

# Sussex China Seminar Series

## Perspectives on Social, Technological and Environmental Dynamics in a Changing China

**Geoff Oldham**

**Fifty years of Science and Technology in China: A Personal Account**

14<sup>th</sup> October 2014

### **Abstract**

Professor Oldham will reflect on his experiences over fifty years, starting with this first visit to the Chinese mainland in October 1964 when he wrote in Science magazine of “the beginning of the Chinese scientific revolution”. He will recall decades of collaborative work between SPRU and Chinese institutions through the 1970s and 80s, including research conducted on technology transfer in the oil industry and in the area of ‘clean coal technologies’, links between provincial level research and policy making, and his contributions to policy evaluations in the 1980s and 1990s that saw him working alongside Chinese and international colleagues and reporting directly to the Minister of Science and Technology. Tracing China’s changing science and technology policies from the early focus on self-reliance to the ‘catching up’ of the reform and opening period that paved the way for China’s emerging leadership and current patterns of international collaboration, this talk will chart the country’s ongoing transformation and the changing role of science and technology within it. It will also provide an account reflecting on personal memories that have shaped Professor Oldham’s perspectives on this process. From a train journey from Hong Kong to Europe in 1965, shortly before he helped establish SPRU, to subsequent work throughout the country - in Xinjiang, Tibet, Hainan, Sichuan, Jiangsu and elsewhere - Professor Oldham will recall some of the events and individuals that have coloured his experiences along the way.

Prof James Wilsdon (SPRU) will respond, drawing on his own work to provide an account of contemporary UK-China science and technology policy collaboration.

**Prof Geoffrey Oldham**’s early career took him from the Standard Oil Company of California and the Scientific Directorate of OECD to Sussex, where he helped start SPRU in 1966, later acting as director from 1980 to 1992. In 1970 he worked with SPRU and IDS colleagues as one of the authors of the original “Sussex Manifesto” on science and technology for development. He was also instrumental in the establishment of the International Development Research Centre, directing its Science and Technology Policy Programme for ten years and serving as Science Adviser to the President of IDRC from 1992 to 1996. In recent years he helped to establish the Science and Development Network ([www.Scidev.net](http://www.Scidev.net)). Geoffrey Oldham has served on numerous advisory bodies, for example as chair of the UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development

