

Concept Note

German National Congress on Urban Development Policy 2025

International Forum

Social cohesion as a foundation for the neighbourhood of the future

Date: September 16th, 2025

Time: 16:30–18:15

Location: StadtHalle, Südring 90, 18059 Hansestadt Rostock (room t.b.c.)

Facilitation: Dr. Tina Silbernagl, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

Language: English

Background:

The challenges of our time - climate change, the digital transformation, migration, the housing crises and rapid changes in the reality of everyday life due to new technologies - are not only putting pressure on urban planners, city administrations and municipal decision-makers. They are also shaking the foundations of our (urban) society and the way we live together. When planning and developing existing and new neighbourhoods, it will therefore not only be a matter of creating modern and sustainable living places in order to get to the “neighbourhoods for the future”. It will also largely depend on how social cohesion can be fostered. Social cohesion determines the strength of relationships and sense of solidarity/belonging among residents; thus, it significantly contributes to the resilience of a neighbourhood. This will be a key factor particularly in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, as it helps to balance social and economic differences and enables the integration of all population groups through participation and inclusive neighbourhood management approaches. Without it, future city neighbourhoods risk becoming fragmented, alienating, socially unstable or unsafe. European cities bring strong traditions in integrated and participatory planning approaches that centre on liveable cities for the common good. North American cities are known for their strength in community organizing, grassroots initiatives, and public-private partnerships. Sharing these practices can bring about new perspectives to common problems and provide a transatlantic perspective on the relevance of social cohesion in the development of neighbourhoods that are truly “future proof”.

Session objectives:

This event will explore how social cohesion can be deliberately developed, fostered, and sustained in existing or newly developed or redeveloped neighbourhoods. Through “real live” case studies, and interactive exchange between North American and European practitioners, this session aims to identify and showcase practical tools, policy approaches, and inclusive planning principles that strengthen social cohesion in future proof city quarters.

Methodology: Pecha Kucha presentations, reflection round in a panel format with involvement of the audience

Contributors:

High-level representatives from:

- State Secretary, **Dr. Olaf Thorsten Joachim**, German Federal ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building (BMWSB)
- **Rico Quirindongo**, Director of the Office of Planning and Community Development, City of Seattle (United States)
- **Lars Löbner**, Head of Unit "Housing Projects", Senate Department for Urban Development, Building and Housing, City of Berlin (Germany)
- N.N., City of Montreal (Canada)
- N.N., City of Kyiv (Ukraine)

Facilitator: **Dr. Tina Silbernagl**, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

Draft session outline:

Time	Element
16:30	Welcome State Secretary, Dr. Olaf Thorsten Joachim, BMWSB Framing and run of show: Facilitator
16:35	Pecha Kucha presentations (12 min per presentation) on the topic of social cohesion in new neighbourhoods with examples from three cities from Canada, United States and Ukraine
17:15	Reflections and questions by German city representatives followed by facilitated panel discussion
18:00	Q&A with audience
18:15	Wrap-up and goodbye Facilitator

Please note: After this session all panelist and international guests of the congress are invited to an informal get-together. The venue will be announced in due time.