

News

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Smart Connected Cities Harnessing Ecosystem Potential for Digitalization

On 13 February 2024 the GIZ projects "Connective Cities" and "International Smart Cities Network (ISCN)" held a side event titled "Smart Connected Cities: Harnessing Ecosystem Potential for Digitalization". It took place alongside the main event of "Data-Driven Cities: Conference for the Urban Common Good" held in Nairobi and online 12 & 13 February 2024. The side event brought together 21 representatives from cities represented at the main conference, among them the Kenyan cities Nairobi, Kisumu, Mombasa and Wote Municipality, Munich, Berlin, and Enzkreis from Germany, as well as Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Ekurhuleni from South Africa.



Photo: Connective Cities

Cities were able to exchange in a more intimate surrounding on their digitalization journey. Following initial presentations from Berlin on their Smart City strategy Gemeinsam Digital: Berlin (Together Digital: Berlin) and from Munich on its' urban planning challenges undergirding Smart City efforts, a vivid discussion emerged on common challenges but also differing perspectives.

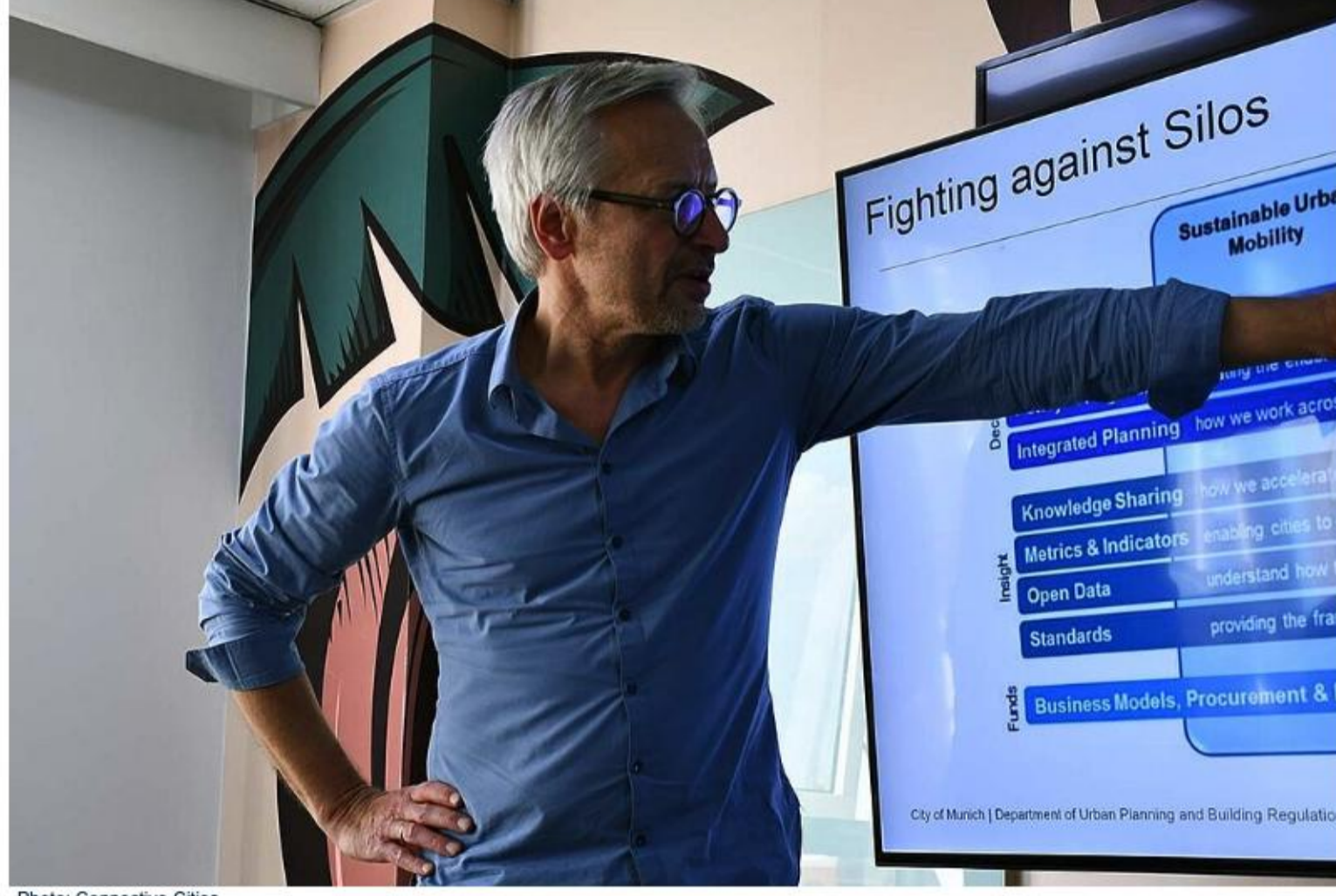


Photo: Connective Cities

In many cases cities were familiarized for the first time with the day-to-day realities of their peers. Key issues nearly every city could identify with were 1) disruptions occasioned by political changes in city administrations and how to bridge them, 2) cultural and informational silos within city departments, 3) new ways of picking up needs and capacities of citizens, such as Urban Living Labs, community-based initiatives or cooperatives, 4) how to keep focus on data-based solutions in urgent areas that don't generate immediate revenue.



Photo: Connective Cities

Subsequent to the sharing of perspectives and identification of issues first success factors were emerging: The enabling of legal and policy frameworks; collaboration and stakeholder engagement, particularly also with the involvement of universities and higher education; and a strengthening of Open-Source approaches for more budgetary independence. In some cases, a centralization of data and information would address data fragmentation. Additionally, fostering a culture of innovation, despite financial considerations, is vital to keep pace with rapidly evolving technologies. Last, but not least, many cities appreciated the power of networks to shield against disruptions and to leverage knowledge exchanges and new initiatives.

As next steps, it was agreed to explore further information exchange and peer learning. One such instance could be the "ISCN Global Mixer" format featuring short, fresh and innovative 30min interventions.



Photo: Connective Cities

The challenges that emerged were cities; prioritizing digital solutions that were revenue generating, disruptions occasioned by political changes in city administrations, cultural and informational silos within city departments, lack of collaboration and PPP perspectives, limited funds, and skills.

As next steps, it was agreed to explore information exchange and further peer learning deepening on the digitalization journeys. Topics emerging included:

- Setting of open and inclusive data bases like urban observatories
- Open source and resource sharing
- Collaboration and technical exchange among others

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Categories: [Conference participation](#), [Good Urban Governance](#), [Smart Cities / Digitalisation](#)
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