

## **Professor Steffen Lehmann of CCI, University of Portsmouth has recently returned from China, where he discussed sustainable cities and urban development**

Director of The Cluster for Sustainable Cities, Professor Steffen Lehmann, was invited by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) and Urban Europe (JPI-EU), to speak at a conference in Zhongshan, South China. Steffen presented on the topic of 'Transition Pathways and Systemic Change for Cities', at the international symposium on sustainable urban development and resilience.

During his visit, from the 21<sup>st</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> of November, Steffen discussed questions of suitable urbanisation models for China, and met with Mr Tang Ying, Executive Director of Zhongshan Municipality, currently planning for a new 200 sq km urban cluster on the Pearl River Delta.

At the meeting it was recognised that the development of different regions in China is unbalanced, due to rapid urbanisation of some areas over the last 30 years, and the Chinese Government now has plans to address this issue through their new urban paradigm, focusing on urban regeneration of second, and third-tier cities.

According to the most recent Five-Year Plan, China is now shifting from an industrial, to an ecological civilisation, aiming to become more environmentally aware, something that is reflected in numerous top-down urban strategies detailed in the plan.

Steffen also attended an interdisciplinary workshop event, in Zhongshan, which offered a timely opportunity for leading academics from Europe and China to share knowledge and experience on the topic, enabling participants to connect the sustainable cities research undertaken in Europe, and relate it to Chinese colleagues and the immense challenges they face.

The discussion brought up a number of factors to consider, including, the demographic shift to an ageing population, behaviour change as a driver to reduce consumption, the need for mixed urban economies, and the integration of technology, and green space.

Urban liveability is becoming an increasingly important factor for the competitiveness of Chinese cities and their ability to attract investment and talented people. To become more liveable, cities require compact, walkable, and mixed use neighbourhoods, as well as enhanced public space, and more urban greenery, such as parks and gardens.

In this context, new participatory models and co-creation methods are the most promising ways to better include citizens in the future decision making processes through new relationships and engagement with community groups.

Whilst in China, Steffen was able to refine the consortium for a forthcoming proposal to the current EU-China Flagship Platform call (Horizon 2020. SC5), and to discuss an interdisciplinary catalogue of criteria as a set of indicators and drivers for nature-based solutions. He also met up with colleagues at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, who are part of this large international consortium.

Steffen said he was "pleased to be able to increase the international cooperation in the field, and China is the suitable platform, given its new leadership role in matters of combatting climate change as recognised in the Paris Agreement last year".



Academy of Social Sciences

Speaking at the conference of the Chinese



Meeting with the leader of the Zhonshan People's Congress Standing Committee of Guangdong (south China) to advise on their ambitious plans for a new 200 sq km urban cluster at the Pearl River Delta

Meeting with the leader of the Zhonshan



Polytechnic University

Visiting colleagues at the Hong Kong