

## [Green Cities Beyond Failure: Towards Hopeful Epistemologies of Ecological Urban Futures in Asia](#)

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Call for Papers

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Environmental History / Studies, Geography, Southeast Asian History / Studies, Urban Design and Planning, Urban History / Studies

As more urban areas across the world adopt green visions, more case studies are conducted to document how these projects have yet to deliver on their environmental promises. Together, the dominant discourses reinforce a recurring and deterministic view that without radical reforms, existing political-economic structures will doom green city experiments to failure. Since such wholesale structural transformations seem far-fetched in most societies, the saturation of existing criticisms inevitably conjures up a bleak outlook on ecological urban futures. Repetition of similar criticisms is prone to overgeneralize the drawbacks of green city experiments, especially when the dominant discourse overshadows contextualized and differentiated outcomes. As a result, green cities are often viewed as ecological utopias that disguise state or market rationale to capitalize on nature, and urban scholarship on green cities seems to have hit a cul-de-sac of universal disapproval. Focusing on Asia, we acknowledge the importance of scholarly critiques of green cities but also seek to nudge the discourse beyond conclusions of inevitable failure.

There is, by now, a large and valuable body of critical urban scholarship on green and sustainable urbanisms in various parts of Asia. In particular, Asia's eco-cities have been subjected to considerable scrutiny, resulting in rich insights about how and why these and related experiments have failed (e.g. Chiu-Shee, 2021; de Jong et al., 2016; Joss & Mol, 2013; Rapoport, 2014; Shwayri, 2013; Sze, 2015; Williams, 2017). In contrast, this workshop encourages participants to leverage existing critical insights and identify promising roadmaps towards alternative urban ecological futures. We invite scholars who have examined "green" or eco-city developments in Asia to share experiences and reflect on ecological urban futures in ways that move beyond the generation of yet more critical case studies.

Centered on Asian cities, the dialogues that we envisage should generate new perspectives that address questions including, but not limited to:

- In what ways can academic work on "green," "eco," or "sustainable" experimentation retain a critical edge while also contributing to hopeful epistemologies (Pow, 2015) in urban studies?
- Rather than adding new research on the failure of green city experiments, can future research clarify what constitutes success and how to achieve it?
- Rather than viewing Asia's existing green cities as sites and vehicles of capitalist growth or as

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symbols of untenable green futures, what lessons can we draw from Asia that would encourage more genuine green transitions?

- In more nuanced examinations of Asia's green cities, are there promising shifts in the diverse processes and outcomes that counter the view of a dismal or dystopian future? What progress has been made in Asia's green cities that might be expanded to enable hopeful transitions?
- Assuming that pro-environmental experimentation will (and should) continue in cities, what are the domains and types of intervention that can contribute to meaningful progress?
- In academic research on rethinking ecological urban futures, how to generate methodological/theoretical breakthroughs and forward-looking insights to nudge policy and action in progressive directions?
- What are some existing responses to academic critiques in design, planning, and policy practices? What could be some responses to academic critiques?
- Given that COVID-19 has shaken up human-nature relationships in cities and fomented debates about green recovery, what lessons does the pandemic offer for rethinking ecological urban futures in (and *from*) Asia?

## SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Paper proposals should include a title, an abstract (300 words maximum) and a brief personal biography of 150 words for submission by **24 April 2022**. Please also include a statement confirming that your paper has not been published previously, it is not committed elsewhere, and that you are willing to revise your paper for potential inclusion in a special issue submission (in collaboration with the workshop organizers and other participants).

Please submit your proposal using the provided [template](#) to Sharon at [arios@nus.edu.sg](mailto:arios@nus.edu.sg). Successful applicants will be notified by the beginning May. Panel presenters will be required to submit drafts of papers (2,000 words) by **18 July 2022**. These drafts will be circulated to fellow panellists and discussants in advance. Indeed, we expect that presenters will be open to feedback from fellow participants.

## WORKSHOP CONVENORS

### Dr Colleen Chiu-Shee

Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore

### Prof Tim Bunnell

Asia Research Institute and Department of Geography, National University of Singapore

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## References

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