

## The Life and Legacy of Geoffrey Oldham

University of Sussex, April 13, 2018

Notes for Francisco Sagasti's presentation

- Thanks to SPRU/IDS/IDRC for organizing this event to honor the life and legacy of a great man: Geoffrey Oldham.
- I had the privilege of meeting him in January 1970 in Cusco, when I was working on my PhD dissertation, and became a lifelong friend and benefitted enormously from his wisdom and generosity.
- Summarizing his legacy is simple: the field of science, technology and development policies and studies would have not been the same without Geoff's seminal contributions and continued support. Let me give you some examples:
  - Science and technology policies in China. Since the late 1950s and early 1960s Geoff worked on this subject, made sense of the inscrutable and opaque nature of Chinese work in this field, following what the Cultural Revolution and subsequent upheavals and great strides. He was a member of the Hong Kong delegation to the UN Conference on Science and Technology for the Benefit of the Less Developed Countries, held in Geneva in 1963. Twenty years later, in 1984, we met in Beijing for a meeting on the challenges of S&T policy in China, and I was fortunate that Geoff asked me to be the rapporteur of the meeting.
  - SPRU in 1966, following a year at the OECD in Paris, where he worked with Chris Freeman and Charles Cooper. The Research Policy Institute at Lund University, led by Stevan Dedijer, and SPRU were the first two research institutions in this field.
  - Collaboration with IDS, which started with Dudley Seers, in the Study Seminars (SS23) and in one devoted to science, technology and development, which trained several researchers that would be later involved in the STPI project
  - Creation of IDRC, institution that became the main supporter and promoter of science and technology policy studies in the world. Geoff was key in promoting the idea that IDRC should support developing country researchers, rather than conducting research in the North for the South. Two former presidents of IDRC are now with us, and the current vice president for programs will address this meeting in the afternoon.
  - STPI project: first large scale, comparative, policy-oriented research project with 10 developing countries, more than 150 full time researchers. IDRC and OAS support. 40 years after we started STPI we met in Lima with Geoff and most of the country coordinators. Geoff interviewed all the STPI participants and contributed a chapter to a book called *Looking back to move forward a 40-year retrospective of the STPI project*. Focus on implementation was always key for Geoff.
  - Contributions to the 1979 UN Conference on Science and Technology for Development held in Vienna. Geoff as participant, feeding in the results of STPI, creation of a special fund for science, technology and development. Agreement reached in August 1979. Chairmen of the UN Advisory

Committee on Science and Technology for Development. But Reagan was elected in November 1979.

- Contributions in India, Egypt, Indonesia, Vietnam, Peru, Colombia, Africa and many other countries; creation of SciDev; work on gender and science; many varied interests.
- What are the main enduring features of Geoff's contributions? Let me attempt a brief summary:
  - Raise the visibility, underscore the importance and help shape the field of science, technology and development policies and studies.
  - Catalyst for the creation and design of several institutions (SPRU, IDRC) in the field of science, technology and development
  - Identify young researchers, give them opportunities to develop and mature, mentor and guide them (many of us are here, even more would have liked to join us)
  - Creating long-lasting networks of researchers and policy makers (STPI 40 years later)
  - Lead us with his example: generosity, selflessness, concern for others: he was a full human being in the proper sense of the word.
- Let me also say that through Geoff we also had the privilege of getting to know Brenda and the family. It has been a blessing to share many experience and great moments together.
- I am thankful for having met Geoff early in my career; I have benefitted from his support, advice and friendship and my professional and personal lives would have not been as rich and satisfactory without Geoff.
- He will be in our memories forever and in that of those of us who share Geoff's passion to mobilize knowledge to improve the human condition.

Thank you.