

: Programme

As at 11 September 2023

Berlin Summer Dialogues 2023

Can Cities Save the World? The Impact of City Networks and City Partnerships for Peace and Development

Relaxa hotel Berlin

19 September 2023

Conference languages

German/English (simultaneous interpretation)

Cooperating partners



#BSD23

BACKGROUND

The emergence of city diplomacy is directly linked to the commitment of cities to peace and reconciliation. Following World War II, the desire for “never again!” fostered the establishment of diplomatic relations at the level of municipalities. Personal contact between citizens was intended to contribute to international understanding, to initiate reconciliation and to counteract nationalist power politics among nations. Thus, many twinning agreements were established against the backdrop of the Second World War, especially between cities in Germany, France, Poland, and the Soviet Union. In some cases, relations between cities even preceded the official opening of diplomatic relations at the national level. Since its emergence, twin-city partnerships and city diplomacy have proven to be effective means to build bridges, dismantle hostile images and break down barriers, both real and imagined.

Urban diplomacy has since evolved and become more varied. As members of multilateral city networks, cities take up global political agendas such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), they position themselves as foreign policy and development actors and demand more scope for political participation. Thematically, the engagement of cities is no longer limited to cultural exchange. Today, cities engage in a wide range of foreign policy areas, including climate policy, development cooperation, migration, and human rights.

The growing commitment of cities is based on the realization that the future of humanity resides in urban areas. More than half of the world’s population already live in cities, and estimates suggest that by 2050 this number will rise to 70 percent. This has profound social ramifications. While cities provide space for innovation and economic opportunity, they are also the epicentre of growing marginalization and social inequality. In rapidly growing cities, disparities in living standards create a fertile environment for violence, rising crime rates and political extremism.

In light of these developments, the United Nations University warns that the future of violent conflict will be in cities and can only be avoided through sustainable development. As the main providers of public services, it falls primarily to municipal administrations to counteract socio-economic imbalances. To turn cities into inclusive, resilient, and sustainable spaces (SDG 11) and to promote peaceful and inclusive societies (SDG 16), cities across the world have intensified bilateral and multilateral cooperation and are pushing for the localization of the SDGs.

To what extent do urbanisation, growing social inequality, climate change and political fragility increase the potential for violent conflict within cities? What contribution can multilateral city networks and bilateral city partnerships make to preventing crises and promoting peace and sustainable development? And what best practices exist at the local level to foster urban peace?

: Tuesday, 19 September 2023

09.30 hrs Registration

Chair

Dr Marcus Kaplan

Executive Director
Development and Peace Foundation (sef:), Bonn

10.00 hr Welcome

Klaus Brückner

Former Principal (retired), Berlin
Treasurer of the
Development and Peace Foundation (sef:), Bonn

Dr Rainer Seiderr (angefragt)

Head of the Division for International Relations and
Deputy Chief of Protocol of the Federal State of Berlin
Governing Mayor of Berlin, Senate Chancellery

10.15 HRS

KEYNOTE

CONFLICT IN MOTION – SUSTAINING URBAN PEACE

Ideally, cities provide space for creativity, exchange of ideas and innovation. However, these advantages of urban life are by no means shared by all city dwellers. Economic, religious, ethnic, and social divides further the exclusion of vulnerable populations, for example regarding access to housing, education, healthcare, and justice. Consequently, in the next decades social conflicts are likely to increasingly find their violent expression in urban areas. At the same time, urbanisation is accelerating worldwide, especially in Asia and Africa. Fragile states and regions already affected by conflict are experiencing particularly rapid urban growth, which could further aggravate an already tense situation.

What lines of conflict are emerging against the backdrop of rapid urbanization in the Global North and Global South? How do (violent) conflicts manifest themselves in urban spaces and which actors need to be involved in conflict resolution or — ideally — conflict prevention?

Input

Dr Achim Wennmann

Director for Strategic Partnerships
Senior Researcher, Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP)
Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Genf

11.00 hrs Coffee break

11.15 HRS

SESSION I

**OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITATIONS OF CITY NETWORKS
IN ADDRESSING GLOBAL CHALLENGES**

Chair

Nora Witt

Research Coordinator
Development and Peace Foundation (sef:), Bonn

Due to opposing interests and open conflicts, nation states around the world are less and less willing and able to find collaborative solutions to global challenges. Here, municipalities can step in. They have to worry less about state interests and geopolitical tensions, but share a responsibility to provide reliable public services. Municipalities across the world face similar problems, which enables them to focus on interpersonal (instead of intergovernmental) relations and provide a stable foundation for constructive cooperation. This has inspired the ideas: “States talk — cities act” and “Cities will save the world”.

To enhance the visibility of urban needs, cities increasingly organize themselves in formalized networks. Approximately 300 city networks are currently active across the world, working on a wide range of topics such as employment, digital transformation, migration and mobility, climate change and protection of natural resources, democratic participation, and civic involvement.

What added value do city networks such as UCLG, C40, U20, ICLEI, Metropolis or the Pact of Free Cities offer in promoting peace and sustainable development? To what extent do city networks strengthen the national and international scope of action for cities? And does the growing number of city networks also have downsides?

Discussion Round

Alfredo Malaret Baldo

Peace in Our Cities, Urban Violence Program Officer
Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice, University of San Diego

Laura Valdés

Head of Policy, metropolis, Barcelona

Dr Lorenzo Kihlgren Grandi

Leiter des City Diplomacy Lab
Columbia Global Centers, Paris

12.30 hrs

Lunch

13.45 HRS

SESSION II

LOCAL SOLUTIONS FOR GLOBAL CHALLENGES?

THE IMPACT OF CITY-TO-CITY PARTNERSHIPS TO FOSTER PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

Chair

Dr Marcus Kaplan

Executive Director

Development and Peace Foundation (sef:), Bonn

Bilateral city-to-city partnerships continue to enjoy unbroken popularity in many countries. In Germany, the Russian war against Ukraine triggered a wave of solidarity at the level of municipalities. Numerous cities hoisted the Ukrainian national flag in front of their town halls, organized rallies, and provided humanitarian aid and unbureaucratic help for refugees. Within a year, the number of twinning agreements between German and Ukrainian municipalities rose from 76 to 120, promising active involvement for post-conflict reconstruction.

Against the backdrop of current global crises and the weakening of multilateralism at the intergovernmental level, city partnerships continue to gain in importance. Together, municipal partners seek solutions to global (urban) problems and share best practices on crisis prevention, social cohesion, and sustainable development.

What role do bilateral partnerships play in acute crisis situations? How can they effectively address urban conflicts? How can partnerships between cities in the Global North and Global South be made equitable?

Discussion Round

Jörn Hendrichs

Development policy information and education work, development policy guidelines

Senate Chancellery of the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen

Marianne Kreuzig

Project Manager, German-Ukrainian Municipal Partnerships

Service Agency (SKEW), ENGAGEMENT GLOBAL gGmbH

Dr Sandile Mbatha

Senior Manager, Research and Policy Advocacy

eThekweni Municipality, City of Durban, Province of KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa

15.00 hrs

Coffee break

15.30 HRS

SESSION III

IN FOCUS – INNOVATIVE COMMUNAL APPROACHES TO FOSTER PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

Chair

Nora Witt

Research Coordinator
Development and Peace Foundation (sef:), Bonn

Urbanization is a relentless trend, and as cities grow and expand, conflict and violence are urbanizing as well. To avoid turning the “urban century” (Kofi Annan) into an era of urban violence, municipalities around the world are developing innovative solutions to tackle the challenges lying ahead. The last session of the day contributes to the exchange of best practices by highlighting promising initiatives from municipalities in the Global South to overcome conflicts, prevent violence and to foster social cohesion.

Discussion Round

Daniela Reina

Cooperation Commissioner
Mayor’s Office of Palmira, Colombia

Kariem El-Ali

Senior Policy Advisor and Team Lead Smart Change Jakarta
Jakarta Provincial Government, supported by German development cooperation through the “Experts Fund for Municipal Partnerships Worldwide”

Pamela Reducindo Pérez

Deputy Director for International Cooperation
Mexico City

17.15 HRS

SESSION IV

SUMMARY AND OUTLOOK

Chair

Nicola Humpert

Consultant for Communal Development Cooperation
Senate Department for Economic Affairs, Energy and Public Enterprises, Berlin

N.N.

18.00 hrs

End of Conference