



Urbanisation in China Newsletter

Information on urbanisation issues in China

A service of the Sino-German Urbanisation Partnership

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Dear Readers,



Sino-German Urbanisation Partnership

First of all we would like to wish you a happy, healthy and prosperous new year! 新年快乐! 2017 also marks a new beginning for the Sino-German Urbanisation Partnership

project of GIZ as we gather our team in China and Germany and establish various new ways to exchange information on our project as well as general news on urbanisation topics in China. Today we have the great pleasure of presenting you the first edition of the bi-monthly "Urbanisation in China"-Newsletter compiled by the Sino-German Urbanisation Partnership project of GIZ.

We would like to supply you with the latest news on urban development topics in China, focusing on urban planning, climate and environment, adaptation and resilience, transport and infrastructure, buildings and housing as well as social and cultural affairs.

In the past few weeks one topic in particular dominated the news and this is China's struggle with severe air pollution. Currently, nearly 25 percent of Chinese cities, including Beijing, see heavy smog – which means a hazardous Air Quality Index (AQI) between 300 and 500 in the last days. In comparison, today the city of Berlin has an AQI of 21.

In 2015, 88,8% of Chinese cities were not able to reach the minimum air quality standard set by the Ministry of Environmental Protection. Beijing reacted and updated the emergency response plan for severe air pollution in December 2016 and is currently establishing a special police force halting garbage incineration, biomass burning and even open-air barbecues. Beijing and its surrounding provinces have already increased their supervision of the emissions generated by factories in the last year and shut down production in case of non-compliance with regulations. However, the new police force will not only target factories or companies, but also individuals committing environmental offenses that have an impact on the air quality.

These short-term solutions to reduce air pollution in China's cities are encompassed by larger and more strategic measures to mitigate CO₂ in the framework of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change that was pushed forward by China in 2015. Also with regards to the G20 and the New Urban Agenda of UN-Habitat, China is committing to a green and sustainable development by reducing emissions. We support our Chinese partners in reaching their goal through international cooperation and promotion of best practices from Germany.

Long-term solutions have to be shown as well as the path towards them. That is why we introduced Germany's Climate Action Plan 2050 and its implications for cities, sustainable buildings, transport and energy to the Chinese government.

Project Information

In the light of rising urbanisation rates, climate change and the need for closer cooperation on sustainable city development, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Chinese Premier Li Keqiang initiated the Sino-German Urbanisation Partnership in 2013.

Minister Barbara Hendricks of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety of the Federal Republic of Germany (BMUB) and Minister Chen Zhenggao of the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development of the People's Republic of China (MoHURD) signed a Joint Declaration of Intent on the implementation of the Sino-German Urbanisation Partnership in November 2015. In June 2016, The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH has been commissioned by both ministries to implement the Partnership.

The Sino-German Urbanisation Partnership aims at promoting the exchange of experience, best practice and expertise between cities and provinces of the two countries on current issues of integrated and sustainable urban development.

Through capacity development and training for officials, municipal actors, urban planners, developers and other relevant stakeholders – sustainable and integrated urban development will be strengthened in both countries.

We now hope that you enjoy our first edition of the newsletter. We highly appreciate your feedback as we strive to improve the newsletter according to your needs (contact sgup@giz.de). Should you not wish to receive further editions, you can simply use the "unsubscribe" button in the imprint below.

We wish you a great start for 2017,

Sandra Retzer and the team of the Sino-German Urbanisation Partnership

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General News

2016 World Cities Day Forum Held in Xiamen

The World Cities Day Forum was hosted by the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development (MoHURD), UN-Habitat and the Fujian Provincial Government in October 2016 in the city of Xiamen. The Forum was part of the annual World Cities Day and focused on sustainable, inclusive and integrated city planning, design, and construction topics. Besides discussing the outcome of the Habitat III-Conference in October 2016 in Quito, the Xiamen Initiative on Urban Development was signed by the participants, including MoHURD Vice-Minister Yi, UN-Habitat Deputy Executive Director Kirabo, South-African Vice-Minister for Human Settlements, Kota-Fredericks, and BMUB Head of Division Dr. Vera Rodenhoff. The Xiamen Initiative underlines the principles of the New Urban Agenda and promotes sustainable and integrated urban development worldwide. [More...](#)

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2016 Guangzhou International Award for Urban Innovation

The ceremony for the 2016 Guangzhou International Award for Urban Innovations was held in December 2016. 171 cities from 59 countries submitted more than 300 initiatives in the field of renewable energy, waste management, climate change, road safety, and youth engagement. The award was finally given to the Korean city of Songpa-gu, Copenhagen (Denmark), Boston (USA), La Paz (Bolivia) and Qalyubeya (Egypt) as winning cities together with a check of \$20,000. The annual award is given by an international jury to outstanding cities which actively and successfully promote urban innovations and the quality of life of its citizens. [More...](#)

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Urban Planning

News from the Project

In October 2016 the project supported a study tour of the Research Institute of Standards and Norms (RISN), subordinate to MoHURD, to Berlin on the topic of energy efficiency in the building sector. The delegation visited the German Institute for Standardization (DIN) and held talks with BMUB and the German Sustainable Building Association (DGNB).

The project has supported the World Cities Day Forum organised by MoHURD on 31st October in Xiamen. Successful meetings between BMUB and MoHURD as well as with the Chinese Mayor Association (CAM) on the future development of the Urbanisation Partnership took place. The Sino-German Mayors' Programme is implemented since 1982 and will be part of the Urbanisation Partnership from 2017 onwards.

On 23rd November the project organised a workshop for a 30-member delegation from MoHURD and representatives of the local HURD offices with BMUB on the topic of "sponge cities". The discussion focused in particular on the anchoring of adaptation measures in water laws and regulations. The German Federal Water Act and its enclosed measures on water protection served as an example.

Upcoming Events

- The project will organise various workshops during the International Conference on Green and Energy-Efficient Building & New Technologies and Products Expo (IGEB) in **Beijing in March**.
- A meeting with German and international stakeholders of the Sino-German Urbanisation Partnership will be held **in Berlin in January**. *By invitation only*.
- The Sino-German Mayors' Programme will take place at the end of **in Germany in September**. If you are interested and wish to participate you can contact the team of the Urbanisation Partnership directly.

MoHURD to Preserve Buildings of Historical and Cultural Value

The Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development (MoHURD) has published a plan in August 2016 to protect and preserve historical and cultural blocks and buildings in China. According to the plan, all cities have to identify historical and cultural blocks and historic buildings in the next five years and publish a list of suggestions for their protection. The Provincial Housing and Urban-Rural Development Bureau collects and verifies the data. In the supervision and inspection stage (beginning of 2019), the protection and improvement measures will be checked and supervised in order to guaranty smooth implementation by municipal governments and are planned to be finished by 2020. [More...](#)

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Chinese Cities are Slowly Sinking

Local governments try to counteract the lowering of Chinese cities that currently poses a threat to over 50 cities. Geologists predict that it will worsen with the development of new urban areas and the overuse of natural resources (such as an extensive use of underground water). The sinking of the cities is also a risk for the public through possible damaging of city infrastructure and the statics of skyscrapers. The central government implemented various costly measures to fight the problem. For example, city planners are made aware of the issues and plans to build underground infrastructure are being halted and re-evaluated.

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Climate and Environment

State Council Issues New Plan to Promote Low-Carbon Development

The Chinese government has released a new plan to curb greenhouse gas emissions and promote green and low-carbon development during the 13th Five-Year Plan period. According to the plan, by 2020 the level of carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP will be 18 % lower than in 2015. To reach this goal, the plan calls for a low-carbon energy revolution across China that includes promoting energy conservation in the industry, construction, and public transport sector as well as developing non-fossil energy, including power generated from nuclear, wind, solar, geothermal, and biomass sources. Furthermore, intelligent, green and low-carbon urbanisation, a modern transportation system, effective recycling and disposal of household waste, and the promotion of low-carbon lifestyles will contribute to the nation's growing efforts in promoting a green development. These measures will be supported by the introduction of a carbon emission trading system which will cover eight industrial sectors, such as petrochemical, steel, paper making, and aviation industry, starting in 2017.

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Yangtze Belt Development Plan Issued

China issued a new development plan for the Yangtze River Economic Belt which includes 2 municipalities and 9 provinces and is set to promote a green low-carbon development and repairs most of the environmental damage which accrued along the Yangtze River by 2020. The goal of the plan is to improve the ecological environment and biodiversity along the river, protect water resources by preventing pollution, restoring the function of wetlands and also increasing the coastal forest coverage rate to 43% to avert flooding. By 2030, water environment, water quality and ecosystem function shall be improved.

Furthermore, the central government plans to gradually implement a negative list of banned industry activities along the economic belt. Among the planned measures are preventing industrial and agricultural pollution as well as urban sewage disposal into the river and strict prevention and control of ship pollution. The repairing activities will be followed by water resource management and other strict standards to protect the Yangtze River environment in the future.

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Adaptation and Resilience

China's Ambitious Sponge Cities Plan

In 2013, Xi Jinping published a new national plan to combat flooding in Chinese cities. High tides and torrential rain are mainly a result of climate change but occur also through fast urban growth and sealing of soils. The governmental programme is now in its implementing stage, with cities attempting to dewater urban infrastructure and protect valuable water resources. Currently, 16 Chinese pilot sponge cities test measures for natural infiltration, natural purification, and natural retention. 20 % of the chosen cities must develop sponge cities standards by the end of 2020 and 30 % until 2030. Moreover, all of the pilot cities need to complete the project constructions until 2017. [More...](#)

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NDRC and MoHURD Start Pilot Works of Climate Resilient Cities Construction

The Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development (MoHURD) and the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) plan to actively promote urban adaptation to climate change and effectively improve cities' ability to adapt according to the "Urban Adaptation to Climate Change Action Plan". Until 2020, pilot cities for climate resilience shall realise economic, social, urban, and industrial development planning and construction standards to adapt to the increasing impacts of climate change. A notice issued from NDRC and MoHURD stated that up to 30 highly vulnerable Chinese cities will be selected to carry out pilot measures, including strengthening capacities, formulating plans, assessing urban climate change impacts and vulnerabilities. After the pilot projects have proven successful, the government is looking forward to establish the city resilience index offered as a tool to cities worldwide. The index is the first extensive tool to help cities identify their vulnerabilities, prepare themselves for the future, and evaluate their resilience. Moreover, the index motivates cities to be more future-focused and inclusive. [More...](#)

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Transport and Infrastructure

Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Railway Project to Ease Traffic Burden

To ease traffic problems and air pollution in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, the central government established an integrated railway plan for the region. The railway will connect the cities of Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Shijiazhuang, Tangshan, Qinhuangdao, Langfang, and Baoding. The systems will be introduced in towns with more than 100,000 residents and are expected to significantly reduce commuting time between the cities until 2020. [More...](#)

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China to Boost Rural Transport Investment to Reduce Poverty

China's central government plans to spend more funds on transport development in poorer areas within the next four years to support the aim of developing a moderately prosperous society by the end of 2020. Especially western and central regions shall profit from rural road construction that offers an easier access to nearby towns and cities and hence an increase in tourism and trade. Furthermore, every Chinese village should have asphalt roads and be connected to the public transport networks by the end of 2020. The plan requires the renovation of 16.000 km freeways and roads, the construction of 195.000 km asphalt roads between townships and villages, the construction of 46.000 km of highways, upgrading of 15.000 bridges and widening lanes as well as supporting 1.177 counties by building better roads. [More...](#)

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Buildings and Housing

China to Promote Prefabricated Buildings

The Chinese government plans to increase prefabricated buildings in its urbanisation policy to increase energy saving and improve safety. The prefabricated buildings will be built in metropolitan areas such as Beijing, Hebei, Tianjin, the Pearl River Delta, the Yangtze River Delta, and other cities with more than three million permanent residents.

To promote the development towards using prefabricated buildings, the State Council plans to improve standards and regulations. Rolling out supporting policies to assist cities will be the responsibility of local governments. In order to actively implement the decisions of the State Council, local provinces and cities put forward their own development goals: Beijing and Zhejiang Province plan that prefabricated buildings account for 30% of the proportion of new buildings by 2020.

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China Moves to Cool Housing Market

By introducing stricter local measures, China is trying to counter the negative development of the property market. China's cities have seen a price surge and excess speculation in the last years. The measures aim to stop the steep increase in home purchases and punish aggressive real estate agents. For example, the local government in Hangzhou implemented restrictions which require buyers at auctions to pay the full purchasing price for high-priced land within a month. This shall stop developers to pay above the market rates during prizing booms and moreover palliate the boom, caused by earlier attempts such as down payment requirements and transaction taxes to lowering inventories.

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Social and Cultural Affairs

Government Measures Against Poverty

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang underlined the necessity to end poverty until 2020 and to implement the envisaged poverty-relief measures. More than 55.75 million people in China still live in poverty. The measures focus on border and ethnic minority areas as well as cities and regions with a high rate of poverty. The government expects positive effects for local residents through promoting agriculture, tourism, and commerce. Furthermore, the local government shall ensure that the revenue of exploiting mineral and hydropower resources will benefit the local residents and industry. Other measures include guaranteeing basic social security in poor regions and the restoration and building up of modern infrastructure, such as water conservation facilities, power grids and telecom networks. [More...](#)

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China to Allow Farmers to Keep Their Land Rights

Urban growth in China has caused huge pressure on the land used for housing, agriculture, and industry. Growing numbers of Chinese farmers have begun to resist land seizure and to protect their land used for farming, oftentimes their main source of income. The central government issued a new guideline in November 2016 to protect farmers' rights. The new land reform changes the old household responsibility system and separates farmland ownership rights, contract rights, and operating rights, which allows the farmers to retain the rights to their allotted land even if they choose to lease the land out to individuals or corporations. [More...](#)

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Beijing Ends Urban-Rural Hukou Distinction

Beijing's local government ended the decades-long distinction between urban

and rural residents through the country's household registration system "hukou", affecting 2.9 million residents. The authorities decided to give urban and rural residents the same access to public service systems. The change in policies is a reaction to rising urbanisation rates as China aims to reach 60 % of its overall population living in cities by the end of 2020. [More...](#)

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Picture of the month

Also the Forbidden City is covered in smog...



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