

DAY 1- SYNOPSIS

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RAJREWAL



KEES SPANJERS



KARAN GROVER



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SHANKAR



Transformations: Sustaining Design for Change



KARAN GROVER

Karan Grover is a green crusader and a renowned name in the field of sustainability and architectural education. He passionately advocates the need to develop a direction for contemporary architecture through following the socio-cultural clues embedded in the history of our nation. He actively participates in pedagogic and conservation-related forums worldwide, and, has on many occasions, been dubbed a "social entrepreneur."

KEES SPANJERS



Kees Spanjers began his architectural practice in 1976. Currently, he is director at the Amsterdam-based BV Zaanen Spanjers Architects, a firm that specializes in architectural projects for the public domain. Their repertoire ranges from new constructions and indoor and outdoor design to rehabilitative re-use and expansion of existing buildings. Spanjers was curator at the recently concluded inGhuangzhou World Interiors Meeting held in China.

Kees Spanjers and Karan Grover took to the stage for a spirited discussion on transformation in the architectural realm. With two very distinct yet unified takes on the topic, Spanjers presented the works of his firm which highlighted the practical aspects of adaptive re-use while Grover tied it together with philosophic insight and various takeaways from his own work and travels across the globe.



hen we transform anything, we also change lives. When we transform behaviour, we change habits. The long march towards sustainability begins with a very simple question - how do we waste less, or rather. how do we not waste at all?

The word "transformation" in itself has numerous interpretations. "Re-use" is one of its more practical definitions, something that can be explored in depth architectur-

ally speaking. The process of building is one that is long drawn and many-layered, with a number of procedures involved, be it in terms of design or the time taken for applications for various sanctions, and so on. By the time the built actually gets manifested in the environment, the needs of the people are likely to have undergone some degree of change. Hence, buildings need to be adaptable to evolving needs at all times. Irrespective of the building typology or its



expected lifespan, creating something that can adapt to changing times should be the priority for architects and designers.

An item designed for a single purpose can have multiple uses. From something as seemingly simple as a toothpick, to a fully-functional building, a little bit of creativity and imagination can go a long way in ensuring that most things be used and re-used indefinitely.

The idea of sustainability not just embodied as a built structure, but as a way of life on the whole, is beautifully illustrated through a community school in Bangladesh, where a building was constructed out of mud and bamboo, by the students, teachers and parents belonging to that school. We now see a newfound respect for the old with a concerted effort being made towards the study and preservation of heritage buildings around the world. Some of the best learning in architecture comes from historic buildings such as the 2000 year old fort precinct of Champaner in Gujarat- preservation consists of understanding both the tangible and intangible aspects of architecture. History is not just about learning from our ancestors, but rediscovering essential lessons which can be adapted to modern use. The architecture in Fort Kochi is infused with a rich Dutch heritage, the designs serving as prototypes

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that were subsequently constructed in and around the area.

Adaptive re-use in many ways, is the future of architecture of place. The longer one takes to ponder over establishing the heritage status of a historic precinct, such as Fort Kochi for instance, the more its original fabric gets eroded to be replaced by a new form of anonymity. From a seaside community dependant on fishing & trade, the city has rapidly boomed into a jugger-



naut of modern business, economic reforms and urban development.

Harmony between the old and the new can be achieved through an eclectic union born out of the complete understanding of the existing context. This is well illustrated by the Hearst Tower in New York City, designed by Norman Foster. The building functions as an active public space while being environmentally viable. One of the most visited spaces in Manhattan, this LEED Goldrated skyscraper establishes a creative dialogue across time with a 44-storey recycledsteel tower appearing to effortlessly float

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above a base that was initially the old Art Deco structure. The China Heritage Fund is another significant example of an initiative that has restored a sense of relevance to the old, through the resurrection of historic buildings and furniture making techniques. The Palace Complex in the Forbidden City located at the heart of Beijing, now functions as a reception centre, museum for traditional Chinese architectural technique and a flexible exhibition space for art & photographs. Seemingly minor, yet well-considered interventions such as the addition of a staircase have opened out the upper levels of the building, historically used only for storage. Today, visitors can walk up to be greeted by expansive, framed views across the Forbidden City. In India, the Rajasthan government undertook the refurbishing of a number of heritage properties which today form the basis of the hospitality industry in the state, such as the Neemrana Fort Palace and the Mishangarh Fort, Jaipur.

What often gets overlooked in the scheme of re-use is the potential that seemingly unremarkable buildings hold. The urban fabric of a city is comprised of all the buildings it holds, outstanding or ordinary, stitched together by the streets. These streets and buildings form the collective memory of that city. Slow transformation of the city with careful re-use of existing buildings ensures that history remains readable, and the collective memory transforms gradually while nurturing a sense of place in its people.

The Leidseplein is a square in central Amsterdam where a 1920s courthouse and the adjoining prison were transformed into a theatre and recreational centre in 1979. Achieved on no financial investment apart from the yearly rent being paid for the premises, this project showcases how without changing the exterior, simple materials like scaffolding can be used to modify the

nature of existing space within. What was earlier just a facade that people walked past is today a hub of culture, with the vibrancy of the activities inside spilling over to the sidewalk and street as well.

The Beurs Van Berlage was designed at the turn of the 20th century as a stock exchange centre. Its architect, the legendary H.P. Berlage, however, envisaged a multidimensional future for the building: "I realise this will become the most capitalistic building in Amsterdam, but as soon as the economy crashes this will become a pallazo publico. A place where meeting others, sharing knowledge and working together will be the central themes." This vision was fulfilled in the late 80s, with the transformation of the building into a concert hall for the Dutch Philharmonic Orchestra. The original exchange halls were converted into the pallazo publico, consisting of concert halls and a multi-functional exhibition space. The highlight of this landmark project was the construction of the Glass Hall, a separate rehearsal and performance space for the Chamber Orchestra, a "building within a building." The first large frameless glass structure in the Netherlands, it was realised with pre-stressed bracing systems & bolted glass fixing, possessed excellent acoustics, and could hold up to 200 seats. However, the structure was commissioned to be removed in late 2014 to create additional conference space within the main hall. What is noteworthy here is that the Glass Hall wasn't demolished, but "packed away", and is soon to be reconstructed as part of the ambitious Tilburg City Campus project. The core of the Tilburg Railway Zone is set for urban renewal with proposals in place to transform the LocHal, a locomotive repair shed, into the city hall and library.

Changing how we see buildings is as important as changing how they look. Sustainability is not merely a facade but an embedded quality that is nurtured through transformation of our collective attitudes. The process of learning and imbibing lessons from the past can be furthered only by addressing some key questions - how can manmade structures be balanced with the natural? How do we perceive the meaning of place and how do we see ourselves within it? Most importantly, how do we create without seeking to destroy?