

INTERNATIONAL ECO-CITIES INITIATIVE

International Eco-Cities Initiative

December 2017

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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Call for abstracts: special journal issue – 'Smart, the new sustainable?'

Partners of the Smart-Eco project are guest editors for a special issue of the journal *Sustainability*, entitled 'Smart, the new sustainable? The smart city and its implications for sustainable urbanism'. This volume 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. The volume is being edited by Martin de Jong, Simon Joss and Federico Caprotti. 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 submitting preliminary abstracts is 31 January 2018. Abstract submissions can be made to any of the three guest editors. The deadline for manuscript submissions is 30 June 2018.

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

A new paper by Chiara Luchino takes a quantitative look at the performance of various eco-city initiatives in China to date, finding that in many cases they are falling below expectations. While various Chinese eco-city policies have been ambitious and unprecedented in scale, this piece highlights how the resulting initiatives have struggled to reconcile a growing need for housing with definitions of sustainability in a wider sense. It scores and ranks fourteen eco-city initiatives using a number of indicators, finding that construction has often lagged behind schedule, urban morphology contributes to low liveability, and levels of air pollution are higher than expected. The work is based on Dr Luchino's doctoral thesis undertaken at the Department of Civil, Building and Environmental Engineering, Sapienza University of Rome.

- [Download the paper](#)

Paper: Pathways to sustainable Chinese urbanisation

If Dr Luchino's paper examines some of the empirical problems with Chinese eco-city initiatives, her work is complemented by another new piece by Professor John Zacharias (Peking University, Beijing), who explores alternative pathways towards urban sustainability for China. The first part of the article is devoted to the reasons for the relative abandonment of the eco-city movement – a lack of investor interest, political problems in implementing the schemes and high front-end costs. In the present context of a policy gap for sustainable urbanisation, the paper then reviews the more conventional means available to city leaders to retain sustainability objectives, drawing on the recent literature. Those means involve promoting higher densities, the use of more economical building forms, reforming representational planning practices, mixed land use, conserving traditional habitats, and promoting non-motorised transport.

- [Download the paper](#)

Doctoral researcher: Alec Gelgota

We are pleased to welcome Alec Gelgota, a new doctoral researcher investigating decentralised peer-to-peer energy sharing initiatives, and their role as urban experiments in creating systemic change. The project aims to understand and improve the capacity of urban experiments to drive these transformations within the built environment by identifying challenges and barriers that inhibit their roll-out and uptake. To this end, the research will include a detailed comparative case study analysis of several peer-to-peer energy sharing initiatives. The project is co-supervised by Professors Michael Neuman and Simon Joss.

- [Read the full profile](#)

Project: smart urban development in India

The University of Westminster will be leading a project in collaboration with the Jharkhand State Urban Planning and Management Institute (JUPMI), as part of the programme Smart Urban Development in Indian States – funded by the UK Government's Department for International Development (DfID). The JUPMI was recently established to strengthen institutional capacity in pursuit of Jharkhand's urban growth and smart city development strategy. Ranchi, the state's capital city, is part of the government of India's Smart City Mission. The University, together with external partners, will provide expertise and technical training on institutional governance, urban planning, infrastructure management and financing, and sustainable development. The project is coordinated by Professor Johan Woltjer. Simon Joss will contribute academic input on smart cities, drawing on a comparative case study of UK smart city initiatives as well as a recent global smart city survey.

- [Read the full news item for contact details](#)

New book: Retrofitting Cities

With over half the world's population living in cities and urban areas, they will be key to achieving global sustainability. While new build projects featuring the latest design and technology may receive much attention, an even greater challenge may be addressing the legacy of the existing built environment. In response to this challenge, a new book, *Retrofitting Cities for Tomorrow's World* (M. Eames, T. Dixon, M.

how this can be governed; and to lay out a conceptual framework for this process. Simon Joss and Robert Cowley have contributed a chapter entitled 'National policies for local urban sustainability: a new governance approach?'. Their work explores the important – and sometimes overlooked – role of national policies in shaping local efforts, providing comparative perspectives on four recent national sustainable city programmes from France, India, Japan, and the United Kingdom.

- [For further information, view the publisher's website](#)

Symposium proceedings: Monsoon Airs

Monsoon Assemblages recently published the proceedings of its first symposium, Monsoon Airs. This was one of three planned annual events structured around the monsoon's three material elements: Monsoon Airs, Monsoon Waters and Monsoon Grounds. The symposia are part of a five-year research project funded by the European Research Council, investigating the South Asian monsoon as a social, political, cultural and aesthetic phenomenon as well as a meteorological one. Its ambition is to confront challenges of urban climate change through novel, theoretically-driven spatial enquiries into the impacts of urbanisation on monsoon climates in three of South Asia's rapidly growing cities: Chennai, Delhi and Dhaka, with wider application for other cities. It is being carried out by an inter-disciplinary research team led by Professor Lindsay Bremner. The proceedings contain a critical reflection by Simon Joss, who is a member of the Advisory Board for the project.

- [Order a paper copy](#)
- [Download as a PDF](#)

Call for abstracts: Monsoon Waters symposium

Proposals are now also invited for contributions to Monsoon Waters, the second of the Monsoon Assemblages symposia, taking place at the University of Westminster on 12-13 April 2018. The abstract submission deadline is 8 January 2018. The event will comprise inter-disciplinary panels, key-note addresses and an exhibition and aims to bring together established and young scholars and practitioners from a range of disciplines, literatures, knowledge systems and practices. Contributions should take the form of 150 – 250 word abstracts for either papers or creative, practice based contributions such as drawings, photographs, videos, performances, musical compositions etc.

- [Read the full call on the Monsoon Assemblages website](#)

LinkedIn discussion forum

The 'International Eco-Cities Forum', our online discussion board, now has over 660 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

Please see the [International Eco-Cities Initiative website](#) for further information and to sign up for news and events.

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