



Call for Participants - Connective Cities Dialogue Event

2nd Hands on Public Buildings

Reuse of Modernist Buildings from the 60s and 70s

Berlin, Germany, 24–26 September 2024

Connective Cities and the Senate Department for Urban Development, Building and Housing Berlin invite urban practitioners to the **dialogue event on the reuse of modernist buildings** to be held in **Berlin, Germany** from **24 to 26 September 2024**.

The event addresses both German and international municipal actors working on solving the challenge of steering use of existing buildings within their municipalities. The focus lies on developing innovative strategies for the adaptive reuse of existing public buildings from the 60s and 70s in urban environments. Municipal actors include representatives of municipalities, municipal companies as well as representatives from civil society, academia and business who are active in municipal projects in this thematic field.

All participants are expected to engage proactively in the international dialogue by presenting their experience and/or identifying concrete challenges and needs they face.

This collaborative effort between Connective Cities and the City of Berlin will provide a platform for sharing experiences and identifying challenges related to the repurposing of modern buildings. Hosted by the Senate Department for Urban Development, Building and Housing Berlin and the Senate Chancellery Berlin the event will feature insights from recent and ongoing projects enriching discussions with practical perspectives.

Background

The construction sector is one of the most energy-intensive sectors of the economy largely responsible for global climate change by causing up to 40 per cent of the global CO₂ emissions. Today, the way in which we plan and construct new buildings can already help to reduce emissions. However, the reuse of existing buildings is key to an environmentally friendly construction sector. It can take a very long time for the high emissions generated during the construction phase of a building to be compensated during its lifespan. Therefore it's important to focus on the utilization of existing buildings and enable cities and municipalities to save grey energy bound in concrete and steel in a sustainable, economically efficient and cultural heritage sensible way.

The modern era has profoundly shaped cities worldwide, leaving an indelible mark on their landscapes and cultures. The influence of modernism is particularly evident in public buildings. A common element in buildings from the 60s and 70s is the highly flexible construction method, where walls are no longer load-bearing. The building plan can therefore be adapted and tailored to new requirements. While in most cases demolition and reconstruction has been the answer at the end of a building's lifespan, the current goal to create an emission free construction sector is lately leading to a paradigm shift.

Local governments are important players in initiating and supporting these processes on the ground. Under specific circumstances, decision-making regarding numerous buildings and districts may be urgently required. The host City of Berlin is experienced in the reuse of public buildings, not least for its history. Much of the German capital's administration is based within historic or post-war buildings. Berlin's former government and state-owned buildings are lately moving into the focus of urban development, to evaluate whether and how to reuse them. Their long-term partner, the City of Jakarta, is currently facing the withdrawal of governmental institutions and happy to share their initial concepts and thoughts on the reuse of the existing building structures with a wider audience of experts. The dialogue event will benefit from a broad participation of experts worldwide with even more examples to showcase.

Thematic focus of the dialogue event

To be able to discuss the reuse of existing buildings at a practical level, the Connective Cities dialogue event in Berlin will focus on the three specific aspects:

- **Rededication and conservation**

Cities worldwide face the challenge of approaching sites with historic significance. Public buildings are a prominent element of urban planning. Especially the modernist architecture of governmental buildings has considerably shaped urban landscapes. When changed governmental circumstances require a redefinition of existing architecture, or buildings reach the end of their anticipated life span, cities must decide between the demolition and reuse of such. Participants of the dialogue event will discuss the advantages of preservation in the context of conserving modernist buildings from the 60s and 70s.

- **Social and ecological sustainability**

The reuse of existing buildings is key for a climate-conscious construction sector and can further generate additional ecological and social benefits. The exchange of good practices and approaches of quantifying the impact of reuse can help municipalities to formulate strategic goals for a more sustainable building stock. Especially in former administration buildings, the reduction of the ecological impact and waste are important elements to consider in a sustainable planning process, but also the provision of inner urban public spaces at the disposal of the citizens' needs. Given that the public buildings are in the cities' hands, great amount of space can be designated to social and affordable housing.

- **Innovative construction methods and economical reuse**

With increasing energy cost, the preservation of energy in the creation of affordable office spaces and housing gradually gains economic importance. Innovative, adaptive construction methods for already existing urban structures allow preserving grey energy bound in steel and concrete, while offering economic answers to the growing demand for working and living in urban areas. Participants of the dialogue event will discuss opportunities to decrease construction costs without compromising on environmental and social criteria and further exchange on tried and tested materials and construction methods.

Objectives of the dialogue event

Acknowledging the complexity and variety of planning the reuse of existing buildings, the workshop does not present universal solutions. Rather, it aims at enhancing the capacity of participants to understand

their local context and to be able to choose a suitable mix from the different options available based on reliable and consistent data, identification of problems, framework conditions and respective objectives.

An involvement of experts from municipalities, civil society and their organisations, as well as research and academia provide a platform to pool experiences to discuss challenges and generate ideas for adaptive reuse concepts.

The aim of the exchange is to explore good practice examples from municipalities in diverse local contexts as well as inputs from international organisations. Here, the interest is mainly to identify pragmatic solutions and approaches that can be applied or adapted in the participants' local contexts. Furthermore, the event will offer a platform to discuss the challenges around the theme reuse of modernist buildings from the 60s and 70s and support municipalities in elaborating joint project ideas that may later be implemented in the respective home municipalities or within existing or new thematic municipal partnerships.

This dialogue event is the first step of what we call a "Connective Cities learning process". Selected ideas for local solutions can be deepened with further support by Connective Cities via a follow-up activity (such as an expert mission, workshop or a webinar). A welcome outcome of a Connective Cities learning process is to enable the participating municipalities from the Global South to initiate projects, ideally with their German partner municipality and further support by the the Service Agency Communities in One World.

Participation and contact

If you wish to participate in the dialogue event, preferably with a good practice that fits in the thematic focus, we warmly invite you to apply for your funded in-person participation in the event in Berlin, Germany. To do so, please send us an email by **30 June 2024** to inform us about your municipality, organisation and your function within it, plus a short description of the project or challenge you would like to present to the other participants. We welcome the participation of municipal delegations of two experts, respectively those working in departments dealing with architecture, urban planning, cultural heritage and development concepts for reuse.

If you have any queries about the event and your eventual participation, we encourage you to contact us. Marcella Sobisch, marcella.sobisch@engagement-global.de, +49 (0)228-20717-2658

Connective Cities at a glance

The international exchange platform Connective Cities has been bringing international urban practitioners from city administrations, civil society, academia and the private sector together since 2014. Connective Cities is a cooperation project of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the Association of German Cities and Engagement Global with its Service Agency Communities in One World.

For more information on past and upcoming activities, please check: www.connective-cities.net

Factsheet: All information at a glance

Date & Place	24 to 26 September 2024, Berlin, Germany
Duration	2.5 days including site visits
Thematic focus	The event will focus on the following aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Rededication and conservation – Social and ecological sustainability – Innovative construction methods and economical reuse
Expertise	German urban practitioners look forward to presenting their experiences in elaborating solutions for adaptive reuse concepts. International participants will share their knowledge and good practices on this topic. Both German and international urban practitioners will share and discuss their challenges.
Objective	Initiate a practice-oriented exchange between German and international practitioners active in elaborating concepts for the reuse of existing buildings; Launch collective knowledge process; Foster the development of ideas for local solutions.
Criteria for participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical perspective and first-hand experience in municipal strategies and projects regarding the reuse of existing buildings; • Presentation of a local good practice example; • Willingness to engage in an exchange about current needs and challenges in this thematic area.
Language	English

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