

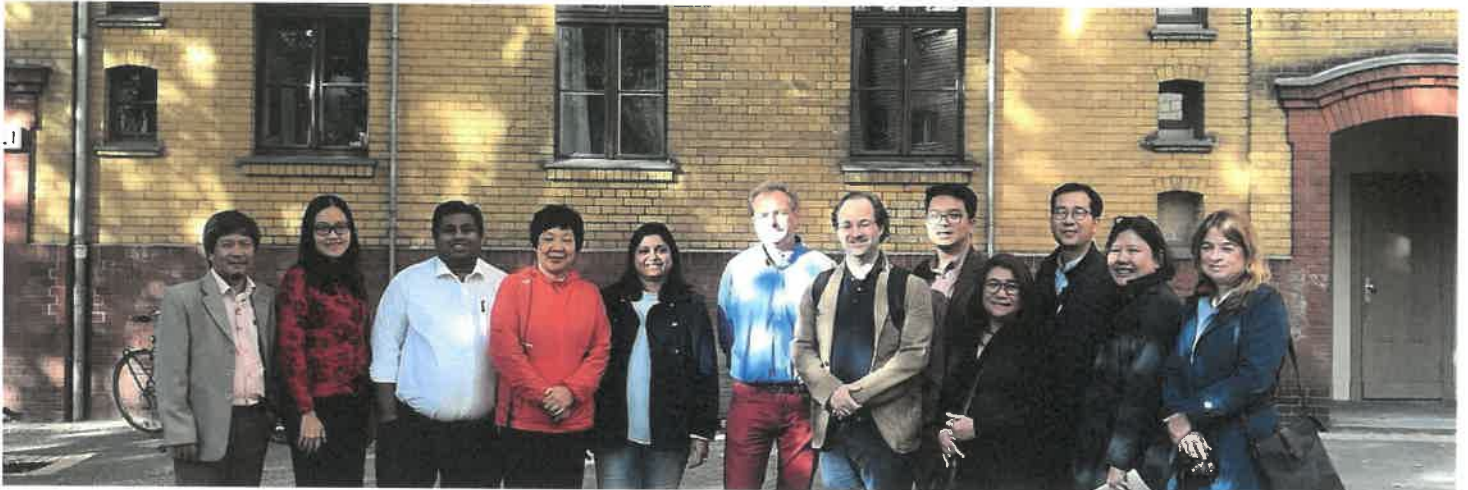
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Building liveable, social cities for the economy of tomorrow in Asia and Germany

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News | Created by Sergio Grassi

Urbanists from Europe and Asia are facing some of the same challenges, but from often quite different angles. Experts from nine Asian countries visited Germany to explore social city making in Berlin and Leipzig.



Members of the expert visit on social city from Asia to Germany included urbanists from China, India, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam. Photo by FES Indonesia.

Urban planners from across Asia visited Germany in September to gain a better understanding of social city-making in Berlin and Leipzig and discuss some of their own insights into city planning. The visit was hosted by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung as part of its [Asia regional programme](#) on Economy of Tomorrow (EoT).

A key message was that top-down planning is not enough to ensure socially just urbanization, and that the technology-centric approach known as smart cities cannot alone address the needs of citizens. An inclusive and social city must include affordable housing, public transportation and participation of the public in planning and development.

"We want to define 'smart' as what is good for residents" said a representative of the *Deutsche Städtetag*, the Association of German Cities. "There is no success of projects without the participation of residents and their ownership," he said.

The visiting delegation included the director of Seoul's centre for housing policy development, a State Assemblyman from Malaysia, the deputy director of the China Center for Urban Development, and think-tank representatives and academics from Indonesia, Singapore, India, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam.

"The framework to build a social city must rest on a desire to shape social cohesion, to avoid social segregation in cities, and to activate participatory decision-making by residents through neighbourhood management and social processes."

There was a lively exchange of ideas with the Asian experts about their German counterparts' observations, challenges and possible instruments to provide affordable housing, sustainable transport and civic participation, under the concept of a holistic social city and integrated urban development.