

# **ESRC Rising Powers and Interdependent Futures Programme: Overview of potential synergies and impact activities**

*Background Note for the First Principal Investigators Workshop  
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## **1. Introduction and Overview**

The ESRC funded “Rising Powers and Interdependent Futures” research programme aims to provide a better understanding of how emerging economies, such as (but not exclusively) Brazil, China, India and Russia, are impacting on global economic, political and social governance, and the consequences that arise from this for the UK. This is an ambitious agenda. The ESRC has provided over £6 million of core research funding to the programme. This has been dispersed in three distinct phases. Phase 1 (2010-2011) involved 12 micro-data ‘pathfinder’ studies that sought to build research links with collaborators in India and Brazil drawing on existing secondary datasets held in Brazil and India. Phase 2 (2010-2011) financed nine research network grants and opened the scope of the programme to a wider range of ‘Rising Power’ countries. The network grants were geared to strengthening collaborative links between UK and Rising Power academics through networking activities, including research visits, conferences and embedded visiting fellowships. Phase 3 (2012-16) accounts for the bulk of the funding on the programme. Twelve major research studies have been awarded, with individual grants ranging from just under £300 to £700K. Four of these studies are with project teams that had obtained research network grants in Phase 2. None of the Phase 1 pathfinder projects were funded in either Phase 2 or 3.

In August 2013 the ESRC appointed Dr Khalid Nadvi (University of Manchester and a grant holder in both Phase 2 and Phase 3) as the overall Research Programme Co-ordinator. The Co-ordinator’s position, which commenced in October 2013 and runs for three years, has three core tasks:

- First, to help draw out synergies between the distinct projects funded through the ESRC initiative, with a particular focus on synthesising key findings.
- Second, to disseminate these findings more widely amongst the policy and research communities in the UK, EU, *and* the Rising Power states, and through the media to the wider public.

- Third, to explore, in consultation with the distinct projects as well as the policy community, how the findings from the studies funded by the ESRC better shape our understanding of ‘Rising Powers and Interdependent Futures’ and point to areas that require further research.

Since October, Khalid Nadvi and Corinna Braun-Munzinger (a University of Manchester funded PhD student whose studentship is directly tied to the Co-Ordinator post) met with all the Principal Investigators (PI) and team members of the twelve projects funded under Phase 3. With the exception of two meetings that were conducted by phone or skype, the rest of these discussions were held face to face with Khalid and Corinna visiting individual teams at their home institutions. Making personal contacts with each of the PIs on the other teams, getting a better insight into what each project is doing, the challenges that they are currently facing and the perspectives of individual project teams on the development of the overall programme has been extremely helpful. One very critical observation for us was the genuine enthusiasm, observed in all our discussions, for exploring links between projects and breaking out of the ‘silos’ in which research teams often work. There are thus good prospects that this ESRC programme could have a wider impact that underline the benefits of the ESRC’s investment in this area of research.

This note summarises our discussions. It identifies what we have gleaned from these extensive face to face dialogues, and our thoughts on areas where we may have common interests and concerns. In addition to these potential synergies we also set out some of our initial thoughts on impact activities that could help strengthen the overall engagement of the Rising Powers programme with academic, policy and wider public audiences. The aim behind the note is to help contextualise the discussions that we collectively have at the first PI workshop in Manchester, and point to areas that may warrant further thinking on our part. The note is set out as follows. In order to explore areas of synergies we first provide an overview of the main agendas of each project, and consider the regional focus, country coverage, theoretical frameworks and methods adopted by the different projects. We then go on to identify a number of cross-cutting themes, as well as common challenges, which may hold potential for exchange and collaboration among projects. We end by turning to possible impact activities.

## **2. Core Research Agendas**

We begin first by briefly outlining the core research agendas of each of the twelve projects (further details of these can be found in the appendices). By putting down our understanding of what each project is addressing we hope a clearer narrative may emerge with regards to connections between projects. These are set out in the order in which we met the various teams. Each project is referred to by the PI name. Our apologies in advance that these are very crudely summarised briefs of what are fascinating and complex projects. They do not capture the nuances within each project, but the aim is to give a sense of our reading of what each project has as its core research agenda.

- Philip Shapira's project (Manchester Business School) is concerned with exploring how China and Russia are engaging in developing high-end 'breakthrough' technologies through a focus on the nano-technology sector. Working with collaborators in key science research institutions in both countries the project seeks to understand how nano-tech development has taken place in China and Russia, the role of institutional support (including in particular state institutional interventions) in these developments, and the implications that may arise from this for other developed and developing countries.
- Brian Salter's project (King's College, London) is also focusing on innovation, specifically bio-medical innovations in China and India especially in the areas of regenerative medicine including stem cell research. It is also concerned with the issue of values and ethics behind these innovations and how value based governance in China and India may challenge Western models of ethics and values in this area, and the consequences that arise from this. Brian's project builds on an earlier network grant funded in Phase 2
- Frauke Urban's project (SOAS) looks at China 'going global' through the lens of hydropower. It explores how large Chinese (state owned) firms are investing in major dams in Ghana, Nigeria, Malaysia and Cambodia. Research is being carried out also within China to explore the political economy behind Chinese investment in infrastructural development. The project aims to better understand the consequences that arise from this both for local communities where such investments take place, including on social and environmental aspects, and the ways in which the 'Chinese model' might challenge existing Western norms on infrastructural development.
- Simon Deakin's project (Cambridge) explores the relationship between the evolution of legal regulatory frameworks and judicial practices in Russia and China and the implications that arise from this for financial developments and the effective enforcement of contracts. The project is thus exploring legal transitions in these large, 'former' communist (is China still 'communist' – open question?) societies and their implications for FDI flows and the enforcement of private contracts. The project is also building up a 'leximetric' database on legal and regulatory reforms in both countries.
- Caroline Humphrey's project (Cambridge) focuses on the border regions between China, Russia and Mongolia. This project, which again builds on an earlier network grant, is interested in exploring the notions and practices of state, trade and identity and how these have been shaped and reshaped in these border regions during the Communist and post-Communist eras. These borders which were formerly highly militarised and impermeable have now rapidly become permeable with extensive trade networks, labour and commodity flows. The construct of Russia as the 'modern' has now been replaced by China, with new 'border cities' developing new identities and regional practices, including Mongolia's negotiation of its own position in this shifting terrain.
- Stephan White's project (Glasgow) explores inequality in China and Russia and its implications for political instability in these countries. This is done through qualitative

and quantitative analysis of absolute measures of inequality, perceptions of inequality amongst different segments of civil society and of the state and the nature of responses to this at both the state and civil society level. The project thus considers how the growing inequalities in wealth distribution in these (former?) socialist economies coexist with or challenge the rise of autocratic politics.

- Marcus Power's project (Durham) looks at the role of China and Brazil in the promoting low carbon transitions in southern Africa. The project explores how Chinese and Brazilian energy firms have engaged with investments in low carbon and renewable power generation in South Africa and Mozambique (in particular solar and wind power). The project is conducting interviews with business and state elites in South Africa and Mozambique, with key energy firms in Brazil and China and with local communities where such low carbon energy projects have been implemented in Mozambique and South Africa. Central to the project is thus an interest in innovation, the role of Rising Powers in driving this, and the community impacts that arise from these RP led interventions.
- John Heathershaw's project (Exeter) interrogates the narratives and practices of conflict management by Russia and China in Central Asia. The project is primarily undertaking research in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and comparing both the nature of conflict resolution by the Russian and Chinese state in local conflicts in these areas as well as contrasting these with the liberal Western models of conflict resolution. Thus the project is undertaking discursive analysis, elite interviews in China, Russia and the central Asian case study countries as well as ethnographic research in the sites where conflicts have emerged.
- Kataryna Wolczuk's project (Birmingham) is also concerned with Russia's engagement with its near abroad and explores how Russia has sought to export its governance model to countries that were formerly part of the Soviet Union by building particular sets of bilateral ties with Ukraine, Belarus and Armenia that are structured around the Russian led Eurasian Customs Union (proposed as an alternative to closer integration with the European Union). The project also explores how this engagement confronts and challenges the EU's attempt to integrate these economies into the wider European region. The project involves research in Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia, Russia and the EU, and is, in light of recent events in Ukraine, exceptionally timely.
- Ian Scoones' project (IDS, Sussex) asks whether China and Brazil are bringing in new paradigms to agricultural development aid policies in Sub Saharan Africa. In addition to research in China and Brazil the project is undertaking work in Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, where Chinese and Brazilian aid and investment interventions to support African agricultural projects have been undertaken. The project is working closely with agricultural scientists in China and Brazil as well as in each of the African case study countries. It draws on detailed ethnographic research, discursive practices and elite interviews.
- James Manor's project (School of Advanced Studies, London) analyses the political and policy processes through which Brazil, India, China and South Africa have

intensified efforts to tackle poverty and inequality since 2002. The project explores how and why political actors have chosen to implement specific social policy interventions to reduce poverty and inequality and what kinds of political coalitions and interests might drive these government strategies. Located within a political science framework the project is undertaking research with politicians, bureaucrats and policy elites in each of the four countries.

- Finally, Khalid Nadi's project (Manchester) is investigating how China, Brazil and India as Rising Powers are engaging with, challenging and possibly reshaping the debate on labour standards in global production and trade. The project is carrying out research on labour standards and corporate social responsibility initiatives with Rising Power firms including those that are internationalising and building global production networks of their own. It is also conducting research with civil society organisations in these three countries on how they mobilise and influence local norms around labour and social standards in production and finally it is investigating how the Chinese, Brazilian and Indian states enforce labour laws and engage in the formulation of labour and social standards in key international arenas and trade policy debates.

### **3. Academic Disciplines and Theoretical Frameworks**

As one can see from the brief overviews above, each of these projects has a rich and substantive research agenda. While one could broadly argue that all of the projects focus on issues of political economy, multidisciplinarity is a key feature across most of the projects. Projects draw from a variety of disciplines across the social sciences, with a majority clustered around the fields of political science and area and development studies (see Table 1 below). Further disciplines covered include law, management and business studies as well as anthropology. This diversity allows for the exploration of similar topics from different angles, for instance by approaching innovation in Rising Powers from a business as well as from a political science and from a geography perspective.

Accordingly, concepts used in the different theoretical frameworks cluster around diverse bodies of literature, including the following:

- Political economy, power analysis, political science, comparative politics, international relations, peace and conflict studies
- Law and regulatory frameworks
- Innovation studies, science and technology studies, management, international business, economics, institutional economics, global value chains
- Social anthropology, ethnography, sociology
- Geography, development studies

Many of the projects combine these concepts into interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks and work with teams composed of researchers from different academic backgrounds. For example, Wolczuk's project draws on law and international relations in building a conceptual framework to analyse Russian export of governance to post-Soviet countries. Salter's project combines political economy with global value chain analysis and science and technology

studies to interrogate global political forces in biomedical innovation in China and India. Nadvi's project uses frameworks from economic geography, development studies and business studies in exploring how Rising Power actors are shaping the 'rules of trade' on labour standards in production. This interdisciplinarity is also reflected in the methods used across the different projects. Some projects combine ethnographic and anthropological field research at the micro level with macro level analysis of foreign policy processes (most notably the study of border relations and the shaping of border communities and cities between Russia, China and Mongolia (Humphrey project); or the study on the impact of Chinese and Brazilian interventions on agricultural development in four Sub-Saharan African countries (Scoones project)).

While PIs emphasize the benefits of such multidisciplinary approaches in order to achieve a better understanding of current processes of social and economic change, working across disciplines can pose challenges in bringing together different ways of thinking and different methodological approaches. Such challenges tend to be intensified the larger and the more geographically spread out project teams are. Managing multidisciplinary (and multicultural) teams is a key task faced by many of the PIs.

Multi-disciplinarity is thus a strength and a potential challenge for the programme as a whole. In terms of exploring synergies, we need to be aware that in most cases we work within our specific disciplinary boundaries and tend to produce academic outputs for specific disciplinary audiences. One area where we could consider how we could build on the sum of the parts as it were is to see how we might work to integrate the distinct disciplinary, theoretical and methodological approaches utilised across the various projects to explore areas of common interests. Thus, in what ways could we bring together the disciplinarily grounded, studies that say use anthropology, political science, and international relations to consider the interaction of Russia (and China) with its bordering regions? This is therefore one area where it would be useful for us to think further in our discussions at the Manchester workshop,

**Table 1: Academic disciplines and theoretical frameworks**

<b>Project</b>	<b>PI</b>	<b>Main discipline</b>	<b>Elements of the theoretical framework</b>
<i>Law Development and Finance in Rising Powers,</i>	Simon Deakin, Cambridge	Law	institutional economics, corporate governance
<i>State strategies of governance in global biomedical innovation: the impact of China and India,</i>	Brian Salter, King's College	Political Science	political economy, GVC, science and technology studies, political science/governance, innovation studies
<i>Emerging Technologies, Trajectories and Implications of Next Generation Innovation Systems Development in China and Russia,</i>	Philip Shapira, Manchester	Management & Business Studies	innovation systems, management
<i>Rising Powers, Labour Standards and the Governance of Global Production Networks,</i>	Khalid Nadvi, Manchester	Area & Development Studies	global production networks, global value chains, development studies, political economy, international business
<i>China goes global: A comparative study of Chinese hydropower dams in Africa and Asia,</i>	Frauke Urban, SOAS	Area & Development Studies	political ecology, Asian drivers, power analysis
<i>Where Rising Powers Meet – The North Asian Border Between China and Russia,</i>	Caroline Humphrey, Cambridge	Social Anthropology	social anthropology, comparing Chinese and Russian political economies, political culture/ideology/religion, ethnicity/ identity
<i>The Rising Powers, Clean Development and the Low Carbon Transition in Sub-Saharan Africa,</i>	Marcus Power, Durham	Area & Development Studies	geography, science and technology studies, international relations, development studies
<i>Rising Powers: Unequal Powers, Authoritarian Powers, Unstable Powers?,</i>	Stephen White, Glasgow	Political Science	political science, comparative politics
<i>Rising Powers and Conflict Management in Central Asia,</i>	John Heathershaw, Exeter	International Relations	international relations, political economy, peace and conflict studies
<i>Russia and the EU in the Common Neighbourhood: Export of Governance and Legal (In) Compatibility,</i>	Kataryna Wolczuk, Birmingham	Area & Development Studies	international relations, law
<i>Rising Powers in African agriculture: Are China and Brazil bringing new paradigms to agricultural development cooperation?,</i>	Ian Scoones, IDS, Sussex	Area & Development Studies	ethnography of aid, anthropology, political science, international relations, political economy, policy processes, social imaginaries
<i>Expanding, Not Shrinking Social Programmes: The Politics of New Policies to Tackle Poverty and Inequality in Brazil, India, China and South Africa,</i>	James Manor, SAS, London	Political Science	political science, sociology, economics

#### **4. Country Coverage and Comparative Scope**

As specified in the ESRC call for proposals for the research programme, the main countries studied through the various projects are Brazil, China, India and Russia. Of these ‘Rising Powers’, eleven projects take China as one of their case studies, five study India, five adopt Brazil as a case study and six include Russia within their country coverage (see Table 2 below). Only one project includes South Africa as a Rising Power as part of comparison of social policy-making, while another project uses South Africa as a case study to analyse Chinese and Brazilian influences in promoting low carbon transitions in Sub-Saharan Africa. Apart from the Rising Powers themselves, several other countries are also included in the analysis, as summarised in Table 2.

Broadly speaking, projects can be divided into those analysing internal dynamics in Rising Powers (7 projects: Deakin, Humphrey, Manor, Nadvi, Salter, Shapira, and White) and those investigating the impact of Rising Powers on other countries (5 projects: Heathershaw, Power, Scoones, Urban, and Wolczuk). Out of the latter, three projects look at the impact of Rising Powers in developing country contexts (mainly in Sub-Saharan Africa but also South East Asia – namely Power, Scoones, and Urban,), and three projects focus on the influence of Russia and China on their immediate neighbours (Heathershaw, Humphrey and Wolczuk).

All projects do some kind of comparative work across countries, including comparisons across Rising Power and comparisons of Rising Power engagement across different countries (see Table 2 and Table 4). Interestingly, five projects (Deakin, Heathershaw, Humphrey, Shapira and White) have as their core focus a China-Russia comparison, albeit from a variety of distinct analytic angles, including legal, political science, anthropological and business perspectives. The agendas for the China-Russia comparative studies are quite separate, from a focus on innovation practices, political processes, legal and institutional frameworks, the anthropology of border engagements, to an international relations perspective on Chinese and Russian conflict management in Central Asia (see Table 3). Further, eight of the projects are undertaking research in three or more countries across different continents, opening up the prospects for broader comparative analysis, while also posing project management challenges in terms of logistics and coordination of geographically dispersed teams.

Again, this raises some important points of commonality. Can we, for example, through the eleven studies that address China as a Rising Power, be able to say something collectively that will give us a better insight into both internal dynamics within China as well as Chinese engagements externally. Similarly, five of the projects have an explicit China-Russia comparison which suggests a potential for exploring this particular set of Rising Power interactions.

## 5. Shared Themes

In addition to the country coverage and country comparisons, a number of cross-cutting themes can be seen across several or all of the projects. We identify the following:

- i. The impact of the Rising Powers on *governance* issues at different levels is not unsurprisingly a common thread addressed to different ways in *all* of the projects. In this context, some projects focus on the analysis of formal laws and regulations, whereas others place more emphasis on informal norms and values. However, from discussions with the projects it also appears that interactions between formal and informal rules and governance channels can play an important role in the context of Rising Powers and their international engagement, which may deserve further exploration. So how do we view governance, in what ways might we consider the Rising Powers as challenging existing, Western takes on governance, and what consequences arise from this become an area where further discussion might be useful.
- ii. The role of the *State* in the economy and in society is an aspect that has repeatedly been highlighted during conversations with different projects. In this context, some researchers also pointed to the need for further theoretical work, as existing Western-based analytical frameworks may be challenged when applying them to the Rising Powers context. How do we view the State in China, Russia, India and Brazil? In what ways could we explore this further to consider whether the role of the State in these economies points to a distinctly different narrative on the neo-liberal state that has dominated Western discourse?
- iii. Four projects cover *innovation* (Power, Salter, Scoones and Shapira,) although often from quite different perspectives. Nevertheless, there are areas where some overlaps would be worth exploring – for example, what can we learn when we counterpose the findings from the nano-technology innovations project (Shapira) with those from the bio-medical innovations project (Salter)? Similarly, the projects focusing on low carbon technology innovations (Power) and on agricultural development practices (Scoones) could both provide useful insights into how key Rising Powers (in both cases China and Brazil) engage in the spread of new forms of potentially inclusive technological innovations which have wider developmental consequences.
- iv. Connected to the point above six of the projects have an explicit *development* agenda (Manor, Nadví, Power, Scoones, Urban) in terms of assessing how Rising Powers through various interventions shape distinct aspects of developmental processes, from environmental technologies, agricultural development, infrastructure and community impacts, through an understanding of consequences for labour in production, and via research on the politics of social provisioning.
- v. Three projects explore *social and political inequalities* within Rising Power countries and raise questions on political stability (Humphrey, Manor, White.). Two of these projects (Manor and White) are located within political sciences and seek to

understand how political coalitions, interests and settlements negotiate the growing inequality and consequent political and social instability arising within the Rising Powers.

- vi. Finally, six projects address to varying degrees issues of ***social and/or environmental sustainability*** (Manor, Nadvi, Power, Scoones, Urban, White). While these projects do so from different angles, some of them (Manor, Nadvi, Power, Urban) suggest that the conventional view (often touted in the popular media) that the Rising Powers are likely to drive a ‘race to the bottom’ in terms of social and environmental norms may well be challenged.

Table 3 below illustrates some of the potential overlaps. It would be worth focusing more closely at the Manchester workshop as to which of these cross-cutting themes attract interest—both through bilateral links between individual projects, through smaller groupings of project, and for all twelve projects. And what might we want, and realistically be able to, explore as additional outputs or insights in terms of these cross cutting themes?

**Table 2: Countries Studied**

	'Rising Powers' Countries					Countries where RPs are 'engaging'	
	Brazil	China	India	Russia	South Africa	Asia	Sub-Saharan Africa
<i>Law Development and Finance in Rising Powers</i> , Simon Deakin, University of Cambridge	X	X	X	X			
<i>State strategies of governance in global biomedical innovation: the impact of China and India</i> , Brian Salter, King's College London		X	X				
<i>Emerging Technologies, Trajectories and Implications of Next Generation Innovation Systems Development in China and Russia</i> , Philip Shapira, University of Manchester		X		X			
<i>Rising Powers, Labour Standards and the Governance of Global Production Networks</i> , Khalid Nadvi, University of Manchester	X	X	X				
<i>China goes global: A comparative study of Chinese hydropower dams in Africa and Asia</i> , Frauke Urban, SOAS, London		X				Cambodia, Malaysia	Ghana, Nigeria
<i>Where Rising Powers Meet – The North Asian Border Between China and Russia</i> , Caroline Humphrey, University of Cambridge		X		X		Mongolia	
<i>The Rising Powers, Clean Development and the Low Carbon Transition in Sub-Saharan Africa</i> , Marcus Power, University of Durham	X	X	X				South Africa, Mozambique
<i>Rising Powers: Unequal Powers, Authoritarian Powers, Unstable Powers?</i> , Stephan White, University of Glasgow		X		X			
<i>Rising Powers and Conflict Management in Central Asia</i> , John Heathershaw, University of Exeter		X		X		Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan	
<i>Russia and the EU in the Common Neighbourhood: Export of Governance and Legal (In) Compatibility</i> , Kataryna Wolczuk, University of Birmingham				X		Armenia, Belarus, Ukraine	
<i>Rising Powers in African agriculture: Are China and Brazil bringing new paradigms to agricultural development cooperation?</i> , Ian Scoones, Institute of Development Studies, Sussex	X	X					Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique, Zimbabwe
<i>Expanding, Not Shrinking Social Programmes: The Politics of New Policies to Tackle Poverty and Inequality in Brazil, India, China and South Africa</i> , James Manor, University of London	X	X	X		X		

**Table 3: Project groupings around cross-cutting research themes**

Rising Powers and Interdependent Futures Projects	National/ Global Governance & the State	Innovation	Social and Environmental Sustainability	Inequality, Social & Political In/Stability	China – Russia Comparisons	Development Impacts
<i>Law Development and Finance in Rising Powers,</i> Deakin, Cambridge	X				X	
<i>State strategies of governance in global biomedical innovation: the impact of China and India,</i> Salter, King's College London	X	X				
<i>Emerging Technologies, Trajectories and Implications of Next Generation Innovation Systems Development in China and Russia,</i> Shapira, Manchester	X	X			X	
<i>Rising Powers, Labour Standards and the Governance of Global Production Networks,</i> Nadvi, Manchester	X		X			X
<i>China goes global: A comparative study of Chinese hydropower dams in Africa and Asia,</i> Urban, SOAS, London	X		X			X
<i>Where Rising Powers Meet – The North Asian Border Between China and Russia,</i> Humphrey, Cambridge	X		X	X	X	
<i>The Rising Powers, Clean Development and the Low Carbon Transition in Sub-Saharan Africa,</i> Power, Durham	X	X	X			X
<i>Rising Powers: Unequal Powers, Authoritarian Powers, Unstable Powers?,</i> White, Glasgow	X		X	X	X	
<i>Rising Powers and Conflict Management in Central Asia,</i> Heathershaw, Exeter	X			X	X	
<i>Russia and the EU in the Common Neighbourhood: Export of Governance and Legal (In) Compatibility,</i> Wolczuk, Birmingham	X			X		
<i>Rising Powers in African agriculture: Are China and Brazil bringing new paradigms to agricultural development cooperation?,</i> Scoones, IDS, Sussex	X	X	X			X
<i>Expanding, Not Shrinking Social Programmes: The Politics of New Policies to Tackle Poverty and Inequality in Brazil, India, China and South Africa,</i> Manor, SAS, London			X	X		X

## **6. Research Methods**

In line with the broad disciplinary scope of the programme, the twelve projects draw on a variety of methodological tools to examine dynamics in the Rising Powers and their global impact. Nevertheless, a number of commonalities can be identified from the overview in Table 4.

First, all projects carry out qualitative interviews with respondents in Rising Power countries, including elite policy actors from the state and civil society. In some cases these are combined with an analysis of quantitative data or with further qualitative methods.

Second, most projects carry out some analysis of policy-processes within the Rising Powers. For some, this approach is central to their area of investigation (e.g. a comparison of policy-making on social programmes), while others use an analysis of foreign policy processes in Rising Powers to complement bottom-up field research in third countries, such as the project on Rising Powers in African agriculture.

Third, about half of the projects use some quantitative data analysis. Out of these, two projects carry out their own quantitative surveys, one project is establishing a new leximetric database of legal documents and one project uses bibliometric analysis.

Finally, three projects engage in ethnographic and anthropological fieldwork aimed at identifying thick narratives, on topics including a comparison of Chinese and Russian border cities, Rising Powers outward foreign investment in agriculture and conflict management in Central Asia.

These overlaps in methodological approaches may provide a basis for joint learning around the practicalities of doing field research in the Rising Powers, as several projects expressed the wish for exchange in this area. Some of the issues that were raised repeatedly during conversations with Principal Investigators include access to data and to interviewees, as well as establishing and maintaining fruitful cooperation with local partner institutions and researchers in the Rising Powers.

**Table 4: Research Methods**

Rising Powers and Interdependent Futures Projects	Quantitative Methods	Qualitative Methods	RP Policy-Makers	Comparative Research
<i>Law Development and Finance in Rising Powers</i> , Deakin, Cambridge	Quantitative analysis of lexicometric data	Qualitative interviews	X	Comparison across Brazil, China, India, Russia
<i>State strategies of governance in global biomedical innovation: the impact of China and India</i> , Salter, King's College London	Secondary quantitative data	Qualitative interviews, observation of conferences	X	Comparison between China and India
<i>Emerging Technologies, Trajectories and Implications of Next Generation Innovation Systems Development in China and Russia</i> , Shapira, Manchester	Bibliometric analysis of nanotechnology publications and patents	Qualitative interviews	X	Comparison between China and Russia
<i>Rising Powers, Labour Standards and the Governance of Global Production Networks</i> , Nadvi, Manchester	Secondary analysis of statistical data; quantitative analysis of firm level questionnaire data	Qualitative interviews	X	Comparison across Brazil, China and India
<i>China goes global: A comparative study of Chinese hydropower dams in Africa and Asia</i> , Urban, SOAS, London		Qualitative interviews, stakeholder mapping, focus groups		Comparison of Chinese FDI across Cambodia, Malaysia, Ghana and Nigeria
<i>Where Rising Powers Meet – The North Asian Border Between China and Russia</i> , Humphrey, Cambridge	Secondary analysis of statistical data	Structured and unstructured interviews, observation, media analysis		Comparison between China and Russia, based on frontier cities at the Chinese-Russian border
<i>The Rising Powers, Clean Development and the Low Carbon Transition in Sub-Saharan Africa</i> , Power, Durham		Qualitative interviews	X	Comparison between China and Brazil and between South Africa and Mozambique
<i>Rising Powers: Unequal Powers, Authoritarian Powers, Unstable Powers?</i> , White, Glasgow	Nationally representative quantitative surveys on inequality and perceptions of inequality	Qualitative interviews, focus groups		Comparison between China and Russia
<i>Rising Powers and Conflict Management in Central Asia</i> , Heathershaw, Exeter		Qualitative interviews, discourse analysis, ethnographic fieldwork	X	Comparison between China and Russia, based on case studies in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan
<i>Russia and the EU in the Common Neighbourhood: Export of Governance and Legal (In) Compatibility</i> , Wolczuk, Birmingham		Qualitative interviews	(at regional level)	Analysis of Russian external governance, comparing its impact on Armenia, Belarus, Ukraine
<i>Rising Powers in African agriculture: Are China and Brazil bringing new paradigms to agricultural development cooperation?</i> , Scoones, IDS, Sussex		Qualitative interviews, Ethnographic fieldwork, observation	X	Comparison between Brazil and China, based on engagement in Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique, Zimbabwe
<i>Expanding, Not Shrinking Social Programmes: The Politics of New Policies to Tackle Poverty and Inequality in Brazil, India, China and South Africa</i> , Manor, SAS, London		Qualitative interviews	X	Comparison across Brazil, India, China and South Africa

## 7. Challenges and Concerns

A few issues have emerged through our discussions with individual project teams which point to potential areas of concerns. First, several researchers indicated that a critical reflection on the term ‘Rising Powers’ would be useful to increase awareness of terminology used both internally and with regard to external communication. No one has a clear definition of the Rising Powers concept. The term has come from the ways in which the ESRC formulated the initial programme and has stuck. Many projects have gone on to adopt the term in the ways in which they frame their respective agenda and we use it as our core identifier in terms of outreach through our website [www.risingpowers.net](http://www.risingpowers.net). The term can thus have mileage, but it is also problematic. In what ways, say are Russia and China to be viewed as ‘Rising Powers’ when both have been recognised superpowers and permanent members of the UN Security Council long before their recent economic dynamism? Similarly, the term indicates little awareness of history. And finally, we have to consider how relevant this term is in the countries that we are researching, and with our research collaborators in these countries? Thus, this throws up a number of points of discussion, including the extent to which the term is Western-based and what kind of implicit notions it entails on history as well as future economic growth in the Rising Powers. The counter argument would be: is there a better term that captures our specific ‘area studies’ agenda?

Second, while many of the project teams are building multidisciplinary analytical frameworks that offer the potential for a more comprehensive understanding of the Rising Powers by going beyond established theories in any specific discipline, this also poses critical challenges – theoretical, methodological and practical. Some of this we have noted earlier and again some discussion on this would be fruitful.

Third, the role of the State in Rising Power economies and societies forms part of the research agenda most of the projects. Nevertheless, some researchers felt the need to discuss further theoretical development of related concepts, as existing theories were not sufficient to fully grasp the prominence and the type of state involvement currently observed in the Rising Powers.

Fourth, beyond theories around the State, several projects experienced challenges in applying established Western-based theoretical frameworks to an analysis of the Rising Powers. Hence, exchange around ways to address these challenges through theory development and adaptation, multidisciplinary work or potential further approaches might be of interest to some project teams.

Fifth, several project team spoke about practical challenges in conducting research in countries where access to critical and at times sensitive information is difficult, and in some cases where research requires working in difficult circumstances. Thus there was an expressed interest in exchanging experiences on the practicalities of doing research in and on the Rising Powers, particularly in countries like China, Russia and India. Various issues could potentially be included in such discussions, ranging from access to data and interviewees, cooperation with local partner institutions, to logistics such as visa procedures, organisation of regional workshops etc.

Sixth, and linked to the point above is the challenge of working with, and in the case of PIs managing, relatively large research teams that are also differentiated in terms of their academic disciplines and their cultural backgrounds. Again, are there useful lessons to be learnt from peers as to how we might all individually do this better through better team management strategies?

## 8. Impact Activities

While the primary objective of the first PI workshop in Manchester is to explore areas of intellectual synergies between projects, it is also useful to begin our thinking on individual and joint impact activities, and to distinct academic, policy and public audiences. Each project has its own distinct impact plan with clearly ear-marked impact activities. In some project there are a number of novel activities in this regard, including the production of short videos and visual outputs to augment the standard academic publications. What is also clear is that there would be some merit in considering some joint impact work.

First, a concrete step towards joint impact is the development of a joint **website** that operates alongside each project's own website and acts as a repository for the whole of the ESRC Rising Powers programme. We are in the process of setting up this website ([www.risingpowers.net](http://www.risingpowers.net)) and expect it to go live this Spring (tentatively from April 2014).

The site will be housed at Manchester but will retain its own independent identity. Its primary purpose will be to function as the first port of call, in effect a portal that disseminates outputs from all the individual projects (working papers, policy briefs, research briefs etc.). It will also aim to provide visual outputs including videos and video blogs, blog posts and twitter feeds that utilise social media to enhance our overall impact and outreach. Finally, it will provide a regular diary of events and news updates on activities being undertaken by individual projects (including dissemination related workshops). We will manage this through the additional resources that we have at Manchester for the Co-Ordinator's position. For this to be effective though we will need support from individual teams especially in terms of production and delivery of content for the site. We may have some additional resources to produce further content but we will need to assess this as we proceed forward.

Second, it would also be useful to consider whether we could – most likely from late 2014 through to 2016, undertake a small number of collective **dissemination workshops**. This could involve exploring whether individual projects could, for example, consider co-ordinating their in-country dissemination workshops with colleagues from other projects such that a larger potential audience could be targeted. Similarly, there is scope for considering how groups of project could more effectively target key policy audiences in the UK through collective presentations. There is likely to be a great deal of interest in Whitehall circles with research being undertaken through many of our projects, and potentially one could consider more focused and more targeted dissemination workshops that bring together a few projects that have closely connected research agendas of relevance to key government departments. Thus, a Chatham House event, for example, on projects on Russia-China comparisons; a workshop with the FCO (say at Wilton Park) on Russia, the nature of Putin's state and Russian engagement with its border regions (bringing together the projects of Deakin,

Heathershaw, Humphrey, White, Wolczuk); a workshop with BIS on Rising Powers and innovation (bringing together Power, Salter, Scoones, and Shapira,); and with DfID on Rising Powers and developmental impacts (with the Manor, Nadvi, Power, Scoones, and Urban projects).

Third, we should begin consider the substantial potential that exists for more *academic outputs*. This could involve for example, proposing *joint conference panels* at key international conferences that many of us attend (and putting together a potential list of such international conferences would be very useful). We could also be a bit more ambitious and consider the scope for developing *journal special issues* for key high impact journals (which would they be and who would like to take the lead on these individual initiatives as a ‘product champion’?). There is also scope for at least one, if not more, high profile *edited monograph* coming out from the twelve projects as a way to enhance the overall output and impact of our work. Again, it would be worth discussing this further to explore where interests lie and what would be practical and who would be willing to take leads on these.

Fourth, many of the twelve projects have assembled a group of junior researchers and doctoral students. One area of potential impact would be find ways to strengthen this cohort of junior colleagues who are likely to build their academic and research careers around work on the Rising Powers through early career support activities. This would include holding possibly two doctoral and early career workshops (the first of these is planned in Manchester on June 5, 2014) as well as encouraging early career colleagues in terms of publication and dissemination of their work through participation in conference panels and journal special issues.

## 9. Way Forward

To sum up, this note sought to outline areas where we perceive from our discussions with individual teams that there are a number of common interests, practical challenges, concerns and potential areas of synergy and joint impact activities across the twelve projects that form the core of the Rising Powers and Interdependent Futures programme.

There are a number of thematics that we could explore further – from the question of the State in Rising Powers, to the issue of Rising Powers and their impact on global, regional and national governance processes, including governance processes within these countries, and finally on the efficacy of the terminology of ‘Rising Powers’ itself. Thinking further on these issues is also useful in terms of how we begin to collectively engage with the UK research policy community in terms of providing inputs to possible new areas of research on these dynamic and emerging economies and societies (even going beyond the narrow framing of ‘Rising Powers’ such as China, India, Brazil and Russia) and their consequences for global economic, social and political developments and for shaping the contours of critical policy debates in this century.

Finally, we have to take into account two very real considerations, one practical and the other more intellectual in nature. The first relates to limited time and resources. We are all in our individual projects stretched in terms of the time and resources we have available to devote to

and deliver on our own agendas and project commitments, let alone exploring cross-cutting synergies. So taking this forward will require teams, and PIs, to be willing to put in additional time and energy to make this happen. At the same time, there are clearly some very obvious low hanging fruits to be garnered and ones that could add value to our own individual projects as well as to the wider agenda defined by this ESRC programme. The second is that we are not the only ones working on the ‘Rising Powers’ agenda, even with ESRC funding. There is a great deal of research work currently being undertaken in the UK on our core case study countries (in particular China, Russia, India and Brazil). Some of this research is financed by the ESRC, by DfID as well as by other funding agencies. We need to have better intelligence on what work is also going on in this area – especially ESRC and ESRC-DfID initiatives – and to consider whether we need to (and if so how) distinguish the work in the Rising Powers and Intermediate Futures programme with other research projects. In some cases this may well imply a closer engagement with what other colleagues are doing. It also raises the broader question of how we see this area of research interest to develop in the near future, and what advise we can provide on this to the ESRC and the wider UK research policy community.

We will use the Manchester workshop to explore areas of potential synergies, especially those that garner greatest interest amongst colleagues. We will also consider whether it would be useful to set up some (smaller) working groups that encourage a few projects to meet and share views on a more regular basis and explore synergies and impact events in greater depth, and we will consider what other activities we could envisage as a collective.

## Appendix I: List of projects

1. **Where Rising Powers Meet: China and Russia At Their North Asian Border**  
Professor Caroline Humphrey, University of Cambridge
2. **Rising Powers and Conflict Management in Central Asia**  
Dr John Heathershaw, University of Exeter
3. **Emerging Technologies, Trajectories and Implications of Next Generation Innovation Systems Development in China and Russia**  
Professor Philip Shapira, University of Manchester
4. **Rising Powers in African agriculture: Are China and Brazil bringing new paradigms to agricultural development cooperation?**  
Professor Ian Scoones, Institute of Development Studies
5. **Russia and the EU in the Common Neighbourhood: Export of Governance and Legal (In) Compatibility**  
Dr Kataryna Wolczuk, University of Birmingham
6. **The Rising Powers, Clean Development and the Low Carbon Transition in Sub-Saharan Africa**  
Dr Marcus Power, University of Durham
7. **State strategies of governance in global biomedical innovation: the impact of China and India**  
Professor Brian Salter, King's College London
8. **Rising Powers, Labour Standards and the Governance of Global Production Networks**  
Dr Khalid Nadvi, University of Manchester
9. **Expanding, Not Shrinking Social Programmes: The Politics of New Policies to Tackle Poverty and Inequality in Brazil, India, China and South Africa**  
Professor James Manor, University of London
10. **China goes global: A comparative study of Chinese hydropower dams in Africa and Asia**  
Dr Frauke Urban, School of Oriental & African Studies
11. **Law Development and Finance in Rising Powers**  
Professor Simon Deakin, University of Cambridge
12. **Rising Powers: Unequal Powers, Authoritarian Powers, Unstable Powers?**  
Professor Stephen White, University of Glasgow