

BY ANDREA PEUS

Attractive, cosmopolitan and creative

Cities must become places of ideas and provide incentives in order to attract creative people. This is what the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Alexander Otto, requested at the opening of the tenth European conference of the “Lebendige Stadt” foundation. Under the motto “Pulsating city: ideas, money, noise”, more than 600 participants and speakers from all over Europe were discussing about creative urban landscaping, relieving municipal budgets as well as strategies for noise reduction and prevention in the BMW-Welt in Munich on November 4 and 5, 2010.

For their conferences, the “Lebendige Stadt” foundation always chose very special locations in the course of the last ten years, said Dr. Andreas Mattner, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the foundation, in his welcome speech. This also includes the BMW-Welt. “It is an architectural masterpiece for which the motto of our congress – ideas, money, noise – was solved perfectly,” said Mattner, who lead through the program as moderator on both days. The Bavarian Secretary of the Interior Joachim Herrmann highlighted in his welcome speech the increasing importance of cooperation between municipalities. It is becoming more and more important for the accomplishment of our cities’ future tasks. “Together you can often achieve more than with single solutions,” said Herrmann. In view of the empty municipal coffers, cities and municipalities would be well advised “to check investments for sustainability and citizen value,” said the Lord Mayor of Munich Christian Ude, who is also Vice President of the German Association of Cities and Towns.

Günther H. Oettinger, EU Commissioner for Energy, officially opened the conference with his keynote speech on the topic “money”. His core thesis: further development will be endangered without a European energy network. “There won’t be any growth without energy, without growth we are loosing our jobs and we and our cities will have no future without jobs,” said Oettinger. Prerequisite is a Europe-wide power grid allowing the exchange of large amounts of energy from variably supplying sun power plants, wind turbines and water power stations and thus reducing the demand for energy storage capacity. But this is still a weak point, said Oettinger. “When it comes to traffic we have already realized this. A network of motorways covers Europe. Everyone takes it for granted that motorways lead from country to country without interruption. As far as power grids – our power motorways so to say – are concerned we just started thinking about it,” said Oettinger. The goal must be to transfer the EU’s energy policy to the community. “When 27 nations deal with the problem individually then they will surely not be successful. This is a political task. It depends on each Member State whether we want to fulfill or not,” said Oettinger.

“Competition is helpful and stimulating”

“The future pulsating city is electric,” confirmed RWE Power CEO Dr. Johannes Lambertz. For telecommunications, air conditioning systems, electronic cars or automated production we will need clearly more energy. This requires us to increase the share of renewable energies of the gross energy consumption to 60 % by 2050. To achieve this “we not only need to create an investment climate open for technologies, we also require flexible energy suppliers with sufficient capital”. There is enough to do. Thereby, competition is helpful and stimulating. “In future, a broad mixture is needed – of energy types as well as market participants,” said Lambertz. He demonstrated that this can also include successful cooperation with communal partners by using the “Gekko” project as example. In this project, RWE is not only constructing the coal-fired power plant in Hamm together with 23 communal partners but is also investing a total of one billion euros in numerous projects for regenerative energy generation until 2020.

How successful and efficient this can be on communal level was demonstrated by Dr Kurt Mühlhäuser, CEO Stadtwerke [municipal utilities] Munich. Thus, the Stadtwerke Munich are by now the seventh largest utility company in Germany. A story of success for Mühlhäuser, for which the course was set already back in the 1990s when they decided not to sell the communal company in deficit but to turn it into a GmbH [limited liability company]. Today, the company generates with its some 7,250 employees a turnover of 4.9 billion euros and a surplus of 393 million euros (2009). “We are generating 70 per cent of Munich’s energy in combined heat and power plants – this is a peak Europe-wide,” said Mühlhäuser. By 2025, it is intended to generate as much power with renewable energies as consumed

in Munich. “Then Munich would be the first megacity that achieved this goal,” said Mühlhäuser. For the city it was a benefit to rely on a 100 per cent communal company. “We offer high quality at moderate costs – and this despite Munich being one of the most expensive cities in Germany,” explained Mühlhäuser.

The people have to be integrated

But the issue city and money also included the maintenance of attractive pedestrian zones and public squares. In the course of the new organization of the municipal finances many cities have to make every effort to keep the tradespeople in the city centers. How this can be achieved was shown by Dietlind Grabe-Bolz, Lord Mayor of Gießen, and Klaus Tscheuschner, Lord Mayor of Flensburg, with so-called business improvement districts (BIDs) and pacts (partnerships for enhancing the attractiveness of city, service and tourism areas). Thereby, retailers, caterers, service providers and land owners commit themselves privately and with financial means to the maintenance of the vitality and attractiveness of their boroughs – with great success. So, the BIDs did not only take into consideration the local particularities of the cities but “also the community spirit of the people living there was strengthened,” said Grabe-Bolz.

Hence, the two lord mayors already addressed an issue that plays an important role when implementing all minor and major projects with the aim to maintain our cities’ attractiveness – the integration of the people living there. How crucial this is for the success of various projects became obvious again and again also in the conference’s second large theme block: noise.

“Noise – this is the long runner in the communities,” said Dr. Frank Hanser, CEO DSK Deutsche Stadt- und Grundstücksentwicklungsgesellschaft [German city and property development company], in the subsequent panel discussion. Noise is causing illnesses, reduces the working capacity and the peoples’ wellbeing, cuts real estate prices, reduces the municipalities’ income and causes in Germany alone several billion euros of follow-up costs, explained Ursula Heiner-Esser (member of the German Bundestag), Parliamentary State Secretary in the Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation and Reactor Safety, in her keynote speech. With the EU Environmental Noise Directive, there now exists an EU-wide legal tool for the control of street, rail and air traffic noise. This includes, among others, the draw-up of strategic noise maps with standard assessment methods. They are to help determine the pollution with environmental noise.

How it works explained Lord Mayor of Cologne Jürgen Roters. With more than one million inhabitants, Cologne is now Germany’s fourth largest city, what also becomes evident when it comes to noise. In Cologne, they are therefore focusing on noise-reducing road surfaces, pedestrian and bicycle-friendly streets and paths as well as on an increased number of 30km/h zones in residential areas.

That one can go even further was demonstrated by Prof. Dr. Brigitte Schulte-Fortkamp from the Department of Engineering Acoustics at the Technical University Berlin with the example of the Nauener Platz square in Berlin. Together with the citizens this former social hotspot was turned into an “acoustic audio oasis”. It was not so much about creating silence at the square – which would not have been possible anyways due to its city-center location – but to direct the attention to an attractive square design meeting the citizens’ needs as well as to artificial birdcalls and sea sounds.

In the following panel discussion, joined not only by Dr. Frank Hanser but also by Jaanus Multi, member of the city council of Tallinn, Christian Popp, managing partner at Lärmkontor Hamburg GmbH, and Prof. Joachim Scheuren, President of the German Society for Acoustics, it was highlighted that climate protection and noise protection are not mutually exclusive. “But not only the avoidance of noise costs money, but also the noise itself,” reminds Scheuren. Those costs are not mentioned in the discussion about noise reduction but consequently would have to be offset, he said in his speech to the municipalities.

Diversity as chance for more creativity

Prof. Dr. Thomas Staubhaar, Director of the Hamburg Institute of International Economics, opened the theme block “ideas” by declaring the increasing diversity in our cities as “mega trend”. “The gap between young and old, healthy and ill, employed and unemployed, with migration background and without is increasingly growing. We must not let this become a problem but must use this diversity as chance for more creativity,” urged Staubhaar. After all, only tolerance and openness towards

innovations is characterizing cities – coupled with educational systems and universities, which again are generating and attracting knowledge and new talents and which are creating the prerequisites for new technologies. “Here, we have to start rethinking,” said Straubhaar, “since today traditional factors such as low tax rates are playing a less important role for companies when deciding for a new location than the availability of qualified and creative employees.”

According to Jan Mücke (member of the German Bundestag), Parliamentary State Secretary at the Ministry for Traffic, Construction and Urban Development, the demographic change as well as the increasing diversity will make cities have to face considerable challenges. Which he thinks will be the strengthening of the cultural diversity of city centers as well as the age-corresponding, social renovation of existing buildings.

Expand the portfolio, invest, modernize and to adjust to the peoples’ increasing requirements for technology and advancement – those are the challenges Deutsche Bahn will address in the upcoming years, promised Jürgen Büchy, CEO of DB Vertrieb GmbH.

“Germany has excellent conditions”

The appearance of the internationally renowned top economist Prof. Richard Florida was eagerly awaited. He was broadcasted live from Miami on a large screen and insistently and descriptively promoted his theses. He – just as Prof. Thomas Straubhaar in his speech – sees a definite connection between creativity and growth. “The focus must be on sustainable growth – and this is created with ideas,” he said. “Creative people are the economic engine of the future. They are the resource on which the cities have to count on.” A thesis which he – moderated by Prof. Dr. Björn Bloching from the management consultancy company Roland Berger – backed up with studies, observations and own experiences in a rhetorically skilled manner. Not for nothing did the high tech revolution take place in San Francisco and its surroundings, the Bay Area, said Florida. A place that strongly characterized the counterculture of the 1960s and which was determined by self-realization. This was what pioneers such as Apple founder Steve Jobs oriented themselves on.

However, it is not technology that accelerates growth but the people behind it who are constantly developing new things. “The decisive question is the following: which social and cultural factors are generating such talents?” said Florida and continued: “You don’t just have talents – just as states have raw materials. And unlike gold or oil, creative people are very mobile. We must therefore analyze: where do they conglomerate? And why? How can they be attracted and what makes them stay? I am convinced that apart from excellent universities and research institutes a tolerant and cosmopolitan atmosphere is an important magnet.” In his opinion, Germany has developed to an open, worth-living and tolerant society similar to Sweden – with women playing a strong role, rights for gay people and high environmental standards. “The country has excellent conditions. The question is whether there is the political will to use it,” said Florida.

This seems to be the case in Freiburg. There, they are already counting on the “Freiburg mix” of science, technology, politics and citizenship but also culture, climate, environment as well as lifestyle and quality of life. So Freiburg is one of the few German cities not affected by demographic change, said Lord Mayor of Freiburg Dr. Dieter Salomon. “And this despite we used to be an industrial city,” said the Lord Mayor. “We have to make the cities worth living in again, then the creative class as Richard Florida calls it will return naturally.” The three Ts – technology, talent, tolerance – Florida was talking about, also perfectly describe Freiburg, said Salomon.

Enthusiasm for the Winter Olympic Games 2018

On Thursday night, the “Lebendige Stadt” foundation started the Olympic Games Express in the Postpalast in Munich: mayors and conference participants from all over Germany enthusiastically supported Munich’s application for the Winter Olympic Games 2018 – among other with Bochum’s ensemble’s artistic production of the Starlight Express by Mike Klokow. Among the 600 visitors were also numerous former winners of former Olympic Games and top athletes such as the skater Katarina Witt, “Gold” Rosi Mittermaier, skier Christian Neureuther and Andrea Fuchs, participant of the Paralympics. Lord Mayor Christian Ude and the Bavarian Secretary of the Interior Joachim Herrmann highlight the importance of the Olympic Games for the city of Munich and Germany. “With the Olympic Games, Germany has once more after the Fifa World Cup 2006 the chance to present itself to a global audience as good organizer and pleasant host. Germany would benefit in the long term from this positive image,” said Alexander Otto, Chairman of the “Lebendige Stadt” foundation.

The conference in Munich "Pulsating City" has already been the tenth foundation event of this kind. 2001, the "Lebendige Stadt" foundation hosted a conference in the NRW Forum in Düsseldorf, 2002 in the Autostadt Wolfsburg, 2003 in the exhibition halls in Leipzig, 2004 in the Hamburg Harbor, 2005 in the Allianz Arena in Munich, 2006 in the Colosseum theater and Zeche Zollverein in Essen, 2007 in the Tempelhof airport Berlin, 2008 in the Transparent Factory in Dresden and 2009 in the WDR studios in Cologne. In 2011, the foundations conference will take place in Dortmund.

Further material and documentation to the conference "Pulsating City" in Munich can be found on the Internet under www.lebendige-stadt.de.