

By Lutz Engelke

From 1 May to 31 October 2010, the largest global exhibition of all time will be staged in Shanghai. The organisers are expecting 200 participating countries and companies and 70 million visitors. The masses will congregate at the 5.4 sqkm Expo-compound that is currently being developed on both banks at the Huangpu River, in the centre of Shanghai. With the motto "Better City, Better Life", Shanghai Expo 2010 organisers are addressing an urgent issue. 2008 was the first time in history that the number of urban dwellers exceeded the rural population globally. It is estimated that city inhabitants will make up 75 per cent of the world's population by 2050. In the middle of the last millennium, New York was the only city whose population outstripped the ten million mark. By 2015, a total of 23 cities will have reached this mark.

Today, China already has 175 cities with more than a million inhabitants. The country is developing at breakneck speed and approximately 60 million people move from rural areas into the cities each year, lured by the promise of a better life. Not surprisingly, this uncontrolled migration leads to excessive demands on the cities' infrastructure. Traffic jams, air pollution, endless commutes, insufficiently treated water supplies, and dilapidated sewage systems are just some of the immediate effects. Managing the associated social and cultural transition of millions of people living in close proximity will prove to be an enormous challenge for China's cities. Many urban dwellers find their quality of life and opportunities for work radically changed.

International Know-How

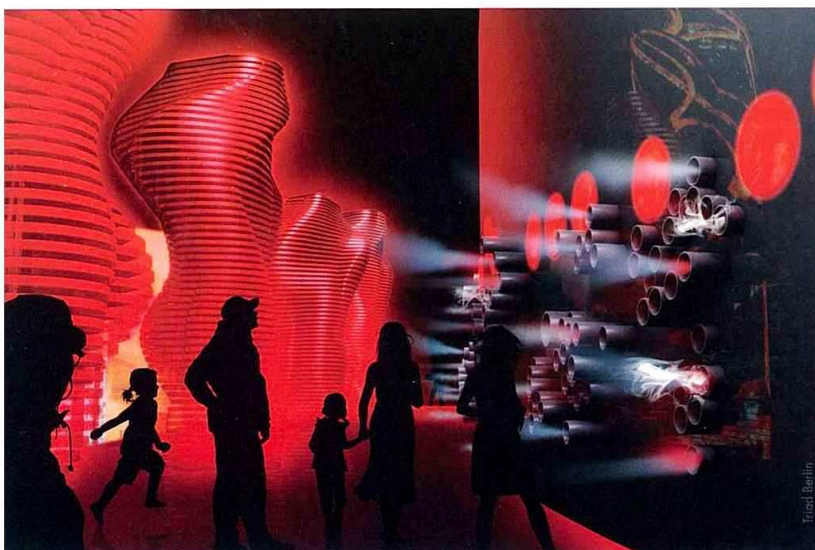
The way urbanisation is handled will decide the future of society. The Expo's motto promises that these global problems will be addressed. The world Exposition will provide a platform for debate where innovative concepts necessary for future city projects can be discussed, developed and explained. All participating nations and companies through their contributions will address themes such as the remodelling of city districts, the interaction of rural with urban areas, the cultural variety and economic development in cities, and the scientific and technical innovations that may well prove decisive for future cities.

Amongst the hundreds of pavilions will be five Chinese "theme pavilions". Those five pavilions will be called City Being, Urban Dwellers, Footprint, Dreams, and Urban Planet and their purpose will be to highlight the significance of the Shanghai Expo motto. Three of these pavilions will be located in a large venue at the main axis of the Expo compound, opposite the national Chinese pavilion.

Urban Planet

The Urban Planet pavilion, one of the theme pavilions at the main axis of the Expo compound, was designed by the German design agency Triad Berlin and will be built in cooperation with their Chinese partners. As Expo specialists, the Berlin-based agency, the only German bidder out of 150 rival bids, won the tender for concept, architecture, and design. The Bureau of Shanghai World Expo Coordination required that bidding companies have previous experience

Expo 2010



of constructing large Expo projects. Having been involved in both Expo 2000 in Hanover and the 2002 Swiss Expo in Biel, Triad was a suitable candidate.

For Urban Planet, Triad is developing the overall narrative, background scenery, exhibition architecture, and design. The Chinese symbol for Yin and Yang will form the narrative frame for the architecture and the extremes of destruction and renewal will be depicted therein. A mirror image has been created, with the aim of reflecting the intercultural cooperation between Western perception and a Chinese world Exposition. On an area encompassing 12,000 sqm, the pavilion will showcase current and future problems of mega cities as well as proposals for solutions. Here, a variety of international examples of best practice, innovative products, and trendsetting green business concepts will be on display. The challenge for the developers of such a pavilion is to convey meaningful expression that is not hindered by language or cultural barriers, through architecture, content and design.

The Concept

The pavilion's two-part structure illustrates the process of urbanisation and its consequences for the planet. In an eight-metre-wide helix, visitors will ascend the "Road of Destruction". In five chapters, the organisers will attempt to give a chilling visual representation of the destructive potential of cities. Current topical issues like climate change, environmental degradation, water shortages, energy waste, and global waste production will be addressed. Stirring images of destruction, exploitation, and pollution will animate the themes for the visitors on an emotional level and encourage them to express personal opinions and reactions.

Having reached the summit, a view from a height of 14 metres is presented onto the blue planet. During the descent, the "Road of Solutions" tells the tale of the ecologically sustainable city of the 21st century. Five chapters with titles like "Ecological city development: Green cities", "Mobility: Moving to the city", and "Renewable

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The site of the Shanghai Expo 2010 on both banks of the Huangpu River

energy: Eco power" articulate the keys to sustainable human occupation of the earth. From advice for the individual on how he can be environmentally conscious in his everyday living, to national and international initiatives – all of these will be explored within Urban Life. There will be various practical examples and case studies, such as that of the Chinese businessman who founded a company in northern Germany that converts PET bottles to fabric which is subsequently Exported to China for use in the textile industry.

Cooperation with Local Partners

Now that the design phase of the Urban Planet pavilion has been completed, the signing of the construction contract marks the beginning of the final phase of the project. All detail of the draft will have to be completed by March 2010. This ambitious target will be achieved in cooperation with two Chinese partners: Shanghai Foremost Multimedia Co., Ltd. and Shanghai Kangye Construction Decoration Co., Ltd. Triad Berlin, in close cooperation with its Chinese partners, will supervise the production of media content, the consolidation of all other content and onsite form. At the same time, Triad will thematically integrate innovative products of selected companies into its design. For international companies, the Expo 2010 and the integration into the Urban Planet represents a unique chance to present

their innovative solutions and green business concepts to an international audience.

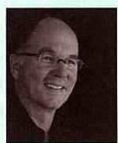
Intercultural Exchange

Whether it is this, or any other, internationally planned pavilion – cultural differences among the contracting parties, the Bureau of Shanghai World Expo Coordination, the Chinese firms, and the foreign partners pose an unusual challenge. The proper translation of creative processes is of major importance as here the different cultures become particularly apparent. Adding to this complexity is the fact that tactical changes often affect the planning process of the world Expo which foreign companies simply have to accept.

Be it unfamiliar working processes or divergent mentalities, the Expo is an exchange of experience for both the Chinese and the foreign sides. Anyone who has worked in China knows that preconditions in terms of selected partner firms or the ability to navigate through an endless number of commissions are essential to the creative process. The inability to adjust to these cultural differences will result in frustration and defeat. The learning process on both sides will undoubtedly lead to an increased quality of cooperation between Western and Chinese companies. In this sense Shanghai Expo 2010 is already serving an important purpose. ■

Profile

Founded in 1994, Triad Berlin is one of Germany's most successful communications agencies. Our interdisciplinary teams use open spaces to create emotionally intelligent communication formats – showrooms for small and medium-sized businesses, grand productions and brand worlds for global players, and virtual communication rooms. Our award-winning exhibitions, Expo pavilions, trade fair presentations and events can be seen all over the world. We understand that every business faces individual challenges that demand individual solutions. That is why we offer strategic advice on all matters concerning communication (internal and external), brand strategy, and PR support for bodies with financial, cultural, and political interests. In Berlin, all projects are centrally coordinated and connected via our international network of partners. Triad Berlin also has offices in Munich and Shanghai.



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