

News Release

14 January 2014

Contact: j.day@ids.ac.uk / +44 (0)7974 209148



Can Chinese innovation help address the climate crisis?

New research project explores lessons for 'low carbon innovation' from world's biggest polluter

A unique new UK-China project launches today, investigating the social and political drivers and implications of low-carbon innovation in China, the world's largest carbon dioxide emitter by volume, rather than focusing on technical change alone.

To mitigate climate change worldwide we need to transform the way we power our homes, travel and feed the planet's ever-growing population. And nowhere is the approach to innovation across these sectors more crucial than in China, whose decisions on this will impact the rest of the world.

With China throwing state support behind electric vehicles, solar energy and next-generation agricultural technologies, where bottom-up successes in electric two-wheelers, solar thermal and agro-ecological farming have also emerged, now is the time to understand the crucial impact of social and political issues on the successes and failures of low carbon innovations.

The ESRC-funded project 'Low Carbon Innovation in China – Prospects, Politics and Practice' will offer in-depth academic analysis seeking to inform opportunities for low-carbon transitions in China and beyond, with case studies spanning energy, mobility and agriculture.

Dr David Tyfield, Co-Investigator of the project said: "The success or failure of low carbon innovations rests not on how superior the technology is, but on how people use the technology and the issues of power that surround it.

"This project is exploring these crucial social dynamics where they are arguably of greatest significance for global prospects of a 21st century shift to sustainability: China," Dr Tyfield added.

This new three-year project is an international collaboration between researchers in the UK and at leading institutions in China, led by Professor John Urry at Lancaster University.

Notes to editor:

- Dr David Tyfield, Co-investigator of this project and Co-director of the Centre for Mobilities Research at Lancaster University, is available for interview
- Videos explaining more about the project, and other resources are online: <http://steps-centre.org/project/low-carbon-china/>

- The research institutions involved are: UK - Lancaster University, University of Sussex, The School of Oriental and African Studies; China – Tsinghua University, the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Centre for Chinese Agricultural Policy

For more information:

Julia Day, Communications Manager j.day@ids.ac.uk / +44 (0)7974 209148

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) is the UK's largest organisation for funding research on economic and social issues. It supports independent, high quality research which has an impact on business, the public sector and the third sector. The ESRC's total budget for 2012/13 is £205 million. At any one time the ESRC supports over 4,000 researchers and postgraduate students in academic institutions and independent research institutes. More at www.esrc.ac.uk