

# FUTURE AHOY!

Fresh ideas open up a wide range of possibilities for the world of tomorrow.

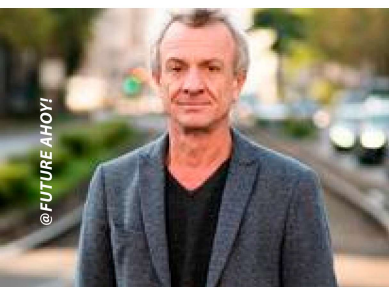


- "Life Hamburg": A place to live and work as well as a contact point for well-being.



# MOTTO: THINK ANEW

The Weißenhofsiedlung in Stuttgart is regarded as the dawn of architectural modernism. It was part of a building exhibition organized by the Deutscher Werkbund in 1927 together with the city of Stuttgart. One hundred years later, the international building exhibition IBA 2027 StadtRegion Stuttgart (IBA'27) is now exploring the future of building and living together. In an interview with #FutureForward, IBA Director Andreas Hofer reveals how he is rethinking the city, how innovative floor plans are revolutionizing residential construction, and how participation works in commercial districts.



• The architect Andreas Hofer is Director of the IBA 2027 in Stuttgart.

**“WE NEED TO THINK EVEN MORE RADICALLY IN TERMS OF ARCHITECTURE: IS THE CATEGORIZATION INTO RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS STILL VIABLE?”**

**Andreas, what is the big theme of IBA'27?**

**Andreas Hofer:** In a certain sense, it's almost the inverse of the Weißenhof. The statement back then was: “You can't live in the city anymore. You can't live near industry. We have to separate the functions.” We see the consequences of this separation of functions today. I'm thinking of the huge transportation infrastructures and the encroachment on nature. And, of course, we are currently realizing that the whole thing has only worked because we have burned up and used endless quantities of cheap raw materials. That will no longer be possible in the future. I believe the time has come to rethink the way we approach cities.

**How do you envision sustainable and resilient cities?**

Actually, as they were 150 years ago. Of course, life in preindustrial cities was not all good. But they can still serve as a model, as an idea, as an image for the interplay of the most diverse social strata, the most diverse life contexts – including trade and production. With new technologies and forms of production, this is possible again, without the devastating negative consequences for health and quality of life that it had back then. So the city of the future is actually the one we had.

**So all functions well mixed?**

Definitely, and for that we need to think even more radically in terms of architecture: is the categorization into residential and commercial buildings still viable? The consequence of this would be that we no longer create specialized buildings, but perhaps instead generic structures that can be anything. I recently heard the funny phrase, “You can easily put an apart-



• A classic of modern architecture: the Weißenhofsiedlung in Stuttgart.

ment in a textile factory, but it's hard to put a textile factory in an apartment.” It's exciting to take that thought further for once, isn't it?

**A building where anything is possible? Could that really work?**

There are certainly exceptions, such as a laboratory building. That is so highly specific and specialized in terms of its technical development alone that it is probably wiser to build it as a laboratory building. But then please make sure that it can be dismantled into its individual parts later on. A modular concept would be a good way to go. But my professional experience has shown me how much you can actually repurpose when you are forced to.

**Do you have an example?**

The requirements for residential construction have changed completely in the last 20 years. In Germany, however, these 12-meter-deep buildings are still planned on plots of land by default, because every investor knows what to do with them and has the family

apartment in their mind's eye. But this has proven to be very rigid and probably also not sustainable. For many parts of today's society, it no longer fits. There are now great examples of making good housing based on 20-meter-deep floor plans. This is creating new typologies that also offer completely new potential in the long term. In Germany, the first parking lots are now being converted into housing.

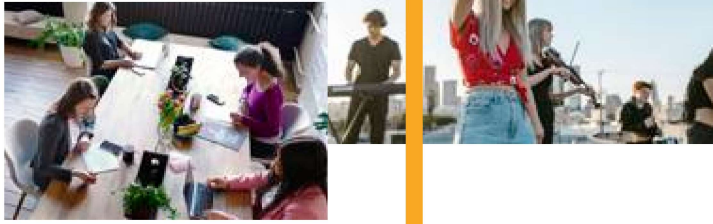
**In your view, what ingredients do attractive and vibrant city centers need?**

Inner cities in Europe are characterized by market speculation and specialization. Price expectations for land and rents have boiled up to such an extent that people hardly live there anymore. They are extremely monofunctionalized. But I'm convinced that housing will return to the inner cities – it has to, if we're talking about the quality of life in cities. In big cities like Stuttgart, where you always have the administration, the opera house, the State Gallery, I'm not too worried. They will survive all that.

**Where do you have worries?**

I see big questions in the medium-sized cities. Though there could also be opportunities there. Everywhere where prices are not yet so high, a medium-sized supply structure could emerge again, in some cases even new functions. We see, for example, how libraries are developing further, how they are becoming public spaces. Such cultural institutions are also losing their monofunctionality. Opera houses don't just want to be opera houses, they also want to be lounges, so that perhaps new audiences can be introduced to opera. These are exciting developments that make me confident. >





## "IT'S ALWAYS ABOUT A BETTER MIX AND ABOUT ENABLING ENCOUNTERS AND COMMUNITY."



### But IBA'27 isn't just looking at the city centers. What about the urban areas outside the centers?

An IBA has to look for some kind of niche. That's why we're very interested in the edges of cities and the transitional areas between different functions. An example project for this is a huge commercial area in Fellbach: essentially single-story, large parking areas, no quality to the outdoor space. The city said: this is actually our last development area. If we think of such industrial estates as urban, productive quarters in which we stack up the functions, then suddenly large potential areas of space emerge.

### So the future belongs to quarters?

I think a neighborhood is a good size: walking distance, cycling distance, childcare – all these things. We are looking for a new, radical mix of uses. You could talk about a commercial district, or a more intensively used residential district. Maybe every place has to start telling something like its own story. For a long time, it was said that a commercial district doesn't have to tell a story, we just need it to make the economy work. So possible qualities were neglected. I'm thinking of the quality of stay and quality of life for the employees who spend all day in these places.

They walk outside the plant and there's nothing but a parking lot, maybe a gas station at the next intersection where they can get a sandwich. Surely, for an affluent, rich society, these are conditions that we can change and want to change. I feel that there should be a right to a good quality of life above all else.

### How can such qualities be created?

Through building densification. In the commercial areas I've mentioned, but also in the purely residential estates of the postwar period. It's always about a better mix and about enabling encounters and community. Perhaps it's not about having an additional study in your own apartment so you can work from home, but rather a neighborhood coworking space that also has childcare. In the case of residential areas with single-family homes, we see the problems of demographic development. Kids are moving out, infrastructure is starting to crumble, people are getting older. The last stores are disappearing. Turning around such structures is challenging, and in some cases we are also at a bit of a loss. But I see exciting developments for mid-sized residential neighborhoods on the outskirts and also for commercial areas.

### So you see more of a multifunctional urban structure that doesn't need a city center as a center of attraction?

I've been accused of wanting to homogenize everything and make everything the same. A city functions through hierarchy and centrality. That's true, of course, but perhaps we'll end up with a somewhat more multipolar structure, which will lead to a city of short distances. But we're not talking about some kind of utopia, along the lines of "We'll tear everything down now and then rebuild it completely with the new concepts!" Everywhere we have a starting situation that has grown historically, which has perhaps also been shaped by the landscape. When I think of Stuttgart, I think of the role that the topography plays in this city. I see many points of departure there for new forms of identity. I don't believe that the city center will be challenged by attractive neighborhoods.

It might then reinvent itself culturally and come down a bit from its high economic horse. These transformation processes always involve opportunities and sacrifices.

### On the subject of participation: how do you do that in an industrial park, for example?

IBA'27 has initiated a kind of meta-participation across the entire region, starting with the discussion: what should the region look like in the future? There are, of course, many problems and conflicts, but we want to talk about shaping the future together. That's the crucial point for us: that participation is a proactive, positive attitude toward the possibilities of the future. We then try to bring this spirit into the projects. To return to the example of the industrial park in Fellbach: the municipality as project sponsor naturally addresses the local companies first, including the neighboring gardening

businesses. How could trade and horticulture come together? The people who work here every day are also involved, as are the city residents, for whom this will be a new neighborhood. It's not about the compulsory participation program, which often tends to manifest fears and forces of prevention. We are trying to show the enormous opportunities that are inherent in such projects. An IBA has this utopian, positive touch, behind which people rally: "We're doing an IBA now. This has something to do with the future. This is a temporary state of exception." That helps, of course; we can ride that wave of enthusiasm.

### How can cities become more climate-friendly?

Cities helped cause climate change and are the biggest accumulators of resources. Cities will also dominate the post-fossil era, because the majority of humanity lives in cities or in interurban regions. At the same time, cities also offer good

conditions. Of course, we have legacy buildings that are poorly insulated and have resource problems. But the proximity and density of European cities is the biggest opportunity, because it enables thinking in context. It's not a matter of adding another five centimeters of insulation to a passive single-family house on a greenfield site. What we need is an understanding of the interrelationships, and we also need the commercial sector to think along with us: 90 percent of the waste heat from industry and commerce is currently not being used. We must succeed in linking commercial and residential buildings more closely in terms of energy, thinking in terms of neighborhoods, not houses. Of course, the regulatory framework must also be adapted to these issues that we will face in the future. We can't let laws and liability issues get in the way of sensible energy systems. There is huge potential and new tasks for municipal utilities and innovative companies. //



“LIFE HAMBURG”

# CREATIVE SPACE FOR ALL AREAS OF LIFE

A place for lifelong learning and working, and a starting point for well-being: with Life Hamburg, Janina Lin and Benjamin Otto want to create a future-oriented meeting place, which is set to be completed by the 2025 school year. They are drawing on ECE’s many years of experience in the development, implementation, and management of complex construction projects.

“LIKE MY GRANDFATHER AND MY FATHER, I WANT TO GIVE SOMETHING BACK TO SOCIETY THAT WILL HAVE A LASTING IMPACT.”

BENJAMIN OTTO



● Janina Lin and Benjamin Otto, founders of the Holistic Foundation.

**R**einventing learning once again, across generations – that’s what the Life concept is all about. For the design of the 12,000 square meter area, Janina Lin and Benjamin Otto have secured the professional support of the ECE Group’s architecture and construction experts. As the developer’s representative, ECE Group Services controls and manages the entire project within the framework of a multiparty contract – “a contract model that is new in Germany, in which all employees, companies and processes involved in the project are bound in a joint process and the contracting parties participate in the entrepreneurial success of the project with shared risk and return,” explains Valentin Hadelich, Head of the Urban Planning Department at ECE Group Services.

Modern and interlocking daycare and school concepts with a coding school as well as supplementary health, sports, and catering facilities, coworking areas, and an event area are to be created. The basis for the future-oriented, sustainable architecture that is envisaged for the Life project is a preliminary concept by the architectural firm Behnisch, which was selected by the ECE experts as part of an architectural competition.

“With the Life project, we are building the world’s first innovation community in which the essential elements of life, such as health, lifelong learning, professional life, nature and craft experiences, and balancing activities are united under one roof,” is how Janina Lin Otto explains the concept, which is inspired by Learnlife, an international learning initiative launched in Barcelona in 2017.

Benjamin Otto, grandson of mail-order pioneer Werner Otto and son of Michael Otto, is following in the Otto family tradition with the Hamburg Life project: “On the one hand, I live according to the values passed on to me by my family and, like my grandfather and my father, I

want to give something back to society that will have a lasting impact. On the other hand, it is also important to me to follow my convictions and to be able to contribute my own ideas for a better world. Together with my wife, I can best realize these ideas with concepts that pay off in terms of learning and working in the future and improving health.” //

