

INTERNATIONAL ECO-CITIES INITIATIVE

International Eco-Cities Initiative

April 2018

Welcome to the latest issue of the International Eco-Cities Initiative newsletter. The bulletin (published three times per year) provides information about our research, events and publications, and contributes to analysis and discourse on 'eco-cities' and sustainable urbanism of various kinds across the world.

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Paper: City branding practices in China's three mega-city regions

The challenge of 'ecological modernisation' is that of green growth: creating higher economic values at a lower environmental cost. For cities trying to achieve this goal, being able to market themselves on this basis of their aspirations and achievements is key to attracting potential residents, workers and investors. Depending on their scale and key industries, cities can adopt varying developmental pathways to ecological modernisation – but how well do these pathways match the ways that cities brand themselves? A new article explores this issue by looking at urban centres in China's three mega-city regions. The analysis shows that most cities brand themselves in conformity with what their pathway would lead one to predict, except those with a strongly manufacturing oriented profile, which may adopt branding strategies that contrast sharply with their historical legacy and current profile. This research article was co-authored by Martin de Jong, Yawei Chen, Simon Joss, Haiyan Lu, Miaoxi Zhao, Qihui Yang and Chaoning Zhang and published in the Journal of Cleaner Production. Contact Simon Joss for a complimentary copy of the article: josss@westminster.ac.uk.

- [Read the article \(subscription required\)](#)

A new paper by Rick Pruetz explores the future of cities with autonomous vehicles (AVs). These are often depicted as robot-chauffeured cars providing low-cost, effortless mobility, powered by renewable energy, and driving safely down narrow lanes surrounded by ample space for cyclists and pedestrians. There are potential dangers in this approach: the ease and lower costs associated with AVs may result in an increase in the distance travelled by low-occupancy vehicles; exacerbating urban sprawl and encouraging further car dependence. Moreover, widespread benefits of narrow roadways are unlikely to arise until manually controlled cars are phased out. In light of these risks, this paper advocates a careful use of planning and public policy to achieve a more sustainable trajectory, prioritising compact, mixed-use and walkable neighbourhoods and active and public transport. The role of AVs in this future is characterised by responsible use and ride sharing, which may be achieved through policies such as road user charges, infrastructure restrictions and transportation demand management.

- [Download the paper](#)

Report: Smart-eco cities in Germany

The Smart-Eco project looks at urban initiatives that span both the existing sustainability agenda and the newer, more technologically-oriented smart city agenda. A new publication, authored by Professor Philipp Späth, explores how these trends are being realised in the German context, through profiles of three German cities: Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich. It finds that strategies and activities under the banner of 'Smart City' or – more recently – 'active digitalization' are often used to demonstrate the innovation-orientation and competitive economic strength of cities. These efforts have been shaped by the ambitions of city administrations to attract EU funding, and also to host the headquarters and development departments of big international technology and service providers.

- [Download the report](#)

Call for applications: PhD projects (with scholarship funding)

The University of Westminster's Department of Politics and International Relations (home to the International Eco-Cities Initiative) is offering studentships for prospective PhD students, starting in September 2018. The department is offering one studentship of £16,000 per year for three years, and up to two of £5,000 per year for three years, along with full fee waivers at the Home/EU rate. Applications are sought from high-quality prospective doctoral students who will contribute to at least one of the core areas of research within the department. Two areas – contemporary democratic theory; and governance, and resilience and sustainability – are of particular relevance to the International Eco-Cities Initiative. The closing date for applications is soon: 5pm on 27 April 2018. Interviews will be held on 12 June 2018.

- [Visit the Department's website to apply or find out more](#)

Event report: What can urban sustainability experiments do?

As part of the Smart-Eco project, Dr Robert Cowley and Dr Jon Phillips (King's College London) have produced a report entitled 'What can urban sustainability experiments do?', summarising an audience discussion at the recent World Urban Forum in Kuala Lumpur. The piece synthesises the viewpoints of approximately 50 audience participants, gathered through discussion and feedback forms. The debate identified key benefits of urban sustainability experiments, which enable communities to translate new ideas to local contexts through trials that are small-scale and relatively low cost. How can local authorities make these experiments happen? Despite, as one audience member stated, necessity rather than policy-making being the mother of invention, the conversation also highlighted various roles that local authorities can play in catalysing local experimentation; as well as the relationship between experimental innovation and existing regulations. The World Urban Forum is UN Habitat's conference on urban issues; this year it was attended by approximately 22,000 participants.

- [Download the report](#)

We are pleased to welcome Marie-Sarah Gastou from the Ecole Centrale de Marseille in France, a visiting researcher with an engineering background who has joined the International Eco-Cities Initiative for the current academic year. In collaboration with Simon Joss, she is engaged in researching smart cities through two distinct projects. The first, 'Becoming Smarter: Governance Innovation Envisioned and Enacted in Smart City Initiatives in Four UK Cities', looks at the governance rationale behind four UK smart city initiatives that are part of the UK Future Cities Demonstrator initiative, in collaboration with Dr Rob Cowley. The second concerns her own analysis of smart city policy, technology and innovation. This examines the definition of 'smart' through the use of technology in different urban sectors such as transport, energy, food, water and buildings, with case studies for each.

- [View Marie-Sarah's researcher profile](#)

Final call for article contributions: 'Smart, the new sustainable?'

The deadline is soon approaching for manuscript submissions for a special issue of the journal Sustainability, on the topic of smart cities, being guest edited by Martin de Jong, Simon Joss and Federico Caprotti. 'Smart, the new sustainable?' will interrogate the extent and significance of the apparent shift in urban policy from 'sustainable' to 'smart': whether it is relatively superficial and inconsequential, or whether it represents a more profound change in our understanding of urban planning and politics. In particular, contributions are invited relating to conceptual perspectives; analyses of policy and governance processes; and case studies of on-the-ground practices. The deadline for submissions is 30 June 2018, and submissions must be made via the publisher's online system.

- [Visit the journal page for more information and contact details](#)

LinkedIn discussion forum

The 'International Eco-Cities Forum', our online discussion board, now has over 670 members, including researchers, policy-makers and practitioners. It invites contributions from around the world, aimed at discussing and sharing information, reflections and practical learning on sustainable urbanism in its various forms.

- [Join the International Eco-Cities Forum](#)

Further information

For more information about the International Eco-Cities Initiative and to sign up for news and events, please see our [website](#).

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