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ESRC Research Seminar

The Governance of Eco-City Innovation



Event 4

Bringing eco-cities to life: community engagement, local activism

Wednesday, 30 May 2012, 10.00 am - 4.15 pm
University of Westminster,
115 New Cavendish Street. London. W1W 6UW

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Speakers' Abstracts & Biographies

Sarah Burgess

Sarah Burgess is a qualified town planner with over ten years experience in private and public sector planning in both Australia and England. Sarah is a senior lecturer in health and spatial planning in the World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre for Healthy Urban Environments at the University of the West of England. Her research interests include health impact assessment, sustainable behaviours in the home and measuring the quality of the built environment. Sarah has extensive practical experience in spatial planning, from the preparation of strategic plans for local authorities in Australia to the development and running of a three year project at the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) which looked at emerging local spatial plans across England. Through her work at CABE, Sarah prepared a guidance document, Planning for Places, to assist local planning authorities in preparing a spatial plan and contributed to the National Planning Forum's position paper, Fit for purpose spatial planning. Her experience means that Sarah has a unique understanding of healthy urban planning, particularly in the context of developing a clear vision and strategy that addresses local issues, needs and circumstances.

John Barry

John Barry is Director of the Centre for Sustainability and Environmental Governance; Reader in the School of Politics, International Studies and Philosophy; and Associate Director of the Institute for a Sustainable World, at Queens University Belfast. He has written extensively about normative aspects of environmental politics, citizenship and sustainability, the political economy of sustainability, the politics of renewable energy and the political and economic aspects of the transition to sustainability. His recent work has focused on critiquing the orthodox economic model, the 'Transition Towns' movement and conceptual and policy debates around 'resilience' as a supplement or replacement for 'sustainability'. He is also co-editor of the journals *Environmental Politics* and *Ecopolitics online*. He is currently working on two books, *Sustainability, Vulnerability and Green Politics: Resistance, Resilience and Republicanism*; and *Green Politics in Ireland: The Political Economy of (Un)Sustainability*.

Community/stakeholder involvement in sustainable urbanism: challenges and opportunities of community engagement

Fred London

Abstract The presentation draws on experience in participatory planning work done over the last 20 years. It focuses on the work undertaken in the UK, Ireland, Germany and Scandinavia. The impact of major historical changes (fall of Communism and economic crises) on the framework and practice of participatory planning is analysed and discussed in detail.

Fred London is an architect and partner of John Thompson & Partners. His experience ranges from the detailed design of individual buildings to the masterplanning of large-scale sites, including the concept design of major new settlements in the UK, mainland Europe, Russia and China. This breadth of experience has been gained working on a wide variety of public and private sector projects,

frequently including participatory planning and community architecture.

In the UK, Fred has been responsible for masterplans to redevelop redundant sewage treatment works as high-quality residential neighbourhoods. These include Kew Riverside, London; The Hamptons, Worcester Park, London; Wycombe Marsh, High Wycombe; and The Manor, to the south-east of Reading, which won a Building for Life Silver Standard Award. He was also responsible for the Peter Scott Wetland Centre, Barnes, London, which has won a series of environmental awards.

Much of Fred's work is concentrated on the promotion of sustainable approaches to development. This has led to his involvement with the EU 'Eco-City' initiative, bringing together model projects in Italy, Spain, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Slovakia and Finland. His particular contribution was in the area of community engagement and urban planning.

Transition Towns movement

Molly Scott-Cato

Abstract How do we imagine sustainable cities and how do they relate to their local environments? Molly Scott Cato's proposal for a 'bioregional economy' revolves around the market town as an efficient size of economy for the production and exchange of resources, as well as an ideal size of convivial community. In her presentation she will explain how our existing lengthy supply chains leave us vulnerable, as well as being wasteful of energy. She will take a critical look at the idea of economies of scale, and apply this to the design of urban settlements. Finally, she will explore Herbert Girardet's ideas of the need to transition from our current Petropolis towards the Ecopolis of the future. Her critique of existing patterns of provisioning leads to questions about how resources are owned and controlled: without community ownership of resources, how can communities be accountable for their own sustainability?

*Molly Scott Cato is Professor of Strategy and Sustainability at Roehampton University and has worked for several years as a green economist. In 2009 she published *Green Economics: An Introduction to Theory, Policy and Practice* and she has also written widely on themes concerned with mutualism, social enterprise, policy responses to climate change, banking and finance, and local economies. Her new book called *The Bioregional Economy: Land, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness* develops ideas for a new model of stable and sustainable economic life. Molly is an active member of the Green Party, standing for election at all levels and currently speaking for the Party on economic issues as well as being a local councillor in Stroud. She is a Director of Transition Stroud and was involved in the launch of a local currency in Stroud in 2009. She is also a Director of Stroud Common Wealth.*

Activism and the Planning System: The role of the Epistemic Community

Geraint Ellis

Abstract The idea of “town planning” in the UK has its origins in movements for social reform and philanthropy in the 19th century and became a state-sponsored regulatory function as part of the post-war welfare state. It remains as a powerful- but largely unrecognised - influence on environmental quality and local quality of life issues that are instrumental in reforming settlements as eco-cities. However, despite its reformist origins and a strong professional rhetoric of public participation, planning has evolved into an overly bureaucratic - regulatory system where certain interests, skills and discourses have a disproportionate influence over local development decisions and strategies. Although there are plenty of examples of effective local campaigns, it has become increasingly difficult for local communities to effectively influence the planning system. In this context, this presentation will consider the role of experts, particularly planning academics, in the field of planning activism. The paper reflects on the role of universities and the academy in challenging the trajectory of development and in creating alternative possible urban worlds. The paper will draw on examples of where academics have played a key role in planning campaigns and discuss the important contribution played by networks such as PNUK and INURA.

Geraint Ellis is Senior Lecturer in the School of Planning, Architecture and Civil Engineering at Queen's University, Belfast (QUB). He is a graduate of the Universities of Cardiff, Birmingham and Reading and began his career working for community and environmental organisations in the east end of London. During the mid-1990s he worked as a planning and community development advisor to the Government of Lesotho in Southern Africa, after which he returned to practice in urban regeneration in London. He joined QUB in 1998. His main research interests include the way environmental issues and the planning process affects people's well-being and as such now focuses on energy, health and marine issues, equality and planning pedagogy. He has published and researched widely on these issues, including co-editing Learning from Wind Power: Governance, Society and Policy Perspectives on Sustainable Energy which is published by Palgrave in May 2012. He is also a co-editor of the Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning. Geraint was awarded the European Planning Studies Prize in 2002 and QUB awards for excellence in teaching in 2002 and 2006. Geraint is also active in the voluntary sector and has been a board member of a number of voluntary organisations including Sustainable NI, Community Technical Aid and Belfast Healthy Cities. He regularly advises Friends of the Earth (NI) on planning issues, is an active member of the Planners Network UK and is a founding member of Transition Town Whitehead.

Role of local action and community engagement in climate change

Christine Holloway

Abstract Chris Holloway will use Winchester Action on Climate Change, which she heads, as a case study of the community engagement in climate change in a two-tier prosperous semi-rural district. She will outline the various approaches which the charity have taken to achieve the target of a 30 per cent cut in greenhouse gas emissions by 2015, what went well and what didn't, and where their thinking has got to after almost 5 years of effort. She will particularly focus on working with the Local Strategic Partnership, and supporting small local community green groups.

Christine Holloway has been Executive Director of local charity Winchester Action on Climate Change for three years. Before that she was Assistant Chief Executive of Eastleigh Borough Council, Local Director for Woking for Surrey County Council, Stakeholder Liaison Adviser with the Government Office for London, Chief Executive of London Voluntary Service Council and a director of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux. She enjoys working with community groups, helping people find their way through the complexities of local and central government. She gets exasperated at people who can't explain complicated issues in simple words. With an MSc in Organisational Behaviour, she has been a management consultant and trainer with not-for-profit agencies, and a member of several management committees, national and local.

Food systems and the eco city

Joy Carey

Abstract How can a city influence the food system? The first step is to understand how the food system operates and how different elements are interconnected. The second is to understand strengths and vulnerabilities in relation to food system sustainability and longer term resilience. The March 2011 report, 'Who Feeds Bristol: Towards a resilient food plan' explores these questions with the aim of informing both citizens and city decision-makers and providing a holistic framework from which to develop a resilient food plan. At the heart of this challenge is finding effective mechanisms to bring a wide range of stakeholders together to plan and implement change.

Imagine if a city based its food policy & planning on the following criteria:

- Maximising the supply of staples from the surrounding city region
- Ensuring city-wide availability of 'cook from scratch' ingredients with which to prepare a healthy meal
- Maximising the diversity of food markets and food retail
- Ensuring 'closed loop' systems to reuse and recycle resources
- Maximising the engagement of citizens in the food system

Whether or not this would result in a more sustainable and resilient urban food supply system is as yet un-tried, but these criteria are the basis for the 'Who Feeds Bristol?' report recommendations. To reform the food system in this way has yet not been built into local government policy and strategy, nor could a local government achieve such changes alone – it would require the commitment and pro-active buy-in from a wide range of city and city region stakeholders. Bristol is the first UK city to establish a 'Food Policy Council' which was formally launched alongside the publication of the 'Who Feeds Bristol?' report in March 2011.

Joy Carey, author of 'Who Feeds Bristol?' will look at the background and motivations for work on food in Bristol; the approaches and outcomes; and the current challenges that relate to stakeholder involvement and local activism around food issues in Bristol.

Joy Carey is a UK independent consultant on sustainable food systems and author of 'Who Feeds Bristol? Towards a resilient food plan' commissioned and supported by National Health Service Bristol and Bristol City Council. (www.bristol.gov.uk/whofeedsbristol published March 2011). She has worked in the local food arena since 1990 in both urban and rural settings, both as an organic horticultural grower and as facilitator and manager of several different local food sector development programmes. Her experience includes public sector sustainable food procurement, local food marketing, producer/consumer direct links, local food sector strategic and policy development.

She has been involved in community development and local food initiatives for over 20 years, in the early 90's growing Asian and Caribbean vegetables in inner city Birmingham and later working with an organic fruit and vegetable box scheme supplying shops, restaurants and households in rural Norfolk. She joined the Soil Association in 1998 and was Head of Local Food and Market Development from 2004-09. While at the Soil Association she led work on re-localising sustainable food systems around the UK through building direct connections between food producers and their customers (box schemes, farmers markets, community supported agriculture, local food business networks and sourcing local and organic food for schools and hospitals).

This wide range of food-related experience has led to a strong interest in the planning and design of sustainable food systems and of urban food strategies. She is on the steering group of Bristol Food Network (<http://www.bristolfoodnetwork.org/>) and is doing ongoing work on food in Bristol alongside the new Bristol Food Policy Council. The 'Who Feeds Bristol?' baseline analysis report was Joy's own initiative and she continues to make a significant contribution to building a more resilient food system for Bristol, specifically in the areas of strategic planning and city-level dialogue; a city-wide campaign to support the local independent retail sector (<http://bristolindependents.co.uk/>). Currently Joy is involved with an in-depth evaluation of the Big Lottery Local Food funding programme of £50 million (<http://www.localfoodgrants.org/>) led by CCRI; and is research manager for the 'Making Local Food Work' Programme, a partnership initiative which is concerned with the growth and sustainable development of community food enterprise in England. (<http://www.makinglocalfoodwork.co.uk/>)

The Governance of Eco-City Innovation- Seminar 2

Evaluation

- *Information about yourself*

Which of the following categories best describe your interest in eco-cities?

Academic Policy Urban Planning Architecture

Other (describe)

- *Information about the conference*

Which presentation did you enjoy most?

Which aspects of the seminar need improving?

- *Information about future events*

What other Eco City related themes would you like to discuss in future events?