The architectural exhibition curated and designed by Matthias Sauerbruch for the Akademie der Künste, Berlin discusses the relationship between architecture and the social reality of the 21st century and shows the impact of art and culture on cities and architecture.

Art and culture have in many ways become key motors of innovative and successful urban design and planning, without which the world’s metropoles would no longer be worthy of the name. The exhibition Culture:City encourages us to think consistently about the future of our cities from this perspective.

In what way does cultural activity change a city? How does it affect architecture? When do they strengthen, recfine or preserve the urban environment from decay? When do they can become a burden on public finances? Given the global competition between cities, dreams of glory and tourism drive politicians and property developers to erect spectacular buildings designed by star architects — for the purpose of creating memorable icons. However, these do not always serve local culture. What then are the alternatives to the “Bilbao effect” or “post Bilbao effect”?

The selection of international examples presented — ranging from spectacular architectural and art projects, via the creative reuse of empty buildings and city areas, through to citizens’ initiatives — opens up a panorama of constructed concretisation of culture thus allowing us not only to take stock of the surroundings but also to evaluate and assess each individual case. Does the social, cultural and architectural rootedness in the city work and does this lead to new forms of cultural production? Or does the construction project merely represent a symbol strong on marketing, yet another island in a city’s public spaces characterised by increasing fragmentation?