



Talk: Technology, Jobs and a Lower Carbon Future

Event Sub Title:

Methods, Substance and Ideas for Informal Economy: The Case of Rice in India

Speaker:

Prof Barbara Harriss-Whyte, Emeritus Professor of Development Studies, Oxford University

Date / Time:

July 5, 2013 - 4:00pm - 5:15pm

Venue:

10th Floor, Auditorium, Pixel A, APU

Abstract:

Informal economies, out of state regulative control, are neglected in debates about climate change and the long-awaited materials revolution. Our trans-disciplinary pilot project is developing methods for the study of the materiality of the informal economy, appropriate for widespread application. Uniting life cycle analysis (from environmental science) with value chain/ production system models and analysis (from management science and economics) and decent work criteria (from labour studies), it explores how capital, technology and labour are combined to produce commodities, solid and liquid waste and GHGs. Adapting multi-criteria analysis it also explores the diffusion, costs and trade-offs of technologies which lower GHGs and improve livelihoods.

Greenhouse gases, water and energy are chosen as indicators of materiality, costs/ returns and labour as indicators of economic activity and the system of rice production and distribution is taken for case study. Rice was chosen because of the research team's familiarity with the complexity of its production-distribution systems NOT because it is a big polluter.

A mix of secondary and primary data has been and is being collected from three rice growing regions of India's semi-arid tropics. Four production technologies are being studied (high yielding technology, systems of rice intensification, organic rice for supermarkets and rain fed rice); and four channels of distribution (informal distribution, registered and partially regulated market systems, supermarket supply chains and the state's public distribution systems).

A Note on the Speaker:

Barbara Harriss-White is Emeritus Professor of Development Studies, Oxford University, former Director of Queen Elizabeth House and founder-Director of Oxford's Contemporary

South Asian Studies Programme. Having driven from Cambridge to New Delhi in 1969 to climb in the Kishtwar Himal, she has been studying and teaching about India's development ever since. She prefers to research through primary field work. Her main foci have been on the one hand: agrarian change, rural markets, local capitalism and the informal economy, and on the other: many aspects of deprivation and their relation to markets and public policy. She has (co)written and (co) edited 40 books, published over 200 scholarly papers and chapters, supervised 35 doctoral students and worked short term for 7 UN agencies. She is active in the UK's campaign against climate change.