

# 'Island ecologies and the built environment: Interactions, planning, and protection', a special section of *Island Studies Journal*, 18(1), May 2023

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Although they are often studied independent from one another, ecology and the built environment are intimately related. In island contexts, marine, coastal, and terrestrial environments provide spaces and resources for human activity, while human activity changes the nature of these environments.

Island ecosystems are not necessarily more fragile than mainland ecosystems, but small island spatiality (limited land area and separation from hinterlands) and coastal settlement patterns concentrate and intensify the exchange of energy and ecological material between land and sea. As a result, exceptional pressure is often placed on natural resources on and surrounding islands.

This issue is relevant beyond island studies in a narrow sense. At a global scale, small islands are sites of disproportionately intensive human settlement construction. In the case of islands offshore from continental mainlands, this is because islands have proven extraordinarily useful for facilitating terrestrial and marine contact and exchange, particularly in terms of maritime trade. Cities such as New York, Singapore, Lagos, Guangzhou, and Venice show how small islands have – at various points in history, in different regions – been especially likely to develop into important centres of population and industry. The combination between large-scale human settlement construction and limited ecological carrying capacity accentuates environmental problems and localises the impacts of resource overconsumption. Even oceanic islands often face severe pressure on their natural resources, sometimes precisely because these natural resources are so attractive, e.g. for tourism, with examples including the Galapagos Islands, Madeira, Palau, and Seychelles.

Current research on islands tends to focus on terrestrial and marine ecological protection and island economic development not simply as distinct issues but also with little reference to the geographical or spatial attributes of the built environment and the human settlements themselves. Environmental and economic processes affecting islands and their surrounding waters tend to be abstracted, losing sight of the actual spaces in which people live and with which people interact.

This special section of *Island Studies Journal (ISJ)* seeks to remedy this problem by asking: How do island ecologies and the built environment influence one another? The special section discusses island environmental, economic, and other issues in direct relation to spaces of human settlement and activity. How do ecological factors and human settlement practices influence one another? For example, where are island cities, towns, and villages located? How are they planned and developed? How do they link up with, or how are they disconnected from, other terrestrial and marine spaces? Similarly, how do particular ways of living with and on islands produce particular ecological results? Do real-life human settlement practices in island spaces indicate a need for different approaches to environmental conservation than in mainland contexts? How can terrestrial, marine, and coastal development best be coordinated to balance various human and environmental needs, in terms of

infrastructure construction, spatial layout, industrial development, resource development, ecological protection, and cultural and social needs? How does the mental categorisation of some islands as existing within archipelagos and other islands as existing in isolation affect the ways in which people do or ought to treat islands?

This special section encourages contributions from planners, architects, geographers, environmental scientists, and others who research human interaction with island and marine spaces. We foreground the island as a space for assessing ecological and human values, considering not just general technical issues and systems construction but also factors connected to the characteristics of individual islands and archipelagos. For example, islands that provide important habitats for migratory birds or that are seen as critical to world natural heritage and biodiversity conservation may be valued in different ways by both islanders and mainlanders than are islands that are not commonly regarded as possessing globally or locally unique ecological values. It is possible to conceive of rational development and utilisation of islands' terrestrial and marine resources in a manner that is conducive to sustainable development, but different islands will require different solutions and ways of thinking about sustainability.

This special section will be published in May 2023 in *ISJ*, but individual papers will be published online ahead of print as and when they complete the peer review and editorial process. *ISJ* is a web-based, freely downloadable, open access, peer reviewed journal that publishes papers advancing and critiquing the study of issues affecting or involving islands. It is listed and abstracted in Scopus and the Social Science Citation Index (Q1 in 2021).

For further information or if you are interested in submitting a paper, contact: guest editors Huan Zhang ([0014979@zju.edu.cn](mailto:0014979@zju.edu.cn)) and Adam Grydehøj ([agrydehoj@islanddynamics.org](mailto:agrydehoj@islanddynamics.org)). Manuscripts should be between 5,000 and 10,000 words (including 250-500 word equivalents for each table/figure) and must be prepared in accordance with the *ISJ* submission guidelines: [https://www.islandstudies.ca/guidelines\\_instructions.html](https://www.islandstudies.ca/guidelines_instructions.html).

The deadline for final submission is 31 March 2022. All papers will be subject to peer review. Final drafts of papers must be submitted via the journal's online submission system, but authors are strongly encouraged to first send an early draft to the guest editors for review.