference, Addis Abeba, apr 2016
- Tour Leader, 8 days SST, delegation from Tigray, jun 2015
- Tour Leader, 8 days SST, delegation from Arauco Province, Chile, Eco-tourism and Eco-municipality 5.0, may-june 2015
- Trainer, Process Leader Training, Arauco Province, Chile, Eco-tourism and Eco-municipality 5.0, jan-feb, 2015
- Speaker, Regional Conferences, Mekelle/Tigray, Bahir Dar/Amhara, Dodolla/Oromia, jan 2015
- Tour Leader, 8 days SST, delegation from Trans-Nzoia County, Kenya, sep 2014
- Speaker, "Eco-preneurship", International Research Conference, Trehörningssjö, Sweden, jun 2014
- Speaker on a series of lectures in North America, apr-may, 2014

### 2010 - 2013

- Speaker on Sustainable Forum, Rio +20, April 22-24 2012, Rosario, Argentina
- Invited delegate to the UN's High-level-meeting on "Happiness and wellbeing: Defining a new economic paradigm", New York, apr 2012,
- Key-note Speaker, Global Seminar, "After the earthquake: rebuilding ecosystem adaptability", f, Sendai Japan, feb 2012
- Key-note Speaker, Seminar on Planning for Sustainable Development, Denmark, nov.2011
- Project Leader, "System Solutions in combination with territorial change processes with practices in Chile", oct-2010 – jun 2012

## BOOKS / PAPERS

- *My Journey with the Eco-municipalities: How to change the world through Local Action?* – Torbjörn Lahti, CAmplus ReDesign, 2012
- *The Natural Steps for Communities – How Cities and Towns can Change to Sustainable Practices* - Sarah James, Torbjörn Lahti, New Society Publishers, 2004 (Translated to English, Japanese, Chinese and Spanish)
- *FoU-behov for lokal bärkraftig utveckling, or Research and Development Needs for Local Sustainable Development*, Helmfrid, Hillevi, Torbjörn Lahti & Mia Haglind, Swedish University of Agriculture Sciences, Report #7, 1995
- *Principskiss for kommunens arbete med Agenda 21, or Principles for Municipality Work with Agenda 21, The Natural Step Municipalities consensus document*, Karl-Henrik Robért, Torbjörn Lahti, Det naturliga steget, 1995
- *Agenda 21-guiden - teorihäfte, or The Eco-Municipality Education Guide* – theory book.

## MEMBERSHIP

Member of Business Advisory Board of the Business School and Economics at Umeå University

## AWARDS

- *Appointed by the Swedish Institute for Social Inventions* Grants for “Winning model”; in the 1988 contest for social innovators. “Particular attention is given his work with the Foundation Ekotopen”
- John Olivergren Fellowship 1994:  
“For his pioneering work with the Swedish Eco-Municipality project. Torbjörn is one of the great visionaries in the Swedish “eco-movement”. He gets the various players in the environmental movement, municipalities, research institutions, industry and government to work towards the same goal - a sustainable recycling society. He gets the vision to take root in a reasonable way in the municipalities, helping them to formulate criteria for a sustainable society, influence them to change their approach and contributes to an active exchange is initiated between the different actors. On a knowledgeable, humble and popular way Torbjörn convey his vision and makes everyone feel part of the change process.”.

## FAMILY

Torbjörn is married with Mona and has three children Andreas (40), Johan (36) and Sara (28), and six grand-children.