

Is the Future of Cities green?



A debate on the growing pressures on our cities and infrastructural systems – [Professor Steffen Lehmann, Cluster for Sustainable Cities](#)

The future of our cities and their complex supporting systems will be the topic at the Construction Industry Research and Information Association's (CIRIA) annual debate, on Thursday 22 June 2017 at the Royal Society in London.

The 2017 debate on cities, entitled "Is the Future of Cities green?" will examine how best to plan for and manage a resilient urban future, and how we can do this in a sustainable and equitable way.

Engineers, planners, architects and other built environment professionals operating in this complex and challenging context are constantly working to adapt urban environments to changing social conditions, shifting demographics, emerging environmental conflicts and ageing infrastructure assets, while at the same time finding innovative solutions to better design, build and manage cities.

Professor Steffen Lehmann, Director of the [University of Portsmouth's](#) Innovation Cluster for Sustainable Cities, will be a panellist at this year's debate.

In his statement, entitled *Regenerated Cities are Sustainable Cities*, Prof Lehmann will speak about the need to regenerate and transform fossil fuel-based cities in the UK.

He will briefly touch on his research in making cities more climate-resilient and resource-efficient. The urban regeneration of cities for the post-fossil era has emerged as the new paradigm in urban development. Due to our obsession with economic growth, urban expansion and excessive use of finite resources, the challenges including rapid urbanisation and sprawl require us to regenerate and re-compact cities in a new forward-thinking way.

In the discussion, Steffen will consider how we can realise the urban future we want and report on international *next practice*.

"Our research shows that easy access for all citizens to parks, gardens and outdoor spaces is a hallmark of resilient and sustainable cities," Professor Lehmann says.

"We are considering circular economy models for cities and ways to remove the barriers to delivering long term sustainable infrastructure projects, by providing better evidence for long-term decision making and urban governance," he added.

"Urbanisation in the UK and in Europe has become increasingly complex. However, the compact, mixed-use and walkable city model has (again) emerged as the most promising urban model in the shift towards low-carbon cities."

Steffen will explore the notions of *green urbanism*, which extends the concept of the resource-efficient city to include optimising all urban material and energy flows. But the urban challenges we face are far too big for one single discipline (eg. the architect, or the engineer) alone to resolve them. New partnerships for sharing of experiences and better evidence are increasingly important

to ensure efficient decision making and to overcome the frequent lack of reliable urban data.

And then there is the crucial factor of Time. Time is now of the essence in counter-acting fossil-fuel induced climate change, Lehmann says.

“As a civilisation, we are very late in acting. What is now required is much more accelerated action on transition pathways that help to radically reduce greenhouse gas emissions.” – Professor Steffen Lehmann

“While we have entered the *Age of Cities*, however, we have clearly not yet entered the *Age of the Sustainable City*,” he concludes.

Steffen Lehmann's experience in city transformation

Steffen is Professor of Sustainable Architecture and Director of the Cluster for Sustainable Cities, at the University of Portsmouth. The Cluster for Sustainable Cities is a cross-faculty interdisciplinary Innovation Cluster that brings together 38 researchers at the University of Portsmouth with a strong interest in sustainable cities research.

He has over 25 years professional experience in architectural and urban design, over ten years of this with my own firm in Berlin. In the 1990s, he was able to make significant built contributions to the 'New Berlin'. He also gained over 20 years of academic and research experience, leading large multi-disciplinary research projects (including 13 years as a full Professor in Australia). From 2008 to 2010, he was the holder of the UNESCO Chair for Sustainable Urban Development in the Asia-Pacific.

Steffen Lehmann was born in Stuttgart, studied in the 1980s at the Architectural Association in London, and completed a PhD at the TU-Berlin. He subsequently worked with James Stirling in London, and Arata Isozaki in Tokyo, before establishing his own research-driven studio in Berlin: the s_Lab. He founded his own practice in 1993 to pursue a more ethically correct practice. Since then, he has been practising as a licensed architect and urban designer first in Berlin, then increasingly worldwide, including in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region.

The Annual CIRIA Evening Debate

Other speakers of the 2017 debate will include Prof Peter Head CBE (Chair), Founder of the Ecological Sequestration Trust; Sally Uren, CEO of the Forum for the Future; Sarah Toy, Bristol City Council; and Malcolm Smith, Arup Fellow.

This high-profile evening debate intends to highlight the wide range of approaches possible for managing urbanised regions, and to address the complexities in developing more inclusive and sustainable urban environments and communities by embracing a new urban agenda.

You can find out more information about CIRIA's 2017 debate [here](#).

See Steffen's latest post on the CIRIA blog [here](#).