

Bilateral Meeting with Arab Urban Development Institute

17 Jan. 2023

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A few days ago, the new Director General of the Arab Urban Development Institute got in touch via LinkedIn. A relatively young, dynamic Saudi city planner with a background both in city government and at King Saud University in Riyadh, Anas Almughairy inherited what sounds like an ossified, almost inactive structure, and he is trying to blow new life into it. As part of this effort, he is looking for partners, and wanted to speak to propose signing an MoU with Metropolis.

I cooled down expectations on an MoU: I explained that first we need to approve a new strategy, perhaps work together on one or two projects or activities, identify the exact contents, and only then we could consider an MoU. Agnes and I have been discussing that signing MoUs is not something we should do lightly, even when there is no specific commitment, and it is better to get to know the organization and its intentions before we even consider it.

The Arab Urban Development Institute is the oldest of the Arab Towns Organization's affiliate institutions. AUDI is supposed to be the (sort of) think-tank/scientific branch for them. The funding arrangement consists basically of one source: the host city - in this case, Riyadh - pays for the whole structure. There are other, smaller and newer, of these Arab Towns Organization's affiliates in Abu Dhabi (on environment and climate), Doha (a Fund for cities), Amman (on Smart Cities) and some other I now forget.

AUDI in Riyadh is working on a new Strategy. They may or may not emerge as a more interesting organization out of it. For now, I think we should have more of a wait-and-see attitude than a proactive one. I will send them the link to pre-register for the Brussels Urban Summit, and will be exchanging reactively until there is a clear opportunity or proposal on sight.

Hélène, I am copying you because one thing they do is capacity-building. I am not suggesting we do something on this issue, just mentioning it for your information

Jordi