



International learning and exchange formats promote integrated urban development

Dialogues for Urban Change (D4uC)

Context

By international standards, Germany is considered a good example in urban development, implementing prototypical approaches such as integrated urban development and planning, the multilevel approach (vertical cooperation between municipal, state and federal level), the place-based approach and the focus on the common good. These approaches are given life in particular through the National Urban Development Policy (NUDP) and its programmes, which implement the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities (2007) and the New Leipzig Charter (2020).

While the context in Europe, the USA and the Global South may differ, many cities and municipalities face the same problems. The Leipzig Charter therefore advocates exchange between cities, at both national and international level in order to ensure that they find future-oriented ways to create liveable cities and neighbourhoods.

With the Dialogues for Urban Change (D4uC) project, the German Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (BMI) is supporting international exchange in order to promote integrated urban development focused on the common good, to advocate for the (further) development and implementation of national urban development policies and to leverage municipal innovation

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Contact	Dr. Bettina Silbernagl

Objective

Innovative international learning and exchange formats strengthen integrated urban development focused on the common good, municipal capacity and the implementation of national policies, both in Germany and in selected cooperation countries.



Approach

The project supports BMI with internationalising the National Urban Development Policy and the New Leipzig Charter. Study and expert trips and joint events are regularly held to this end.

The project's central focus is the implementation of transcontinental peer learning networks, each of which comprises up to eight cities. In conjunction with national authorities and city associations, they each take an in-depth look at one real project example per city in 'living labs', where the implementation practice is examined with a critical eye on both, the local and national frameworks. One central part of the networks is cooperative learning on an equal footing, or the 'peer learning' method.

Participants support the implementation of the project examples over a period of around two years, exchanging information on the implementation in face-to-face workshops, local assignments and virtual advisory meetings. Participants also interact with policy-makers, intensively and openly.

What all project examples have in common is that they take an integrated urban approach with a clear place-based focus (neighbourhood). In the living labs, challenges relating to governance are often at the forefront. These include the management of interdepartmental coordination processes, multilevel governance or long-term citizen participation.

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Supportive measures such as temporary placements provide a deeper insight into the 'other' everyday working life above and beyond the local assignments.

Experiences gained are taken into consideration in the national urban development policies and their implementation programmes. They are also presented at conferences such as BMP's annual National Urban Development Policy Congress and made available to other municipalities through associations such as the Association of German Cities.

Results

Open exchange based on trust and in the context of peer learning helps improve the implementation of national policies related to integrated urban development focused on the common good and permits open dialogue on existing challenges.

In South Africa, citizens are already benefiting from new exchange formats. In the municipality of Msunduzi, representatives of the administration sat on the 'red sofa' to talk directly to citizens about rejuvenation of the inner city, away from the highly formalised standard participation processes.

Participating urban developers, municipal associations and ministries are more invested in their key role in the sustainable structuring of the city of tomorrow and are better able to defend their positions with integrity in the face of resistance.

National partners and bilateral programmes in South Africa and Ukraine adapt and replicate the peer learning method and have formed their own national urban development learning networks.

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Further information:

- [Feature video about the project approach \(South African-German City Network 2017\)](#)
- [Peer Learning at the 2017 Federal Congress on National Urban Development Policy in Hamburg](#)
- [International cooperation arrangements of the National Urban Development Policy](#)
- [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\)](#)
- [Ministry for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs \(COGTA\), National Urban Development Policy South Africa](#)
- [Project description of the German Marshall Fund of the United States D4C initiative](#)

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Registered offices
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Germany

Potsdamer Platz 10
10785 Berlin, Deutschland
T +49 30 338 424 443
E info@giz.de
I www.giz.de

Name of the programme/project:
Dialogues for Urban Change (D4uC)

Contact:
Dr. Bettina Silbernagl (bettina.silbernagl@giz.de)



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