

George Adu, PhD. (1977-2019): The Social Planner goes home...

FRANKLIN OBENG ODOOM, EDITOR, *AFRICAN REVIEW OF ECONOMICS AND FINANCE*

Dr. George Adu, a pioneering and dynamic Associate Editor of the *African Review of Economics and Finance*, has died at the prime age of 42. His contributions to the economics of natural resources, much like W.S. Jevons, a towering figure in natural resource economics, will be missed by both admirers and critics.

Not only was Dr. Adu's support for this journal unwavering and long-standing, it was also *épatant*. Together with Imhotep Paul Alagidede and Franklin Obeng-Odoom, respectively the editor-in-chief and editor of this journal, Dr. George Adu announced the arrival of a new African economics by contributing to the maiden issue of this journal. At the time, the form and substance of frontier oil economies had become central points of contention in economics with a near consensus on entrusting Africa's resources into the invisible hands of the market to avoid what was understood to be state-based resource curse or a 'tragedy of the commons'.



George defending his PhD thesis before the doctoral panel in 2012 at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala, Sweden.

George Adu turned this conventional thinking on its head, instantly making him an intellectual rebel. He considered that the potential problems of oil were, in fact, to be found in the contradictions of the market and their inherent social costs such as pollution and the multi-scalar disruption of socio-ecological structures. What Dr. Adu advocated was for the firm to be socialised, not in terms of nationalisation, but by ‘imposing’ production quotas on oil firms. His approach, then, was to institute limits to drilling and mining markets.

Even within the socially optimal level for which the firm could be allowed to drill, Adu put the case for the regulation, indeed re-regulation, of technological activities, ecological footprint, and export which, for Dr. Adu, has to be delayed until world prices are favourable. Instead of selling oil by all means, the continent would be better off using its own resources domestically. This social planning of oil remains to-day neither left; nor right.

Thus, when I first got the opportunity in 2016 to meet this ‘Social Planner’ at another maiden event: the *African Review of Economics and Finance* Conference in Kumasi, I was curious to learn more about such an original thinker. Although



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Tributes to Dr George Adu

I had corresponded with him in our collective effort to edit this journal and we had both studied at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, prior to that 2016 meeting, not only was I years his junior, we had also been educated in very different academic departments. I was not sure what to expect before our meeting. Several questions ran through my mind: would the social planner be social or shy, introverted or extroverted?

Despite being a man of few words, Dr. Adu's actions spoke loudly. Mild mannered, he was respectful, acutely attentive, deeply reflective, and crystal clear in his exposition. He put the interests of others before his, including serving this journal and authors.

Writing this obituary in my office at the University of Helsinki in Finland, I am overcome with grief, but I also feel the comforting presence of this wonderful colleague and comrade. It has, indeed, been a privilege to have been a fellow traveller with Dr. George Adu. His legacy to the world is the rare mix of his personal attributes (see the tribute by Hannah Vivian Osei) with his stimulating research (see the tributes by Muazu Ibrahim and Imhotep Alagidede), including his model of the social planner, and his critical optimism that another world is possible.