



■ In Profile – Dr. Rene Peter Hohmann,



Cities Alliance

Dr. Rene Peter Hohmann is the Head of Global Programmes at the Cities Alliance (CA) Secretariat, hosted by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). Prior to the Cities Alliance, he worked for the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH and advised various projects financed by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in the field of decentralisation, regionalisation and urban governance. As a professional and academic, he is eager to learn more about and share experiences on inclusive development approaches in cities and particularly their application in fast growing secondary cities. He taught urban planning courses at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and holds a PhD in Geography from King's College London as well as a Master's degree in Social Sciences from Humboldt University in Berlin.

Dear Rene, thank you for sitting down with us and taking the time to answer our questions. You are DeLoG's Focal Point at the Cities Alliance. Can you tell us a little bit more about your work at Cities Alliance and how the membership in the DeLoG Network ties in?

Thank you very much for the invitation. As a global partnership strengthening the role of cities in poverty reduction and sustainable development, the Cities Alliance has lots in common with DeLoG, both in terms of its membership structure but also its' policy orientation. In our operations at country and global level, we are proactively promoting an agenda for change with our members, such as United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and its regional chapters in Africa and Asia-Pacific. This agenda is to enable cities and their local governments to fully exert their mandates in ensuring public service provision for all, promoting principles of local democracy and good governance. The fact that DeLoG and Cities Alliance are joining up in moments that count, such as in multilateral processes, is a fantastic asset to build upon.

The Cities Alliance provides direct operational support to urban programmes aimed at reducing urban poverty and gender inequality. Both represent goals of the 2030 Agenda. In your opinion, what are the main challenges that these programmes are confronted with nowadays and how does Cities Alliance contribute?

We do believe that a subsidiarity principle must be enshrined, for example in national policies and constitutions, to address the key challenges of today (i.e. responses to climate change,



rising social and economic inequality and institutional fragility). One of the key failures of our international development community is to think in sectoral approaches. Even more worrisome is the reinforced trend to 'silo' support interventions for, and in, cities as 'urban'. This was unfortunately and unintentionally reinforced with SDG 11 on 'Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable'. Our own study on the 2030 Agenda argues that up to 65% of all SDG targets are at risk should cities not be assigned a clear mandate and role in the implementation process.

Personally, I believe that we need to listen more to cities and their citizens to overcome these silos when development partners are programming their support for change in cities. We have been testing such an approach in our country programmes, for example in Uganda, for the last 10 years, in which national governments, local governments, Non-Governmental Organisations and our members sit around the very same planning table. Here, the sector is not as important as our ability to build a vertical, multi-stakeholder partnership to address the challenges of rapidly urbanising cities in the country.

Rene, 2020 has just kicked off. Traditionally this is the time for New Year's resolutions. What are these for Cities Alliance and what activities do you have planned for 2020?

We will continue to maintain and reinforce the value of partnerships in times of multilateral and institutional change. We will also contribute to the 2020 Year of Action on Adaptation announced by the Global Commission on Adaptation. This year Cities Alliance will raise attention on the implementation of adaptation projects worldwide, especially in informal settlements. This commitment is based on our collaborative work within the partnership in recent years, on the nexus between climate change, vulnerability and informality, i.e. as addressed through our Joint Work Programme on Resilient Cities, Cities and Climate Change Programme, our Future Cities Africa (FCA) programme, and the support to the Urban Housing Practitioners' Hub (UHPH). This work needs to also capitalise upon, and leverage, a policy process on Addressing Informality in Cities that was graciously inaugurated by [UCLG at its World Congress in Durban](#) last year. This is the first time that we holistically address informality in cities in a dialogue with local governments at a global level. Given the significance of informality for the current and future life in cities, just to name its implications for housing, precarious work environments, gender inequality, future jobs, infrastructure safeguards, climate vulnerability and ecosystem use, we really need to work together at all levels to better understand and address this remaining feature of our future in cities.

Besides DeLoG, Cities Alliance works together with several other institutions, such as National Governments, Universities, Foundations, Multi-Lateral Organisations, International Associations of Local Authorities, etc. How are these institutions involved in Cities Alliance's work and where do you see opportunities for DeLoG and Cities Alliance to deepen their cooperation in this context?

Building partnerships between these constituencies is within our DNA. You can find these collaborations in our governance structure and in our work in partner countries, such as Liberia, Uganda and Tunisia. The Cities Alliance adds value to support programmes in countries when these partnerships are in place. In this regard, we require the facilitating role of global partnerships that can help bring other development actors to the policy and programming table at the country level.



We also work closely with our members and partners to inform and support reforming national institutional enabling environments for cities. As global partnerships we can add value by reviewing the status quo, facilitate peer learning among our partner countries and not shying away from critical conversations with our national development partners. Current collaborative work, such as on [National Urban Policies](#) with UN Habitat and OECD or the diagnostic work on Cities Enabling Environment (CEE) with [United Cities and Local Governments Africa](#) and [Asia-Pacific](#), offer a great opportunity to deepen support and exchange.

In February 2020 the 10th World Urban Forum (WUF) will take place in Abu Dhabi. The WUF aims to address rapid urbanisation and its impact on communities, cities, economies, climate change and policies. How does Cities Alliance plan on participating and what do you hope to take away from the Conference?

The Cities Alliance Secretariat has participated at all World Urban Fora and is therefore looking forward to celebrating its 10th edition in Abu Dhabi. Apart from reaching out to partners to achieve our aforementioned New Year's resolutions, we would like to offer a discussion and exchange on two key questions that are emerging in our work. Firstly, [how can local, national and global actors collaborate further on improving migration management in secondary cities](#). Secondly, we will be discussing with our Tunisian Partners, such as the mayor of Tunis and the World Bank, [how we can address the socio-economic challenges of Tunisian Cities and their lagging regions](#). We do hope that through these engagements we can strengthen and enlarge our partnerships around these initiatives. DeLoG members and partners are cordially invited to join.

Before we close, is there anything that you would like to add?

Thank you very much for this conversation. Let us use 2020 to build upon this!