



Media Release

Global experts at SMU City Dialogues Vienna: Urban resilience requires trust, equity and ‘smart enough’ solutions

(Singapore and Vienna, Austria) 3 July 2025, Thursday – As a partner event of the Mayors Forum of the World Cities Summit 2025, the fourth edition of [SMU City Dialogues](#) was successfully organised by [Singapore Management University](#) (SMU) in partnership with [Urban Innovation Vienna](#) (UIV) on 2 July 2025 at Vienna City Hall.

City Dialogues Vienna welcomed over 100 attendees from 20 countries; with representation from more than 20 universities and over 30 private and public organisations – a testament to the diversity and dynamism of our global community, and the urgency and relevance of the dialogue topic of urban resilience.

The event opened with a welcome address by **SMU Provost, Professor Alan Chan**, followed by remarks from **Mr Melvyn Ong**, Permanent Secretary (Development) at the Ministry of National Development, Republic of Singapore. The keynote address was delivered by **Mr Jürgen Czernohorszky**, Executive City Councillor for Climate, Environment, Democracy and Personnel of the City of Vienna.

Centered around the guiding question “*What is the value of urban resilience?*”, the event brought together urban leaders, policymakers and academics from Europe, Asia and beyond to exchange actionable insights towards resilient, inclusive and future-ready cities.

The programme featured three thematic tracks, each addressing a core dimension of urban resilience:

- Finance and Public-Private Partnerships
- Social Equity and Environmental Sustainability
- Innovation and Technology

These parallel discussions concluded with a joint key takeaway session led by SMU professors Winston Chow and Orlando Woods, alongside UIV’s Johannes Lutter. Their insights made one thing clear: urban resilience is not a buzzword, but a lived responsibility which requires trust, participation, and context-sensitive action.

Professor [Winston Chow](#), Co-Chair of the IPCC Working Group II and Professor of Urban Climate at SMU, said, “Resilience isn’t just about surviving, it’s about thriving. We need to align financial systems with social goals, build trust through good governance, and empower communities to shape their own future.”

Prof Chow also cautioned against over-reliance on public-private partnerships, noting that “public-private partnerships can be powerful tools, but they are not universal solutions. They require competent, stable governments, extensive due diligence and clear alignment of interest.”

SMU Professor of Geography [Orlando Woods](#), who is also Director of the SMU Urban Institute, reflected on the limitations of digital solutions in addressing complex urban challenges. While his group was tasked with exploring innovation and technology, much of the discussion shifted toward the structural problems that technology alone cannot resolve.

"It's not about being a smart city. It's about being a smart enough city. Smart enough relative to the context, the specific problem we are trying to solve with the technology that we have." He emphasised that overreliance on data and digital tools often leads to oversimplified responses, while masking deeper systemic issues like inequality, mental health, or infrastructural neglect.

Dr [Johannes Lutter](#) Senior Urban Planner at Urban Innovation Vienna, outlined three key messages on how resilience can be made more socially inclusive and locally grounded. "Given our limited resources, it is essential that we take targeted action—focusing in particular on those who are most vulnerable. To do so effectively, we must have a clear understanding of who is at risk."

"We must restore agency to communities—not by shifting responsibility onto them and stepping back, but by fostering a structured dialogue between governments and communities, ensuring genuine collaboration between public institutions and the people they serve," he added.

- End -

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About SMU City Dialogues

Initiated in 2019 by Singapore Management University, the *City Dialogues* series fosters candid exchange among policymakers, academics and business leaders. It aims to generate actionable recommendations for sustainable and inclusive urban development. Previous editions held in Singapore and Bangkok successfully brought together leaders from government, industry, and academia to engage in honest, action-oriented conversations.

About Singapore Management University

A premier university in Asia, the Singapore Management University (SMU) is internationally recognised for its world-class research and distinguished teaching. Established in 2000, SMU's mission is to generate [leading-edge research](#) with global impact and to produce broad-based, creative, and entrepreneurial leaders for the knowledge-based economy. SMU's education is known for its highly interactive, collaborative and project-based approach to learning.

Home to over 13,000 students across undergraduate, postgraduate professional and postgraduate research programmes, SMU comprises eight schools: [College of Integrative Studies](#); [College of Graduate Research Studies](#); [School of Accountancy](#); [Lee Kong Chian School of Business](#); [School of](#)

[Economics](#); [School of Computing and Information Systems](#); [Yong Pung How School of Law](#); [School of Social Sciences](#).

SMU offers a wide range of [bachelors'](#), [masters'](#), and [PhD degree programmes](#) in the disciplinary areas associated with its schools, as well as in multidisciplinary combinations of these areas.

SMU emphasises rigorous, high-impact, multi- and interdisciplinary research that addresses Asian issues of global relevance. [SMU faculty](#) members collaborate with leading international researchers and universities around the world, as well as with partners in the business community and public sector. SMU's city campus is a modern facility located in the heart of downtown Singapore, fostering strategic linkages with business, government, and the wider community.

Annex 1 - Official event photos

Photo credit: © Singapore Management University



Photo 1

Left to right: SMU Professor Winston Chow; UIV Dr Johannes Lutter; SMU Professor Orlando Woods



Photo 2A

Mr Jürgen Czernohorszky delivering the keynote address at SMU City Dialogues Vienna.



Photo 2B

Mr Melvyn Ong addressing the guests of SMU City Dialogues Vienna.



Photo 3

Professor Alan Chan delivering the opening address at SMU City Dialogues Vienna.



Photo 4A & 4B

Left to right:

1. Mr Kirk Arthur, Worldwide Government Solutions Lead, Microsoft
2. Mr Eric Pedersen, Head of Responsible Investments, Nordea Asset Management
3. Ms Fang Eu-Lin, Sustainability Lead, PwC Singapore
4. Mr Hakim Ouansafi, Executive Director, Hawaii Public Housing Authority
5. Mr Lim Eng Hwee, Chief Executive Officer, Urban Redevelopment Authority Singapore
6. Mr Thomas Madreiter, Director of Planning, City of Vienna
7. Prof Orlando Woods, Director, SMU Urban Institute
8. Prof Alan Chan, Provost, SMU
9. Professor Phang Sock Yong, Celia Moh Chair Professor of Economics, SMU
10. Professor Loretta Lees, Director, Initiative On Cities, Boston University
11. Dr Cathy Oke, Director, Melbourne Centre for Cities, University of Melbourne





Photo 5

SMU Provost, Professor Alan Chan, sharing his views at the Roundtable Panel session.



Photo 6

A participant posing a question to the Roundtable panelists.



Photo 7

Professor Orlando Woods moderating the Roundtable Panel session.



Photo 8

One of the track discussions in-progress, where participants engage in deeper conversations around the sub-themes.