



Call for Papers

1st New Cities Conference **New Cities in the 21st Century: Economic Engines and Global Development**

Hosted by the

**Charter Cities Institute &
MIT Sustainable Urbanization Lab**

October 2, 2022
Department of Urban Planning and Studies
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Background

The 21st century has seen an accelerated growth in the planning and construction of new master planned cities from scratch. Although the phenomenon is global, new projects are most apparent in the Global South. By some estimates, as many as 250 new cities are currently being built in Africa alone. The “new cities wave” also appears functionally and ideologically diverse, with projects being justified as tools for nation-building, economic development, climate mitigation and adaptation, technological innovation, political experimentation, and private sector profit.

The new cities wave brings unanticipated challenges and novel opportunities. If approached carelessly, these projects may develop into the same dysfunctional, unequal, and ineffective urban environments prevalent in much of the developing world. However, if executed well, new cities can become engines of economic vibrancy. Thus far, the phenomenon has been largely neglected by academic researchers and many open questions remain unaddressed.

Purpose

The **1st New Cities Conference** will bring together researchers and practitioners from different domains—economics, political science, finance, urban planning, real estate, international development, technology, and government. Getting new cities “right” will require a diverse set

of expertise, and the central goal of the conference is to initiate a dialogue between the relevant actors. This includes both scholars studying the consequences of new cities and stakeholders directly engaged in these projects.

Topics

The conference welcomes a diverse set of papers on new cities development, with a particular focus on their role as engines of economic growth and global development. We are also interested in both critical perspectives and practical solutions. Some research questions of interest include:

- How can new cities attract new industries?
- Can new cities accommodate low-income residents?
- Will new cities address the pressures of rapid urbanization in the Global South?
- How can new cities mitigate and adapt to growing climate risks?
- What challenges will new cities face in integrating with the domestic economy?
- To what extent can new cities “leapfrog” development in developing countries?
- How should new cities be governed?
- How should the private sector and public sector coordinate their respective roles?

Submissions

Scholars interested in participating in the conference are encouraged to submit their papers via **PDF format** to the Charter Cities Institute for review. Submissions should include the full paper, an abstract, the name of the researcher’s affiliated institute, and a link to their academic website (if available). Draft submissions are acceptable. The most promising papers will be included in our white paper series.

We have limited funding for conference attendees on a case-by-case basis.

Please email submissions and questions directly to Tommie Thompson at tommie@cci.city by **September 1, 2022**.

The Charter Cities Institute

The [Charter Cities Institute \(CCI\)](#) is a nonprofit dedicated to building the ecosystem for new planned cities. It was founded on the idea that a fresh approach was necessary to tackle humanity’s most pressing challenges: global poverty, rapid urbanization, conflict, migration, and climate change. Charter cities—new cities granted a special jurisdiction to create a new governance system—can be an integral part of the solution.

CCI’s work is focused on providing technical assistance to governments and developers interested in establishing their own charter cities. They also generate novel research on relevant subjects like decentralized governance, economic growth, and urban policy.

Recent Publications

- [Research Agenda](#) outlines the 5 research topics most important to the charter cities movement and helps guide CCI's research on urban governance, economic growth, and poverty alleviation.
- [Governance Handbook](#) is a guide for policymakers and city developers on how to design the regulatory environment for charter cities. It lays out the types of laws, regulations, and institutions that can help new cities become economically vibrant centers for tomorrow's urban dwellers.
- [Planning Guidelines](#) develops an urban planning framework for charter cities. It outlines how planners should think about transportation, urban design, and city development in a way that strikes a balance between formal planning and emergent markets.

The MIT Sustainable Urbanization Lab

The MIT [Sustainable Urbanization Lab \(SUL\)](#) is a research center focused on studying the behavioral foundations of sustainable urban and environmental policies. Rapid urbanization across the world will have dramatic consequences for our economy, society, and the environment. By 2025, cities will generate over 86% of the global GDP and 70% of the world's greenhouse gases. Promoting sustainable urbanization will be critical if we hope to leverage this trend for global development.

Reflecting the need to examine sustainable development at a global scale, the SUL has established two research themes: *Environmental Sustainability* and *Placed-Based Policies & Self-Sustaining Urban Growth*. One of the center's first projects, *Asia's New Cities*, examined the emergence of "new planned cities"—such as industrial parks, high tech zones, and new smart cities—across Asian countries and their role in stimulating urban vibrancy. This work built on comparative studies on new cities in China, India, Malaysia, and South Korea, and it has produced an edited volume, [Towards Urban Economic Vibrancy: Patterns and Practices of Asia's New Cities](#) (MIT SA+P Press, 2020).

[Prof. Siqi Zheng](#) is the STL Champion Professor of Urban Planning and Real Estate Sustainability at the Dept. of Urban Studies and Planning at MIT. She is the Faculty Director of the SUL as well as the MIT Center for Real Estate. Her research specializes in urban and environmental economics and policy, with regional expertise in China, particularly on urban spatial structure, green cities, housing supply and demand, housing price dynamics, and low-income housing policies. Her innovative and diverse research projects have been supported by international research institutions including the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the International Growth Center at London School of Economics, and various departments of the Chinese government. Dr. Zheng received her Ph.D. in urban economics and real estate economics from Tsinghua University.