

«Urbanization or Migration:

The Role of Culture in Indian and German Transitional Medium-Sized Cities»

Workshop, June 9-11, 2011

Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

List of participants

- Dr. Regina Bittner, Head of Bauhaus Kolleg
- Prof. Dr. Friedrich von Borries, Architect and Professor of Design Theory and Curatorial Practice, Hochschule für Bildende Kunst, Hamburg
- Martin Heller, cultural entrepreneur, Heller Entreprises
- Prof. Yudhishthir Raj Isar, Professor of Global Communications, The American University, Paris
- Markus Heinsdorff, Artist and Architect
- Gabriella Hornung, Program Assistant, Robert Bosch Stiftung
- Dieter Jaenicke, Artistic Director, Europäisches Zentrum der Künste, Dresden
- Bose Krishnamachari, Curator for Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2012
- Prof. Dr. Gilbert Lupfer, Academic Head of the DAPHNE Provenance Research Project, SKD
- Prof. Rahul Mehrotra, Architect and Urban Designer, Harvard University
- Dr. Sabyasachi Mukherjee, Director Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj V Sangrahalaya Museum Mumbai
- Prof. Dipl.-Ing. Heinz Nagler, Dean of the Faculty of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Urban Planning, University of Cottbus
- Satyendra Pakhalé, Industrial Designer, Amsterdam
- Dr. Volker Rodekamp, Director of the Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig
- Prof. Dr. Martin Roth, Director General of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Minutes

On the occasion of the year “Germany and India 2011-2012”, the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden and their partner, the Robert Bosch Stiftung (Robert Bosch Foundation) hosted a workshop to address the role of cultural institutions in transitional medium-sized cities in Germany and India. The objective of the three-day workshop was to discuss the development of these types of cities and its consequences from the perspective of cultural institutions and initiatives in both countries. Chaired by Martin Roth, Director General of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, the discussions helped to understand the complexities of social and cultural patterns in both countries and to identify new visions and potential fields of action for a changing role of culture in urban development processes. The strategies that have been developed during the workshop will be the basis of a follow-up conference which is scheduled for February 2012 (preliminary 6.-9. 02) in Kolkata. The workshop proved that the

diversity of the situation in Germany and India can spark a productive dialogue, with the potential to commonly create new visions for culture in the urban environment.

Procedure

The workshop in Dresden included discussions (first two days) as well as assessments of specific examples of urban development in Dresden and Görlitz. Guided tours of the most important museum buildings in Dresden provided an overview of the city's cultural scene which was particularly important for those participants who had not been to Dresden before. The visits included:

a) Museums: Grünes Gewölbe (Green Vault), Museum Albertinum with Galerie Neue Meister (New Masters Picture Gallery) and Skulpturensammlung (Sculpture Collection), Galerie Alte Meister (Old Masters Picture Gallery), Hygiene Museum, 3. Sächsische Landesausstellung (3rd Saxon State Exhibition) "Via Regia", Görlitz;

b) *Urban districts and monuments*: Dresden's historical centre and Neustadt, Garden City Hellerau, Görlitz historical centre.

Sessions

Each session was introduced by a keynote from one or two participants, followed by an open discussion:

Session I

Regarding the evolution and significance of change in medium-sized cities, an overview was given by Heinz Nagler (for Germany) and Rahul Mehrotra (for India). Mr. Nagler addressed the causes and consequences of the phenomenon of shrinking cities in Germany and presented different examples of urban planning programs that have been developed to react to these changes. Then Mr. Mehrotra outlined contemporary urbanism in India, classified cities in three major categories and elucidated their challenges in the field of urban planning. He argued that especially the category of "class 1 cities" with 100.000 – 1 million inhabitants had a lack of urban planners. (Please note that copies of the power point presentations will be submitted later).

Session II

Subsequently, for Session II Raj Isar pointed out the importance of the cultural dimension in the context of urban transformation and the need for alterations in city cultural policy. Mr. Isar emphasized the importance of cultural democracy in the contemporary context and the requirement for new visions and alliances to substitute the lacking engagement of city authorities. (The core theses of this presentation are also attached to this document).

As an example of cultural contributions to the dialogue between Germany and India, Markus Heinsdorff gave a presentation on the “Mobile Space” he designed for the year “Germany and India 2011-2012”. From November 2011 onwards, a set of modern multi-purpose pavilions will move to seven Indian cities during the event year and host interactive presentations on topics and solutions related to “City Spaces”. The “Mobile Space” combines design elements from Germany and India and creates a symbiosis of art, architecture and technology.

Session III

Session III was dedicated to the subject of cultural activities to react to the urban transformation processes and their consequences. The keynote by Friedrich v. Borries was dedicated to the evolution of “interventions” starting as a military action and later also articulation of artists in public space, who thematize for example political and social issues by interfering in existing contexts (e.g. manteling of the Reichstag in Berlin by Christo). In his keynote, Mr. Borries addressed the impact of and interrelations between artistic, urban, social, political and military interventions and “non-interventions”.

As an example of cultural involvement in a transforming environment in India, Bose Krishnamachari presented the project of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale planned for November 2012 in different venues in Kochi, Kerala. The Biennale, a nonprofit endeavor, seeks to strengthen the historical cosmopolitan legacy of the city of Kochi by showing Indian and International art in existing exhibition sites, public spaces and heritage buildings. The festival aims to stimulate national tourism, cultural interest and social cohesion. The preparations of the project show that individual support plays a major role for the effective implementation. It remains to be seen if the biennale will be a successful format of cultural activity and whether it will succeed in attracting creative potential and influencing the urban environment in Kerala.

Points of discussion

The contributions revealed significant new facts particularly for those participants in the workshop who were not familiar with the context of urban transformation processes and cultural scene in the respective other country (Germany/ India). As a result, the discussion developed very quickly, ranging over and including the following thoughts:

- In the era of rapidly changing cities (caused among others by effects of globalization and migration), stabilization of cultural identity seems to become more important than ever. How do you define the contemporary identity of a society, taking into account past as well as present influences appropriately?
- In contrast to metropolises and mega-cities, a cultural infrastructure with museums, theatres etc. rarely exist in Indian middle-sized cities. Thus, in order to be able to react

properly to urban changes those cities will need a kind of cultural memory. Is there a way for the classical museums to transfer their values to those cities with weak cultural infrastructure and act as mediators? How can activities be adjusted to the local needs? Who should activities be addressed to?

- The idea of cultural activities in the public space as an adjustable and loose cluster, which could replace the rigid form of museums (acting within their buildings) to form “virtual museums”. Artistic, governmental as well as civil society support will be essential for this endeavor.
- Traditional museums should more extensively leave their premises and intervene with the local population in public space (“museum of interventions”). Thus, the definition of museums should be broadened. How can museums be part of public space – physically as well as intellectually? Will this be a future guideline for traditional museums?
- How could different selective public activities of museums be combined? How can those activities be matched with cultural festivals and city life (i.e. Durga Puja)?

Future Perspectives

From the above discussion the following research questions came up, which should be the basis of the envisaged conference in Kolkata in 2012:

- The relation between cultural identity and urban environment processes: What is the environmental impact on identity construction (in Germany and India)?
- Inventory of the existing cultural structure and actors in middle-sized cities in India: What are existing structures, who are the actors and how are they organized?
- Landscape of possible cultural reactions to urban transformation processes: What role do the classical museums of surrounding metropolis play? What forms of cultural articulations can be implemented in India and Germany? How can interconnections with existing structures and city life be established (e.g. festivals)? Who will be the targeted public?

Beyond that, Mr. Roth stated the interest to include in this following step young students, who could contribute fresh and new perspective to the discussion and develop their own concepts for cultural interventions. The city of Kolkata was identified to be an attractive place to organize the next conference. Major social and political changes have taken place over the course of the last century (India’s capital until 1912, 34 years of communist government until 2011) that influenced the picture of the city tremendously. How do cultural institutions react to these changes? What could be the role of the Indian Museum (as the most prominent example) for the changes in society?