

As Good As Old?

The Reinvention of Technologies for Sustainability

High profile examples of reintroduced (or reinnovated) technologies which have previously been commercialised are relatively easy to identify within the sustainability field: wind power, electric cars, bioplastics. These technologies are becoming viable again due to factors such as the rising price of oil and demands for greener products.

However, many good ideas never reach the market at the time of their invention, and fall off the innovation pathway due to unfavourable circumstances. Reinventing these previously overlooked technologies for today's world is becoming increasingly relevant as technological requirements are changing, and sustainability considerations influence the innovation process. Revisiting and reinventing forgotten ideas will provide a useful source of sustainable technologies to address some of these issues. However, the concept of reinvention has received little recognition, and little is known about this area;

- ⇒ How many useful inventions lie forgotten, dormant or lost in research archives or elsewhere?
- ⇒ What is the potential impact of these technologies on sustainability?
- ⇒ How can the best of these ideas be identified and exploited?

Oakdene Hollins is running a one year long scoping project, funded by the TSB, to investigate these questions. Within this project we aim to:

1. Produce a clear definition and model defining reinvention in this context,
2. Develop and implement methodologies for identifying forgotten technologies,
3. Assess the potential impact of reinvention on sustainability,
4. Establish a community of practice in this field.

The project team are seeking interested parties to contribute to and influence this work. We are particularly interested in learning about examples of reinvention, application in existing innovation models and methods for evaluating the impact of inventions. Any input would be valued – please get in touch! Further information can be found on our website - http://www.oakdenehollins.co.uk/sti_emergent.html

A free to attend workshop is being held on the 5th October at the Dana Centre (Science Museum, London). To find out more or register please use the contact details below.