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International Eco-Cities Initiative newsletter September 2016

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# INTERNATIONAL ECO-CITIES INITIATIVE

## International Eco-Cities Initiative

### September 2016

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.

- New reports: UK and Dutch smart-eco cities 2016
- New doctoral research: sustainability in Johannesburg
- Launch of 'Monsoon Assemblages'
- New essay: Reinventing the world through urban experiments
- New essay: Perspectives on sustainable urban development in China
- Conference papers by Rob Cowley and Simon Joss
- How the past shapes the way we talk about technology today
- Ecocity World Summit 2017
- Congratulations Dr Rob Cowley

### New reports: UK and Dutch smart-eco cities 2016

Two new reports provide analyses of 'smart-eco' policy trends in the UK and the Netherlands, including case studies of ten UK cities and four Dutch ones. The concept of the 'smart-eco' city reflects what is often a large overlap between the newer 'smart' agenda (usually focusing on areas such as ICT, urban infrastructure and governance) and the existing sustainability agenda (covering areas such as energy, waste management and mobility as well as economic development). These areas are being investigated in the SMART-ECO research programme which looks at urban initiatives across Europe and China.

- [Download the UK report](#)

- [Download the Netherlands report](#)
- [Visit the SMART-ECO Project page for more information](#)

## New doctoral research: sustainability in Johannesburg

We are pleased to welcome Zubeida Lowton, our latest doctoral researcher and recipient of a prestigious Commonwealth Scholarship Award. She is researching sustainability, liveability and resilience in the City of Johannesburg, South Africa. The project will investigate the impact of planning and the spatial transformation that Johannesburg has undergone in the past 90 or so years, and aims to provide a social sustainability and liveability framework that can address spatial fragmentation and promote denser city living. For enquiries, contact Zubeida via email: [zubeidabeiling@gmail.com](mailto:zubeidabeiling@gmail.com).

[Read Zubeida's full profile](#)

## Launch of 'Monsoon Assemblages'

All are welcome to the launch of Monsoon Assemblages hosted at the University of Westminster on 4 October 2016 (6-8pm). This five-year research project, which is funded by the European Research Council and led by Professor Lindsay Bremner, investigates how urban design can help confront the challenges of urbanisation, extreme weather and climate change in monsoon contexts. The project treats the monsoon as an organising principle of urban life, rather than an 'external' phenomenon. Chennai, Delhi and Dhaka, three rapidly growing cities in South Asia, serve as the main case studies. The same event will also feature the launch of Public Spaces and the Role of the Architect, a three-year comparative study of architecture in London and São Paulo (PS), focusing on the role of design in public spaces and the public realm. Professor Simon Joss is a member of the Advisory Board for Monsoon Assemblages.

[View the full event description and sign up \(free\)](#)

## New essay: Reinventing the world through urban experiments

How can we envision the process of transitioning towards liveable, prosperous and sustainable cities? One way is as 'experimentation', viewing cities as a test bed for innovative and creative solutions which can potentially be transferred and scaled-up to other contexts. This is the focus of a new essay written by one of the partners of the SMART-ECO project, Professor Rob Raven, and two of his colleagues, Professor James Evans and Dr Andrew Karvonen. The essay is based on a new book, entitled 'The Experimental City', which draws together insights from 32 researchers on social and urban issues across the world.

[Download the essay \(PDF\)](#)

## New essay: Perspectives on sustainable urban development in China

In the context of rapid industrialisation, growth, urbanisation, and ecological pressures, what efforts have been made to shift towards a cleaner path of urban development in China, and how can we understand the underlying institutional and policy processes? This question is addressed in a new piece for the International Eco-Cities Initiative by our partner Professor Martin de Jong at TU Delft. In this text, reproduced from his inaugural professorial lecture, de Jong provides insights into a series of major Chinese policy initiatives, including metro networks, high-speed rail, eco-industrial parks and eco-cities.

- [Download the essay \(PDF\)](#)
- [Read a recent related research paper](#)

## Conference papers by Rob Cowley and Simon Joss

Rob Cowley and Simon Joss were invited to present at the recent Annual Meeting of the Society for the History of Technology (SHOT) in Singapore, 22-26 June 2016, as part of a session on technology and the city. Rob Cowley presented a paper on science fiction and the smart-eco city, which discusses the

implications of the clear science fictional aesthetic in the way that many urban initiatives are promoted. Whilst the utopian presentation of smart city initiatives may be at odds with their dystopian literary connotations, Cowley ultimately finds value in such a story-telling approach to city planning.

Simon Joss, in his paper, explores the rise to prominence of the 'smart' theme in recent years. However, he writes, this may be potentially regressive – implying a shift away from sustainability, and towards a more positivist, linear, rational interpretation of urban planning and governance.

- [Download 'Science fiction and the smart-eco city' by Rob Cowley](#)
- [Download "Smart city": a regressive agenda?' by Simon Joss](#)

## How the past shapes the way we talk about technology today

Debates rage today about the risks and benefits of modern technology, not least also in relation to (smart) cities. However these questions are far from new. In a recent article in the Huffington Post, Dr Art Mollella, a partner of the Eco-Cities Initiative, explores the particular ideas of Henry Adams, who was struck by what he saw at the World's Fair in Paris in 1900, and whose ambiguous perspectives on technology in some ways mirror contemporary ones. Certainly, his disquieting question about whether the human spirit can survive the machine age resonates with current discussions about driverless cars, the use of drones in warfare, and robots in the operating theatre, among others; and it seems relevant too, to how we imagine, and plan for, the future city.

[Read the article](#)

## Ecocity World Summit 2017

The core themes for the Ecocity World Summit 2017 conference have now been announced, with the overarching topic of 'Changing Cities: Resilience and Transformations'. The event will be held between 12-14 July next year in Melbourne (Australia), a city which has itself promoted low-carbon and 'smart' agendas and which has been recognised as highly 'liveable'. The biennial Ecocity World Summit series has been hosted since 1990 by Ecocity Builders, founded by Richard Register. Professor Simon Joss has recently been appointed to the Board of Directors of the organisation. The deadline for academics, policy-makers and practitioners to submit contributions is 3 February 2017.

[Visit the conference website](#)

## Congratulations Dr Rob Cowley

Rob Cowley continues to carve out an exciting trajectory since successfully defending his thesis last September. He has recently been appointed as a lecturer on sustainable cities at the Department of Geography in King's College London, in addition to his research fellowship on the SMART-ECO project at King's. We look forward to working with him closely through our ongoing collaboration on this project. Rob can be contacted by email: [robert.cowley@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:robert.cowley@kcl.ac.uk).

## LinkedIn Discussion Forum

The 'International Eco-Cities Forum', our online discussion board, now has over 590 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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