

GEOFF OLDHAM

Personal Remembrances, October 2017

All of us at SPRU benefit from “standing on the shoulders of giants” but I feel particularly fortunate to have known and learned from Geoffrey Oldham. I had the honour of working with him very late in his career, after he had accumulated over half a century of experience in the field of science and technology policy, and unparalleled networks of friends and colleagues across the world. I will never forget his generosity, warmth and wisdom.

I first met Geoff ten years ago when preparing for my first trip to China in 2007. As well as providing interesting (if somewhat out of date) advice on the food I might expect on the trans-Mongolian express (which the Oldham family had taken in 1965), Geoff inspired me with his excitement about the changes that he had seen since his first visit (which he had written about in Science magazine). He gave me his spare copy of the report ‘A Decade of Reform’ produced ten years earlier by the IDRC / SSTC Science and Technology Review Mission to China, which he headed. I have since had the great pleasure of travelling to China with Geoff, and engaging in discussions with some of the country’s leading science and technology policy researchers around shared global challenges of sustainable and equitable development. Geoff’s personal contribution to this ongoing dialogue between our countries, and across the wider international community, is undeniable.

I also worked closely with Geoff on the STEPS Centre project ‘Innovation, Sustainability, Development: A New Manifesto’. The project reflected on the original ‘Sussex Manifesto’ (1970), which Geoff produced with colleagues from SPRU, IDS and the United Nations. The New Manifesto project worked with international partners to share and recommend new ways of linking science and innovation to development for a more sustainable, equitable and resilient future. Throughout the project, I benefited from Geoff’s mentorship, support and friendship.

It has been such a privilege to be able to work with someone who has – throughout their life - shaped our field of research, and had a long-term impact on the organisations that fund, conduct and use it. And even with his academic and policy acclaim, another source of inspiration has been Geoff’s openness to new ideas (even when, on discussing them with him, I find that they are actually old ideas expressed in different ways). I will miss him, but will always appreciate the hours that we shared – discussing, reminiscing, learning and laughing. Thank you, Geoff.

Adrian Ely

SPRU – Science Policy Research Unit, University of Sussex

I first met Geoff when he recruited me as one of SPRU's first post-docs in 1968. The other was Martin Bell. Geoff had just joined SPRU as Chris Freeman's assistant and had set up one of SPRU's first international development grants; it was on technology development in India's Scientific Instruments industry and was funded by ODM (as it was called at the time). I then contributed to a second major programme on technology development in Latin America, funded by the Organisation of American States (OAS). This was one of the earliest research programmes that attempted to balance the acquisition of foreign technology in ways that help to support the autonomous development of poor countries. SPRU was a very small outfit then but we all felt we were doing something new and exciting and in no small measure Geoff's enthusiasm and commitment were central to setting up a new type of research institute which has since gone from strength to strength. He was and continued to be highly supportive both as a colleague and a friend. Both Brenda (my wife) and I will miss him greatly.

Norman Clark

Open University

I remember Geoff's smile, his eternal optimism, his commitment to SPRU and his tireless work. I got to know him well when we had the SPRU-Imperial Link. This consisted of a lecture series and dinners held at Imperial and they provided a different and unique forum for discussions about science policy and the work of SPRU in particular.

Geoff was a very special person. He was a very warm human being whom it was a privilege to know and to work with. And he never stopped working for a better world.

Dot Griffiths
Imperial College London

Geoff was the SPRU Director all over the period of my Ph.D. studies. He has always been a benevolent figure, happy to encourage students and colleagues. And to sort out so many small and not so small problems. It was great to see him in excellent shape at the SPRU at 50 celebrations. He was smiling as usual and nobody would have noted that so many decades had passed by watching Geoff alone. Seeing Geoff Oldham and Jackie Fuller dancing rock 'n roll we had the impression that we were back in the mid-1980s. We will miss his work. We will also miss his smile and his truly gentleman's manners. All of us will need to work harder, and to be more gentle to each other, to replace him.

Daniele Archibugi

"Well done, good and faithful servant." Matthew 25:23 - another "Matthew Effect" in science!

Caroline Wagner

Geoffrey: A Champion of Gender in Science and Technology:

There are untold global circles of women internationally whose lives were lifted forever by the extraordinary focus Geoffrey placed on the gender analysis measuring the differential impact of science on men compared to women. As British delegate to the UN-CSTD, and Chair of the 'Gender Working Group' Geoffrey engaged top gender experts globally to provide evidence on the gendered nature of science and technology. I enjoyed the wonderful fortune of working as his Director of Studies. The 'Universal Declaration of Intent' was endorsed by ECOSOC and the Declaration taken to the Beijing 1995 Conference. IDRC, where Geoffrey served as Science Advisor to the President, published 'Missing Links' capturing the story. Subsequently UNESCO introduced its first chapter on the gender dimension of S&T in its 1998 World Science Report.

Few men have brought such unparalleled commitment to gender. The Gender Advisory Board and UNESCO Reports remain but a small ongoing measure of the incalculable impact his prestige and intellect rendered to the cause of gender analysis in science.

His signature remains indelible on those of us who drove the cause forward with him. It also remains manifest in the changed lives of innumerable others who will never know nor thank this extraordinary gentleman for carrying the gender banner. Farewell fair champion. We thank you. Betsy

Dr Betsy McGregor

I greatly enjoyed Geoff's insights, calm wisdom and company when he was Chair of SciDev.net and I was a trustee.

Philip Campbell

In the spring of 2014 (11 April), I firstly met professor Oldham at the SPRU strategy form. When I told him that I'm originally from Korea (South), Geoff asked me if I know Jung Geun-mo, who is the founder of KAIST (Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology). Saying Jung is his close friend and talking about their recent meeting in Africa, Prof Oldham shared the stories about how Jung and he shared knowledge and worked together in the 1970s, thinking a national R&D strategy for Korea to set a future direction of the nation. I still remember Geoff's powerful tone of voice and his smiling eyes with full of curiosity and passion. I will be so pleased if can hear just something more about his untold stories; but sadly, now I have no access to his knowledge, experiences, and wisdom that have not documented yet. May God gives him peace and rest. Your smile on a sunny spring day will be with me.

Youngha Chang

SPRU – Science Policy Research Unit, University of Sussex

In early 2011, Geoffrey Oldham, CBE, agreed to serve as an Expert Panel Member on a 15-member Panel, convened by the Council of Canadian Academies, to look at and report on the factors that influence the career trajectory of women in university research in Canada and underlie gender disparities. Geoffrey was a terrific panel member and engaged in animated and lengthy discussions with his fellow panellists. He was tireless in his pursuit of evidence for the report and in that pursuit, unearthed some interesting data. The report was stronger for his diligent review and comments. We maintained correspondence well after the publication of the report, and his interest in so many subjects, including ways to promote women in research, will be sorely missed. A great raconteur and a wonderful researcher. Geoffrey will be missed.

Janet Bax

Council of Canadian Academies

Geoff Oldham was an important and beloved figure in Canada for his work on IDRC and the Council of Academies. He helped a group of us as we tried to instil gender sensibilities into the UN agencies and continued to pursue gender equality issues. While I was president of York University in Toronto we recognized his vital contributions with an honorary doctorate. His ideas and enthusiasm is remembered with respect and affection by us all.

Lorna Marsden

York University, Toronto

I came in contact with Geoff Oldham in 1981 at the time when I was introduced with Chris Freeman. All I remember since I met him is how graceful, gentle, open and sympathetic he was to students like myself. Recently at the SPRU 50 years anniversary, we met and he took much time with me discussing on a variety of issues. His kindness, welcoming and generosity were deeply touching.

When I heard from our dear Johan Schot that he passed away when I was in the Globelics Conference in Athens, I was truly sad and hurt. I know Geoff has left us physically but his legacy and his contributions will live on in the eternal river of time. May his soul remain in peace forever and ever.

Mammo Muchie

I met Geoff when I was 18 years old in Argentina and then I said to him that I wanted to work at SPRU. With his usual kindness and wisdom he told me that it was better to finish my University studies first and then see if I wanted to continue with a Masters course at Sussex. After many years I ended up

working at SPRU, finishing a PHD at Sussex and having my celebration party organized by him Geoff and Chris (Freeman of course).

Geoff was a constant influence in my career even when I lived in Brazil he came to visit and we spent many agreeable dinners and afternoons with him and Brenda and with Amílcar Herrera (a dear friend of his) and Lia, his wife. I am glad that not too many years ago I was able to share quite a few days with Geoff in South Africa after an expert meeting, quality time to catch up- as he put it.

I am deeply saddened by his loss and very happy to have shared thoughts and company on so many occasions. I am also thankful for his professional support throughout many years in my early career. I am also sure he is resting in peace as he very well deserves. Love to all whom we shared wonderful moments with Geoff.

Liliana Acero

Geoff was my PhD supervisor (early 1980s), my career mentor, my friend and my referee for every job I ever applied for. I will remember Geoff for his intelligence, warmth, wisdom and kindness. He always gave generously of his time and would answer questions patiently until every last person had no more.

I remember how much he loved China and how open he was to helping Chinese students understand the potential of science and technology and encouraging international collaboration. I was lucky enough to work with him there on a joint project involving the Chinese National Offshore Oil Corporation and technology transfer. I remember how much he enjoyed exploring South America and how committed he was to social development and exploring the potential of developing science and technology capabilities to contribute to more equitable industrialisation. I worked in collaboration with Geoff at the Andean Pact and IDRC, where as a young researcher and project officer he guided me and helped me establish my own career path - he found a way to provide feedback that counted and helped.

Geoff was a good person, and the SPRU Scholarship in his name is a fitting testament to Geoff's commitment to encourage students to explore and believe in their intellectual dreams. He was someone who both understood academic pursuit but who was also firmly rooted in the real world and how science and technology achieves economic progress. It was an honour to have known Geoff all these years and to have become a friend of Geoff and Brenda's. My heart goes out to Brenda, who Geoff loved dearly, and Geoff's family, who must miss him terribly. I have so many memories, too many to mention here.

Rest in peace, Geoff.

Alyson Warhurst

Geoff was an inspiration and mentor to many - myself included. Without him, my career would have turned out very differently.

I worked closely with him through the China Council for International Co-operation on Environment and Development in the late 1990s and early 2000s. When he first approached me to get involved with this research, I wasn't entirely convinced. But he persuaded me that working with researchers in China to find ways of advancing innovation in cleaner technologies would not only be an interesting thing to do, but could also have real impact.

He turned out to be right. It led to over ten years of collaborations during a particularly fascinating period in China's economic development and environmental awareness. Our recommendations were

discussed with senior government officials, helped by Geoff's contacts and experience. This work was followed by an opportunity to carry out one of the first studies of how China could eventually peak and reduce its carbon emissions through cleaner technology innovation.

Geoff's enthusiasm for understanding China, its culture and language was infectious. The most memorable trip we did together included a three day train journey from Urumqi in the north west of China back to Beijing. We could have flown, but that would have been far less interesting. I'll never forget the conversations and food we shared during the journey - or the day when Geoff insisted we join the early morning exercise class in the train corridor.

Jim Watson

When Geoff interviewed me in 1984, along with Keith Pavitt, it was reputedly one of the first instances of anyone ever having a formal job interview at SPRU. They weren't very practiced at it. After the niceties, we got down to business by talking about cricket with Geoff and football with Keith. In a way, it was very revealing. My professional abilities were taken as given, but what mattered, especially to Geoff, is whether I would fit in with SPRU's culture.

A great deal will no doubt be justifiably written about Geoff's scholarly contribution, but I will focus on what he taught me about being an academic leader. First, he was always available and always smiling and friendly. He saw value in everyone's contribution. Second, he instilled and promoted a culture of respect and sharing. I, like many others, have tried to carry these lessons into the academic organisations I have led, without, it must be said in my case, Geoff's flair and aplomb!

He taught and showed me much, for which I will always be grateful.

Mark Dodgson

I began my working career at SPRU in 1970 when Martin Bell, Norman Clark and I collaborated on a project initiated by Geoff and codirected with Charles Cooper. We produced an (overly!) long Report for the Organisation of American States on the mechanisms and channels of technology transfer to Latin America. Charles went on to focus on the nature and determinants of technological choice from imported technology. Geoff, by contrast, made the far-sighted decision to move beyond technology-transfer and technology-selection to the generation of technology. In the process he initiated the STIPI research programme which developed capabilities in a number of Latino colleagues who subsequently became influential in policy and research on the continent and globally. It also led Geoff to play a critical role in the formation of the Canadian International Development Research Centre. We never forgave him for his insistence that IDRC funds be directed to developing country researchers rather than to SPRU!

In subsequent decades I frequently interacted with Geoff, although I never had the pleasure of working directly with him again. He was an inspiring presence – ebullient, always-positive and filled with energy and adventure. I have come to think of him as the Indiana Jones of academia – hair-raising escapades, visits to more than 130 countries and a continual source of fun. Whenever my energy flags I think of Geoff.

How much we miss him, and how much harder is the loss for Brenda, Janice, Keith and the rest of the family.

Raphie Kaplinsky

SPRU – Science Policy Research Unit, University of Sussex

Geoff had vacated the responsibility of Director by the time I arrived as an STP MSc student in 1996. But his legacy and influence was inescapable. My condolences to his family, friends and colleagues. They can be proud of his achievements, of which SPRU is but a part.

Andy Tanner-Smith