



PRESS RELEASE

New International Consortium on Innovation Set to Address Global Challenges

Wednesday 7 September

[SPRU](#) – the Science Policy Research Unit at the University of Sussex is celebrating its 50th anniversary as a leading centre of research and teaching at the forefront of thinking on science, technology and innovation by hosting a major conference from 7-9 September 2016. The conference is based on the overarching theme of ‘Transforming Innovation’.

SPRU believes that innovation policy has the potential to help tackle some of the world’s most central challenges, such as sustainable development and inequality and it has developed a [research strategy](#) that is focused on long-term transformative change and innovation across different sectors, societies and structures.

The conference provides an opportunity for academics, policy makers and civil society actors to come together to will explore the nature, determinants and direction of innovation and its contribution to meeting current and future global challenges such as climate change, economic growth, sustainability and security.

Rooted now in the School of Business Management and Economics, SPRU is focused on responding effectively to these interconnected challenges by fundamentally rethinking how we organise, govern, direct and accelerate innovation so that it contributes to long-term sustainable development, economic progress and social justice.

With this objective, at the opening session, a new initiative: the Transformative Innovation Policy Consortium (TIPC) will be launched. The Consortium will bring together global actors to examine and research innovation systems as well as explore the future of innovation policy.

Alongside SPRU, the founding organisations are; Colciencias, the Government of Colombia’s Department of Science, Technology and Innovation; the National Research Foundation in South Africa; and Forskningsradet: The Research Council in Norway, with a further cohort anticipated before the end of the pilot phase in 2016/17.

Professor Johan Schot, Director of SPRU said: *“At the same time that we celebrate this significant milestone for our organisation, we see that the world is facing an increasing number of crises and persistent problems. The modern way of provisioning our basic needs is not sustainable in the long run, and is already causing climate change, profound societal turmoil, tensions and conflict on an unprecedented scale. It is clear that we cannot globalise our current ways of providing food, energy, mobility, healthcare and water. TIPC aims to analyse our current world – which is in deep transition - and develop a new, shared rationale and vision for innovation policy.*

The Consortium’s key objective is to examine and expand on current innovation frames and approaches to assist in solving urgent social and economic issues of our time. TIPC also seeks to engage in policy design and experimentation, training and skill formation. The project involves building new platforms for a mutual learning process between the Global North and South and between research and policy.

Alejandro Olaya Davila, Deputy Director of Colombia’s Colciencias said: *“Science, technology and innovation fundamentally contribute to promoting progress in Colombia. They provide solutions to the great challenges we face in building a long-lasting and stable peace. Our country has initiated a transformation phase which requires rethinking the ST&I policies of today - in order to rise to the occasion of this historic challenge.”*

Yet, how do we ensure that the ‘right’ innovations occur? The TIPC is based on a new framing of innovation (Innovation 3.0¹) that recognises that negative impacts or externalities of innovation can overtake positive contributions. This frame focuses on mobilising the power of innovation for addressing a wide range of societal challenges including inequality, unemployment and climate change. It emphasises policies for directing socio-technical systems into socially desirable directions and embeds processes of change in society.

“The directionality that the grand societal challenges provide is increasingly accepted by our research and innovation systems. Advanced and better science, technology and innovation are pointed to as the way forward. Yet, we also experience how the grand challenges entail challenges to ourselves as a research funding organization. The challenge of addressing the grand challenges - to cite a well-known title – has come to stay and is inviting us out of our comfort zone. At The Research Council of Norway many of us have been inspired by SPRU to venture out and experiment these last years. We are excited by the prospect of future "crossover" collaborations for continued learning and development - as envisioned by the Transformative Innovation Policy Consortium.” Anne Kjersti Fahlvik, Executive Director Division for Innovation, The Research Council of Norway,

Across his entire career, SPRU’s founder Chris Freeman embraced an ‘economics of hope’ – a principle which embodies a positive view of our potential to direct innovation, creativity and new technologies towards more sustainable and inclusive futures. It is with this ethos that the new Consortium will look to shape innovation over the next fifty years and beyond.

¹ *Framing Innovation Policy for Transformative Change: Innovation Policy 3.0*, Johan Schot, W. Edward Steinmueller www.johanschot.com (2016)

Notes to Editors:

1. The opening session will comprise a speech by Professor Johan Schot on 'The research and policy agenda for a world in transition' followed by a signing ceremony by founding members of the Consortium. The session takes place 09.30-10.30 on Wednesday 7 September, Jubilee Lecture Theatre, University of Sussex, Falmer, BN1 9SL. Professor Johan Schot is available for interviews. Please contact Charlotte Humma: C.Humma@sussex.ac.uk / 01273 873202 to arrange a time or Geraldine Bloomfield on g.bloomfield@sussex.ac.uk 07730977705
2. [SPRU](#) is internationally recognised as a leading centre of research on science, technology and innovation policy at the University of Sussex. SPRU is at the forefront of new ideas, problem-orientated research, inspiring teaching, and creative, high impact engagement with decision makers across government, business and civil society.
3. **About the University of Sussex:** The University of Sussex was the first of the new wave of UK universities founded in the 1960s, receiving its Royal Charter in August 1961. It is among the leading research universities in the UK, with 98 per cent of its research rated as world leading, internationally excellent or internationally recognised (REF 2014).
4. [Colciencias](#) - Guides the design, orientation, and evaluation of National Science, Technology and Innovation Policy and its corresponding implementation, by the National System of Science, Technology and Innovation and thereby contributing to the competitive and equitable social and economic development of Colombia.
5. The South African [National Research Foundation](#) is an independent statutory body established through the National Research Foundation Act. It is a government mandated research and science development agency that funds research, the development of high-end Human Capacity and critical research infrastructure to promote knowledge production across all disciplinary fields. The NRF promotes South African research interests across the country and internationally, and together with research institutions, business, industry and international partners we build bridges between research communities for mutual benefit.
6. [The Research Council of Norway](#) works to add value to the research system by facilitating research that actors in the system could not successfully achieve working on their own. The Research Council seeks to promote an integrated R&D system that supplies high-quality research, develops knowledge for dealing with key challenges to society and the business sector, fosters dynamic interaction within the R&D system nationally and internationally, and creates a framework for learning, application and innovation.