World Design Capital Frankfurt RheinMain 2026

Design Policy Days

11.–14.11.2026

WORLD DESIGN CAPITAL FRANKFURT RHEINMAIN 2026

Programme

Foreword

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Germany's first World Design Capital, Frankfurt RheinMain 2026 has attracted international attention. More than 2,000 events and around one million visitors have showcased the creative power of our state to the world. As Minister-President of Hesse and patron of WDC 2026, I am proud of this overwhelming success.

The *Design Policy Days* provide a particular highlight as the year draws to a close: experts from politics, public administration, academia, business, civil society and the creative sector come together to develop ideas for citizen-centred public services, future-proof cities and a vibrant democracy. The *Design Action Plan Frankfurt RheinMain* aims to embed these initiatives in the region beyond 2026.

This ties in perfectly with our state's anniversary this year. For 80 years, Hesse has stood for freedom and diversity, creativity and innovation. The exhibition *Ausgezeichnet – Design Value Made in Hessen* impressively demonstrated this, bridging 80 years of design history and today's outstanding economic achievements. Art and culture open up spaces for exchange, dissent and new perspectives. That is why the Hessian State Government provides reliable support for cultural practitioners, initiatives and institutions – from the independent arts scene to museums, music schools and cultural education.

I wish everyone attending the *Design Policy Days* inspiring encounters, stimulating debates and outcomes that will have a lasting impact.

Boris Rhein
Minister-President of Hesse

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What Will Remain of WDC 2026?

For an entire year, Frankfurt RheinMain has demonstrated what design can achieve: through 450 projects and more than 2,000 events, in municipalities and universities, in market squares and at neighbourhood kiosks. What will remain when the title moves on? The *Design Policy Days* bring together the insights gained over the year and direct them towards those who determine the conditions under which democratic design can take place. Turning good projects into real change requires structures, clearly defined responsibilities and political will.

In Wiesbaden, we therefore ask what changes when public services are designed. In Offenbach, what happens when form becomes an attitude. In Frankfurt, what follows when design becomes political and influences decision-making. And finally, at St Paul's Church, we ask together what obligations all of this places upon us.

One answer is already available: the position paper, developed in dialogue with associations, municipalities, universities and policymakers. It outlines how design expertise can be permanently embedded in the region. Against this backdrop, the *Design Policy Days* will discuss existing and future plans with guests from around the world.

On 14 November, we will hand over the title to Busan. What we pass on in Frankfurt RheinMain should be more than the memory of a successful year. The team that has worked so closely together throughout this year hopes that it will mark the beginning of something lasting.

In Conversation with Transformation Researcher Prof. Dr Maja Göpel

1. Why should politics take an interest in design?

Politics is a design process in its own right. Good laws are social technologies: inventive techniques or forms of craftsmanship, as reflected in the original meaning of the term "techne."

2. What lasting impact would the year as World Design Capital need to have on the region for you to call it a success?

A renewed enthusiasm for the role of good politics in shaping desirable futures. This applies both to how public officials understand their roles and define success, and to how the media and the public describe and assess their work.

3. Where do you see design as a catalyst for social and ecological transformation?

In transformation research, we distinguish between desirable, realistic and plausible futures. A desirable future, as we hopefully agree, would be one in which we restore and strengthen the natural systems that sustain us and our social cohesion. That is not realistic if we simply continue on our current path. We therefore need to redesign our political, technological and economic tools to change course and, step by step, make desirable outcomes plausible.

Good to Know

Live Translation of the Conference Programme

You can use the QR code to follow the sessions with live translation. Simply scan it with your smartphone and select your preferred language.

Food and Drinks

To enable as many people as possible to attend our conferences, all *Design Policy Days* events are free of charge. Unfortunately, this means that we are unable to provide complimentary food and drinks on the conference days. Food and drinks will be available for purchase from local catering outlets.

You can find more helpful tips for your visit from page 42 onwards.



Heimathafen Wiesbaden
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Hochschule für Gestaltung
Offenbach © Ben Kuhlmann

Goethe University Frankfurt
© Peter Kiefer





Paulskirche Frankfurt © Ben Kuhlmann

11 November 2026
12:00–22:00
Heimathafen Wiesbaden

Design Policy Days

When Public Service Is Designed

When everything runs smoothly at a public service office, we are usually amazed. We do not expect good service from the state. Good service goes unnoticed, while bad service stays in our memory. Yet for most people, the state is not parliament, but an application for parental allowance or a letter from the tax office. Every one of these interactions is a small experience of democracy. What changes when public services are consciously designed?

At Heimathafen Wiesbaden, representatives from public administration, politics and business join international service designers in searching for answers: in sessions on digital government, policy labs, pilot projects in Hesse and service design, as well as workshops organised by CityLAB Berlin and DigitalService. The insights gained throughout the day will be carried forward by the local service design network. At the heart of it all is a simple question: How can public administration become more citizen-centred, creative and future-proof?

In cooperation with the German Design Council, the Service Design Network (SDN) and the Heimathafen Wiesbaden

Programme	Heimathafen Wiesbaden
12:00	Registration
12:30	Networking Lunch *Room: Delikt* A separate registration is required
Location	**Schwurgerichtssaal**
13:45	Welcome and introduction DE ▸ Prof. Dr Felix Kosok ▸ Svenja Bickert-Appleby
14:15 Session 1 Four parallel tracks, 90 minutes each	1.3 Pilotprojekte: Rathaus neu gedacht. Innovation aus Hessens Kommunen Reflect DE ▸ Susanne Stöck ▸ Karin Wolff ▸ Steffen Ball ▸ Achim Janssen ▸ Nikolaos Stavridis ▸ Fabian Hackethal
15:45	Coffee break
16:15 Session 2 Four parallel tracks, 90 minutes each	2.3 Pilotprojekte: Vom Pilotprojekt in die Fläche Reflect DE ▸ Dr Martin Klonowski
17:45	Closing plenary and outlook
18:15	Break
19:00	Welcome ▸ Lutz Dietzold ▸ Prof. Pradyumna Vyas ▸ Carolina Romahn ▸ Dominik Hofmann
19:30	Why Policies hinge on Services and what this means for Civic Design Reflect EN ▸ Prof. Sabine Junginger, PhD
20:00	Making Design Last: From Public Services to Institutional Change Debate EN ▸ Prof. Sabine Junginger, PhD ▸ Martin Jordan ▸ Prof. Birgit Mager ▸ Sonia Manchanda ▸ Dr h. c. Charles Landry
21:00	Drinks & Networking

Civilkammer	Geschworene	Parteien
1.2 From Policy Labs to Platforms EN Debate ▸ Dr h. c. Charles Landry ▸ Piotr Swiatek	**1.1 Digital: Gute Services als Standard** DE Act ▸ Martin Jordan	**1.4 Public Service Design: Jede Idee hat eine Rückseite** DE Act ▸ Tobias Witt ▸ Markus Schulz
Coffee break		
2.4 Public Service Design: Designing for Agency EN Act ▸ Philipp Cartier ▸ Saskia Pouwels ▸ Prof. Dr Felix Kosok	**2.2 Innovations-Ökosysteme. Gestalten mit den Menschen** DE Reflect ▸ Amira Bieber ▸ Peter Post ▸ Dominik Hofmann	**2.1 Digital: Digitale Verwaltung im großen Maßstab** DE Act ▸ Martin Bien ▸ Jasper Klemm

Debate Panel / Roundtable
Reflect Presentation
Act Workshop

Session 1

1.1 Digital: Gute Services als Standard

Act

This session explores how good public services can become the norm rather than a matter of luck: through binding quality standards, shared components and teams that involve users. Representatives from the federal government, the state capital and the state of Brandenburg demonstrate what this means in practice and where transitions still present challenges.

▸ Martin Jordan, DigitalService des Bundes

1.2 From Policy Labs to Platforms

Debate

Across Europe, policy labs and design pilot projects have sprung up like mushrooms. Yet very few have brought about lasting changes in how governments operate. There is an implementation gap that is rarely addressed through deliberate design. This workshop puts that gap centre stage. How can we move from a culture of 'No, because' to one of 'Yes, if'? Three experts in creative bureaucracy and European design policy open the discussion.

▸ Dr h. c. Charles Landry, Creative Bureaucracy Festival
▸ Piotr Swiatek, PDR, Cardiff Metropolitan University

1.3 Pilotprojekte: Rathaus neu gedacht. Innovation aus Hessens Kommunen

Reflect

In this session, municipalities across Hesse demonstrate how public administration can work differently: with mayors meeting people in the marketplace, AI taking care of routine tasks, new spaces for change and digital services that actually work – bringing public administration closer to citizens and encouraging collaboration.

▸ Susanne Stöck, HA Hessen Agentur
▸ Karin Wolff, former Hessian Minister of Education
▸ Steffen Ball, Mayor of Heusenstamm
▸ Achim Janssen, Chief Digital Officer, City of Hattersheim am Main
▸ Nikolaos Stavridis, Mayor of Walluf
▸ Fabian Hackethal, Smart City Stadt Frankfurt

1.4 Public Service Design: Jede Idee hat eine Rückseite

Act

What makes a good public service? A digital user interface is only as good as the infrastructure behind it, and a political objective only has an impact when it can be put into practice in people's everyday lives. Practitioners from the fields of public sector service design, a digital climate currency and the Creative Bureaucracy movement share their perspectives.

▸ Tobias Witt, CityLAB Berlin
▸ Markus Schulz, Klima-Taler

Session 2

2.1 Digital: Digitale Verwaltung im großen Maßstab

Act

Creating a good service for one city is a start. Creating a good service that thousands of people can use is a different challenge. What can design contribute when administrative processes need to be scaled up without losing sight of the people they serve? WDC 2026 itself provides an example: its funding portal seeks to reshape the relationship between funding bodies and recipients, and even bring a little joy to administration.

▸ Martin Bien, WDC 2026
▸ Jasper Klemm, Leonardo impact

2.2 Innovations-Ökosysteme. Gestalten mit den Menschen

Reflect

Public innovation thrives in ecosystems where job centres, initiatives, businesses and neighbourhoods design together. Three examples: a municipal job centre develops approaches to labour market integration with migrants and employers. A citizens' initiative establishes circularity as a municipal service infrastructure. A space in Wiesbaden becomes a meeting place for entrepreneurs, creative minds and civil society projects. All three ask: What changes when we design with people rather than for them?

- Amira Bieber, Pro Arbeit, District of Offenbach
- Peter Post, Circular-Experience.org
- Dominik Hofmann, Heimathafen Wiesbaden

2.3 Pilotprojekte: Vom Pilotprojekt in die Fläche

Reflect

Hesse is the first German federal state to have established a dedicated unit for reducing bureaucracy that uses service design as a tool for modernising government. The session provides insights into the unit's responsibilities and working methods. It then turns to a pilot project initiated by the Regional Council of Gießen. The central question is how a successful pilot project can become standard practice across the state.

- Dr Martin Klonowski, Hessian State Chancellery

2.4 Public Service Design: Designing for Agency

Act

Participatory processes are intended to give citizens a voice. Yet they often reproduce existing inequalities. This session explores the hidden mechanisms that determine whose agency counts. Design research from the Netherlands meets practical experiments from German politics.

- Philipp Cartier, Gestaltungszentrale Politik
- Saskia Pouwels, Eindhoven University of Technology
- Prof. Dr Felix Kosok, WDC 2026

Evening programme

Why Policies hinge on Services and what this means for Civic Design

Reflect

Public services are where political intentions become lived reality. Sabine Junginger demonstrates how design connects citizens, public administration and politics, and can thereby initiate institutional change.

- Prof. Sabine Junginger, PhD, Northumbria University

Making Design Last: From Public Services to Institutional Change

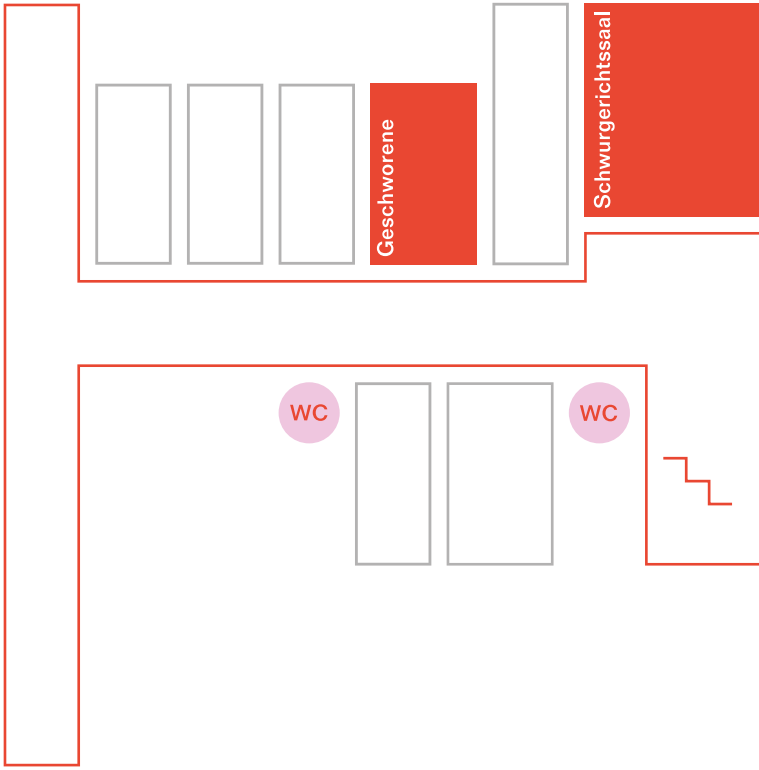
Debate

How can design become an integral part of public-sector practice rather than a one-off commission? The panel brings together three perspectives: the institutional perspective, the cultural perspective (creativity in public administration) and the long-term development of design expertise.

- Prof. Sabine Junginger, PhD, Northumbria University
- Martin Jordan, DigitalService des Bundes
- Prof. Birgit Mager, Service Design Network
- Sonia Manchanda, Spread Design / World Design Organization
- Dr h. c. Charles Landry, Creative Bureaucracy Festival

Site plan
Heimathafen Wiesbaden

1st floor



Conference & Workshops
WC
Passageway
No access

↗ Entrance
Gerichtsstraße 2

12 November 2026
10:00–20:30
Hochschule für Gestaltung
Offenbach

Design Policy Days

When Form Becomes Attitude

When does form become an attitude? A park bench with armrests in the middle already takes a stance: no one is supposed to lie down here. Design constantly takes a position, usually without saying so. The question is whether designers merely implement such decisions or take a political stance themselves – and what it costs them when they do.

In the morning at HfG Offenbach, projects from the WDC programme that intervene in urban space rather than merely embellish it will be presented and discussed with the audience. In the afternoon, an international symposium organised in cooperation with the Board of International Research in Design will explore the discipline's understanding of its political role: its limits, its precarious position and its role in the information age. A day for everyone who sees design as anything but neutral.

In cooperation with Hochschule für Gestaltung Offenbach (HfG) and the Board of International Research in Design (BIRD)

Programme	Hochschule für Gestaltung Offenbach
10:00	Registration
10:30	Welcome EN ▸ Dr Susanne Völker ▸ Prof. Dr Tom Bieling ▸ Prof. Adrian Niessler ▸ Prof. Dr Felix Kosok
10:50	Partisan Spaces. Interventions in Public Space EN Reflect Project presentations and dialogues between the projects Geschichtsabdrucke. Antifaschistische Orte in Offenbach ▸ Prof. Johanna Siebein ▸ studio pari-pari Objects of Resistance ▸ Maziar Rezai ▸ Nila Rezaei Kiosk of Solidarity ▸ Dr Moritz Ahlert ▸ Felix Egle WDC Pavilion ▸ Alexander Römer Working on Democracy ▸ Prof. Catrin Altenbrandt ▸ Dominik Keggenhoff DemokratieKioske ▸ Anne Bartens Moderation: Prof. Dr Felix Kosok
12:45	Plenary session and outlook EN
13:00	Lunch break (Bring your own food)
14:30	Introduction EN ▸ Prof. Dr Tom Bieling
14:45	Fantasy Politics. Fiction and Worldbuilding in the Age of Disenchantment EN Reflect ▸ Noemi Biasetton Introduction: Prof. Dr Uta Brandes

15:30	**Ornamental Politics. An Update** Reflect ▸ Dr Silvio Lorusso Introduction: Prof. Dr des. Marc Pfaff	EN
16:15	**Design is already a Political Event, the Point is to change its Politics** Reflect ▸ Prof. Dr Tatjana Schneider Introduction: Prof. Dr Uta Brandes	EN
17:00	**Break**	
17:15	**Panel: How Design Takes a Stand** Debate ▸ Noemi Biasetton ▸ Dr Silvio Lorusso ▸ Prof. Dr Tatjana Schneider ▸ Prof. Dr Uta Brandes ▸ Prof. Dr des. Marc Pfaff	EN
18:15	**Closing and Outlooks**	EN
18:30	**Drinks & Networking**	

Debate Panel / Roundtable
Reflect Presentation
Act Workshop

Partisan Spaces. Interventions in Public Space

Reflect

Design in public space is never neutral: it takes sides with suppressed memories and overlooked people. *Partisan Spaces* brings together six projects from World Design Capital 2026 that activate urban space and explore how democracy can be shaped spatially.

Geschichtsabdrucke. Antifaschistische Orte in Offenbach

The Politics Working Group at HfG commemorates the book burning of 22 May 1933 in Offenbach, in which members of HfG's predecessor institution also participated. Working with studio pari-pari, Geschichtswerkstatt Offenbach and students, the group produced a publication.

▸ Prof. Johanna Siebein, HfG Offenbach
▸ studio pari-pari

Objects of Resistance

Twelve months, twelve everyday objects that have become symbols of protest movements around the world: an Instagram archive by the art association Mañana Bold. The eleventh object is a step stool made from headscarves discarded by Iranian women. The RK Collective presents it at HfG Offenbach.

▸ Maziar Rezai, Curator of *Objects of Resistance*
▸ Nila Rezaei, Crafted Liberation, Sydney

Kiosk of Solidarity

A mobile kiosk for encounters and solidarity in action, located in Frankfurt's Bahnhofsviertel in 2026. Through posters, conversations and urban walks, it creates a space for issues such as homelessness and addiction support.

▸ Dr Moritz Ahlert, *Kiosk of Solidarity*
▸ Felix Egle, *Kiosk of Solidarity*

WDC Pavilion

A mobile agora: an open, twelve-sided wooden structure with an inflatable roof. In 2026, the pavilion toured six cities across the region, transforming from a classroom into a workshop, from a kitchen into a living room or an outdoor club.

▸ Alexander Römer, ConstructLab

Working on Democracy

Students at HfG work with the Augmented Bahnhofsviertel initiative to create digital sculptures that appear in urban space via the *An Alle* web app (an-alle.net). Their themes include disinformation, inequality, extremism and climate.

▸ Prof. Catrin Altenbrandt, HfG Offenbach
▸ Dominik Keggenhoff, Artist

DemokratieKioske

In 2026, eleven neighbourhood kiosks across the region were artistically redesigned and transformed into places for conversation. With around 120 events and youth labs, democracy comes to the places people already frequent.

▸ Anne Bartens, Lust auf besser leben gGmbH
▸ Moderation: Prof. Dr Felix Kosok, WDC 2026

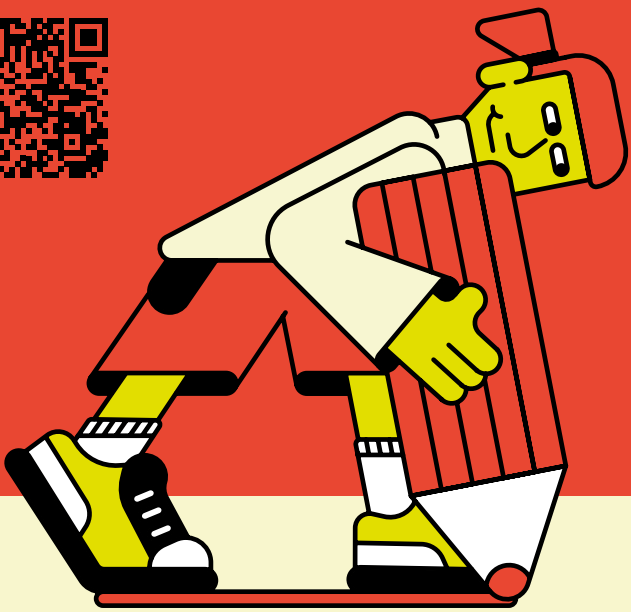
3 Presentations and Panel: How Design Takes a Stand

Reflect | Debate

Silvio Lorusso examines design that wears politics like a badge rather than putting it into practice. Noemi Biasetton interprets fantasy as one of the oldest languages of politics. Tatjana Schneider explains why design has always been political.

▸ Dr Silvio Lorusso, Universidade Lusófona, Lissabon
▸ Einführung: Prof. Dr des. Marc Pfaff, BIRD
▸ Noemi Biasetton, Design Researcher, Venice
▸ Einführung: Prof. Dr Uta Brandes, KISD Köln / BIRD
▸ Prof. Dr Tatjana Schneider, TU Braunschweig

Do you live in the Frankfurt RheinMain region?



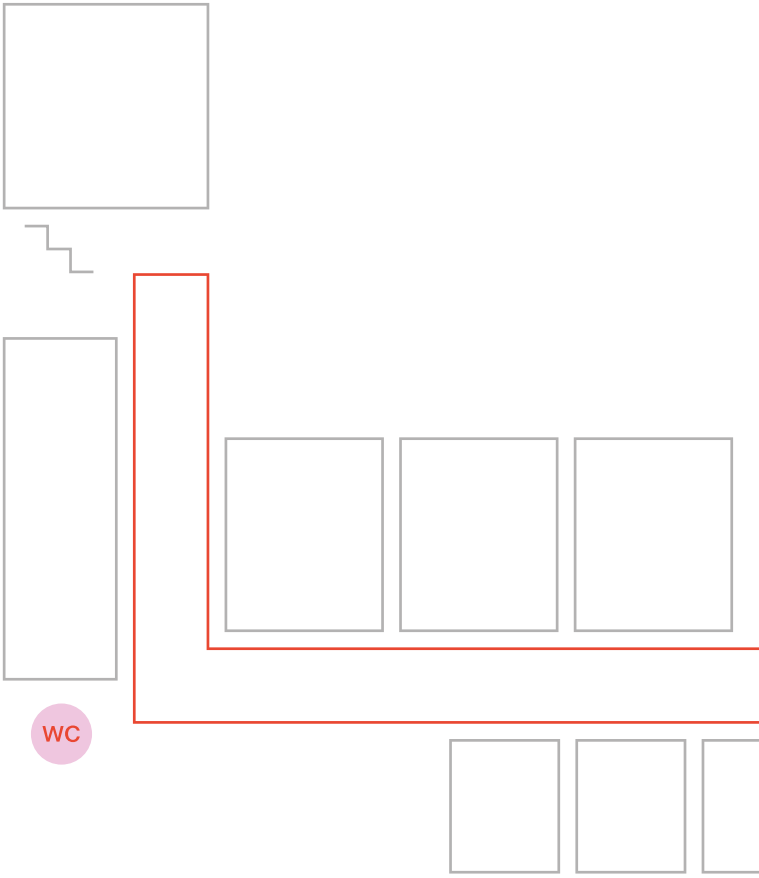
Do you work in the cultural and creative industries?

WORLD DESIGN CAPITAL
FRANKFURT RHEINMAIN 2026

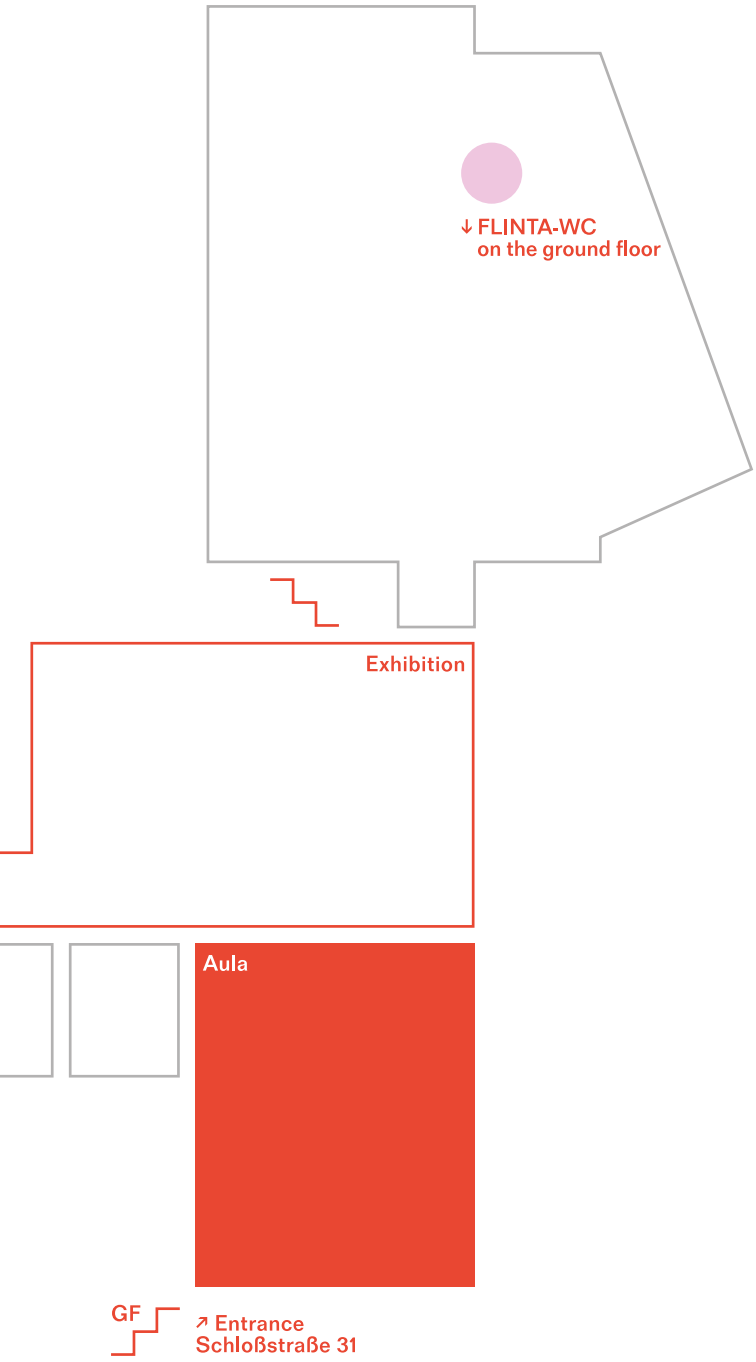
We'd love to hear your views!
Closing date for entries: 14.12.2026

Site plan
Hochschule für Gestaltung Offenbach

1st floor



Conference & Workshops
WC
Passageway
No access


↓ FLINTA-WC
on the ground floor
Exhibition
Aula
GF
↗ Entrance
Schloßstraße 31

Design Policy Days

When Design Gets Political

13 November 2026
09:00–21:00
Goethe University Frankfurt

When does design become political? In the polling booth, at the very latest: the height of the table, the size of the print on the ballot paper, whether someone in a wheelchair can vote independently – these design decisions help determine who can participate in democracy. Politics, too, is always designed. The question is who takes responsibility for this and who is allowed to shape it.
At Goethe University's Casino building, there will be debate, reflection and action. Roundtable discussions will address state reform, digital sovereignty, civil society and transformation. Presentations from political science and design research will provide context, while workshops and an exhibition will demonstrate how things can be done differently elsewhere. In the evening, the Hessian State Award for Universal Design will be presented. Dissent is expressly encouraged: anyone who wants to shape democracy must also get involved themselves.

In cooperation with Deutscher Designtag and the Research Centre Normative Orders at Goethe University Frankfurt

Programme	Goethe University Frankfurt
09:00	Registration
Location	**Room 1.801 (Casino)**
09:30	**Welcome** EN ▸ Rebecca Schmidt ▸ Irmgard Hesse ▸ Carolina Romahn
09:45	**Opening Panel** Reflect EN ▸ Prof. Pradyumna Vyas ▸ Dr Thomas Hemmelgarn ▸ Prof. Dr Lucy Kimbell ▸ Oliver Lin ▸ Min Wang ▸ Mui Kinoshita Introduction & Moderation: Prof. Dr Felix Kosok
11:15	Break
11:30 Session 1	**Staatsreform** DE Debate ▸ Prof. Dr Sven T. Siefken ▸ Prof. Dr Klaus Günther ▸ Rojda Tosun ▸ Karin Wolff ▸ Prof. Birgit Mager Moderation: Svenja Bickert-Appleby
12:45	Break
13:00 Session 2	**Digitale Souveränität** DE Debate ▸ Prof. Dr Friedrich von Borries ▸ Prof. Maiken Laackmann ▸ Prof. Dr Bianca Herlo ▸ Tobias Witt ▸ Eileen O'Sullivan Moderation: Heike List

Room 1.811 (Casino)	Normative Orders
Policy Design EN Reflect ▸ Prof. Sabine Junginger, PhD ▸ Prof. Regina Hanke ▸ Prof. Dr Anna Whicher ▸ Prof. Mai Thi Nguyen Moderation: Piotr Swiatek	Living Futures: Future Personas as a Design Tool for Exploring Democratic Futures EN Act *Room EG.01* ▸ Marta Malesinska
	Demokratie gestalten: Von der Kommune bis zur Weltebene DE Act *Room 5.01* ▸ Markus Möller
	Games as Civic Prototyping: Potentials and Risks of Making Participation Fun EN Act *Room 5.02* ▸ Anna Hentschel ▸ Kerem Halbrecht
Break	
Designing Democracy EN Reflect ▸ Prof. Michael Saward ▸ Dr Anke Gruendel ▸ Philipp Cartier Moderation: Prof. Dr Felix Kosok	Designing Futures Together: From Europe to the Neighbourhood EN Act *Room EG.01* ▸ James White
	Relevance over Rhetoric: Framing a Design Policy Question for Germany EN Act *Room 5.02* ▸ Prof. Regina Hanke ▸ Dr Lynn Harles
	Where Do You Stand? Embodied Foresight for Systemic Change EN Act *Room 5.01* ▸ David Martens

Location	Room 1.801 (Casino)
14:15	Lunch break (Bring your own food)
15:30 Session 3	Zivilgesellschaft Debate DE ▸ Caroline Paulick-Thiel ▸ Juliane Baruck ▸ Philipp Töllner ▸ Dr Deborah Schnabel ▸ Dr Ina Hartwig Moderation: Barbara Lersch
16:45	Break
17:00 Session 4	Transformation Debate EN ▸ Hanna Harris ▸ Prof. Karin Huber-Heim ▸ Prof. Dr-Ing. Jan Dieterle ▸ Christina Melander Moderation: Anna Scheuermann
Evening	
18:15	Break
18:30	Abschlusspanel: Wie kann Design Demokratie stärken und gesellschaftliche Teilhabe ermöglichen? Debate DE ▸ Prof. Dr Nicole Deitelhoff ▸ Boris Kochan ▸ Prof. Dr R. Alexander Lorz ▸ Prof. Dr Felix Kosok Moderation: Rebecca C. Schmidt
19:15	Award Ceremony for the Hessian State Prize for Universal Design 2026 DE ▸ Prof. Dr R. Alexander Lorz ▸ Manuela Strube
20:15	Drinks & Networking

Room 1.811 (Casino)

Lunch break (Bring your own food)

Design in Government

EN

Reflect

- Greta Hauer
- Neha Sharma
- Nynke Tromp

Moderation: Christina Melander

Break

Civic Prototyping & Citizen Assembly

EN

Reflect

- Prof. Dr Markus Miessen
- Dr César Reyes Nájera
- Christian Weis
- Dr Felix Petersen
- Dr Florian Wieczorek
- Dr Brian Morgan
- Prof. Dr Daniela Winkler

Debate Panel / Roundtable
Reflect Presentation
Act Workshop

Opening Panel: The Door into Politics

In a world undergoing profound change, design is no longer merely a technical question, but a political one. The opening panel asks through which door design enters politics and what it changes once it gets there.

▸ Prof. Pradyumna Vyas, World Design Organization
▸ Dr Thomas Hemmelgarn, EU Policy Lab, European Commission Joint Research Centre
▸ Prof. Dr Lucy Kimbell, University of the Arts London
▸ Oliver Lin, Taiwan Design Research Institute
▸ Min Wang, China Central Academy of Fine Arts, Peking
▸ Mui Kinoshita, Hong Kong Designers Association
Introduction and Moderation: Prof. Dr Felix Kosok, WDC 2026

Session 1

Staatsreform

Debate

State reform is usually discussed in terms of cutbacks. This roundtable asks what it means to design the state rather than simply streamline it. Laws, procedures and public administration have always been designed. The question is who takes responsibility for this and according to which criteria.

▸ Prof. Dr Sven T. Siefken, Hochschule des Bundes für öffentliche Verwaltung
▸ Prof. Dr Klaus Günther, Goethe University Frankfurt
▸ Rojda Tosun, PublicLegalDesign
▸ Karin Wolff, former Hessian Minister of Education
▸ Prof. Birgit Mager, Service Design Network

Policy Design

Reflect

Policy is always designed, whether anyone acknowledges it or not. This session asks what changes when design becomes a deliberate instrument of government, how it can work with communities and what legacy the *Design Action Plan Frankfurt RheinMain* will leave behind.

▸ Prof. Sabine Junginger, PhD, Northumbria University
▸ Prof. Regina Hanke, Macromedia University / BEDA
▸ Prof. Dr Anna Whicher, PDR, Cardiff Metropolitan University
▸ Prof. Mai Thi Nguyen, Design Lab, UC San Diego
Moderation: Piotr Swiatek, PDR, Cardiff Metropolitan University

Session 2

Digitale Souveränität

Debate

Digital sovereignty is primarily regarded as a technical question: servers, code and providers. Art and design approach it differently: Who owns digital urban space? Who becomes visible and who is merely simulated? What does sovereignty mean when digital spaces are designed?

▸ Prof. Dr Friedrich von Borries, HFBK Hamburg
▸ Prof. Maiken Laackmann, Düsseldorf University of Applied Sciences
▸ Prof. Dr Bianca Herlo, Hochschule Luzern / DGTF
▸ Tobias Witt, CityLAB Berlin
▸ Eileen O'Sullivan, Head of the Department for Citizens, Digital Affairs and International Relations in Frankfurt
Moderation: Heike List

Designing Democracy

Reflect

Ballot papers, polling booths and parliamentary chambers all have a physical form that helps determine who feels addressed. Design has found its way into government – but to what end? As a political tool or as a critical practice? And who designs democracy without allowing this power to escape democratic oversight?

▸ Prof. Michael Saward, University of Warwick
▸ Dr Anke Gruendel, Leuphana Transformation Lab
▸ Philipp Cartier, Gestaltungszentrale Politik e. V.
Moderation: Prof. Dr Felix Kosok

Session 3

Zivilgesellschaft

Debate

Democracy does not emerge solely in parliaments. Initiatives, educational organisations and cultural institutions develop formats for participation. Debates are shifting to digital platforms, while participation rarely reaches those who feel disconnected. What does civil society contribute, and how are new means of communication changing it?

- Caroline Paulick-Thiel, Politics for Tomorrow
- Juliane Baruck, Hallo Bundestag
- Philipp Töllner, Social Media Academy
- Dr Deborah Schnabel, Bildungsstätte Anne Frank
- Dr Ina Hartwig, City Councillor and Head of the Department of Culture and Science, City of Frankfurt

Moderation: Barbara Lersch

Design in Government

Reflect

Policy labs have brought design into the heart of government. Three European models – from the European Commission, the UK government and the Netherlands – explore what design can change from within, what its limits are and what Germany can learn from them.

- Greta Hauer, EU Policy Lab, European Commission
- Neha Sharma, Policy Lab, UK Government
- Nynke Tromp, PONT
- Moderation: Christina Melander, Danish Design Centre

Session 4

Transformation

Debate

Heat, water, mobility and land use are questions of design as well as justice: Who pays, who benefits and who decides? This panel discussion approaches urban sustainability as a political task and asks how the transition from pilot projects to fair, lasting change can succeed.

- Christina Melander, Danish Design Centre
- Prof. Karin Huber-Heim, University of Applied Sciences BFI Vienna
- Prof. Dr-Ing. Jan Dieterle, Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences

Moderation:
Anna Scheuermann, Architects for Future Frankfurt RheinMain

Civic Prototyping & Citizen Assembly

Reflect

Citizen assemblies are the most visible democratic innovation of recent years. Randomly selected people deliberate on difficult issues such as climate policy. Yet many assemblies remain one-off events, their ideas ending up in a drawer. Meanwhile, democracy happens every day: in neighbourhoods, cooperatives and small initiatives that experiment with new ways of living together.

- Prof. Dr Markus Miessen, Université du Luxembourg / Cultures of Assembly
- Dr César Reyes Nájera, Université du Luxembourg / Cultures of Assembly
- Christian Weis, Mayor of Esch-sur-Alzette
- Dr Felix Petersen, University of Münster
- Dr Florian Wieczorek, Mehr Demokratie e. V.
- Dr Brian Morgan, Ulster University
- Prof. Dr Daniela Winkler, University of Stuttgart

Workshops

1.1 Living Futures: Future Personas as a Design Tool for Exploring Democratic Futures

Act

How can we make the future tangible enough to inform political decisions today? The EU Policy Lab works with 'Future Personas': fictional people from possible future scenarios whose lives, values and everyday decisions make abstract scenarios concrete. In this workshop, participants try out the method themselves. In doing so, they encounter the central challenge right at the conception stage.

▸ Marta Malesinska, EU Policy Lab, European Commission

1.2 Demokratie gestalten: Von der Kommune bis zur Weltebene

Act

This workshop explores how democratic participation can be designed – from the local level to global approaches such as the *We The Peoples* campaign (including the UN World Citizens' Initiative). The aim is to understand political participation and actively help shape it.

▸ Markus Möller, Mehr Demokratie e. V. Hessen

1.3 Games as Civic Prototyping: Potentials and Risks of Making Participation Fun

Act

Public participation has an image problem. This workshop presents playful approaches to urban planning. Participants play the prototyping game *JUST ADD PEOPLE* to test ideas such as 'humanistic data centres' directly on site, outdoors (maximum 20 participants).

▸ Anna Hentschel, HCU Hamburg
▸ Kerem Halbrecht, PlattenBaum / 72 Hour Urban Action

2.1 Designing Futures Together: From Europe to the Neighbourhood

Act

The future does not emerge on its own – it is designed. This workshop combines two approaches: overarching European visions that provide direction and local initiatives from San Diego. How can visionary strategies and practical initiatives on the ground learn from one another?

▸ James White, Design Lab, UC San Diego

2.2 Relevance over Rhetoric: Framing a Design Policy Question for Germany

Act

Design is considered essential within the profession, but rarely in politics. This workshop addresses that gap: rather than simply asserting its relevance, participants develop concrete solutions to existing political priorities.

▸ Prof. Regina Hanke, Macromedia University / BEDA
▸ Dr Lynn Harles, Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts / DGTF

2.3 Where Do You Stand? Embodied Foresight for Systemic Change

Act

This workshop combines futures research (foresight) with spatial constellation work exploring the state of the EU in 2040. Participants embody global factors in three scenarios, making the dynamics of political systems tangible in space and providing fresh impulses for decisions made today.

▸ David Martens, EU Policy Lab, European Commission

Evening programme

Closing Panel: Wie kann Design Demokratie stärken und gesellschaftliche Teilhabe ermöglichen?

Debate

To conclude the conference day, Nicole Deitelhoff, Boris Kochan and Hesse's Minister of Finance R. Alexander Lorz discuss the political responsibility of design.

- Prof. Dr Nicole Deitelhoff, Research Centre Normative Orders, Goethe University Frankfurt
- Prof. Dr Felix Kosok, WDC 2026
- Boris Kochan, Deutscher Designtag
- Prof. Dr R. Alexander Lorz, Hessian Minister of Finance

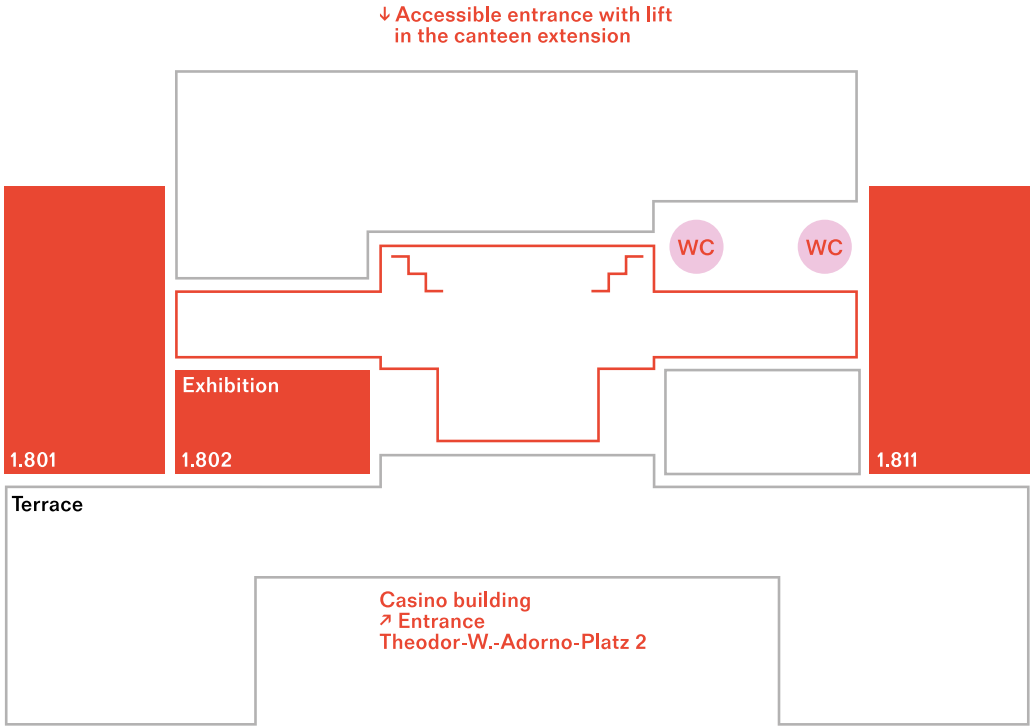
Moderation: Rebecca C. Schmidt, Research Centre Normative Orders, Goethe University Frankfurt

Verleihung Hessischer Staatspreis Universelles Design 2026

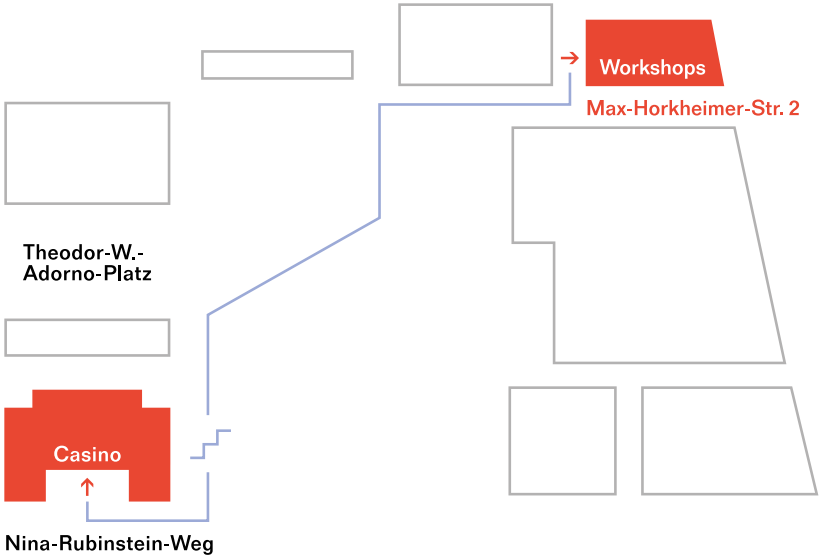
The Hesse Ministry of Finance, Social Affairs and Economic Affairs recognises exemplary concepts for an accessible and sustainable society. This year, the award ceremony takes place as part of the *Design Policy Days*, with the participation of State Secretary Manuela Strube and State Minister Prof. Dr R. Alexander Lorz.

In cooperation with the German Design Council

Site plan Goethe University Frankfurt's Casino building



Casino building 1st floor



How to walk from the Casino building to the *Normative Ordnungen* buidling (workshops)

Conference & Workshops
WC
Passageway
No access
Wayfinding

14 November 2026
ab 14:30
Paulskirche Frankfurt

Design Assembly with Convocation Ceremony

At St Paul's Church in Frankfurt, representatives from politics, public administration, academia, design, culture and civil society come together. The *Design Assembly* takes stock of WDC 2026. The focus is on recommendations for the *Design Action Plan Frankfurt RheinMain* – a roadmap for concrete steps and lasting structures in the region. Further highlights include the handover of the title to the next World Design Capital, Busan 2028, and a digital keynote by transformation researcher Prof. Dr Maja Göpel, looking ahead to 2027.

14:30–15:30	Doors open & arrival with music
15:30–15:45	Welcome by Dr Ina Hartwig, City Councillor and Head of the Department of Culture and Science City of Frankfurt, Carolina Romahn and Prof. Matthias Wagner K
15:45–16:15	The Year Around the Table: five project initiators – Eleonora Herder, Maria Pozder, Prof. Dr Petra Eisele, Anne Bartens and Prof. Roland Lambrette – in conversation with Barbara Lersch and Prof. Birgit Mager
16:15–16:50	Voices from the *Design Policy Days*: Prof. Dr Felix Kosok and Dr Anke Gruendel in conversation

	with Svenja Bickert-Appleby, Rebecca C. Schmidt and Tom Bieling
16:50–17:00	Closing remarks and preview of part two
17:00–18:00	Break with regional drinks, finger food and music
18:00–18:15	Welcome addresses by State Minister Kaweh Mansoori, Frankfurt's Lord Mayor Mike Josef and Dr Susanne Völker, Managing Director of Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain
18:15–18:25	The WDC Legacy: Carolina Romahn and three representatives of civil society – Nicola Stattmann, Dominik Hofmann and Susanne Stöck
18:25–18:35	Digital keynote by Prof. Dr Maja Göpel
18:35–19:00	Roundtable discussion with State Minister Kaweh Mansoori, Frankfurt's Lord Mayor Mike Josef, Dr Ina Hartwig, City Councillor and Head of the Department of Culture and Science Frankfurt, Andreas Bruszynski, Mayor of Offenbach, and Carolina Romahn
19:00–19:30	Convocation Ceremony with speeches by Chun Jae-soo, Mayor of Busan, South Korean Consul Eunjeong Kim and WDO President Prof. Pradyumna Vyas
19:30–20:00	Closing reception in the foyer

Digital Accompanying Programme



Monuments of the Disclosed
© Ahmet Öğüt, Aaron Swartz



Bunte Stoffe – Eine Hymne
© Les Trucs



Morehshin Allahyari
(زوبعة) The Whirlwind,
© Les Trucs

Discover Virtual Art with the WAVA App

Alongside the *Design Policy Days*, you can discover virtual art in public spaces across Frankfurt city centre – free of charge and on site via the WAVA app. For the grand WDC finale at St Paul's Church, visitors can explore the virtual exhibition *DEMO*, created in 2023 to mark the 175th anniversary of the National Assembly. It presents works by four international artists around St Paul's Church, while inside the building, Les Trucs bring their coats of arms to life in satirical song. The programme also features *Primrose Path* by Nadine Kolodziey, which transforms Frankfurt's Hauptwache into fantastical worlds.

wdc2026.org

→ Download the WAVA app free of charge from the App Store

Gestaltung als Haltung – Exhibition at Hochschule für Gestaltung Offenbach

When does an object become political? The exhibition accompanying the day at HfG Offenbach presents works from Tom Bieling's teaching department that explore design as an attitude. *An Alle* by Maiken Laackmann, Tobias Still and Dominik Keggenhoff asks who owns the digital space above our cities: on an open AR platform, citizens can place their own content in urban space, without an app or a tech corporation. The exhibition also includes a contribution to *Objects of Resistance*, the year-long project by the art association Mañana Bold exploring everyday objects that have become symbols of resistance around the world. In *Crafted Liberation*, the RK Collective reinterprets one of these protest objects.

Useful Information for Your Visit

→ Event locations

Heimathafen Wiesbaden
Gerichtsstraße 2
65185 Wiesbaden

Hochschule für Gestaltung, Offenbach
Schloßstraße 31
63065 Offenbach

Goethe University Casino Building
Nina-Rubinstein-Weg
60323 Frankfurt

Paulskirche
Paulsplatz 11
60311 Frankfurt

Tokonoma
Gutleutstraße 320
60327 Frankfurt

→ Food and Drink Recommendations

Discover the region's culinary diversity through the eyes of the local creative scene. *Where Designers Eat*, compiled by HalloBasis.



→ Emergency Contacts

Emergency Numbers
110 (Police)
112 (Fire Brigade & Ambulance Service)

→ Information & Assistance

If you have any questions or need assistance during your visit, you can contact us by email at hello@wdc2026.org or by telephone during office hours on +49 69 271 32028.

→ Online Calendar

Our online calendar lists all WDC events. You can filter them by topic, format, date and location.

Stay informed!

→ WDC Newsletter

Our WDC newsletter brings you the latest news about WDC 2026 approximately once a month till the end of the year.

→ Instagram

Follow WDC 2026 on Instagram and never miss an update!

Partners Design Policy Days

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Forschungszentrum der Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main

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Berlin German International University

SDNOO
Service Design Network

hfg OF_MAIN

Board of International Research in Design, BIRD

NL Niederlande

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Hessisches Ministerium für Arbeit, Integration, Jugend und Soziales

Hessen
Hessisches Ministerium der Finanzen

Hessen
Hessisches Ministerium für Wirtschaft, Energie, Verkehr, Wohnen und ländlichen Raum

Hessischer Staatspreis Universelles Design 2026

Frankfurt RheinMain is World Design Capital 2026.

Find out more and join us: wdc2026.org

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