

Green innovation towards sustainability: perspectives and practices from emerging economies

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Project description:

This PhD project aims to explore green and sustainable innovation practices in tackling environmental issues such as climate change in emerging economies. Many studies have argued that ‘business as usual’ is unsustainable and the environment which we rely on is becoming more and more unstable (e.g. IPCC, 2014; WWF, 2016). In order to find the solution to develop a sustainable global economy ‘that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (WCED, 1987, p. 41), numerous concepts and theories have been proposed suggesting more environmentally friendly and economically sustainable ways of doing business, such as circular economy, green innovation. Despite the research interests in the field, there is a lack of representation of how emerging economies are tackling environmental and sustainable issues rather than being seen as the cause of the most problems (Moon & Shen, 2010). Yet, emerging economies are playing crucial and influential roles in the world economy, the sustainable development of them is undoubtedly vital for the entire planet (UNEP, 2011).

For example, China is by far the largest emerging economy, in 2011 it overtook Japan as the world’s second-biggest economy (BBC News, 2011). After the US withdrew from the landmark Paris agreement, it has put China under the spotlight to work towards the global climate change target by reducing fossil fuel emissions (BBC News, 2017). Recently China is piloting a carbon emission trading system that has the potential to make a significant and long-term impact, yet, like many other sustainable practices, how this system is understood and implemented in practice remain unclear (Deng, Li, Pang, & Duan, 2018). With the distinctive institutional and cultural context, there is a call for exploring green innovation practices and understandings in emerging economies, such as China (Kolk & Pinkse, 2008; Yang & Rivers, 2009; Zhang, Peng, Ma, & Shen, 2017).

Hence, this PhD studentship invites applications that explore green innovation practices from any emerging economy context. It offers an opportunity to examine how grassroot responses and contextual perspectives can contribute to new understandings of innovation, sustainability and organisation studies in general.

We are open to a wide range of perspectives, concepts and contexts that generate new understandings to identify practices of green innovation and environmental sustainability, yet the successful proposal would have a clear focus and rationale on the chosen topic and context. The proposed research project should be in the context of any emerging economy. It can be in either private and/or public sectors, in either small enterprises or larger organisations. The research methodology will be mostly qualitative, for example, ethnographic observations, shadowing, interviews, focus groups etc. Mixed methods are welcome as well.

About the supervisors:

Richard is an organisational researcher with a particular interest in the links between entrepreneurial activity, innovation and environmental sustainability. He has examined the nature and consequences of growth in different organisational contexts, including small artisanal food producers, manufacturing businesses and social enterprises.

Wenjin's research interests are in the areas of organization studies, corporate sustainability, the dynamics of language and communication, and Chinese classical philosophies. Her current work is in the topics of discursive leadership, Daoism, endogenous understanding of ethics and sustainability.

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