

Sussex China Seminar Series

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

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Innovation for Sustainability in a Changing China: Exploring Narratives and Pathways

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Abstract

China is the global leader in renewable energy investment and has adopted ambitious targets for low carbon development. Given the environmental impacts of the country's current development trajectories and China's increasing role as a source of innovation, progress towards these targets are of vital importance to the whole world. This seminar will explore some of the key political narratives that have underpinned China's policies in these areas, and in wider debates around sustainable development. At the same time, we outline emerging Chinese narratives around the concept of innovation, and the ways these link to environmental objectives. Drawing on theoretical insights from work in the STEPS Centre (Leach et al 2010) that investigate the role of power in shaping narratives, knowledge and action around specific 'pathways to sustainability', we explore the ways in which dominant policy narratives in China are driving particular forms of innovation for sustainability, and potentially occluding or constraining others.

Biographies

Dr Adrian Ely is a senior lecturer at SPRU - Science Policy Research Unit at the University of Sussex and Deputy Director/ Head of Impact and Engagement at the ESRC STEPS Centre. He is leading the efforts to establish a STEPS Centre hub in China. He is interested in innovation for sustainability, but his research focuses in particular on international, trans-disciplinary studies of the regulation and governance of emerging biotechnologies, for example co-authoring the book 'Regulating Technology: International harmonisation and local realities' in 2010. Adrian is involved in ongoing research projects focussing on grassroots innovation for sustainability (Argentina, India), low-carbon innovation (China) and collaborative research in the life sciences (Europe-Asia).

Dr Sam Geall is Research Fellow at the Science Policy Research Unit (SPRU) at University of Sussex and Executive Editor of chinadialogue.net. His research focuses on environmental governance, media and civil society in China. His writing on Chinese affairs has appeared in many publications, including The Guardian, The New Statesman, Foreign Policy and Index on Censorship. He is on the board of the EU-China NGO Twinning Exchange and has worked as an International Coordinator for the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development (CCICED). He is also editor of China and the Environment: The Green Revolution (Zed Books, 2013).

