

**Frankfurt Rhein Main  
Application World Design Capital '26  
Design for Democracy. Atmospheres for a better life**

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Let us design

how we

want to live.

# Editorial

**We, Frankfurt RhineMain – encompassing the city of Frankfurt am Main in association with other cities and municipalities in the RhineMain region – are applying for the title of World Design Capital 2026 with the theme: *Design for Democracy. Atmospheres for a better life.* Our application builds on the experience of more than 550 years of all-encompassing social transformation in the RhineMain area, largely brought about through the impact that design and the applied sciences have had on the economic, social and cultural life in the region. Regarding the crises we face today, the problems are already well-defined. Now it's up to us to provide well-designed answers.**

**This application encompasses a whole range of visions, utopias and corresponding narratives that will initially drive and later steer creative activity. We are placing an emphasis on design projects that demonstrate not only the power of imagination but also the practical know-how to turn visions into reality. In addition to**

such outstanding interdisciplinary pilot projects, we want to enable exemplary experimental ventures to be tested on a small or large-scale as visible blueprints in the public realm. These projects cover all the important areas of coexistence, such as construction, consumption, culture, education, energy, health, housing, industry, mobility, public space, sport and work.

Our call *Design for Democracy* stands for design that adheres to the principle of making life easier, more extensive, better maintained, and more intense – design that proposes a credible hands-on response to a range of well-defined problems that have come about through changes to the environment, technology, economy, and society. At the same time, we think of *Design for Democracy* as a movement involving a great number of very different stakeholders, all of whom believe in our potential to shape a future world that is worth living in. These are people interested in developing realistic new ways of designing processes and systems in order to engender

various kinds of atmospheres, in which, in spite of their differences, people are less inhibited to approach one another, and can live together in the here and now.

On one hand, *Atmospheres for a better life* alludes quite specifically to our planet's physical atmosphere, as, without it, no life would be possible. But the word atmosphere can also be taken to mean something interpersonal, something aesthetic, something that has to do with mood. Ideally a good atmosphere helps to create an experience that resonates long afterwards. We are all conscious of what a difference the perceived atmosphere in a room makes to us. We sense it through the conversations we have there, and in whether we feel relaxed and communicative, or inhibited and shy. The same goes for the atmosphere in public spaces. Does a space make me feel comfortable when I'm there with others; is it somewhere I want to hang around and maybe even strike up

a conversation? Do I look after this space, or conversely, dump my rubbish there because I couldn't care less about it? It is the public realm that offers us both a physical and psychological ambience for public and private interaction. Public spaces are where we bump into each other by chance and discover how others differ from us, and it is where inclusion – regarding our diversity, differences and heterogeneity – can and should take place. The ultimate challenge we face in the coming years is to find a way of designing public spaces so they can function as spaces for interaction, and offer a forum in which people can express their views and seek consensus.

*Design for Democracy. Atmospheres for a better life* embodies a pledge, and simultaneously it postulates that we have yet to achieve a better life. This pledge is linked to democracy and to forms of government whose underlying bedrock is a desire to make things better. Because a better life for us today, must be one that ensures

generations all over the world can enjoy a better life too. The responsibility embodied in this pledge is predicated on having an iron will, since we sense what we are facing today through our own being, in our individual biography. Extrapolating even further, design means being held accountable towards another person, a group, or towards society as a whole. It is also well known that people are happier when they become involved and are designing beautiful and good things.

*Design for Democracy. Atmospheres for a better life* is an invitation to take an active role in designing the spaces we inhabit, and in participating in liberal democracy. It should act as ray of hope for those who have been deprived of a liberal democracy, are currently deprived of it, and for all those who are still striving for it.



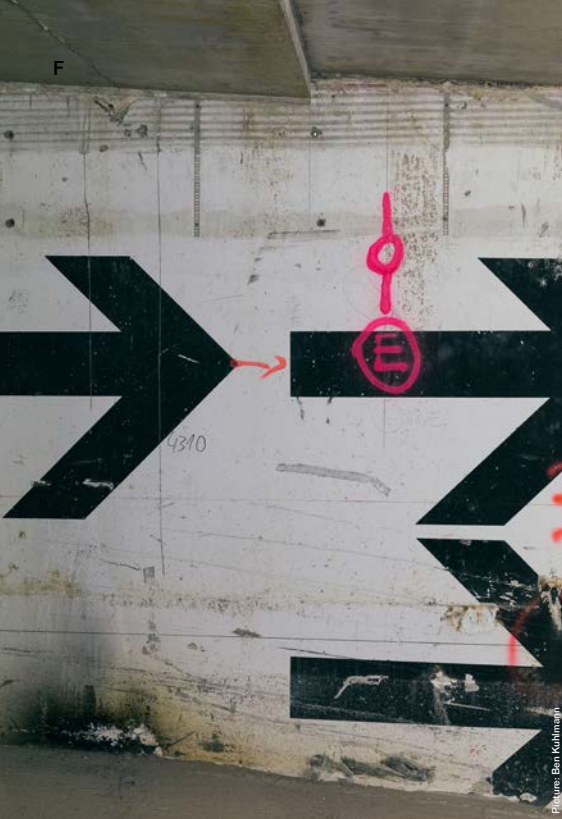




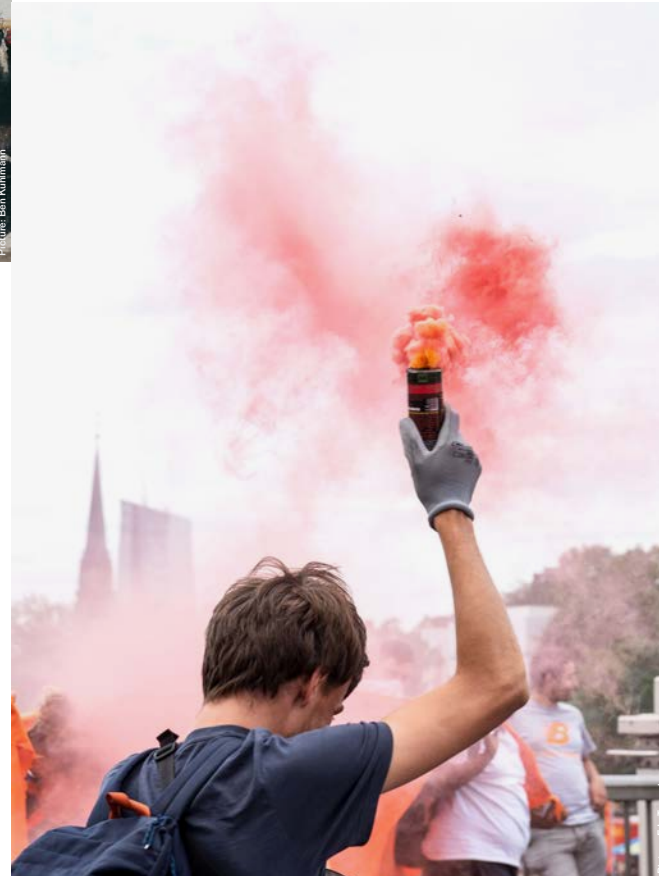
The balance of power in the world's economic centres is shifting towards nationalist, neo-protectionist and right-wing populist factions. Democratic structures are being undermined and current models of autocratic governance in East and West increasingly find their supporters. They seek their validation in ideologies that justify what cannot be justified. Alongside society's dependence on large and powerful technology corporations, our channels of communication are increasingly being manipulated. With the help of personalised messaging and algorithm-derived messages arriving via our smartphones and tablets, outdated patterns of thought are replicating a narrative of dichotomies, ideas, values, and power and domination structures, racism, and group-based misanthropy. Added to that are the violence, oppression and war of an autocratic government, as the invasion of Ukraine by Russian troops, among other things, has shown.

Globally and locally, this leads to a serious conflict of objectives. We will gain nothing if efforts to achieve ecological sustainability end up jeopardising the foundations of our economy. At the same time, concern for businesses and jobs should not prevent us from doing everything necessary to preserve resources that are indispensable for us as humans, and to ensure their capacity for regeneration. We need new technologies, new forms of cooperation and innovative models for conducting business and living together. We need to modernise political processes, because we have now learnt that both media and communication play a systemic role in how democracy evolves and how we participate in politics. Both transdisciplinary thinking and action are crucial if we are to effectively meet the challenges of the future.





Picture: Ben Kuhlmann



Picture: Edin Tahirovic

No political system can afford to deny the truth that, as humans, we are the cause of problems ranging from global warming to the rapid loss of animal and plant species, the surfacing of financial crises, and the consequences of epidemics. And yet, the political reality is that denying the truth, or even hating the truth – a truth one refuses to accept – has become a recipe for success, both in authoritarian politics and for its leading figures. Democratic political systems are not immune to this either. But in a democratic system, as opposed to a dictatorship – in addition to the freedom and dignity of each individual, justice in general, and the preservation of natural resources – what is paramount, is everyone's right to participate in the process of establishing the truth. If truth is neither suppressed nor denied, we will have a better chance of doing something about the crises we are currently facing. All transformative processes to which we as individuals and societies as a whole are exposed, open up new challenges and new roles for designers.

**In addressing them, we also take on the responsibility of refraining from any actions or design interventions that might pose an existential threat to the world, to a free democratic society, or to future generations. The true essence of design is to question the obvious, imagine the future, and to want to change things. And these days, we need this more than ever. *Design for Democracy. Atmospheres for a better life* is not only the theme we have chosen for our application. It is a movement dedicated to addressing the most pressing issues we face today. Through spirited discussion of numerous concepts, we have generated specific projects and far-reaching ideas for the year 2026 and beyond.**

# A portrait of the region

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Picture: Ben Kuhnmann



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↑↓ Impressions from Frankfurt, Offenbach and Rüdeseim (clockwise from the top)

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The Frankfurt RhineMain region lies at the heart of Europe and is one of 11 European metropolitan regions in Germany. It extends over the borders of three adjacent federal states – Hesse, Rhineland-Palatinate and Bavaria within a contiguous area of some 14,800 square kilometres and has around 5.8 million inhabitants. The population density in Frankfurt RhineMain is roughly 394 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> and it is one of the most economically robust metropolitan regions in both Germany and Europe, with over 400,000 resident companies.

For example, the region's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020 amounted to roughly €273 billion. With nearly 3.3 million people in employment, this produces a GDP of €84,051 per person employed. The region's purchasing power index (average purchasing power per inhabitant) also confirms that the economic region punches well above its weight. Assuming the national average purchasing power to be 100%, in 2020 the city of Frankfurt weighed in at 113.5%, while the figure for Frankfurt RhineMain as a whole was 109.2%.

F

Frankfurt RhineMain's cultural landscape is wide-ranging and fertile, both in the established sector and in the more alternative off-scene. Visitors come from far and wide to take advantage of the region's unique museum landscape and award-winning resident dance, theatre, and opera companies, and to attend the extraordinary events that revolve around music and literature. The region has established a reputation for stimulating and communicating arts and culture to a wide public, and many of the region's inhabitants – apart from supporting the more established arts scene – are also involved in various arts initiatives, networks, foundations and associations.



↑ View into the modern extension of the Städel Museum in Frankfurt  
 ↓ EZB Basketball Open Gym at the Wohnzimmer Hauptwache 2022, Frankfurt



**Frankfurt**

**Hanau**

**Offenbach**

**Rhine**

**Main**

**Darmstadt**

**Mainz**

**Wiesbaden**

**Bad Schwalbach**

**Bad Homburg**

**Bad Vilbel**

**Hofheim**

**Oestrich-Winkel**

**Dietzenbach**

## A vibrant hub

Not only do vast numbers of planes, trains and ships arrive and depart in Frankfurt RhineMain every day, transporting both goods and people, the world's largest internet hub DE-CIX processes a tide of digital data, 24/7. This lively and vibrant region has always attracted people from all over the world. But at the same time this brings with it considerable migratory movement in Frankfurt RhineMain's population – both inwards and outwards. For example, the city of Offenbach am Main has the highest percentage of residents in Germany where either the person themselves, or at least one of their parents, was born without German nationality. In 2020, this figure was 63.9%, compared to just 35.8% in the federal state of Hesse.

Compared to other urban agglomerations that sprawl around world-renowned cities such as London or Paris, the RhineMain region is characterised by its much smaller metropolis of Frankfurt am Main, plus surrounding municipalities and neighbouring cities, which maintain very different traditions with their inherently dynamic communities as well as different identities. Along the rivers Rhine and Main – from which the region takes its name – there are five main cities that we are more closely looking at: Frankfurt am Main, Offenbach am Main, Hanau, plus the capital of Hesse, Wiesbaden and the capital of Rhineland-Palatinate, Mainz. Then there is the city of Darmstadt too, located about 35 kilometres south of Frankfurt's international airport. Municipalities of various sizes have gradually formed clusters around these six large cities and many a former rural community has been incorporated as a district belonging to a small, medium-sized or large city. These varied communities not only offer a place to live, but also work and education opportunities, so that (especially before the Covid pandemic) huge numbers of commuters are on the move in the region, morning and evening.



Picture: Hassan Amyal



Picture: Jonas Leonid Schweggach

- ↑ Commuters at Frankfurt Main Station
- ↓ Mainz, capital of Rhineland-Palatine (on the right), and Wiesbaden, capital of Hesse, on opposite sides of the Rhine

The region's six major cities are also home to its higher education and research facilities, with design-focussed degree programmes on offer in courses at several renowned universities and colleges: Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences, Hochschule Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences, Hochschule für Bildende Künste Städelschule Frankfurt, Hochschule für Gestaltung (HfG) Offenbach, Hochschule für Medien, Kommunikation und Wirtschaft University of Applied Sciences (HMWK) Frankfurt, Hochschule Geisenheim University, Hochschule RheinMain University of Applied Sciences Wiesbaden, Technische Universität (TU) Darmstadt. Goethe University and Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst (HfMDK) in Frankfurt as well as Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz and Staatliche Zeichenakademie Hanau offer complementary courses of study.



↑ Student building workshop at Osthang, Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt  
 ↓ Department of Design at Hochschule Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences

# An exciting in-between space

Even though, these days, natural boundaries such as rivers or landscape formations no longer prevent regional populations going about their daily life, these topographical features nevertheless continue to characterise and shape the region. The description Frankfurt RhineMain serves to highlight the ongoing importance of its two large rivers, the Rhine and the Main, which flow through the wide valleys lying between the three low mountain ranges – Taunus, Spessart and Odenwald. Here rural and cultural landscapes overlap, with apple orchards – vital for the local, and typical apple wine (cider) production – and wine-growing areas too, for example the internationally renowned and popular Rheingau, plus historic parks, such as Bad Homburg Kurpark, as well as agricultural activity and forestry. In addition, a particular structure of settlements characterises the conurbations in Frankfurt Rhine-Main: the so-called Zwischenstadt, an area that can be classified as neither urban nor rural, located between more populous areas and the countryside. Commerce, manufacturing enterprises, sports facilities and allotment gardens are often located in these in-between spaces.



↑ Hafenpark Frankfurt with open sports and leisure facilities, right next to the Main at the European Central Bank  
 ↓ Rural landscapes along the Rhine





Correspondingly, one encounters disparities in communities all over the Frankfurt RhineMain region: urban versus rural, economically strong versus structurally weak municipalities, and communities affected by housing shortages or high vacancy rates. The population's diverse make-up – poor and rich, young and old, multicultural and long-established – also differs from district to district and from city to city.

But rather than further widening the gaps that divide places and people, the following proposal goes in search of mechanisms that bring people together in Frankfurt RhineMain, seeking interventions that resonate with the world we inhabit. Embedded in this exceptionally fast-growing, increasingly dense and fast-moving region, *Design for Democracy* identifies relevant topics and challenges, which we want to tackle as World Design Capital 2026.



- ↑ Community-built parklet on Jordanstrasse in Frankfurt-Bockenheim
- ↓ Meeting neighbours at Frankfurt Summer Street Day 2022 in Bockenheim

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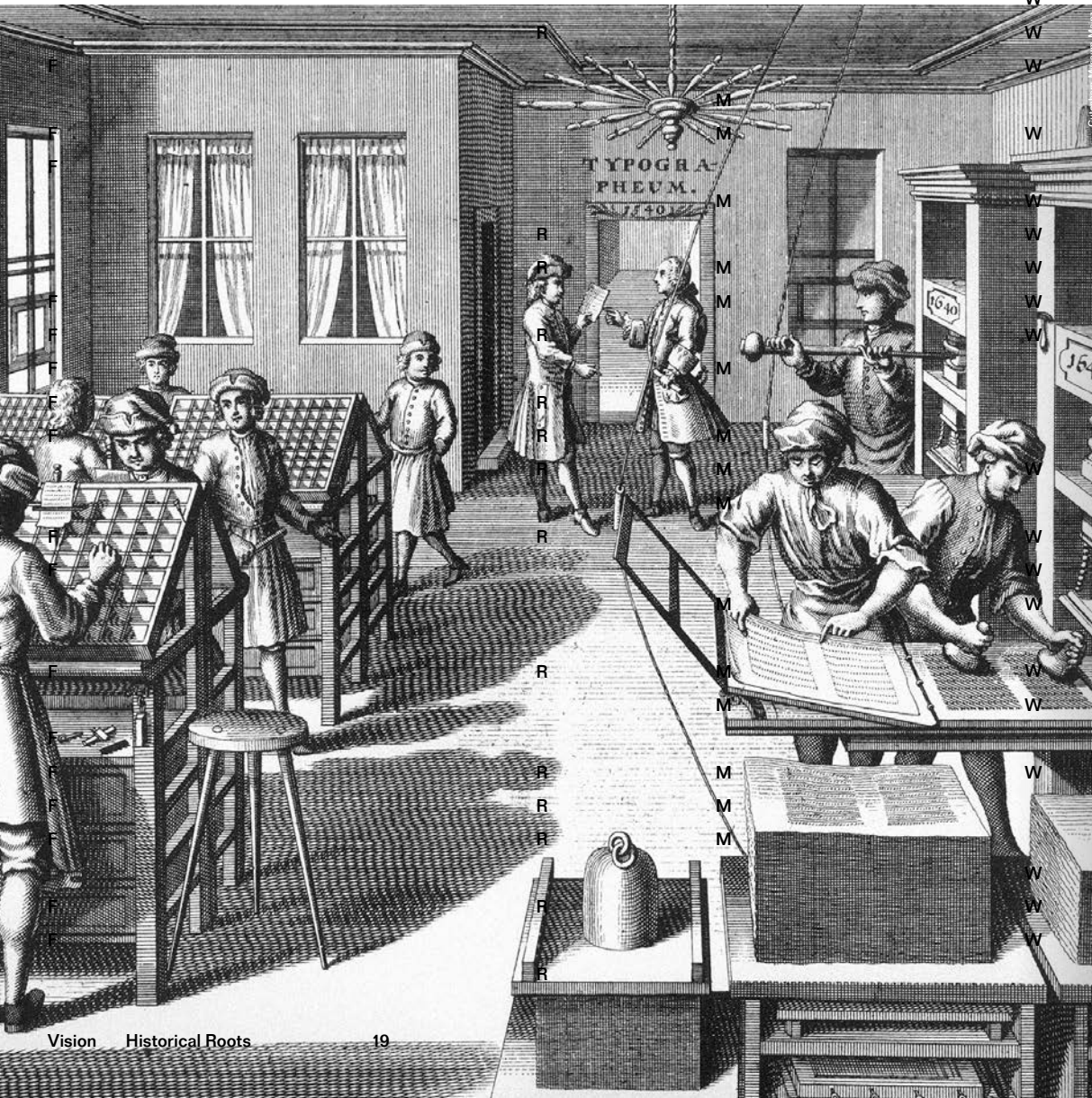
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A tradition  
we want  
to build on.

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Print workshop around 1740, copper engraving by Boetius after an engraving by J.A. Richter



## The media reformation – humanism and the Reformation

Frankfurt RhineMain is a region in which design and the applied sciences have brought about far-reaching social change. More than 550 years ago in Mainz, Johannes Gutenberg (1400–1468) revolutionised the art of letterpress printing by inventing a way to print using moveable metal type. His invention made it possible to produce typefaces and books faster and more cost-efficiently, and transformed how information was shared. This technological innovation had far-reaching consequences on how European society subsequently evolved and it contributed significantly to the spread of humanism and the Reformation. It contributed significantly to the spread of humanism and the Reformation, and laid the foundation for the Frankfurt Book Fair as a hub for the manuscript and later publishing book trade.

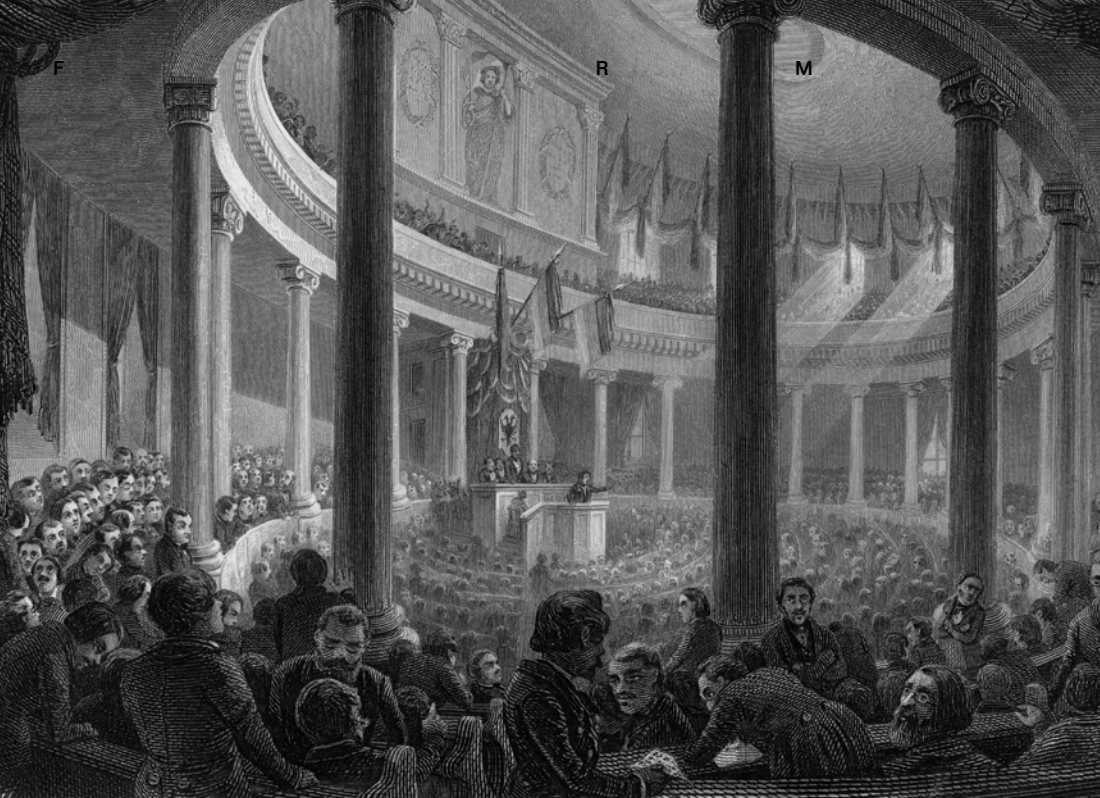
## The rise of the bourgeoisie and the Enlightenment

The rise of the bourgeoisie during the Enlightenment saw advances in the fight against prejudice, and for the rights of self-determination, emancipation and education. It was out of this movement that the Polytechnische Gesellschaft arose, which still exists today. The society was founded in Frankfurt am Main in 1816 as “The Frankfurt society for the promotion of the useful arts and the sciences that ennoble them”, and it marked the beginning of the vocational school system. From today’s perspective, it was also the start of ‘lifelong learning’, and of people’s willingness to adapt to changing conditions, to continue learning, and to take a more active role in society.

The Senckenbergische Naturforschende Gesellschaft (now Senckenberg Gesellschaft für Naturforschung) was also founded in 1817 thanks to a suggestion by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and an initiative by scientifically interested Frankfurt citizens. The research institute of the same name, which is internationally active and well connected around topics such as biodiversity and climate change, as well as the affiliated Natural History Museum, have been located in Frankfurt-Bockenheim since 1907, in the immediate vicinity of the planned Kulturcampus (cultural campus).



Polytechnische Gesellschaft and Kunstgewerbe-Museum (today Museum Angewandte Kunst) in Frankfurt



## The beginnings of democracy

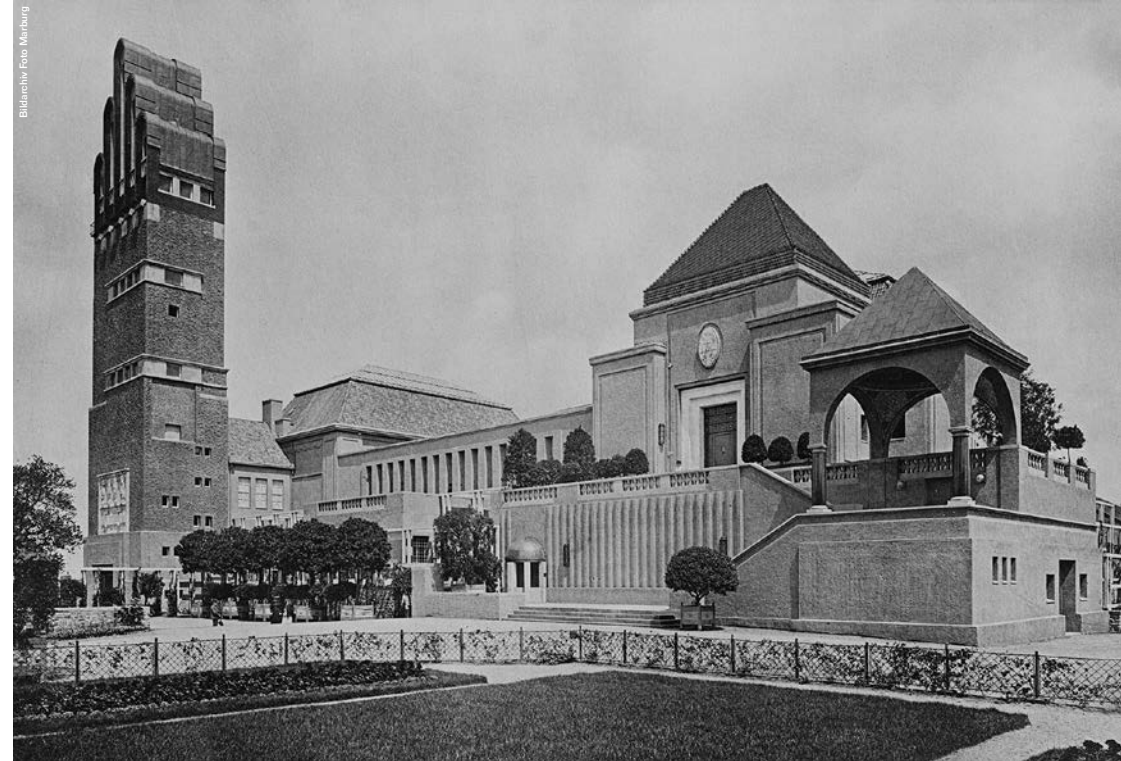


↑ The interior of Frankfurt's Paulskirche, Jean Nicolas Ventadour, 1848  
 ↓ Frankfurt's Paulskirche, lithograph by Franz Heister, 1848

In 1848 the first ever gathering of the German National Assembly was held at Frankfurt's Paulskirche (St Paul's Church). It was here that members first debated an "Imperial act concerning the basic rights of the German people", whereby human and civil rights should become enshrined in law in Germany, including equality before the law, the abolition of class privilege, the guarantee of personal and political liberties (such as freedom of the press, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of trade, freedom of movement, etc.) and the abolition of the death penalty. Even though this constitution was never implemented, its principles were nevertheless enshrined in ensuing constitutional processes.

# Art Nouveau at Mathildenhöhe

The Art Nouveau reform movement – as exemplified by buildings erected on Darmstadt's Mathildenhöhe hill in the late 19th and early 20th centuries – set new standards in the fields of art, architecture, design, fashion, furniture and home decor. In response to the industrial revolution, and for the first time, progressive contemporary design was to become an integral feature of modern permanent buildings. The ensemble at Mathildenhöhe was built by designers and artists for themselves and presented to the public in four major exhibitions from 1901 to 1914; the last ending abruptly with the start of the First World War. This pioneering concept of presenting complete design ensembles as three-dimensional artworks embedded in an everyday environment went hand in hand with employing specialised manufacturers, and it inspired numerous design and architecture exhibitions worldwide. At Mathildenhöhe there was no separation between art, design and architecture. The visual arts were mingled with crafts, new typographies were created, the groundwork was laid for corporate design in emerging industrial companies, and the architecture served the people.



Wedding Tower and Artists' Colony Museum  
at Mathildenhöhe, Darmstadt, 1908



Historisches Museum Frankfurt, Picture: Hermann Cöllischorn



Messe Frankfurt

- ↑ Housing estate Bruchfeldstrasse (also called Zick-Zack-Hausen) in Frankfurt-Niederrad, built 1926-1927
- ↓ The interior of Festhalle at Messe Frankfurt, 1909

## Modernism in Frankfurt

This new emancipatory and creative atmosphere influenced not only the Deutscher Werkbund – the German Association of Craftsmen founded in 1907 as an economic-cultural association of artists, architects, entrepreneurs and experts – it also laid the foundations for the Bauhaus. And for Modernism in Frankfurt too, where a melting pot for modern design and a new model for society flourished under the name of Das Neue Frankfurt (New Frankfurt). What set this modernist movement in the RhineMain region apart, was the large network of people it encompassed: a vast community of people engaged in designing projects at various times, some more permanently involved than others. One of the first hubs in this network was the Messe Frankfurt. As a large trade fair, it was more than an economic instrument. It aimed at becoming internationally active and establishing Frankfurt as a trading and meeting place. Due to the promotion of exemplary design, the foundations of the project New Frankfurt could already be spotted here as early as 1919. A further hub in this network was the city's building department, known for its extensive and ambitious housing construction programme. And there were associations and interest groups too, all committed to the new design approach. Among these were the Circle of New Advertising Designers, the association New Frankfurt, the Frankfurt October Group, the Educational Association of German Book Printers, and the Association of German Commercial Graphic Artists as well as a considerable number of

private companies. The Kunstschule Frankfurt (a merger of the former Kunstgewerbeschule and the Städelschule) also got involved in aesthetic and social restructuring issues, and was conceived as a teaching institution modelled on Weimar's Bauhaus. Das Neue Frankfurt magazine not only published the movement's ideas, but from time to time also included the Frankfurter Register, an advertising and sales organ dedicated to promoting furniture and everyday objects matching the new design principles. Over a very short period, Frankfurt's city building department erected far-sighted and aesthetically and functionally sophisticated housing estates to house thousands of people. This building programme was just as much an expression of direct action as the very first functionally and visually satisfying built-in kitchen of the modern era. This kitchen became the quintessence of such housing estates, and made design history as the Frankfurter Küche (Frankfurt Kitchen). Newly established green spaces in Frankfurt's suburban Römerstadt and Praunheim districts operated on a subsistence and self-sufficiency model. Programmatically, it was a successful attempt at amalgamating ecological and social reforms in a single, forward-looking, overall concept. In today's sense of the word, it represented an exceptionally sustainable model.

- ↑ Das Neue Frankfurt (New Frankfurt) magazine, October/November 1926
- ↓ The Frankfurter Küche (Frankfurt Kitchen) at Messe Frankfurt, 1927





## New Frankfurt



Bildarchiv Foto Marburg, Picture: Ludwig Quast

- ↑ Institute for Social Research at the Goethe University
- ↓ Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, Frankfurt



Picture: Unterberg, Refr/CC-BY-SA 3.0

The protagonists of New Frankfurt took their cue from the present rather than the past. Over the years 1919 to 1933 they wilfully went their own way, designing a very specific kind of Modernism in Frankfurt, one where design and social commitment generated new ways of living, and a new, better society. This New Frankfurt was no longer all about theoretical objectives, illusions and polemics, it was all about direct action. And it was not based on political upheaval, but on the desire for a new start after the First World War, articulated by people involved in politics, business, culture, research and practice. But National Socialism and the Second World War put an abrupt end to this. The same fate befell institutional members of the so-called Frankfurter Schule (Frankfurt School) – which had emerged from the Institute for Social Research at the Johann Wolfgang von Goethe University in Frankfurt – and whose ‘critical theory’ of society had made an impact around the world. The founding of the Goethe University in 1914, with the aim to solve contemporary problems, was unique because it was solely financed by Frankfurt citizens and private funds. It is thus the first German privately funded university (Stiftungsuniversität).

# Germany in ruins

In 1945, German society lay in ruins. Not only were houses, factories and transport routes destroyed and city streets and squares full of rubble and ashes. Beyond all that, the spiritual core of society had been fundamentally damaged too. The Second World War brought death to 60 million people in Europe. Six million European Jews fell victim to the Holocaust, the Nazi genocide.

The entire system of social values in Germany was suddenly called into question, because it had not given people the strength to resist the Nazis. This perhaps also explains why it was just as difficult to seamlessly press on with design modernism around the river Main area after 1945, as it was to pursue the design and social reform movements that had preceded it. Now was the time to start ruthlessly examining all those traditions and certainties that, until then, had sustained German society as a matter of course.

Frankfurt's city centre at the Römer  
(City Hall) after the Second World War





Hochschule für Gestaltung Ulm  
(1953–1968)

# Starting again after the Second World War

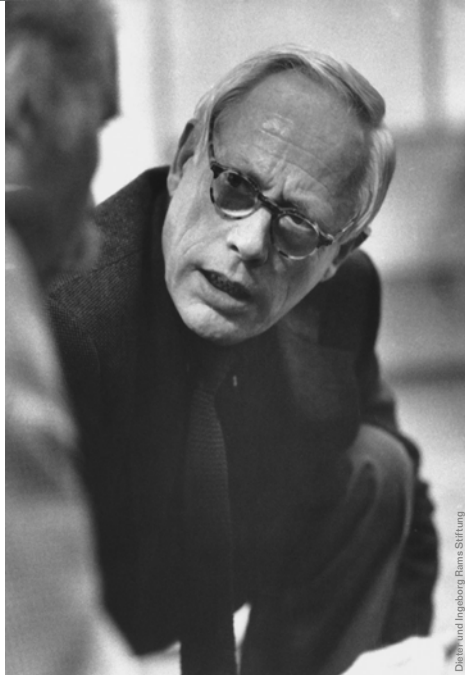
In Frankfurt RhineMain, as in the whole country, reconstruction began immediately after the end of the war with enormous joint efforts, despite the horrendous human and material losses. As an example for future design education, a new design school was established in Ulm, 300 km away from Frankfurt, with the aim of pressing on with design for this fledgling democracy. The educational concept involved a combination of scientific-technical competence with design skills and knowledge, while also keeping in mind socio-political and educational responsibilities. The school wanted to train generalists who would not only act conscientiously, but who could also justify their design decisions from a political standpoint. Part of Ulm's programme encompassed close cooperation with industry, to develop high quality, affordable, and durable mass-produced products. The institution was sponsored by the Geschwister Scholl Foundation, established by Inge Scholl as early as 1951 to commemorate her siblings Hans and Sophie Scholl who had been murdered by the National Socialists. On 2 October 1955, the Hochschule für Gestaltung Ulm was opened in the presence of numerous public figures from the worlds of culture and business.

The Braun company, established near Frankfurt in Kronberg im Taunus, was one of the first companies after the Second World War to implement HfG Ulm's approach to design, and thus also the tenets of modern design. The company was founded in 1921 by the engineer Max Braun. After his sudden death in 1951, his sons Artur and Erwin took over the management of the company. Under their leadership, Braun developed a high standard of design and engaged a number of famous designers. Among them was Dieter Rams, originally trained as a carpenter and architect, who began working for Braun in 1955. Rams created Braun's worldwide-renowned product range of user-friendly, practical, ethical and aesthetically pleasing everyday objects. It was a design approach that decades later would result in his credo "Less, but better".

The German Design Council was established in Darmstadt in 1953 following a German Bundestag resolution, backed by German industry and its cooperating partners. Since 1987 it has been based on Frankfurt's trade fair exhibition site. After the Second World War, it was the Design Council that exhibited German design products appropriately enough at home, but primarily abroad. The Council was founded not only to promote design, but to promote culture in general, and support young talent in particular. It also advises industrial companies on how to increase their appeal to a broader public by helping them improve their brand profile and how they market designs. This all stems from the understanding that good design plays an essential role in cultural diversity and economic success.



Deutsches Design-Museum/Sammlung Raif für Formgebung, Frankfurt am Main, Picture: Eberhard Troeger



Dieter und Ingeborg Rams, Stiftung

↑ 10th Triennale Milano  
1954, German department  
↓ Dieter Rams



Hochschule für Gestaltung  
Offenbach (since 1970)

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# Education, society and science in transition

Two years after the closure of the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Ulm, the Werkkunstschule Offenbach am Main celebrated its renaming in 1970 as the Hochschule für Gestaltung Offenbach, sponsored by the state of Hesse. Many of Ulm's design teaching parameters were incorporated into Offenbach's study programme which, right from the beginning, included a study programme called "The humanisation and design of the environment", centred around scientific insights and design experiments based on interdisciplinary know-how.

Numerous technical colleges in Frankfurt RhineMain founded in the 1970s, include architecture, media and design in their current curricula. In the meantime, they have been renamed ‘Universities for Applied Sciences’, in line with the amended 2016 Hessian Higher Education Act. These include Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences, Hochschule Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences, Hochschule für Medien, Kommunikation und Wirtschaft University of Applied Sciences (HMWK) Frankfurt, Hochschule Geisenheim University and Hochschule RheinMain University of Applied Sciences with its four campuses in Wiesbaden and Rüsselsheim. In 2014 Mainz Technical College, founded in 1996, became Mainz University of Applied Sciences – and since 2011 other technical colleges in Rhineland-Palatinate have followed suit. Apart from the three academies of Music and Arts in Hesse, Hochschule für Bildende Künste-Städelschule Frankfurt, Hochschule für Gestaltung (HfG) Offenbach and Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst (HfMDK) Frankfurt, the sole university in the region with a design focus in the faculty of architecture, is the Technische Universität (TU) Darmstadt. Through these universities’ teaching, research, and application-oriented programmes, students learn about the scientifically important and practically significant interface of society with economics, politics, law, technology, science and culture. These programmes address – from various perspectives – current developments and technical and economic problems, as well as social and cultural change and its consequences.

↑ Department of Design at  
Hochschule Darmstadt University  
of Applied Sciences  
↓ Workshop at Hochschule für  
Gestaltung Offenbach





Frankfurt am Main was the venue for the Auschwitz Trials, the largest Nazi criminal trials of the post-war period in Germany, which lasted from 1963 to 1968. Eighteen years after the end of the Second World War, these trials led to a long overdue legal reappraisal of the Holocaust in Germany.

It was here too in 1969 on Hessischer Rundfunk radio that Theodor W. Adorno had his last discussion with the educational researcher Hellmut Becker on the topic of “Educating towards autonomy”. Other institutions located in Frankfurt include the Leibnitz Peace Research Institute Frankfurt founded in 1970, the Institute for Social Ecological Research, and the research cluster Normative Orders at Goethe University Frankfurt.

View into the hearing room of the  
Auschwitz Trials in Frankfurt, 1963







Museum Angewandte Kunst



Deutsches Architekturmuseum (DAM)

- ↑ Museum Angewandte Kunst at the Museumsufer in Frankfurt (since 1985)
- ↓ Deutsches Architekturmuseum (DAM) in Frankfurt (since 1984)

## Culture for everyone

Frankfurt developed a major plan for a museum embankment in the 1980s. The city's head of the Department of Culture, Hilmar Hoffmann, who was responsible for implementing this scheme, which was based on the initiative of the Frankfurter Forum für Stadtentwicklung, called it "Culture for everyone". The idea was to establish a unique concentration of 19 very different museums and exhibition spaces along the river Main embankment, which was later dubbed the Museumsufer. Two of the museums, the Deutsches Architekturmuseum (DAM) and the Museum Angewandte Kunst specifically focus on design. On account of their changing and thematic exhibitions they are among the most internationally respected and distinguished museums of their kind. The DAM concentrates on architecture and building culture, and is involved, among other things, in the International Highrise Award, the EU Prize for Contemporary Architecture and the European Prize for Urban Public Space. The Museum Angewandte Kunst offers an opportunity to explore the past, present and future of design. It is a place where the visitor can experience design at first hand and appreciate that the term design encompasses far more than just the objects they see in front of them.

In the same decade, more precisely in 1989, the Deutscher Designer Club (DDC) was founded in Frankfurt with the aim of promoting good design and an interdisciplinary exchange of ideas, as well as establishing a network of people involved in creating or commissioning design work.

# From the Paulskirche to the House of Democracy

This year, 2023, marks the 125th anniversary of the first ever gathering of the National Assembly at Frankfurt's Paulskirche. This is where the House of Democracy will be built: a place for everyone. It will offer a tactile and hands-on experience in a space where visitors can test democracy for themselves and experience it in action. The aim is to counter the increasing dissatisfaction – and perhaps even a sense of alienation – that some citizens feel about democracy through a combination of analogue and digital methods. The inviting ambience and various formats for getting together and trying things out will allow visitors to experience democracy in its many facets.

**We are building on a centuries-old tradition of democratic processes that have, through design and applied sciences, already achieved profound transformation and social change in Frankfurt RhineMain. Our World Design Capital 2026 will create a suitable platform for all this to take place.**



The Paulskirche (St. Paul's Church) in Frankfurt, 2022

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The essence of design is to question the status quo, visualise the future and to change things. It can help solve many of the issues facing society, for instance through the design of recyclable products and resource-saving solutions. This sustainable approach to product design is exactly what Dieter Rams was talking about when, with more than 60 years' experience of design and of life to look back on, he called for:

**“Less and less of the kind of products whose production and use squander resources and are a burden on the environment. Less and less of the kind of products that stimulate the desire to buy, but are barely used, quickly set aside, thrown away and then replaced with new ones. Less and less of the kind of products that are nothing more than fashion and become obsolete as soon as that fashion has passed. Less and less of the kind of products that break quickly, wear out and age prematurely. In their place we need more and more products that really are – and do – what the buyer and user should expect from them: the facilitation, enhancement and strengthening of our lives.”**

But the term design, as we understand it in the context of *Design for Democracy*, goes far beyond this. We are not just talking about formal design as practised in the material world, but the kind of design that influences everyone's lives and affects how we co-exist. In social terms, design has the power to bind people together or to alienate them. The latter can happen for instance where it serves the interests of globally active companies, or autocratic systems and their leaders, or is used to advocate an ideology that insists, come what may, on a no alternative, no criticism line of attack. And design fails us too when it neglects to address the pressing issue of how our world should be shaped in the future so that it can be sustained and thus allow humanity to survive. Design will only help foster social cohesion if we are fully conscious of the vital role it plays – socially, ecologically, economically and politically – in shaping our globally connected world. Faced with how to manage crises and the ensuing transformations we are exposed to, both as individuals and as societies as a whole, we need to extend the remit and function of designers – in other words, we need to adopt a broader definition of the word design.

It is no longer solely changes to the natural world, but also changes in society that have become the driving – and hugely transformative – forces on this planet. For this reason, we need design to be based on ethical and moral values and committed to the common good, design that offers us a humane and politically effective way forward. This should then be the kind of design that not only addresses itself to things we sense more immediately, for instance material objects, but to things that are indirectly tangible too, like the design of social systems and processes. It should be the sort of design that relies on an exchange of ideas and on careful deliberation, and is defining rather than defined by others. Designers need to question conditions, systems and things that have already been designed, and then come up with potential answers, derived from today's dynamically changing world. These designers should use their expertise to help society overcome problems and crises in a sustainable way. They should show us that design can not only be thought-provoking, but it can surprise us too and mobilise civil society, thereby helping to underpin liberal democracy.

# Design and responsibility

Democracy cannot be taken for granted. It thrives on inclusion, and on everyone taking an active part in it. It is only where there is an opportunity for every single person to shape democracy, that we can start to tackle things together and do things differently. We want to embolden people, and particularly the designers among us, to get actively involved and to take on responsibility. With responsibility, a certain term comes into play which, from the point of view of etymology, finds its derivation in German from the translation of the Hebrew תוֹרָחָה (tochachat) and the Greek ἀπολογία (apologia), both of which stand for justification or defence. No matter whether we approach the notion of responsibility from the point of view of the social sciences, culture, politics, or the financial or legal system, the word responsibility implies that as a person, one can be held accountable for one's decisions, actions and omissions. This means that responsibility is inherently dialogical, and it presupposes a relationship with the world around. According to the philosopher Johannes Schwartländer: "Responsibility means combining what one actually does with a sense of responsibility for the world, that is to say, this concrete union effectively symbolises how we actually go about putting responsibility into practice." And when we talk about responsibility, other associations come to mind too. We speak of a lack of responsibility, and of joint responsibility. We also speak of those who carry responsibility not only understanding the obligation this brings, but also of

fulfilling it and being able to judge the consequences. This requires experience and competence. At the same time, responsibility opens up a broader conceptual field, where notions such as conscience, morals, ethics, welfare, duty, liability and motivation begin to crop up. But if responsibility is to operate without the need for legislation or regulations, or as dictated by potentates and religions, people first need to develop a sense of what being responsible entails, and this is only possible if individuals act autonomously. Only then – when an individual is weighing up how they themselves should behave, or engage with others or with society – can responsibility even begin to emerge. Man-made global warming and the rapid loss of animal and plant species are both felt and acknowledged by each and every one of us, through what we have personally experienced. Wherever one looks, they stare you in the face, mirrored in the state of trees in our parks, streets and recreational areas, in the virtual absence of insects glued to the windscreen after a long car journey in spring, and in the lack of water filling up garden wells so, come the summer, there's not enough for watering the garden. The list could go on and on, but just these few examples should be sufficient to demonstrate that now is the moment to start doing things differently, because otherwise, we're simply going to run out of time.

# Foraging new ways of coexisting

This is where design comes in. Design is, and we should be mindful of this too, part of those industrial systems and social structures which, to some extent, are to blame for these current problems. One of the many tasks that designers could address here would be to start to intervene, identify mistakes, and correct them. Everything can be designed differently – and often improved – by adopting a new approach or setting different goals. This is where responsibility comes in. As designers we cannot just lean back and carry on as before, applying our designer skills to the design of the next toaster, or to the next PR campaign for a mineral oil company. Being responsible means helping society solve problems in a sustainable way, on all levels, in all areas of life, and wherever we co-exist. And this is the point at which designers, with their particular expertise, need to be brought in right from the start wherever controversial debates and decisions on present and future agendas are concerned, be they of a political, corporate, or scientific nature. It is imperative that we all collaborate in such debates. Together we need to demonstrate that we have both the courage and the agency needed to (co)design a liveable future for everyone.

If we want to live better  
in the future, first  
we need to visualise  
what that future  
should look like.

Somehow things just *have* to get better. Yes, they do! And all the more so, given the problems that confront us today. But it is crucial to have a goal in sight, something to work towards. We need to begin to use our design tools to create visions and utopias, and focus on all those areas where we interact most. It is only with a positive image of what the future might look like that we can set about approaching it with confidence and energy.



Working towards a programme for 2026

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Let's create new ways of coexisting.

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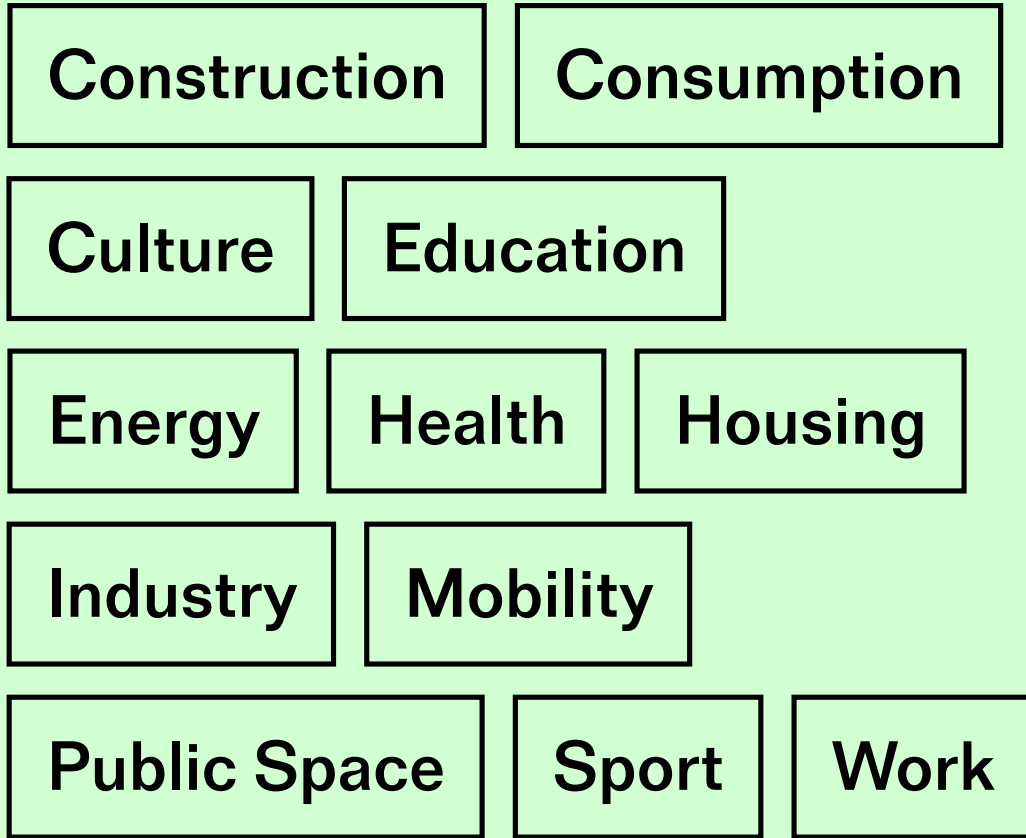
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# A platform for everyone



Ahead of the World Design Capital 2026 in Frankfurt RhineMain we have planned a programme that draws on the immense diversity and potential of the region's dynamic and collaborative creative sector.

With *Design for Democracy. Atmospheres for a better life* we are creating a participatory and dynamic platform for all designers – as we define them in our expanded concept of the term design. The platform sets in motion a collaborative and co-creative process and makes it possible to discuss, test, develop and implement projects and design ideas, at both large and small scale. Moreover, right from the very start, we are aiming to make all this visible to a broad swathe of the public – both locally and internationally. The projects we have selected for 2026 and the topics we are exploring will thus have a future impact not only in the Frankfurt RhineMain region, but throughout the world too, and so help to forge links in the international design community.



## Turning challenges into fields of action

The transformations that we, as individuals, and as societies, have had to face as a result of the many crises are both all-encompassing, and interwoven in a highly complex manner. But instead of retreating and taking cover, we take the view that such change also opens up new opportunities whereby designers are charged with new tasks and thrusts into new roles. We want to face these challenges square on, and we see design as a tool that helps promote peaceful social cohesion. These challenges have led us to identify twelve fields of action in which we want to start jointly shaping a democratic coexistence, not just in Frankfurt RhineMain, but beyond too. We have defined these fields from the standpoint of *Design for Democracy* and we consider them to be the most urgent topics that need tackling if we want to increase social cohesion. During the upcoming preparation and implementation period leading up to the WDC year 2026 we will be delving into the following topics to help us determine and structure the objectives of our programme for 2026: Construction, Consumption, Culture, Education, Energy, Health, Housing, Industry, Mobility, Public Space, Sport, and Work.

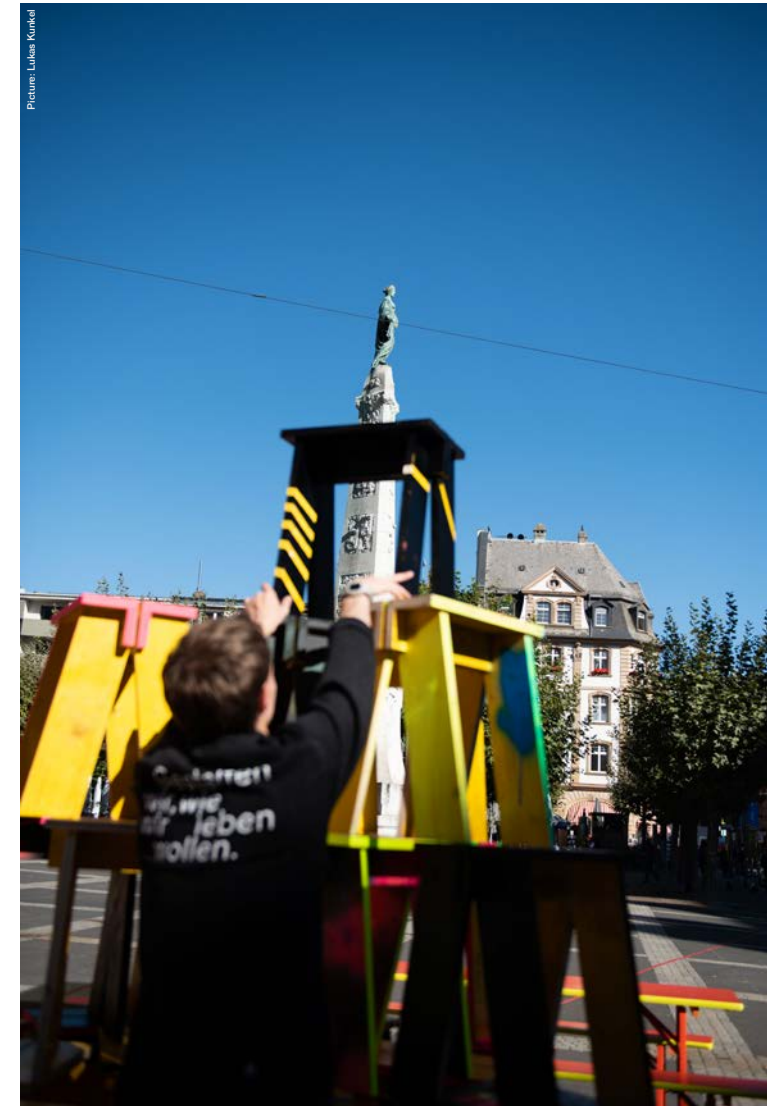
## The movement is already underway.

*Design for Democracy. Atmospheres for a better life*, is not only the title of this application, but also that of a movement we launched at the beginning of 2022. It is dedicated to investigating the most pressing questions of our time. Following energetic discussions and having generated many ideas, we are now planning both tangible projects and looking at far-reaching concepts for the year 2026 and beyond. Within this framework, we are calling upon both designers and citizens of the Frankfurt RhineMain region to come up with ideas and projects for the World Design Capital 2026, to try them out and, ultimately, to put them into practice.

In the course of this inclusive and participatory creative process, we have simultaneously focussed on all three aspects of sustainability: ecology, economy, and social issues. In order to break down these universal global goals into a low-threshold and comprehensible scale, and to simplify their implementation in the short-term at local and regional level, we have adopted both the orientation and objectives of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

We welcome contributions towards planning the programme for the World Design Capital 2026 not only from the design community and related disciplines, but from the general public too. After all, it is towards the public that the programme is directed, and it is they who are co-designing it. We, as platform providers and enablers, are committed to ensuring that these ideas and proposals are given prominent exposure and gain more traction. Our society needs to

be able to face future crises more robustly and adaptably, so we need to become more resilient. Moreover, we need to return to a state where we interact more harmoniously – with each other, with the environment, and with the things in it. We need to create and experience this kind of resonance once again. It is up to us to decide what we really need in the future, and what we can do without. Ultimately, we have to become more sufficient.



Picture: Lukas Kunkel



Picture: Ben Kuhlmann

## A year spent touring, testing, and developing the programme

We have spent the year between March 2022 – when the movement first got off the ground – and March 2023 to find, and to encourage, various cooperating partners and participatory formats, including stakeholders, initiatives and supporters, as well as other (co-)designers to contribute actively to planning the future programme. During this period, we narrowed down the remit of our theme *Design for Democracy. Atmospheres for a better life* and defined more precisely the twelve fields that will allow us to test them out on the ground in real life, ahead of our application to World Design Capital 2026.

One of the more spectacular things we undertook over the past months was the WDC Tour 2022, which we initiated and implemented. We toured the Frankfurt RhineMain region from 8 September to 23 October 2022 with our red workshop van and stopped at over 20 locations. On site, our young designer crew offered poster workshops for invited school classes as well as open, hands-on offers for the local community. In addition, various stakeholders and initiatives at the individual tour locations participated with their own activity programmes related to the topics design and democracy. All in all, we were able to motivate more than 1,000 schoolchildren to think about the design of our region, and we brought a similar number of members of the public into the circle of supporters of *Design for Democracy*. The associated PR work also stimulated interest and attention, with wide-ranging press coverage for the World Design Capital format. (The tour was planned and implemented with the Stiftung Deutsches Design Museum and the University of Vechta, Department of Design Education.)

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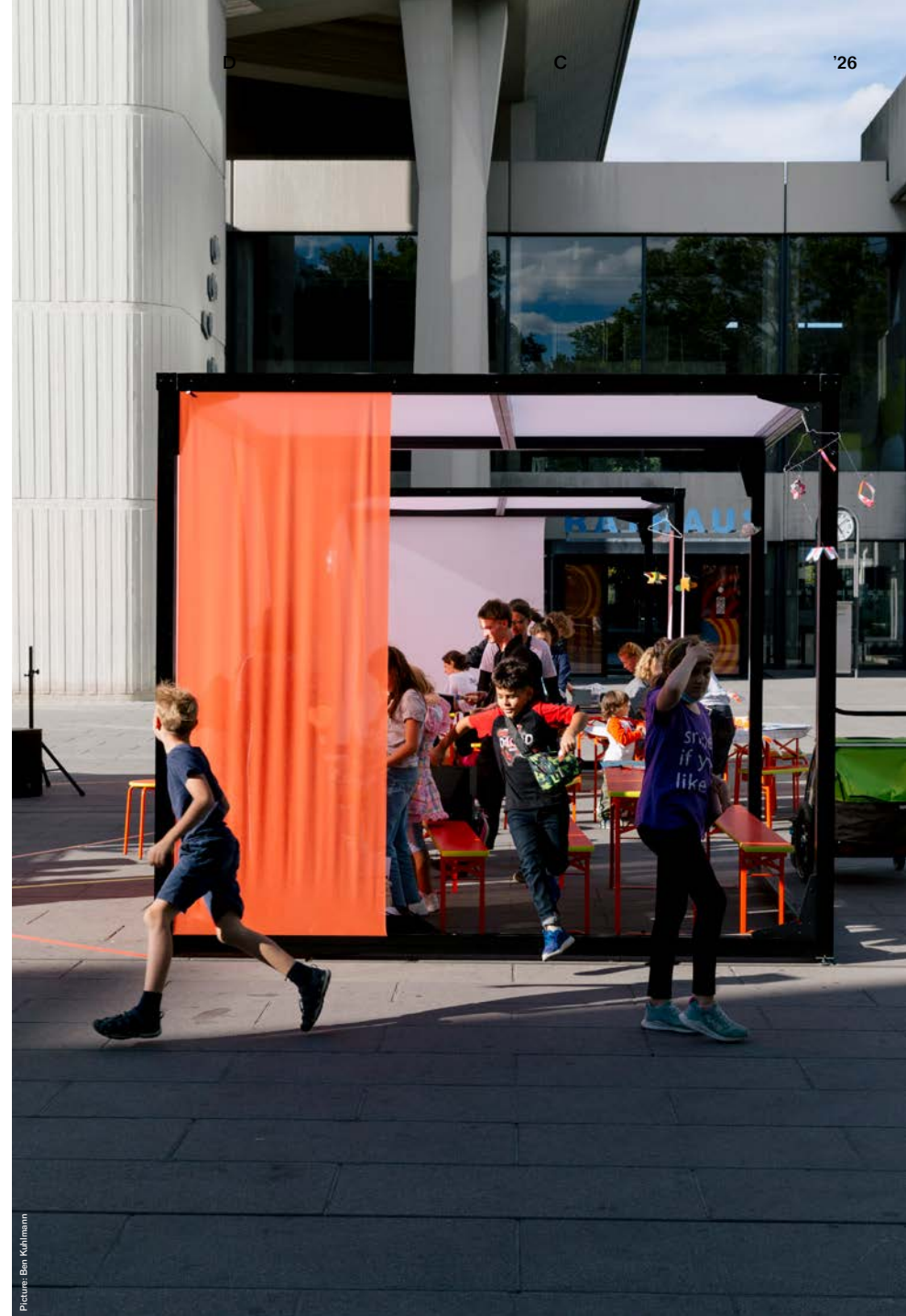
Picture: Ben Kuhlmann

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← ↗ WDC Tour 2022 opening at the Stadthof in Offenbach



Picture: Ben Kuhlmann



↑→ WDC Tour 2022 opening at the Stadthof in Offenbach

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Deutscher Designer Club (DDC)



Deutscher Designer Club (DDC)

- ↑ DDC Convention for Democratic Design 2022 at Atelier Lihotzky in Frankfurt-Ostend
- ↓ DDC Was ist gut 2021 competition at Tatcraft in Frankfurt-Seckbach

Moreover, we supported various conferences, such as the DDC Convention for Democratic Design 2022 in Frankfurt (25.-26.03.2022), the see Conference 15 in Wiesbaden (09.04.-10.04.2022) and the Im Zeichen der Demokratie (With Democracy in Mind) events organised by Hessen Design. We held workshops in cooperation with solon gGmbH, Ideas Are Small Futures (in Frankfurt in May 2022) and Urban Future Labs (in Frankfurt in October 2022 and March 2023, and in Wiesbaden in January 2023), as well as supporting the diverse activities of the Werkbundakademie Darmstadt, at whose initiative we decided to apply for World Design Capital 2026. And last but not least, we encouraged more people to get involved, via numerous key-note talks and discussion forums with representatives from sectors such as politics, business and the creative industry.

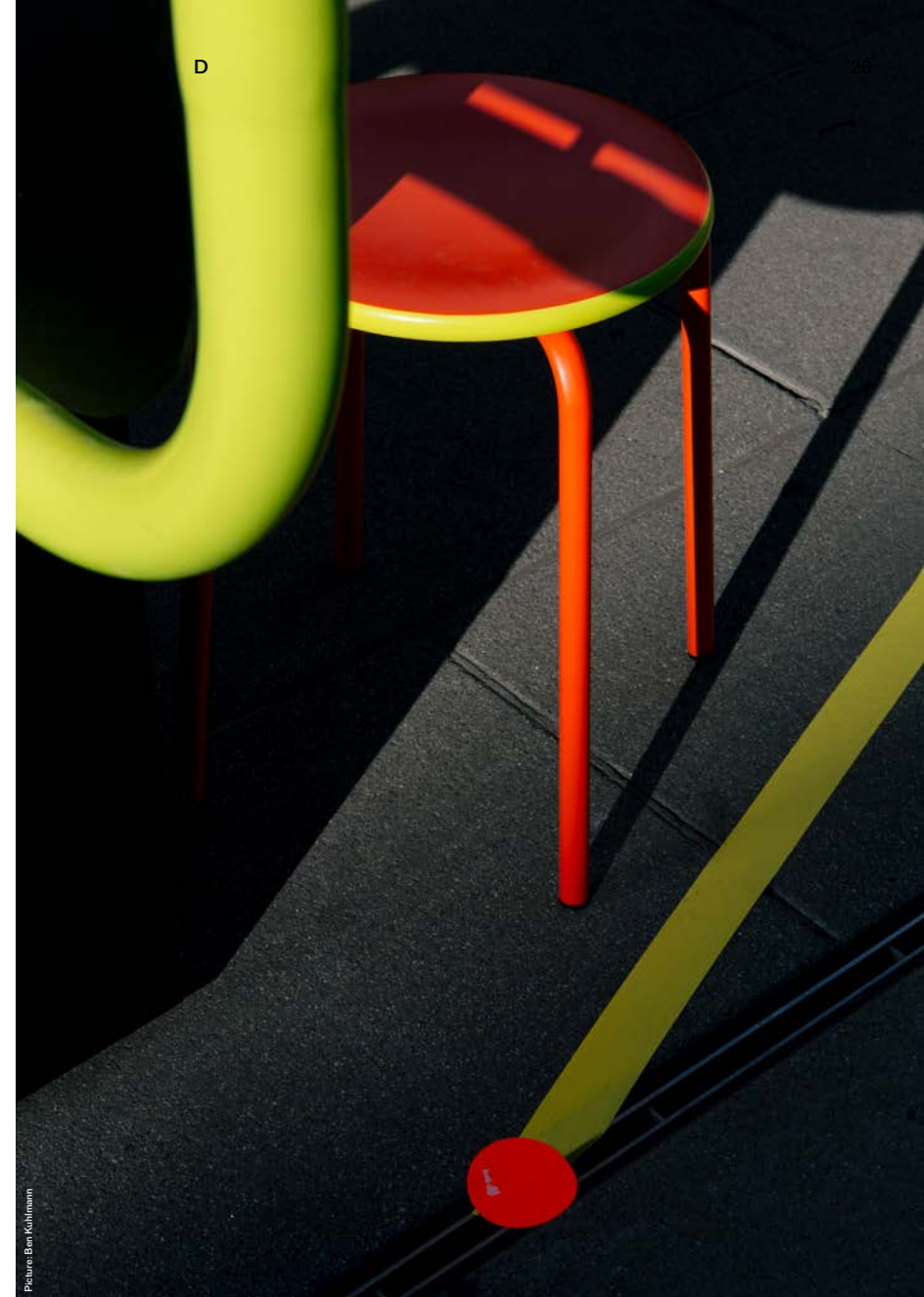
At the end of our participatory process, we asked people to submit their design ideas in an Open Call. By January 2023, we had received more than 60 specific design ideas. A selection of these ideas now feeds into project initiatives that have developed from previous events and discussions, and it provides an initial framework for the programme blueprint presented here. The enriching and diverse experiences that have resulted from this one-year test phase have strengthened and motivated us to continue thinking about and pursuing the path we have taken so far, with strong backing from the entire region. This has already resulted in a widespread, regional network, a new community on which the application can build. It counters the wait-and-see and carry-on-as-usual attitude, with a more constructive “Let’s get together and do things differently!” line of attack.



## An overview of the programme for 2026

In the following section, we want to elucidate the selection of projects that have been generated and curated over the past year, and the events we are planning for 2026. Many ideas and proposals are currently still in the early stages of a process – we’ve dubbed them our uncut diamonds. Some design ideas have already been fleshed out in advance and are already so convincing that we can move straight away to further develop and implement them. Some projects are, so far, just a great idea, but now, having been selected for *Design for Democracy*, there’s every reason for their teams to proceed with more advanced planning. In addition, there are projects that have emerged from the *Design for Democracy* movement itself and these will be further developed by newly initiated teams, and jointly implemented by 2026.

Taking the twelve fields of action we have defined, and networking with various regional stakeholders, institutions and initiatives, our next step will be to set up interdisciplinary teams to take care of the actual planning and implementation of the projects in one (or more) field(s). It is possible that additions or cuts to projects in the coming months may cause slight shifts to occur within a particular field, and this cannot be ruled out, given a lead time of three years and our overwhelming desire to involve the public in the development of the programme.



Picture: Ben Kuhlmann

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| <b>Design Kiosks,<br/>Frankfurt RhineMain</b>                                | R | M |
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| <b>A Step Ahead –<br/>Mathildenhöhe, Darmstadt</b>                           | R |   |
|  |   | M |
| <b>New Campus Hochschule<br/>für Gestaltung (HfG),<br/>Offenbach am Main</b> |   | M |
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| <b>Städtische Bühnen,<br/>Frankfurt am Main</b>                              | R |   |
|  | R |   |
| <b>House of Democracy,<br/>Frankfurt am Main</b>                             |   | M |
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| <b>Life Science Hub – biomindz,<br/>Mainz</b>                                | R | M |
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| <b>Cable Car High*Line,<br/>Offenbach–Frankfurt</b>                          |   | M |
|  |   |   |
| <b>Station Mitte,<br/>Offenbach am Main</b>                                  | R |   |
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| <b>Kulturcampus,<br/>Wiesbaden</b>   |   | M |
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| <b>Kulturcampus,<br/>Frankfurt am Main</b>                                   |   |   |

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# Our ten highlight projects

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Looking at the twelve fields of action, which we have defined from a cross-sectional and integrated perspective, we have identified ten outstanding and interdisciplinary highlight projects for our programme in 2026. On one hand, these projects already enjoy a special significance locally or regionally, and on the other, in the run-up to the World Design Capital year 2026 and beyond, they can act as flagships for the programme, both nationally and internationally. These projects have come about following extensive discussions, submissions and preparations by stakeholders in the Frankfurt RhineMain region over the past few years.

# Design Kiosks, Frankfurt RhineMain

Construction

Consumption

Culture

Education

Health

Public Space

Work

The local neighbourhood kiosk plays a remarkable role in Germany and especially in the Frankfurt RhineMain region, as an open and low-threshold place where locals get together and socialise. One particular type of kiosk, the Frankfurt Wasserhäuschen (water cottage) or Trinkhalle (drinking hall) has been part of the cityscape since the second half of the 19th century. It was originally intended as somewhere the working class could buy hygienic mineral water at low cost. Since then, the kiosk has gone through various transformations and the range of products on offer has expanded considerably. In the meantime, kiosks have developed into places for casual encounters and as a meeting place for locals, and now and then they even attract a regional audience as well as tourists. But many of these places have become so down-at-heel they are just a shadow of their former selves. Now all they need is a kiss of life to be returned to their former purpose - and offered a new one. As part of the open call, two outstanding design concepts for the conversion and redesign of kiosks were submitted, which are now to be consolidated and developed further in a participatory manner as Design Kiosks Frankfurt RhineMain.

GUDES Wasserhäuschen  
in Frankfurt-Nordend





FEIN Wasserhäuschen in  
Frankfurt's Wallanlagen  
(ramparts)

## Design Kiosk

This involves an intervention in a kiosk space currently regarded as neglected, which is centrally located and easily accessible. It has potential for providing educational opportunities in the field of product design, and recreational activities organised by the neighbourhood community. The idea is to bring people together who would otherwise not meet and swap ideas.

Concept: Artist collective iwaipidindei\_\_x\_\_fiyyasc

Open Call Submission

## Democracy Kiosk

A variety of meeting places that facilitate interaction in the public sphere and make it possible for people to experience democracy in action in their neighbourhood. It is a project that can be implemented in stages, starting from spring 2023, for example in the form of an international competition held in conjunction with Frankfurt's partner cities.

Concept: Deutscher Designer Club – DDC

Open Call Submission

# A Step Ahead – Mathildenhöhe, Darmstadt

Construction

Consumption

Culture

Education

Housing

Industry

Mobility

Public Space

Work

Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt – one of the 51 UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Germany – celebrates its 125th anniversary in 2026. The Art Nouveau reform movement, which originated on the Mathildenhöhe, set new standards in the fields of art, architecture, design, fashion, furniture and home decor. Here there was no separation between art, design and architecture. Visual art mixed with arts and crafts, typographies were developed, foundations for corporate design were laid, and architecture served people. The Institute Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt manages three cultural institutions on the UNESCO World Heritage Site Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt: the prominent Exhibition Hall including the Wedding Tower (1908), the Artists' Colony Museum (1901), and the Darmstadt Municipal Art Collection with works from the 18th Century up to the present. With a permanent exhibition of pioneering works by the Darmstadt Artists' Colony (1899 to 1914) and several special exhibitions per year, the Institute Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt promotes the research and presentation of art, design, and architecture from the 19th and 20th Century till today.

Mathildenhöhe's submission to the Open Call is already particularly interdisciplinary in its approach and forward-looking in its orientation, so that it represents perfectly the vision of *Design for Democracy*.


**unesco**

 Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt  
 Welterbe seit 2021

Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt, UNESCO  
 World Heritage Site since 2021





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## A Step Ahead – Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt at 125

In 2026, the Institute Mathildenhöhe will stage a large-scale exhibition to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the groundbreaking first exhibition of the Darmstadt Artists' Colony on the Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt in the year 1901. The anniversary exhibition will take place in the historic Exhibition Hall of the Mathildenhöhe and highlight the Darmstadt Artists' Colony's pioneering achievements in the presentation of modern design. Never before had progressive contemporary design been showcased as an integral part of modern permanent buildings, built by designers and artists for themselves and presented to the public in four major exhibitions from 1901 to 1914. This forward-looking concept of presenting complete designensembles as spatial art in a functional setting, hand-in-hand with specialised manufacturers, inspired numerous design and architecture exhibitions worldwide. On the Mathildenhöhe, there was no division between art, design, and architecture. All aesthetic and practical aspects of everyday life were interlocked. It is no coincidence that the influential designer and architect Peter Behrens built his very first building as part of the 1901 exhibition and, seven years later, trained two architects who later became directors of the Bauhaus: Walter Gropius and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. The uniqueness and worldwide impact of the 1901 exhibition led to Darmstadt being inscribed onto the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2021.

The exhibition A Step Ahead – Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt at 125 will focus on a specific quality of the historic exhibitions on the Mathildenhöhe: the ability to look ahead and create solutions for future challenges. A Step Ahead will, again, after 125 years, bring together artists, designers and manufacturers to envision how we would like to live in the future and how the objects and environments that surround us can be presented in an exhibition space. New 4D materials, fabrics



- ↑ Joseph Maria Olbrich's studio at the Ernst Ludwig House, the central building of the 1901 exhibition
- ↓ Behrens House, the first building by Peter Behrens, built for the 1901 exhibition

that change their shape over time, will be featured in products that will offer new automatic customisation processes. After decades of design objects that feature endless variations that can be customised to our needs in complex steps, in the future, most likely, objects of daily use, living quarters, and exhibition spaces will automatically and organically adapt to the individual person.

The goal of the exhibition is not to be equal to, or surpass, the historic exhibitions, but rather to convey how an investigation into the overall design of our way of life can lead to a new vision of a better tomorrow. Also, the exhibition hopes to inspire people to stay A Step Ahead of their current challenges in life and imagine a brighter, healthier and more just future.

The exhibition has the potential to be a focal point of the 2026 World Design Capital Frankfurt RhineMain, because it will draw on the many local and international design firms and manufacturers that work in the region. Just as the Darmstadt Artists' Colony had close ties to many cities and manufacturers in the region, like Frankfurt, Offenbach, and Wiesbaden, A Step Ahead will bring together designers in tune with the strong character of Hesse and part of the global creative network.

The exhibition seeks not just to present spatial design and art, but also to interact with the diverse range of visitors to the Mathildenhöhe, people from around the world, of all ages and various social backgrounds. Special events on the Mathildenhöhe and outreach activities throughout the region will be organized by the Institute Mathildenhöhe to further deepen the goals of the exhibition.

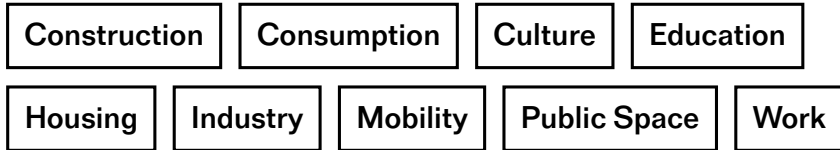
Concept: Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt

Open Call Submission

Opening of the Artists' Colony in 1901,  
in front of the Ernst Ludwig House



# New Campus Hochschule für Gestaltung (HfG), Offenbach am Main



The renowned design school Hochschule für Gestaltung (HfG) Offenbach is planning to build its new campus in Offenbach's harbour district. As a place for new artistic and design ideas, and addressing issues concerning future generations, the new building project is intended, above all, to exemplify an art academy of the 21st century. Within a process-oriented, robust architecture with a workshop atmosphere, room sizes and proportions will be arranged in such a way as to allow for a variety of uses, and especially multiple uses. Easily adaptable spaces, inside and out, will form the basis for a complex that can be used in a number of ways. A small city will be built around a green campus. It was this concept for the new building of the HfG at Offenbach harbour at the beginning of 2023 that the Brussels-based architectural firm Xaveer de Geyter Architects won the competition, together with Topotek 1 Architektur (Zurich) and Topotek 1 Gesellschaft von Landschaftsarchitekten (Berlin). The architects will address and integrate further concepts, such as a new type of student housing and a canteen, on the lines of the student initiative Mensa von Morgen (Canteen of Tomorrow), in the coming years. Construction is scheduled to start in 2026.



Visualisation for the new campus for the Hochschule für Gestaltung (HfG) Offenbach, 2023



# Städtische Bühnen, Frankfurt am Main

Construction

Consumption

Culture

Education

Energy

Public Space

Work



Picture: Alexander Paul England

↑ The Jewish Museum in Frankfurt  
→ Kammerspiele at the Schauspiel  
(theatre) Frankfurt



Picture: Empella Conzelmann

Following the establishment of the Museumsufer (Museum Embankment), with the motto “Culture for everyone”, the next city-defining development and link-up of various cultural institutions is now on the agenda in Frankfurt, formerly called Kulturmeile. Among the institutions involved are the Städtische Bühnen (theatre and opera), Jewish Museum and Tower MMK; various urban squares, and green spaces, such as the historic Wallanlagen (ramparts). In February 2023, further studies on the future of the Städtische Bühnen in Frankfurt requested by the city councillors were presented. Three options were examined in depth with regard to the environment, climate and sustainability, with detailed expert assessments of their ecological, economic, and socio-cultural impact as well as functionality and technical issues. The decision regarding the location of the new theatre and opera house is still pending, and it will then also entail the further development of a Kulturmeile or a different kind of cultural link.

# House of Democracy, Frankfurt am Main

Construction

Consumption

Culture

Education

Public Space

In 2019, the city of Frankfurt began the process of transforming the Paulskirche (St. Paul's Church) into a lively place of democracy. Alongside its refurbishment, the Paulskirche is to be supplemented with a House of Democracy for this purpose. Following the ensuing decision by the German Bundestag to provide financial support to refurbish the Paulskirche, the city of Frankfurt, the state of Hesse and the federal government are working together to advance the House of Democracy as a national place of remembrance, commemoration and learning. Since then, a commission of national and international experts has been advising on potential subject matter and museum didactics.

Visualisation for a House of  
Democracy in Frankfurt, 2020





Picture: Meritz Bernoulli



Stiftung Polytechnische Gesellschaft, Picture: Dominik Buschardt

↑↓ Inside Frankfurt's Paulskirche, 2019

In parallel to the work being undertaken by the parties involved and the commission of experts, the city of Frankfurt commissioned the Leibniz Institute Hessian Foundation for Peace and Conflict Research (HSFK) to prepare the concept study Democracy Centre Paulskirche House of Democracy, which was presented in September 2021. It is proposing extensive and substantive public consultation as the starting point for the process of redesigning a House of Democracy. “A lively and international House of Democracy is to be placed alongside Frankfurt’s Paulskirche and it will also bring it to life in terms of content. [...] The concept pursues the goal of bringing democracy to life in history, in the present and for the future.” In conclusion it states: “The fact that democracy stands for itself, and cannot be delegated indefinitely but is essentially based on the actions of citizens, is something that needs to be experienced anew. In order to achieve this, a House of Democracy must not only present democracy as a place of remembrance and commemoration, but also link the past, present and future of democracy and make it possible for people to experience it with all their senses. This means that the Paulskirche as a place of democracy must not only be a place of remembrance of the beginnings of democracy in Germany, but at the same time become a space in which people can experience things at first hand and experiment.”

Due to the pandemic, the proposed extensive public consultation did not start until the autumn and winter of 2022/2023. Appropriately, the kick-off took place at the same time as our *Design for Democracy* tour was visiting Paulsplatz (St. Paul’s Square) in October 2022. The results of the first workshops and dialogues will be incorporated into the recommendations of the expert commission, which will be announced in spring 2023. This will form the basis of the subsequent planning process, which will include an international architectural competition in the near future.

# Life Science Hub – biomindz, Mainz

Construction

Consumption

Culture

Education

Energy

Health

Industry

Mobility

Public Space

Work

The ambition of the city of Mainz to plan and build the Life Science Hub biomindz in the west of the city are supported, among others, by Mainz University of Applied Sciences, which submitted an ongoing project to the Open Call. How exactly these two projects are going to interact and support each other, and which other stakeholders and initiatives will be brought in, will be determined in the coming months between now and 2026.

The site for the Life Science Hub  
biomindz in Mainz





## Go West

A new educational campus for the university is to be established in the west of the city of Mainz. In terms of space and content, this will be linked to the future location of the biotechnical company Biontech and the Velodukt idea that was also submitted.

Concept: Hochschule Mainz, in cooperation with Hochschule Geisenheim

Open Call Submission

↑ Campus Hochschule Mainz  
University of Applied Sciences  
↓ LUX Pavilion Hochschule  
Mainz in the city-centre

# Cable Car High\*Line, Offenbach–Frankfurt

Construction

Energy

Industry

Mobility

Public Space

Work

At the department of Integrative Design of HfG Offenbach, an idea arose to construct a cable car between Offenbach-Kaiserlei and Frankfurt-Bornheim, to supplement the existing public transport network. The High\*Line project, supervised by Peter Eckart and Daniel Rese, in cooperation with Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences, was also explored as part of the interdisciplinary research project-mo.de, which was dedicated to concepts for planning and designing future-oriented mobility spaces, infrastructure, processes and products. Further implementation phases, in cooperation with the regional public transport company (RMV – Rhein-Main-Verkehrverbund) are already on the horizon.

Visualisation for the  
Cable Car High\*Line



HfG Offenbach, Offenbach Institute of Mobility Design, Yuan Wu



Offenbach's city centre

# Station Mitte, Offenbach am Main

Construction

Consumption

Culture

Education

Health

Mobility

Public Space

Work

As part of the Future Concept for the City Centre (Zukunftskonzept Innenstadt), the Station Mitte (Central Station) was proposed as a key project to help boost Offenbach's city centre. The project envisages creating a new public library in the centre of the shopping mile as a third place for everyone. Station Mitte is intended as a public space dedicated to education and to social interaction centred around books, digital media, and culture. People should also be able to eat together there too, while away the day there, play games and listen to lectures or concerts. Furthermore, associations or educational institutions and initiatives would be free to use the space for different activities and events.

In the subsequent feasibility study by bb22 architekten+stadtplaner, the first phase identified various locations and developed utilisation concepts. In the second stage, the previous space concepts were converted into actual floor plans, while structural, fire protection and static feasibility was examined in detail in order to define the structural measures required in each case, and to be able to back these up with costs. A political decision for one of the three proposed locations is still pending, but has been forecast for 2023.

# Kulturcampus, Wiesbaden

Construction

Consumption

Culture

Education

Health

Public Space

Sport

Work

In Wiesbaden, a forward-looking Kulturcampus (cultural campus) is being considered that builds on the existing cultural institutions near the main railway station. This concept was submitted to the Open Call.

## Kulturcampus Wiesbaden

The intention is to create a participatory and collaborative expansion of the existing Kulturpark (culture park), where Wiesbaden's Schlachthof Cultural Centre and the Kreativfabrik, among others, are located, close to Wiesbaden's main railway station. The launch is scheduled for spring 2023, with discussion workshops to follow in autumn 2023.

Concept: Schlachthof Wiesbaden, together with City of Wiesbaden and Hochschule RheinMain

Open Call Submission

↑ see conference at Schlachthof Wiesbaden  
↓ Wiesbaden's Schlachthof Cultural Centre





# Kulturcampus, Frankfurt am Main

Construction

Consumption

Culture

Education

Energy

Health

Housing

Mobility

Public Space

Sport

Work

Goethe University's Campus Bockenheim,  
looking at the Studierendenhaus (student's building)

Back in 1999, the city of Frankfurt and the state of Hesse took a major decision to move Goethe University from its Bockenheim Campus to campuses in the Westend and on the Riedberg hill. Since then, an extensive process has been taking place, involving many stakeholders, to develop the areas that are to become vacant. Under the title Kulturcampus (cultural campus), various cultural institutions, including the Frankfurt University of Music and Performing Arts (HfMDK), are destined to be housed on the site. While some of the planned residential and commercial areas are already finished, the cultural component of the scheme has yet to be realised. A competition for a new building for the HfMDK will be launched soon. How to use the existing buildings on site is subject to an ongoing discussion, for example regarding the so-called Studierendenhaus (students' building) and the Juridicum (faculty of law building).





Opening of Wohnzimmer Hauptwache, 2022

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# Uniting everyone through a Month of Design 2026

We are committed to introducing a Month of Design in the entire Frankfurt RhineMain region from 2026 onwards. This programme will be a cross-state event that could be implemented beyond the two supporting federal states of Hesse and Rhineland-Palatinate, evn in the neighbouring federal states of Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria. Our expanded concept of design can be used to stage different, locally inspired events and workshops both in cities and in rural areas. For 2026, we propose dedicating the month of June to implementing this, and we are planning to conclude the Month of Design with a week that focusses specifically on *Design for Democracy. Atmospheres for a better life*, held just before the summer holidays in 2026. At that time of the year, the cooperating educational institutions will have both the capacity and the potential to work with us to put the thematic week into practice.

While the ten highlight projects will be present throughout the year of World Design Capital 2026, the Month of Design with its thematic week in the middle of the year is an opportunity to draw attention in a profound and all-encompassing way, albeit on a temporary basis, to the various aspects of *Design for Democracy. Atmospheres for a better life*. It offers many municipalities, institutions, educational institutions, business enterprises and all its supporters an ideal platform for participating and making their own contribution. The lead time until 2026, will make it possible to stimulate, coordinate, and present a wealth of activities.

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Twelve fields  
of action

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From the standpoint of *Design for Democracy* we have defined twelve fields of action we consider to be the most urgent topics to tackle if we want to increase social cohesion. As initiators of this platform responsible for developing the programme for World Design Capital 2026, we will be concentrating on the following areas to determine and structure the programme:

**Construction, Consumption, Culture, Education, Energy, Health, Housing, Industry, Mobility, Public Space, Sport, and Work.**

**We regard the vibrant and diverse Frankfurt RhineMain region as offering an ideal testing ground, as it provides the right kind of space for planning and implementing not only experimental projects, but pilot projects and more tangible schemes too. We will then pass on what we have learnt from these experiments to the rest of the world so that they too can implement these projects for their own purposes and enlarge on them.**

W

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***Design for Democracy* has looked at each field of action from the standpoint of how it relates to the Frankfurt RhineMain region. Here we are outlining a selection of projects that have been curated and generated over the past year. Many of these ideas and suggestions are still work in progress. We like to think of them as uncut diamonds, just waiting to be polished.**

# Construction

## Construction turnaround now



Julius von Blomberg / Maras Dymchuk, Picture: Henning Rogge

Building work and its concomitant sealing of surfaces in the Frankfurt RhineMain region plays an enormous and hitherto underestimated role in the future of our coexistence, especially in view of the scarcity of raw materials, carbon dioxide consumption and biodiversity. In their petition *Bauwende Jetzt* (construction turnaround now), Architects for Future, made this plea: “The ecological footprint of buildings is higher than many people think: the construction and operation of buildings in Germany cause about 40% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, 52% of our waste products and it consumes 90% of mineral, non-renewable raw materials in the production of building materials. To remedy this, Germany must initiate a comprehensive construction turnaround.” They also call for a rethink of (construction) policy and the entire building industry, and, for example, demand that building products are dismantled and materials reused in a life-cycle-friendly way so that, once dismantled, they can be reemployed. Moreover, to protect existing buildings, there should be a law that only permits demolition if it is socially and climatically necessary.

# Conversion and transformation in place of demolition and re-build

This results in the challenge of whether to build or not to build, which many other local, regional and national initiatives support, such as the Chambers of Architects and associations like the BDA Association of German Architects. They too argue in favour of avoiding demolition and new construction work, but where it is deemed necessary, to only build in a life-cycle-friendly way, and to unseal surfaces rather than seal them. This implies taking a broader view of our existing built fabric. According to Rainer Nagel, chairman of the Federal Foundation for Built Culture, our existing building stock transcends its intrinsic value as “grey energy” and becomes “golden energy”. As he puts it: “Existing buildings not only consist of energy bound up in anthropogenic building materials, they also determine the identity and character of our built environment. Therein lies the essence of the new culture of transforming buildings, and one that gives architecture and engineering a (second) chance.” Similar care and attention should be given to protecting and appreciating other existing infrastructures (squares, roads, paths, etc.) and our natural resources (blue and green) in the city and countryside.



↑ ↓ Neustadt, Julius von Bismarck and Marta Dyachenko, 2021

## New building materials and methods



- ↑ Bodybuilding (Mies van der Rohe) at tinyBE #1, by Christian Jankowski, 2021
- ↓ imd\_plant transistor at the Palmengarten in Frankfurt, by HfG Offenbach, 2021



Construction also involves researching and developing new building materials and renewable materials, including those made from algae or fungi. This approach has already been employed, for example, in the stage scenery for Solastalgia at the Schauspiel Frankfurt, and at the temporary open-air exhibition tinyBE in the Metzler Park of the Museum Angewandte Kunst in Frankfurt and in other locations in Darmstadt and Wiesbaden. The potential for recycling or re-using waste products as well as demolition components and building materials is also being tested through developing new types of materials, objects and products. Experimental material research and pilot project test phases are taking place at various regional universities, for example at Prof. Markus Holzbach's Department of Visualisation and Materialisation at the HfG Offenbach. In addition, the highlight project entitled A Step Ahead, at the Mathildenhöhe in Darmstadt, is consolidating research results, demonstrating practice-related prototypes, and taking a new stance on this topic.



Construction

# Projects



↑ Let's get lost at Klassik Island,  
Kammerphilharmonie Frankfurt  
concert at Galeria Zeil, 2022  
↓ Galeria Zeil (former Karstadt)  
in Frankfurt



## Galeria Zeil, Frankfurt

The example of the upcoming closure of the former Karstadt department store, located in Frankfurt's pedestrian shopping street Zeil, can be used to demonstrate the transformation of a consumer-oriented department store into a work, education and cultural project.

with Sahle Wohnen, Signa and City of Frankfurt

## Juridicum (faculty of law building) and Studierendenhaus (students' building), Frankfurt

The two buildings on the former campus of the Goethe University in Frankfurt-Bockenheim, demonstrate how we can create a low-threshold place for everyone, a place of discourse and making.

This is one aspect of the Kulturcampus Frankfurt highlight project.

ABG, Offenes Haus der Kulturen, Saalbau  
and City of Frankfurt

- ← Juridicum (faculty of law building) in Frankfurt-Bockenheim
- RAW (former Deutsche Bahn headquarters) in Frankfurt



## RAW, Frankfurt

The former Deutsche Bahn headquarters (called RAW because of its brutalist background) is currently being converted into a new kind of campus. By opening up the ground floor for the first time, a variety of uses for the neighbourhood and urban society will be tested.

with Quest, Room meets Freiland and Stefan Diez



## Allianzhaus, Mainz

The Allianzhaus (built in 1963, Ludwig Goerz) is an example that can be used to test the cooperative development of a socio-cultural future.

with City of Mainz and local initiatives

- ← Dyckerhoff high-rise in Wiesbaden
- Allianzhaus in Mainz

## Former Dyckerhoff plant, Wiesbaden

The City of Wiesbaden is planning to revitalise the 2.7-hectare industrial site with several existing buildings, including some outstanding individual properties whose future has yet to be developed and decided, such as the high-rise building (by Ernst Neufert) and the hydroelectric power hall. In addition, a possible addition of a new building, such as the H2 Office Centre (by 3deluxe), is being considered.

with City of Wiesbaden and  
Architects for Future Wiesbaden / Mainz





DAM Ostend in Frankfurt

### Agentur des städtischen Wandels (Agency of Urban Change), Frankfurt

An agency to foster the network of initiatives and citizens is being developed in a former shop that sold parts for cars. It will be used to promote the human-centred transformation of the inner city.

with City of Frankfurt and local initiatives

### DAM Ostend becomes Open Space Forum, Frankfurt

The evolution and transformation from an architecture museum to a place for everyone, where ideas can be exchanged on the topics of architecture and the city, includes a gallery, event space, and meeting space.

with Deutsches Architekturmuseum (DAM)

### Rathaus-Pavillon (City Hall Pavilion), Offenbach

The transformation from a police station to a social-cultural place for everyone, an example of the future concept for the city centre.

with City of Offenbach, Agentur Mitte

## RE\_Frame

The life-cycle concept for furniture, RE\_Frame, was first implemented in 2022 for the architectural paint manufacturer DAW SE in Ober-Ramstadt. It has the potential to be extended to other locations in the region.

Concept: Point Architecture

Open Call Submission

## BAULAB

The laboratory and research project BAULAB asks the question: “How do we want to build and live in the future and how are we going to achieve it?” It started in 2022 in the Waldkolonie Darmstadt, which is a part of the Großer Frankfurter Bogen (state of Hesse project).

Concept: Prof. Anke Mensing,  
Hochschule Darmstadt

Open Call Submission

Interaction at the BAUMOBIL,  
a BAULAB project, at the  
Waldkolonie in Darmstadt, 2022



# Consumption

Less is more.

UND Offenbach in a former bank building, by HfG Offenbach, 2022



One of the guiding principles of *Design for Democracy* is: “What we definitely don’t need for a better life is yet more things.” Our new definition of design is predicated on the assumption that, instead of constantly coming up with new products, we now need to generate new processes in order to attain the various kinds of atmospheres we are aspiring to achieve. This change of direction – whereby designers taking on this huge responsibility approach their tasks with a new awareness – is particularly evident if one looks at consumerism. Given the current situation, like the upsurge in on-line shopping, the cheap-is-cool mentality, and the insatiable urge to constantly buy things, we urgently need to counter the consequent demise of our town centres and inner cities by creating spaces and places where all sorts of people can encounter each other.

## Starting to resonate with the world

Hartmut Rosa's view of the (late modern) world in his book "Unavailability" at first also appears negative, when he says we have reached a "point of aggression". "Everything that appears must be known, mastered, conquered, made usable." Moreover, our dynamically designed big cities and conurbations exert a special kind of gravitational pull, because that is where we appear to have all possibilities at our feet. This is where mantra of modern life is incessantly repeated: "Our lives will be better if we succeed in bringing (more of the) world within our grasp". But it is precisely this apparent "availability" of making something visible, graspable, controllable or usable that is doomed to failure because in return, everyone withdraws and the world becomes threatening. Instead, he sees the "basic mode of human existence" in the fact that we "resonate" with the world around us and the things in it, "making them respond with us and responding to them in return". But this "moment of a resonating relationship" cannot be controlled; it is precisely the fact that it is unpredictable, that makes the instant so special.



**Diamant Offenbach school project  
at the M. Schneider department  
store, by HfG Offenbach, 2023**



Picture: Gabriel Pöhlke

↑↓ SOUPS kitchen project at the Rathaus Pavilion in Offenbach, by YRD.Works, 2023

## Third places

This excursion into the world of sociology should make it clear that in remedying the current grievances – whether of an ecological, economic or social nature and largely caused by our mania for consumption and more and more – we are in the middle of a process that does not follow a clear path and whose end is not yet discernible. It is all the more essential therefore to take each step at a time and to be fully conscious of what we are doing at each individual experimental stage. Only then can we begin to find answers to the problems we are observing in our local centres and inner cities, namely the increasing number of vacant buildings and construction sites, the growing division of society into rich and poor, and growing discontent and aggression. It is precisely on account of this complexity that it is essential that we manage to create, in places which have so far been characterised by consumption, consumption-free areas in our centres: so-called third places, where everyone is welcome and where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.



Picture: Gabriel Pöhlke



Consumption

# Projects

Esprit House (former department store) in Frankfurt



## Former Esprit department store, Frankfurt

In a test trial, together with the owners, investors and project developers, we will test how the local department stores' "dinosaur" structures in the city centres can be further thought out and used for the citizens.

with City of Frankfurt

# Management of vacant spaces – Courage in the gap (Mut in der Lücke)

The experience already gained in pilot projects in Darmstadt and Homberg-Efze can help in the development of digital and analogue tools to fill vacant spaces in the cities and in the countryside with new content.

with the municipalities

Das blumen event location,  
re-use of a vacant flower store  
in Darmstadt



**Design department store (Designkaufhaus) with exhibition space**

A place to go for local and regional designers and design enthusiasts. The shelf rental finances the sales space.  
with Etagerie Offenbach, Tacheles Hanau, Lulu Mainz and Lab 106 Frankfurt

**Up-cycling workshops**

Special workshops focus on up-cycling and the reuse of products and materials.  
with Klimawerkstatt Offenbach

**Emission-free delivery services**

Mobility in city centres and town centres needs to be rethought, especially for customers with disabilities.  
with Kiezkaufhaus, EMILIE Wiesbaden, LieferradDA and ViaBike Frankfurt

Tacheles pop-up art store, in a former shoe store in Hanau

**Fischerhallen Frankfurt**

An uncommercial meeting place will be created and located in the fishermen's halls under the Mainkai in Frankfurt.  
Concept: bb22 and Making Frankfurt, in collaboration with Hochschule Mainz

**Open Call Submission**



# Culture

## New spaces for culture



© raumlabor, Sommerbau am Kaiserlei (Offenbach) © J. J. & A. A. / Picture: Jerg Baumann

Sommerbau, temporary event location in Offenbach-Kaiserlei, by raumlabor, 2021

In the sense of *Design for Democracy* the topic of culture is probably the most extensive field of action for our future platform. According to the German dictionary (Duden) culture is the “totality of the intellectual, artistic and creative achievements of a community as an expression of higher human development” as well as the “totality of the characteristic intellectual, artistic and creative achievements created by a specific community in a specific area during a specific epoch”. But here we want to concentrate on existing places for culture in the Frankfurt RhineMain region and on those that will be created in the future, which seize the opportunity to contribute towards the common good through the inherent cultural assets of their own productions and events.

## Bringing cultural events into communities

The pandemic in particular has shown museums and exhibition halls, theatres and operas not only that they must open their doors to all, and lower their thresholds, but also reach out to the public without fear. It is only in the public realm that they can reach the broadest possible audience, since it is only here that new places for discourse, negotiation and ultimately also (co-)creation can be generated. And new collaborations and networks with groups of the public mean more broadly based podiums, events and projects. An outstanding example, which could easily be repeated in the coming years and at different locations, is the Sommerbau (Summer Building), which was constructed and used in the summer and autumn of 2021 on a brownfield site at Kaiserlei, a development zone between Frankfurt and Offenbach. The Frankfurt LAB – an association of five first-rate cultural institutions: Dresden Frankfurt Dance Company, Ensemble Modern, Hessische Theaterakademie, Frankfurt University of Music and Performing Arts (HfMDK), and Künstlerhaus Mousonturm – specially commissioned raumlaborberlin to design an unusual open-air theatre, and one that was easy to erect and dismantle. At the same time in several places, and largely at their own initiative, there is a trend towards turning our cultural strongholds into third places where consumption-free exchange can take place.



Picture: Gabriel Pöhlke



Picture: Tim Frensch

↑ Oper Offenbach, temporary stage and event location in Offenbach harbour, by YRD.Works, 2019

↓ Holidays x Riverside Session by Jazz Montez at the Hafenspark in Frankfurt

Culture

# Projects

Das Theater\* kommt public participation  
project at Frankfurt Zoo, by Baupiloten, 2022



## Theatre for children and young people (Kinder- und Jugendtheater), Frankfurt

Frankfurt will get an independent municipal theatre for children and young people in the Zoogesellschaftshaus (at Frankfurt Zoo) “A theatre for a new, diverse generation and a place where social groups and issues can be brought together.” After the decision in the architectural competition (2021) and the start of public participation (2022), the project will enter the next development phase, which will also include a selective opening of the building.

with City of Frankfurt

## Culture of a Digital City (Kultur einer Digitalstadt), Darmstadt

Within this field of action, Culture of a Digital City sees itself as a platform from which different aspects of digitality can be observed, commented on and shaped from an artistic and cultural perspective. Within the framework of the Digital City Strategy of the city of Darmstadt, a discourse is pending in which the influence of digitalisation on the field of action of culture as well as the networking and participation of citizens will be discussed and implemented in a future network or a platform.

with Digitalstadt Darmstadt  
and Kultur einer Digitalstadt



↑↓ Digital\*Salon by Kultur  
einer Digitalstadt in Darmstadt

## Frankfurt Film Festival House

In the preliminary work for the project A Film Festival House for Frankfurt – Feasibility Study in Five Scenarios, the increasing space requirements of the Frankfurt film festivals are examined with the aim of finding answers to: possible location, future public participation and implementation within the city.  
with City of Frankfurt and bb22

## Future of night culture Frankfurt RhineMain

Riviera Festival is a festival for musicians, clubs and cultural centres, labels, studios and record shops. It is a network for young musicians in the growing city of Offenbach. Following this idea we aim at developing a regional festival for pop and club culture along the Rhine and Main.

with City of Offenbach, Riviera Festival and local clubs, such as Robert Johnson, in cooperation with Momem Museum Frankfurt

## Film festivals and new venues for cinema in Frankfurt RhineMain

The role of film festivals in the city and the region should be strengthened. The need for centrally located venues with a possibility for a supporting programme as well as for temporarily available working spaces (see Frankfurt Film Festival House) needs to be discussed. Successful examples in recent years include the the Lichter Festival and Freiluftkino 2022 in the old police headquarters in Frankfurt as well as Lederkino and Ladenkino in Offenbach, and many more.

with City of Frankfurt and City of Offenbach,  
local film initiatives

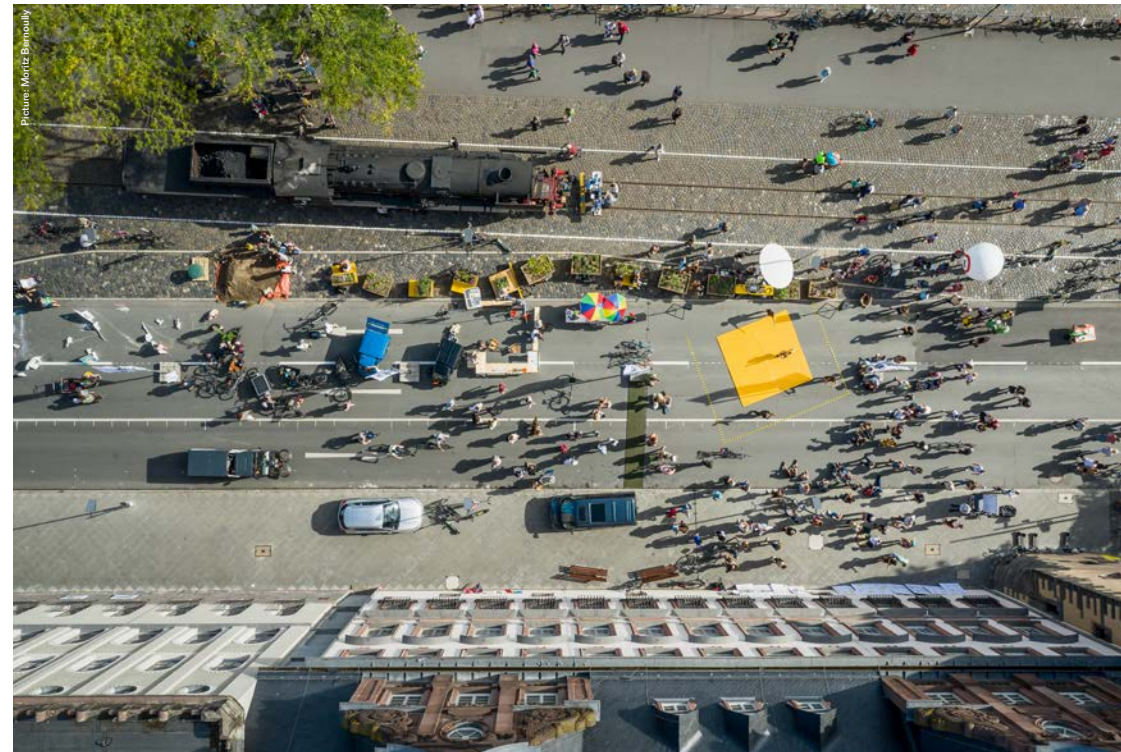
## 4 x 4 – Raum für Neues

The dance project 4 X 4 by AMP Dance Company Frankfurt was first rehearsed and performed in 2020 and 2021 as part of Making Frankfurt. It should now be continued and expanded into the region.

with AMP Dance Company

Open Call Submission

4 x 4 – Raum für Neues at the  
Making Frankfurt Mainkai event, 2020





LED wall at the see Conference  
in Wiesbaden



Scholz & Volkmer

## Hackathon “Design for Democracy”

An interdisciplinary hackathon in the areas of design, content and programming develops thoughts and ideas on the topic of visualising democracy, which are then displayed on a large LED wall. A first prototype event took place in November 2022 at the Schlachthof Wiesbaden, with about 30 students from the RhineMain University of Applied Sciences Wiesbaden. The goal is to implement it in an annual rhythm.

Concept: Scholz & Volkmer with NODE Forum for Digital Arts and Hessen-Agentur

Open Call Submission

## see Conference

The see Conference, one of the largest design conferences in Germany takes place in a two-day event at the Schlachthof Wiesbaden. In addition to the visualisation of information, it deals with sustainable concepts and designs connected to current socially relevant topics. “Interdisciplinary, tone-setting creatives from the fields of design, art, architecture, journalism, philosophy, technology or business will be on stage. They all have one thing in common: they want to make a contribution to society, and they want to do so at a high aesthetic level.” Discussions and workshops (in order to get into action) round off the days. The see15 conference took place in 2022, the next one is planned for 2024, continuing on to 2026.

Concept: Bilder der Zukunfte.V.,  
Scholz & Volkmer and others

Open Call Submission

## Hessen Design – With Democracy in Mind (Im Zeichen der Demokratie)

A new event and discussion format, the Agora Roundtable, began in 2022. It is a series of events organised by the Association of Hessian Designers (Hessen Design) that will run until 2026.  
Concept: Hessen Design e.V.

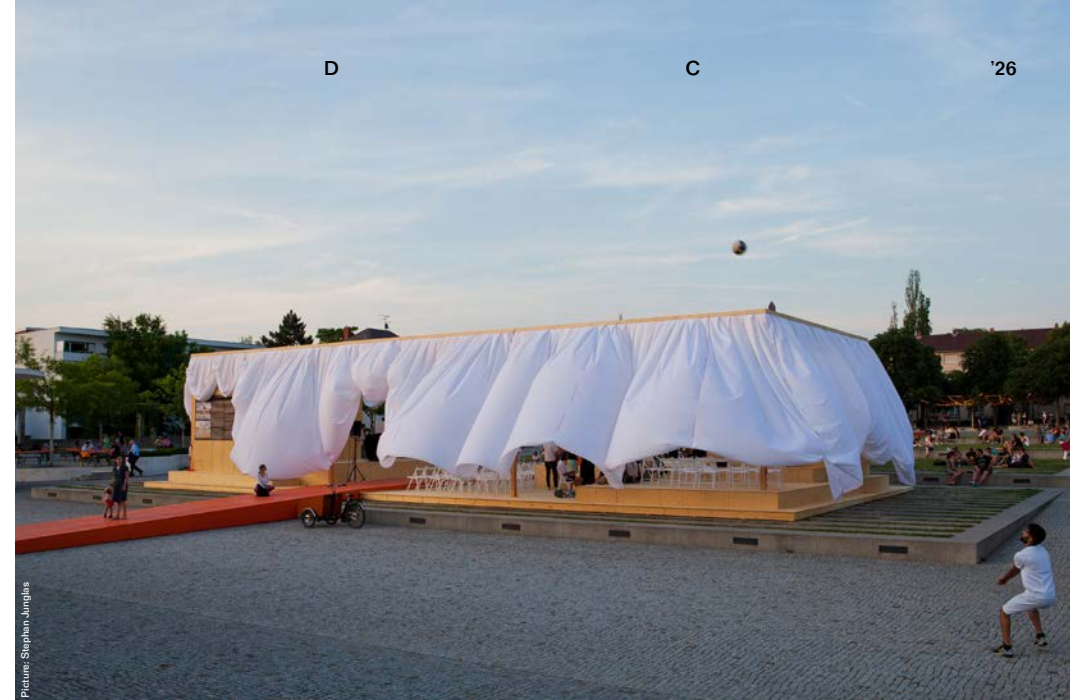
Open Call Submission

## OVAL

A hybrid festival format, encompassing discussions with experts and a programme of contemporary music and events. Repeated annually, with flexible, mobile festival architecture at changing locations. I will take place in Frankfurt in 2026.  
OVAL offers the potential to generate culture sustainably, and to support the new role of designers in a cultural sector that is currently in upheaval.

Concept: Total Total with Hessen Design e.V.

Open Call Submission



Picture: Stephan Junglas



Picture: Sven Helge Caschy

- ↑ Temporary festival pavilion for the Hessische Theaterstage in Darmstadt, by Total Total, 2017
- ↓ Agora Roundtable event by Hessen Design, 2022

## Culture Lab

The Culture Lab includes an art gallery and a co-creative and explorative laboratory for the Kulturcampus (cultural campus) Frankfurt, located in the former art history library of the Juridicum building.

Concept: Jakob Sturm

Open Call Submission



Picture: Jakob Sturm

Former art history library  
in Frankfurt-Bockenheim

## Deep Space

A utopian vision examines how we can live on earth in the long term. Participatory and democratic, with a digital information platform, various events in public space and museums, and educational events for children and adolescents to help them develop a positive image of the future.

Concept: Lea Sophie Krempin, supported by  
Kunstgewerbeverein Frankfurt am Main e.V.

Open Call Submission

(Un)places in Frankfurt networking with (Un)places  
in the RhineMain region

Centred on Konstablerwache as the central event location in Frankfurt. Social design, mobile kiosks, bookcases, seating (e.g. Enzis, special outdoor furniture), and light (cones) are some of the ideas that will lead to 12 (Un)places in Frankfurt and 12 (Un)places in RhineMain, with temporary sound-image-light installations, e.g. at the lighting festival Luminale, Bahnhofsviertel Night (at the main station district), Museumuferfest (Frankfurt's museums festival).

Concept: Ulrich Diekmann, Aylin Günes,  
Jan Jacob Hofmann, Wolfgang Rang, and others

Open Call Submission

## Walhalla Variety Theatre

The historic Walhalla theatre (from 1897) in Wiesbaden, with an area of 4,500 sqm, will be renovated. The aim is to create a centre of cultural diversity that will generate spaces with a quality of public space within the framework of sustainable urban development. This special place should develop impulses and stimulate collaborations in the city and be a place of encounter and cultural longing. The entire project is thus of particular importance for social cohesion and social integration in the municipality. The project kick-off is in 2023, the start of construction will be in 2024 and the constructional implementation in 2026/2027. It will be accompanied by a progressive discussion and consultation of various stakeholders from politics, administration and culture.

Concept: City of Wiesbaden

Open Call Submission

## Art-Movement-Stage (Kunst-Bewegungs-Bühne KuBe)

Creating stages in public space (parks, public squares) where artists of all kinds can present themselves. Anyone can register, on-site, and then present their art to an audience.

Concept: Harrison Krampe and solon GmbH

Open Call Submission

## Democracy thrives on civic engagement

A (digital) participatory platform for sustainable urban development in Frankfurt RhineMain. This employs several technical features to encourage community participation and documentation, and the concept envisages integrating private space into the city's climate strategy. Participatory elements are scalable and modular in design.

Concept: Netzwerk Vollautonom,  
Michael Eiden and others

Open Call Submission

Walhalla theatre in Wiesbaden



# Education

Interactive sports course at Wohnzimmer Hauptwache, by Frankfurter Sport und Kunst Kasino, 2022



## Suitable places for lifelong learning

When we talk about education in the context of *Design for Democracy*, we mean lifelong learning and teaching, research and experimentation. Even though education, with the help of digital media, can now take place in many places around the world, the pandemic years have shown us that analogue learning, in a shared space, and with and from each other, is fundamentally more sustainable and promising. In addition, people who are disadvantaged or discriminated against are better reached in this way, enabling them to participate more easily in the democratic and ongoing development of our liberal society. Educational spaces should of course be designed in such a way that they are able to provide the best possible education opportunities for everyone, or primarily for certain age groups, but they should also be open to all and, in some respects, flexible. This might entail, for example, a school used by children and young people during the day becoming a community centre in the evening. Or a university providing space that benefits the entire neighbourhood, such as a community garden. In addition to public space, we also need to take a closer look here at our trafficked areas which, in the coming years and in many places will be increasingly losing its motorised vehicle traffic and can then be repurposed for the benefit of the community.

## Participation and inclusion

This is also about learning civic participation, recognising and grasping the opportunities of citizens to become involved in political and public processes. This same goes for empowering decision-makers and politicians to embrace and plan to incorporate these new initiators into the decision-making apparatus. Equally crucial are the rights of children, adolescents and young adults and their desire to have their say, through participation and co-creation. The younger generation is not only driven by anger about missed opportunities – as is evident in their climate demonstrations – but also by a well-founded desire to cooperate and become actively involved in children’s and youth parliaments in large and medium-sized cities in Frankfurt RhineMain, and at state level too. This development should also be maintained at a national and international level, because it is only in a partnership between the privileged global North and the suffering global South that real change can take place with regard to climate change and how we deal with other crises. At the upcoming Paulskirche anniversary in May 2023 in Frankfurt, the Paulskirche Network is planning a “Global House of Young Voices – a virtual youth parliament with partner cities”. This will be attended by around 400 young people from Frankfurt and its 17 partner cities and will stimulate further activities. The planning group JugendMachtFrankfurt (Youth Power Frankfurt), founded by Frankfurt City School Students’ Council and Frankfurt Youth Council, as well as the initiative Choosing Democracy (Demokratie wählen) are also providing valuable impetus and concrete proposals for developing participatory formats, for young adults, but also more broadly, for all those actively involved in combatting growing de-democratisation.



Picture: Felix Krumbholz

↑↓ Talking Stairs installation at Wohnzimmer Hauptwache, by Stephan Hauser, 2022



Picture: Felix Krumbholz

## Strengthening the dual training system



Stiftung Deutsches Design Museum, Picture: Yannick Strohmeier, Edition

Design workshop by Stiftung  
Deutsches Design Museum

The first cohort of Generation Z – people born from 2000 onwards – now entering the working world have set themselves the goal of taking matters into their own hands. But while sustainability-oriented study courses and such focal points in teaching and research are becoming more and more popular at university, the highly praised dual training system is failing all over Germany. Fewer and fewer people are interested in an apprenticeship or in learning a trade. According to the Education Report 2022, the trend in vocational training reached an all-time low in 2021, with fewer than 900,000 new entrants. At this point, we urgently need to create an incentive (including a financial one), because in the it is precisely such trained skilled workers that will play an enormous role in the future processes of transformation.

# Projects



Museum Angewandte Kunst, Pictum: Anja Jahn

## Design in Schools (Design macht Schule)

Since the concept of design, which has changed in the sense of *Design for Democracy*, concerns the design of our society and thus also the strengthening of our social cohesion, we see the need for Design to become a school subject, a fixed component in education. The design instruction and training for all school-age children and young people in Hesse and Rhineland-Palatinate, at the latest from secondary school onwards, plays a major role as a decisive starting point for anchoring the thoughts and approaches of *Design for Democracy* in society in the long term.

with Stiftung Deutsches Design Museum  
and HfG Offenbach

Design workshop at Museum  
Angewandte Kunst in Frankfurt



## New building Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst (HfMDK), Frankfurt

The new building of the University of Music and Performing Arts (HfMDK) is the next example for a major educational building project of the Hessian Ministry of Science and the Arts. It is currently planned on the site of the highlight project Kulturcampus Frankfurt, and we will accompany the extensive process starting from Phase 0.

with University of Music and Performing Arts (HfMDK), State of Hesse and City of Frankfurt



Picture: Laura Brätha



Picture: Hansjörg Finsberg

↑↓ Interior views of the current building of the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Frankfurt

## Children's and youth parliaments in Hesse and Rhineland-Palatinate

Such parliaments shall be constituted in all municipalities of Hesse and Rhineland-Palatinate, as well as at state level, in collaboration with more than 50 partner cities of the municipalities in Frankfurt RhineMain.

with Global House of Young Voices  
and Netzwerk Paulskirche

## Young Talents Design Campus

A design camp, a summer school for senior school pupils and young students will be held at Frankfurt trade fair's Agora space. A pilot project will take place during WDC 2026 with the goal of further continuation, when there are no trade fairs.

with Messe Frankfurt, German Design Council  
and Stiftung Deutsches Design Museum

## Life-Long-Design-Learning

Life-long learning about sustainable design, in exchange or by swapping skills and knowledge. It involves older and young people, for instance in a Repair Café, which can be paid for not only with money, but also with digital or language skills.

with Volkshochschulen (adult education centres)  
in Frankfurt RhineMain

Workshop at the WDC-Tour 2022



## Zentrum für Gestaltung in der Politik (Centre for Design in Politics)

Design-relevant competences, methods and ways of thinking are bundled and made accessible to political decision-makers, founded after the Convention for Democratic Design (DDC, 2022).

Concept: Zentrum für Gestaltung in der Politik

Open Call Submission

## Partizipationslabor Darmstadt

Developing a new campus building, together with students, to convey participation processes to young students, project launched in 2022.

Concept: Hochschule Darmstadt, Fachbereich Architektur – Fachgebiet Baukonstruktion Nachhaltiges Bauen Entwerfen, Prof. Architekt Alexander Reichel

Open Call Submission



How-to-gerecht-gestalten event at the Wohnzimmer Hauptwache in Frankfurt, 2022

## How to gerecht gestalten (How to design appropriately)

Workshops and gatherings that follow a how-to-design-appropriately approach. Aimed at all those who shape coexistence in Frankfurt RhineMain: designers, citizens, politicians etc.

Concept: Helena Kiefer and Teresa Laura Novotny

Open Call Submission

## Robo-Insects for future!

Children share their hopes for the future. The project creatively introduces pre-school children to the topics: life in the city, climate protection/biodiversity and robotics. Designed by Tinkerbots (AT), tested in 2022 on the topic of biodiversity with the Palmengarten and Kita Frankfurt.

Concept: Stadtbücherei Frankfurt am Main

Open Call Submission

## DomäneS

DomäneS is a presentation venue for schools, in the centre of Frankfurt, offering young people new opportunities to actively engage with social reality. A first pop-up version will be launched at the “Frankfurt can’t design public squares” project with Arne Winkelmann on the Rossmarkt (2023), further projects and a mobile exhibition architecture by Marco Poblete will follow in a disused space.

Concept: Domäne S –  
für Schülerinnen und Schüler e.V

Open Call Submission

Outdoor installation at Frankfurt's  
Lessing Gymnasium by DomäneS  
and Marco Poblete, 2019



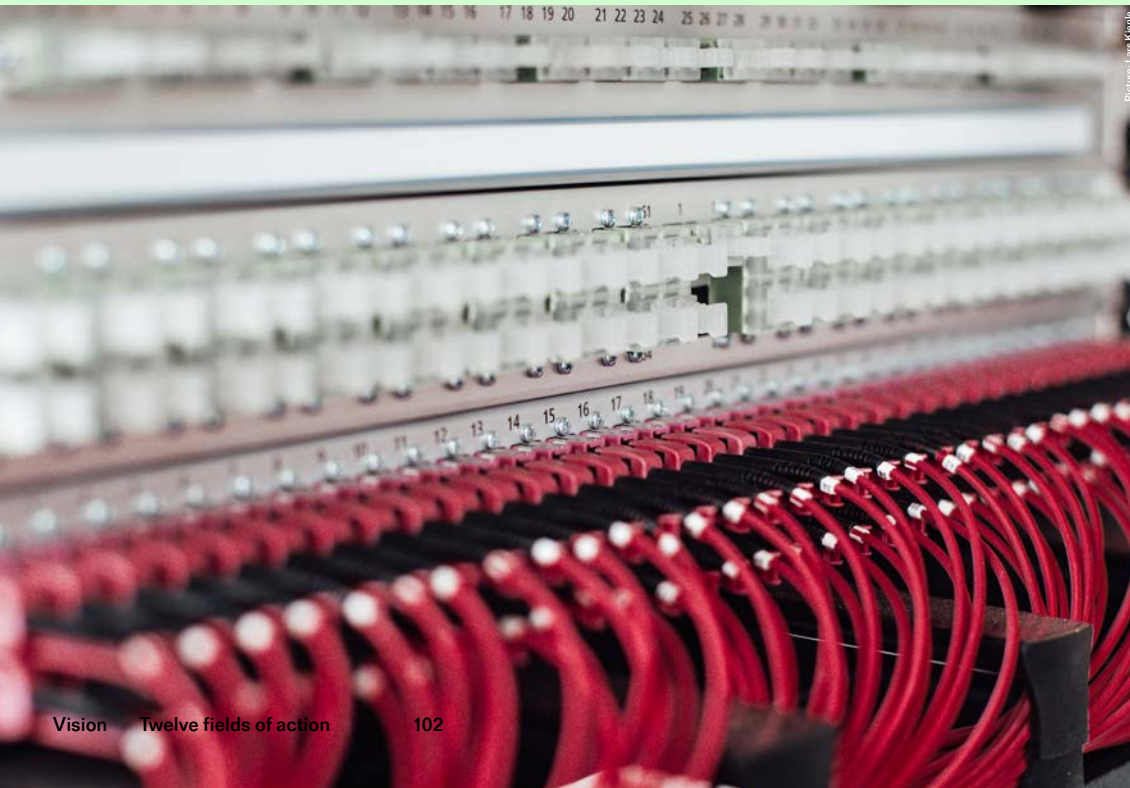
# Energy

## Energy generation in flux



When we think about the provision of sustainable energy to our cities and villages in the context of *Design for Democracy*, it is not only a question of the how much energy (individual) residents and businesses consume. This of course needs to be reduced, and especially the use of fossil fuels should be kept to a minimum, as the war in Ukraine in recent months has clearly shown. However, the heart of the matter concerns new ways of generating energy and how these are interconnected. This is exactly where inventive engineers and planners are called for, and a willingness to experiment. It also requires public and private owners, investors and energy suppliers to interact, and forward-looking public-private partnerships (PPP) too. Truly sustainable energy concepts can then be implemented with the appropriate technology, but this technology should not determine design. For example, back in 2017, as part of his dissertation, Joachim Schulze at the Department of Architecture at TU Darmstadt posed the question of whether vacant buildings from industrial and military stock could be used as energy storage facilities. In a case study he considered using a silo at the decommissioned Wesermühlen in Hameln, Lower Saxony. Similarly, in the future one could imagine looking at building structures in Frankfurt RhineMain that have become obsolete due to transformative processes.

Currently, for example, the two former Clariant sites in Offenbach (Innovation Quarter, see Work) and Frankfurt (Westside, see Industry) are undergoing redesign. Something similar is about to happen in Wiesbaden with the Dyckerhoff plant (see Construction). But the cycle-compatible design of new energy storage facilities, power plants or data centres is also a pressing building task, now and in the future, especially in Frankfurt RhineMain, a strategically prominent hub. If one takes a moment to think this approach through from a design and business perspective, with a realisation date probably after 2026, this strategy could well be implemented in Frankfurt RhineMain too.



Picture: Lars Klein

# Climate change requires a new mindset

When considering how we use energy in our temperate climate zone – which until now has been dominated by distinct seasons but which, due to global warming, is increasingly characterised by heatwaves – we should be prepared to take a good look how we are cooling both indoor and outdoor leisure spaces, as well as the quality of the air we breathe. Here, too, the goal is to become as independent of technology as we can, and to save as much CO<sub>2</sub> as possible. In turn, this means using natural resources and raw materials in a sustainable and resourceful way with planting, by unsealing surfaces, via establishing fresh air corridors and though water resources. On one hand, municipal financial incentives help here, such as the programme “Frankfurt frisch auf” (“Frankfurt freshens up”), which offers subsidies for privately initiated greenery, such as green roofs, or on facades and courtyards. They also subsidise building overshadowing that has a positive impact on public space, and publicly accessible drinking fountains. Furthermore, in the context of *Design for Democracy*, it is important to highlight local and regional experiments, as well as research and start-ups. On one hand, from a marketing point of view, these have an important function as role-models in this transformation, and on the other, they can accelerate an urgently needed move from individual or small-scale interventions, to joint or networked measures. Moreover, this kind of green and blue energy production in the form of cooling, humidity and tranquility has an enormous impact on the health and well-being of people and animals.



**Baumhaus (Tree House)  
in Darmstadt**

Mainova power plant  
in Frankfurt-Gutleut



## Alternative energy generation

We will test alternative energy production without fossil resources and their networking with each other or within a large complex, in several exemplary data centres and power plants in Frankfurt RhineMain.

with Digital Park Fechenheim Frankfurt-Fechenheim, Wasserstoff-Kraftwerk (Hydrogen power plant) Frankfurt-Gutleut, Gasmotoren-Blockheizkraftwerk (Gas-powered block-type thermal powerstation Hanau), Mainova-Rechenzentren-Campus (data centre campus Frankfurt-Seckbach)



## Support for start-ups

Inovative ideas are fostered and communicated, for example in the form of providing opportunities for testing or exhibitions, such as natural shading structures erected by OMC°C (Office for Micro Climate Cultivation) on Frankfurt's Mainkai, which is closed to traffic during the summer, plus presentation and networking opportunities within the framework of the DDC competition "Was ist gut?".

with City of Frankfurt and DDC

## Expansion of community solar energy systems

Micro-initiatives, that are in direct exchange with the citizens, e.g. the association Sonneninitiative, will participate with small shares in large photovoltaic systems on public buildings and thus contribute to the transformation in decentralised structures.

with local initiatives

## Solar campagne in Frankfurt RhineMain, Hesse and Rhineland-Palatine

The campagne provides special incentives for the installation of large photovoltaic systems, not only for private individuals, but for investors and real estate developers too, for instance the photovoltaic system for the roof of the RAW (former Deutsche Bahn headquarters in Frankfurt).

with the municipalitites and federal states

## NO<sub>2</sub> visual indicator of city air quality

A light installation in Wiesbaden illustrates the air quality at central locations in the city and shows passers-by the current situation. In addition, the programming of an app contributes to further dissemination and implementation in various cities in Frankfurt RhineMain.

Concept: Scholz & Volkmer

Open Call Submission

NOXmas installation in Wiesbaden,  
by Scholz & Volkmer, 2016



# Health

## Good health is a human right

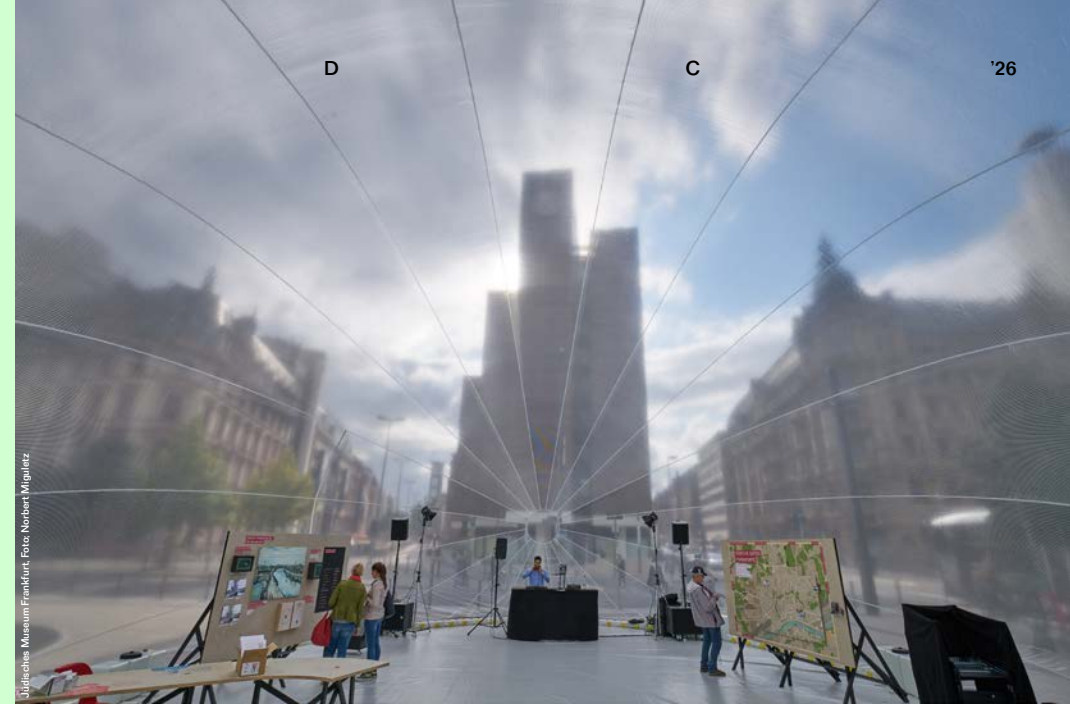


Picture: Marie Hafner

off plate  
culinary event

There seems to be no direct link between *Design for Democracy* and health, yet this topic plays an important role in the aspiration we have set ourselves as a platform provider for 2026. When we talk about wanting to shape a liveable future, the foundation upon which everything else rests is good health. According to Article 25 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (from 1948!), everyone has the right to a standard of living that is adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family. This includes an adequate supply of food and clothing, a place to live, as well as medical care and necessary social services. This shows that health is not just a personal matter, but concerns society as a whole and it serves the common good, across all divides and borders. Ensuring good health, and the well-being associated with it, is a communal task and a prerequisite for social harmony and economic security, both locally and globally.

Naturally, politics and the state also have a contribution to make here. For example, in recent months the Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture, Cem Özdemir, came up with two very important proposals aimed at providing healthy food for everyone, supported by many parties. Firstly: abolish VAT on fruit and vegetables, and secondly (backed by the Federal Minister of Justice Marco Buschmann), legalise “food rescue”, i.e. retrieving surplus food from waste containers. In the case of containers, it would naturally also be possible to have either a state-wide or a municipal regulation operating in Frankfurt RhineMain. It would also be essential to communicate with local food banks, to ensure a holistic and sustainable approach. Although we decided on focussing on food at this point (the foremost factor in Article 25), there is a wide range of further health topics, that will also be discussed in other fields of action, such as fresh air, water supply, fair clothing, affordable housing, medical care and social welfare.



↑↓ The pop-up Küchenmonument (kitchen monument) for the Jewish Museum at the Willy-Brandt-Platz in Frankfurt, by raumlaborberlin, 2017

# Projects

Climate Gourmet Festival 2022,  
Family Sunday



## Open Kitchen

The Open Kitchen is a large kitchen and dining room in one, where communal cooking and eating take place. With rescued and regional ingredients, and in cooperation with existing initiatives such as ada\_kantine, Badias Kitchen, “Über den Tellerrand” or Foodsharing, a specific location might be the Kulturcampus in Frankfurt-Bockenheim, other places are possible. The primary goal is the move into existing buildings and structures.

with local initiatives and chefs

## Pop-up Kitchen

Good food is brought closer to the people with temporary and flexible kitchens that are designed and used in a collaborative way at street and district festivals as well as in public places, such as the Sommer am Main, the Frankfurt Summer Streets or the Superblock Sundays in Wiesbaden.

with local initiatives and chefs

## New spaces for Die Tafel

Die Tafel is the name of a non-profit aid organisation in Germany, a food bank that distributes food, that is no longer used in the economic cycle and would otherwise be thrown away to the needy or gives it away for a small fee. We will start a competition with local designers, schools and universities and the administration, to optimise the future of the distribution, storage and work spaces of the local food banks and to find suitable, permanent and economically feasible locations.

with Die Tafel Deutschland, as well as local food banks, schools and universities

## Kitchen culture workshop with Mensa von Morgen

Space, workshop and tools are essential foundations for giving students the opportunity to shape interdisciplinary projects in a free environment and to influence the way university life takes place. The task is to design future-oriented cafeterias and meeting places with a focus on food for the universities, but also for daycare centres and schools in Frankfurt RhineMain. This task has already been started as a research project, called Mensa von Morgen, for the highlight project New Campus HfG Offenbach. with Mensa von Morgen, HfG Offenbach and Städelschule Frankfurt

## Climate Gourmet Festival in Frankfurt RhineMain

Various events on the topic of climate change and nutrition are planned and will be carried out in the city districts. Good nutrition for everyone does not have to be expensive. Mobile elements (e.g. pop-up kitchen) will be designed with community involvement. Concept: Klimagourmet-Festival

Open Call Submission

## Design-Tool

Aimed at encouraging vulnerable groups to participate in the design process. A design tool on the topic of healthy design will be developed. An inclusive, low-threshold, participatory and open-ended tool will be designed in joint design processes, e.g. through gamification and workshops. Open source results will be made available to the public in the course of the project.

Concept: Designinstitut für gesunde Gestaltung

Open Call Submission

Climate Gourmet Festival 2016 at the temporary Architektursommer Zukunftspavillon (future pavilion) in Frankfurt's city-centre



# Housing

## The housing market under pressure



ABG housing in Frankfurt,  
by schneider+schumacher

For a long time, housing was a purely personal matter. Depending on one's financial means and individual preferences, it was usually possible to find a suitable flat, at least in our cities. However, the wave of immigration in 2015/16 and 2022 in particular and the associated media publicity, as well as a general ground-swell towards living in the large cities and neighbouring municipalities in Frankfurt RhineMain, has exacerbated the situation in the affordable housing market. We are bombarded via the media with the topics of gentrification, rent escalation and eviction and these are indeed side-effects in the search for suitable housing. So far, the political response to this demand has been "Build, build, build". But in view of rapidly increasing global warming, this does not appear to offer anything like a sustainable solution. So what can we do, when luxurious residential buildings in big cities are subject to investment and speculation, while places further out of town empty out and thus lose their attraction? And what can be done when the housing industry is increasingly geared towards wealthy single households or DINKY households (Double Income No Kids Yet), leaving students, refugees and families by the wayside, and older people unable to find suitable alternatives for their now over-sized flats and houses?

## New collaborative solutions

New and intelligent solutions for communal living (and working) are needed, in which the respective potential of communities to steer planning and building needs to be explored and unleashed. At this juncture, the question of sufficiency is also raised, as are questions of distribution and necessity, and how to interconnect and supplement private and communal living space. In addition, especially in the big cities, but also in unexpected places, we must unearth so-called urban mines, and prioritise the use of existing building stock. In this way, vacant office buildings can be turned into flexible and simple residential buildings that are now particularly in demand in the Arrival Cities and university towns in Frankfurt RhineMain, such as in the former office district of Frankfurt Niederrad. Abandoned university or industrial locations can blossom with new and youthful life if the necessary infrastructure (for education and mobility, for example) is thought through and built right from the outset. This can happen in our cities as well as in smaller more remote places; thanks to rapid digital development, many things are possible if you are open and receptive, and tackle them collectively. This is exactly what happened with the Homberg Pioneers, a pilot project to attract young residents to Homberg-Efze. It can also work in locations with a similar make-up if people are prepared to support each other.

Community-based, participatory housing projects do not simply happen by themselves; they involve lengthy discussion and negotiation. Designers, planners and administrators have to prepare for this and become involved, they have to accept their new role as creative mediators in an open process, which at times can also fail or become antagonistic.



The Wohnbüro (living office) pilot project in Offenbach's city-centre

Working together at the Summer of Pioneers in Homberg-Efze



Summer of Pioneers, Photo: Sebastian Lohse

## Communal housing in the countryside

What might communal housing in the countryside look like? What is needed to make not only housing but also life in the countryside attractive for young people? This also involves digitalisation and mobility, among other things.

with State of Hesse and Summer of Pioneers,  
Neulandia Homberg-Efze



## Communal housing in Frankfurt RhineMain, Hesse and Rhineland-Palatinate

This project aims at mutual training, and the mentoring of designers and planners in community housing issues. Best practice examples will improve the communication between (potential) residents and owners plus investors.

with State of Hesse, State of Rhineland-Palatinate  
and Netzwerk Frankfurt für gemeinschaftliches  
Wohnen



↑↓ Workshop for the AdAptiv  
communal housing project in  
Frankfurt-Bockenheim

## Frankfurt Prototype

This is a pilot project for collaborative housing and work for both students and refugees that will be located in the courtyard of the Senckenberg Institute.

with Städelschule Frankfurt

Hafengarten, a temporary urban gardening project at Offenbach harbour, next to the site for the new campus for the HfG Offenbach



Picture: Felix Krammholz

Vision Twelve fields of action

## Urban Gardening and Harvesting

Using public green spaces for gardening and the communal harvesting of regional vegetables and fruit, in place of individual gardens directly linked to apartments.

with local garden initiatives

## AdAptiv

AdAptiv – Housing in the former Akademie der Arbeit (Work Academy) in Frankfurt-Bockenheim. Continuing in the tradition of the Akademie der Arbeit, both ideologically and practically.

Concept: AdAptiv

Open Call Submission

## The New Frankfurt Kitchen of Communal Housing

The New Frankfurt Kitchen of Communal Housing will be the future kitchen in the Ernst-May-settlement. Understanding the kitchen as a space in which different people can work together and meet on the same terms.

Concept: Jonathan Radetz with ernst-may-gesellschaft, City of Frankfurt and Adaptiv

Open Call Submission

# Industry

## Industry in transition.

Industrial site in Frankfurt-Höchst



Infrasew GmbH & Co., Höchst KG

The shift from an industrial to a service and knowledge-based society is also omnipresent in Frankfurt RhineMain. Frankfurt's skyline is becoming denser, new high-rise buildings and office spaces are being created in different spots and forward-looking mixed-use complexes, co-working spaces, and workspaces at home are being developed both in the city and in rural areas (see Work). The growing shift towards information technologies as well as the remarkable location of the major internet hub, right in the city of Frankfurt am Main, is leading to an additional concentration of data centres within the city limits and in neighbouring municipalities such as Offenbach and Hanau (see Energy). Even though in the course of this economic transformation some former industrial sites (mostly large building complexes) either have been, or currently are being obliterated or replaced by other economic sectors such as residential complexes and cultural facilities, all this does not signal the end of Frankfurt RhineMain as an industrial location.

# Scrutinizing the in-between cities

Despite the advance of digitalisation, the production of goods, including handicrafts, still represents a strong sector of the economy. It too is undergoing a major transformation in many places towards small, smart and networked enterprises. However, the necessary work, production and storage facilities cannot be replaced (or only to a small extent) by working from home. Moreover, there are higher noise and odour emissions here than are currently permitted in our core cities or even in mixed areas. These business parks are mostly located in what Thomas Sieverts calls the *Zwischenstadt* (in-between city), an undefined and unstructured space that is constantly changing located right between the city and the countryside. These in-between cities are, globally speaking, often found in regions where cities that have swollen over the years and have now expanded beyond their original borders and grown together. This is a phenomenon that can be clearly observed in Frankfurt RhineMain too. Here, in stark contrast to today's post-Corona world, where much has changed, some almost archaic practices are still in place in (individual) workplaces and environments, regarding the use and disposal of material resources, accessibility (or the lack of it) in workplaces, and the fact that in many cases, people continue to have to commute to and from their place of work, rather than work from home. Apart from those areas where shift work takes place, such places seem to be deserted at evening and at night. A similar atmosphere prevails in our historic city centres after business hours (see Consumption). Here, as there, we urgently need to find design solutions in order to redefine and revitalise potential communally usable places beyond the confines of their business use, and to develop new kinds of mobility for the required commute to them. This would help not just the people working there, but visitors to the city too.



View at Frankfurt-Ostend, where the Osthafen (east harbour) is supplied via roads and railways



Picture: Clemens van Lay



HEM

↑↓ Former and current industrial sites close to the European Central Bank in Frankfurt

## Areas destined for regeneration

In large cities in the Frankfurt RhineMain in particular, the increasing abandonment of large industrial and military sites within the city limits in recent years has created a potential for establishing new businesses, and other functions too, and well-connected with existing infrastructure, energy and mobility. Exemplary schemes are to be found in the former port areas along the Rhine and Main, such as the Westhafen and Osthafen in Frankfurt, and the Zollhafen in Mainz. Currently too, opportunities are opening up following the demise of the Clariant plants in Offenbach and Frankfurt and the purchase of the former Dyckerhoff plant in Wiesbaden. Industry will not be re-established everywhere (see Construction and Work), but in terms of *Design for Democracy*, and over the entire region, it will be imperative to ensure these areas are opened up and made accessible to the public. It is not only the municipalities as owners and developers that have a duty here, but private investors too.

## Visualisation of Frankfurt Westside



## Frankfurt Westside

In Frankfurt-Griesheim, a former chemical park (Industriepark Griesheim, most recently Clariant) is currently being converted into a sustainable industrial and commercial quarter (DGNB pre-certificate in platinum). Particular attention is being paid to opening up the industrial and commercial area along the Main for the public.

with Frankfurt Westside/BEOS AG

# Frankfurt Eastside

Around Gwinnerstraße in Frankfurt-Seckbach (part of the sustainable industrial and commercial area Fechenheim-Nord/Seckbach), former industrial buildings and spaces are being prepared for start-ups that want to produce at higher noise levels or need large storage areas. In order for this to become a cohesive and sustainable area for the creative industries, the cooperation with existing businesses is essential.

with e15, Knärzje, Material für alle and  
City of Frankfurt

View into a former industrial space  
in Frankfurt-Seckbach



## Wiesbaden lights up – designer Christian Dell

A special exhibition is planned at the Museum sam in Wiesbaden in 2026, which crystallises Christian Dell's democratic thought as well as the illumination of democracy-relevant buildings.

Concept: sam – Stadtmuseum am Markt, cooperation with Hochschule RheinMain Wiesbaden and Hochschule für Gestaltung Mainz

Open Call Submission

Illumination of the Alte Oper in Frankfurt for the Luminale festival



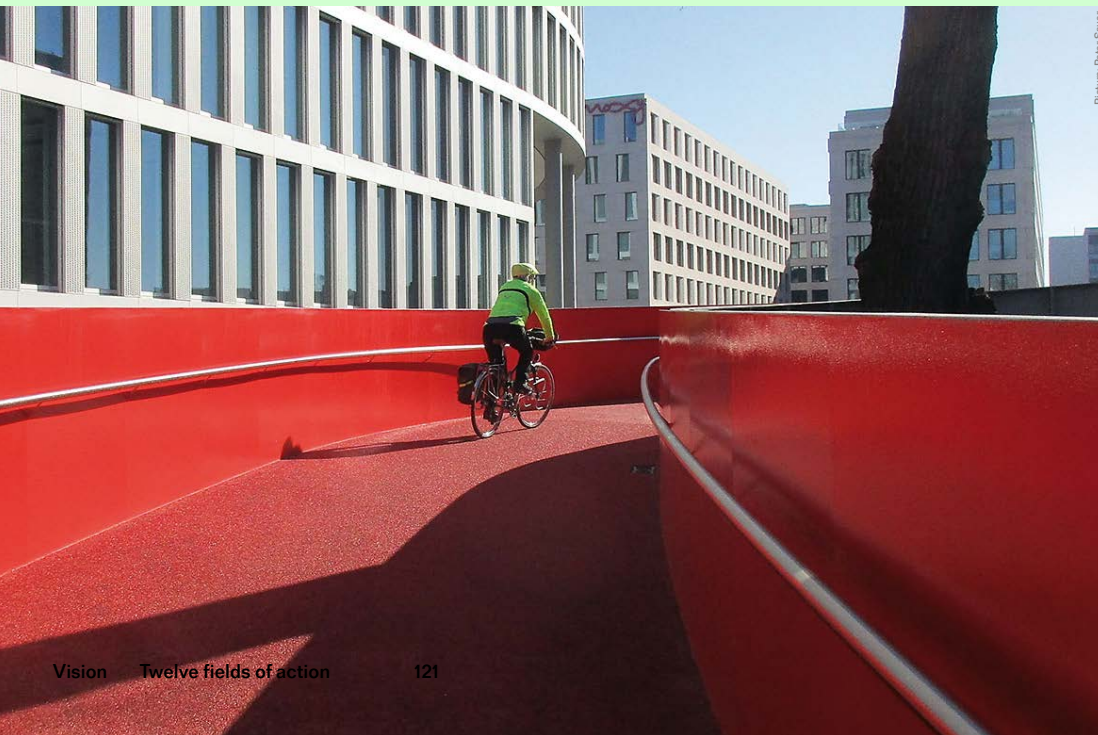
Messe Frankfurt



# Mobility

## New concepts for mobility

Pedestrian and bicycle  
bridge in Darmstadt,  
by netzwerkarchitekten



The many networks and close interconnections in Frankfurt RhineMain, both on a professional and private level, mean that the free-flowing movement of people within the major cities and from one municipality to another plays an enormous role in the level of satisfaction of both inhabitants and visitors. However, already overloaded road and rail networks alone cannot meet future demand for individual mobility in the region, let alone solve the omnipresent problems of air pollution and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. So novel mobility concepts are being trialled in many places in Frankfurt RhineMain, both on roads and on the railways. But to date they have mostly only aimed at solving local, and limited problems, such as designating new cycle paths and cycle lanes by coloured markings, or installing digital bus stop display boards.

## A strategy for the region

In terms of *Design for Democracy*, we intend to develop a coherent and overarching strategy for the entire Frankfurt RhineMain region. The buzzword for a future regional approach is intermodal mobility – i.e. changing from one mode of transport to another as easily as possible along a single route. For this, it is important to interlink various options into a single system wherever possible. In addition, the so-called modal split, i.e. how traffic is distributed between different modes of transport, must be taken into account. Here, it is important to increase the amount of non-motorised means of transport – mostly pedestrian, cycles or scooters – as these means of transport are inherently environmentally friendly and also make sense from a health point of view. In addition, public transport, or more precisely local and regional public transport, must be expanded, and private vehicle traffic reduced. It is only by improving the availability of these other modes of transport that the fundamental and sustainable goal of making preferably non-emission travel in the region a reality can be achieved. In addition, it is only through regional as well as neighbourhood-based urban planning projects, such as the Große Frankfurter Bogen or the 15-Minute-City, that we can expect a significant improvement in the situation. In such complex projects, it is extremely important to coordinate and cooperate with lots of stakeholders at different levels. A pioneering approach to encouraging community involvement in socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods is exemplified by the research project *Beweg dein Quartier* (Move your neighbourhood), implemented in Offenbach's Nordend district in 2022. This strategy could easily be transferred to various other similarly placed neighbourhoods and municipalities in Frankfurt RhineMain.



↑ *Beweg-dein-Quartier*  
pilot project in Offenbach-  
Nordend, 2022  
↓ *project-mo.de* research  
project at HfG Offenbach

In the context of *Design for Democracy*, it is essential that such design ideas not only make it easier to switch from motorised cars to emission-free bicycles or trains, but also make the space gained through the traffic turnaround available to as many pedestrians and cyclists as possible. Here, the topic of mobility is closely linked to negotiations about the use of public space and access to so-called third places (see Consumption and Public Space).

Beweg-dein-Quartier pilot project  
in Offenbach-Nordend, 2022



# Looking at research and development from a different angle



Convercycle Bikes GmbH



Wingcopter

Novel solutions on land, water or air that do not involve having to seal existing open and green spaces in the future are also interesting. This can succeed both on a small scale, as in the design of the Wingcopter drones or the Convercycle bicycle, and on a larger scale too. With its pioneering character, project-mo.de, an interdisciplinary research project of several universities in the region, worked from 2018 to 2021 to answer the question: “How can we best incorporate the needs of different users when designing new and environmentally friendly forms of mobility?”.

- ↑ Convercycle bicycle
- ↓ Wingcopter drone

# Mobility Projects



## Heiner Blocks, Darmstadt

A test phase for a superblock is currently being prepared in Darmstadt. We want to free Heiner Blocks from through-traffic and reduce traffic looking for somewhere to park. Routes within the blocks should become safer for everyone and our neighbourhoods more barrier-free accessible. Less traffic noise and better air, as well as communal areas, will enhance the quality of life in this reclaimed space. At the same time, residents and delivery traffic should still be able to reach every building in the block. Heiner Blocks should also become an attractive location for retail, gastronomy and other service businesses.

with City of Darmstadt, Klimaentscheid Darmstadt, Heiner Blocks and Architects for Future Darmstadt

↑↓ Developing the Heiner Blocks in Darmstadt

## Summer Streets (Sommerstraßen), Frankfurt RhineMain

These are temporary play and neighbourhood streets modelled on the summer streets in Stockholm: car-free streets, only in the summer months, in especially popular and dense residential areas. A pilot project in Frankfurt from 2022 will be extended to the region.

with local initiatives

## Expanding the Frankfurt-Offenbach cycle path

On neutral territory between Frankfurt's Gerbermühle and Offenbach harbour, the cycle path will be developed in inter-municipal cooperation and with the involvement of the residents, with the aim of increasing the attractiveness and the stay and creating added value, such as DIY bicycle repair, lighting and maintenance.

with City of Frankfurt and City of Offenbach, ADFC and VCD Hessen

## Radraum, Offenbach

Radraum by HfG Offenbach is a research laboratory and an event venue, an exchange platform and a DIY bicycle workshop. Previously temporarily housed in the town hall pavilion (Rathaus-Pavillon), the new aim is to find a location in Offenbach's city centre.

with HfG Offenbach, and local initiatives

## Paying with bike kilometres

Development of an app that stores the kilometres you travel by bike and converts them into its own currency.

Concept: Scholz & Volkmer,  
in collaboration with Deutsche Bahn

Open Call Submission

Meeting neighbours at the Frankfurt  
Summer Street Day 2022 in Bockenheim





Drawing machine Radwende in action

## Drawing machine Radwende

The drawing machine Radwende tracks actual cycling routes, and has already been shown several times as an art installation (e.g. at the Architektursommer RhineMain 2015).

Concept: Scholz & Volkmer

**Open Call Submission**

## Superblock Sunday, Wiesbaden

Superblock Sunday was first trialled temporarily in 2022, with the aim of permanently creating more space for pedestrian and cycle paths as well as green areas within a car-free block.

Concept: Scholz & Volkmer and others

**Open Call Submission**

## Velodukt express bike path, Mainz

Velodukt proposes a new bridge for pedestrians and cyclists over Mainz's Zahlbach Valley on the site of the Roman aqueduct, leading from the stadium and the new science campus in the west, and linking up with the green belt in the upper town in the east.

Concept: Axel Effekt

**Open Call Submission**

# Public Space

Georg-Büchner-Anlage, a public space in front of the Staatstheater Darmstadt, by Lederer Ragnarsdóttir Oei and Helmut Hornstein



Picture: Roland Hülbe

## Democracy happens on our doorstep.

In our increasingly dense cities and in more and more anonymous places, it is all the more apparent what a vital role public space plays as a place that allows exchange and discourse to take place, where people can get together and get involved, but also simply a space that makes people feel they are part of a community. Because democracy in action takes place beyond our doorstep, outside our own four walls. The quality of life where we live and work depends directly on how our squares and parks, as well as open and green spaces are designed and used. Recently, since beginning to rethink the role of traffic, we have created newly adopted and rededicated street space, and this also needs further planning (see Mobility). Correspondingly, the first core message disseminated by the Building Culture Report 2020/21 - Public Spaces is: "Attractive cities and places are lively, safe, sustainable and healthy. They are characterised by different kinds of well-designed public open space that facilitates encounters and promotes interaction. As the starting point for urban planning, open space also defines fundamental elements such as interlinking routes. It creates the elementary and permanent structure of a city, in which its character and rhythm are revealed."



## Public space serves the public good.

Our public space as well as street and traffic areas are all publicly owned. At the same time, they are a common good and a finite resource – therefore they should, first and foremost, serve the common good. It is up to all of us, designers and citizens alike, to design, use and spend our leisure time in them in such a way that they benefit as many people as possible and as a means to supplement private living space. In addition, our green open spaces take on many important ecological and health-related tasks, so that traffic calming, unsealing and greening as well as shading our spaces is becoming increasingly imperative. This applies equally to our neighbourhoods, as well as to villages, towns and large cities, especially in a region as densely populated as Frankfurt RhineMain.

Carree Open pop-up installation with re-use elements in Darmstadt's city-centre, by das blumen and DIESE Studio (now social.form), 2018





Picture: Falk Kraushöh

- ↑ Public participation at the Wohnzimmer Hauptwache 2022 in Frankfurt, with Making Frankfurt stools by Jonathan Radetz
- ↓ Public participation at the Sommer am Main 2022 festival at Frankfurt's Mainkai

## Ensuring greater acceptance



Picture: Cornelius Pfannkuch

As with community-organised housing projects (see Housing), in order to function, public space needs people's interests to be represented, and a special form of management. This is to ensure that various wishes and requirements are taken into account: the public sector, community-oriented stakeholders, privately organised initiatives, and residents. In terms of longevity, special focus should be placed on maintenance as well as how to conduct preparatory work (for example communication, planning and construction) and use (such as space allocation). Quite apart from the administrative aspect, we can only expect public space to be accepted and appreciated and maintain both quality and longevity, if residents, visitors and users are involved in the overall process.

Public Space

# Projects

Mainz's town hall and the Jockel-Fuchs-Platz, built 1970–1973 by Arne Jacobsen and Otto Weitling



## Jockel-Fuchs-Platz (public square in front of the town hall), Mainz

In the course of the overall renovation of the town hall, a sustainable design of the forecourt is also on the agenda. Here, both the recreational opportunities and the important connection between the Rhine embankment and the city centre need to be looked at closely.

with City of Mainz and Betonisten

# Repurposing Frankfurt's Mainkai

The Mainkai street, close to Frankfurt historic town hall Römer, has already been closed for car traffic temporarily several times in the area between Alte Brücke and Untermainbrücke. After an initial experimental phase for new uses at the Sommer am Main festival in 2022, the next test phase is scheduled for summer 2023.

with City of Frankfurt and Making Frankfurt



Picture: Cornelia Pfannkuch



Picture: Cornelia Pfannkuch

↕ Public events on Frankfurt's Mainkai at the Sommer am Main 2022 festival

## Forecourt of Deutsches Ledermuseum (German leather museum), Offenbach

Opening up the museum to the outside and to the public space in connection with the upcoming renovation of the museum will lead to a new design for the forecourt.

with Deutsches Ledermuseum  
and City of Offenbach

## Projekt Platzhalter (Project Placeholder) in Frankfurt RhineMain

Projekt Platzhalter deals with communication design in public space through redesigned advertising pillars. It transforms existing advertising space into a place where people can come together, play and exchange ideas. A project initiated by Stiftung FuturZwei, first implemented in Essen in 2022, to be extended to interested municipalities in Frankfurt RhineMain. with Stiftung FuturZwei, Projekt Platzhalter

## Making Frankfurt RhineMain Stool

A DIY stool as a placeholder for the future use of public urban space, more than just a seat and designed object, it marks and symbolises urban change. When locating it (digitally and analogue) the stool becomes linked to a place that is valued or should be redesigned.

with Making Frankfurt and Jonathan Radetz

## Babbelbänksche (talking bench), Frankfurt

Development of a communicative bench that can be placed on public squares as well as in green spaces, based on the historic Ferdinand Kramer bench.

with Demokratie wählen and  
Museum Angewandte Kunst Frankfurt



A re-built Ferdinand Kramer bench at the Metzler park next to the Museum Angewandte Kunst in Frankfurt, 2019

## Kulturelle Mitte (cultural centre), Darmstadt

A network of cultural institutions in Darmstadt that want to revitalise the city centre, develop and design new (participatory) elements and projects, such as those at the Mainkai-Werkstatt at Sommer am Main 2022 in Frankfurt.

Concept: Werkbundakademie Darmstadt and Deutsches Architekturmuseum

Open Call Submission

## Hushrooms

These pavilions are located in public spaces as a home for permanent and/or temporary installations. They promote communication, participation and co-determination.

Concept: Sonja Hilpert, Hochschule Mainz

Open Call Submission

## Debate Room

In the circular Debate Room, similar to an agora, consumers and producers can discuss environmental issues together.

Concept: Yasamam Tavana/  
Ramboll Studio Frankfurt

Open Call Submission

## Theatre of Debates

The Theatre of Debates is a mobile architecture with stands and media facilities as well as a recording studio with post-production calls for self-determined participation. It provides incentives for converting existing structures and for planning new public space, e.g. on Jockel-Fuchs-Platz in Mainz, but also directly on site with younger and older people, e.g. in schools or old people's homes.

Concept: Robin Kuppler and Maximilian Kürten

Open Call Submission

Visualisation of a  
Hushroom pavilion





Agora at the Wiesbaden Biennale, 2016

## Das Fliegende S (The Flying S)

Das Fliegende S is a physical and immaterial platform in urban space with performative interaction possibilities. It is a street furniture that deals with topics such as upcycling, circular economy, leisure activities and barrier-free accessibility. It is being tested in Völklingen since 2021.

Concept: Donata Koschel and Larissa Peters

Open Call Submission

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## Your Turn

Your Turn deals with the redesign of Tilly-Edinger-Platz in Frankfurt-Bockenheim for the common good, as a space for everyone. The project was launched with community participation (2021). First ideas were developed together with Jonathan Radetz

Concept: Bockenheim außer Haus

Open Call Submission

## Design of a neighbourhood square

The participatory redesign of a square at the Dornbusch church in Frankfurt had it's kick-off at the first Frankfurt Summer Street Day in 2022.

Concept: Projekt Dornbusch – Wir machen Platz

Open Call Submission

# Sport

## Exercise helps, especially in a crisis

The pandemic and the Ukraine war have caused the cost of living to rise sharply in European metropolitan regions, which are hugely dependent on the import of various goods and the supply of energy. Becoming self-sufficient and more resilient to crisis scenarios, both as individuals and as a community, requires a profound commitment not just to reform, but to financing this transformation in the most equitable way possible. At present, inflation and high energy costs are placing an enormous burden on every single citizen and putting pressure on the (fair) remuneration of paid employment. It is precisely because of this intensified focus on time spent at work – something often associated with psychological and physical stress – that compensation through time off, i.e. creating a personal work-life balance, becomes all the more important.

In her book “Alle Zeit”, Teresa Brücker presents various emancipatory models of how time can be distributed when it does not involve a full-time eight-hour working day. For example, there is Kathi Weeks’ demand for more time for “what we want” and Frigga Haug’s “four-in-one perspective”, in which we divide our 16 waking hours equally into paid work, caring work, cultural work (leisure time) and political work. Common to both models is the recognition that by shortening or strictly delineating our paid work, we would gain time that we could use both for personal development and for engaging in and helping to shape our society.

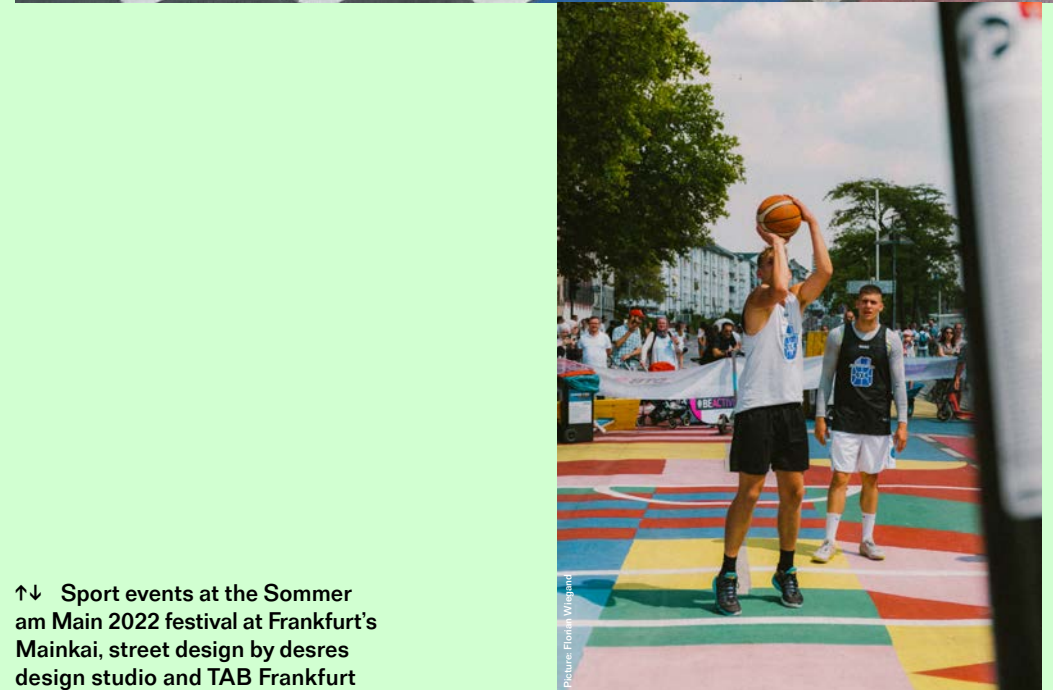
EZB Basketball Open  
Gym at the Wohnzimmer  
Hauptwache 2022,  
Frankfurt





## Sport and exercise in the community

For many people sport and exercise, like culture and crafts, have a compensating effect in stressful times, triggering a feeling of well-being, relaxation or even euphoria. In addition, there is a sense of community that welds people together during sporting activities, be it in a Zumba class or a basketball team. In a nutshell: sport makes people happy and brings them together, both these aspects offer a sound basis for further joint projects. Especially in Germany, so far, sporting activities have taken place primarily in sports clubs and fitness clubs. Every year, however, clubs complain about declining membership, and the threshold of joining a club seems to be becoming more and more of a hurdle. At the same time, fitness clubs are increasingly offering enticing packages to attract paying customers, while everywhere, the cost of living is rising. It is all the more crucial then, to create free or low-cost and inclusive sports and exercise facilities outside the home. In 2022, as part of the funding programme Zukunft Innenstadt (Future of the Inner City) in Frankfurt, two model projects initiated experimental and cooperative schemes, aimed at using public space for sports activities: Sommer am Main (Summer on the Main), an urban space festival on the Mainkai, temporarily blocked for vehicle traffic, and the Wohnzimmer Hauptwache (Hauptwache Living Room) real-life laboratory. The eventful days and colourful images from the past months have stuck in the minds of the citizens and politicians involved and have released an energy that will provide a valuable basis for how to approach the next stages and implement them in a sustainable form.



↑↓ Sport events at the Sommer am Main 2022 festival at Frankfurt's Mainkai, street design by desres design studio and TAB Frankfurt

Sport

# Projects



- ↑ Skate park under the Friedensbrücke in Frankfurt, by Concrete Skate, endboss and Yamato Living Ramps
- ↓ OFLand, a temporary skate park at Offenbach harbour, by Concrete Skate



## Open Sports

Open Sports is the overall theme for designing and planning freely accessible sports and leisure areas in public spaces, beyond regular club activities. It was trialled on a large scale at central locations, such as sports fields at Sommer am Main and Wohnzimmer Hauptwache in 2022, and on a small scale in neighbourhoods, such as the concrete skateboard park at the tip of the harbour island in Offenbach.

with EZB Basketball, Concrete Skate and TAB Frankfurt

## Haus der Vereine (house of associations) at Offenbach main station

The Haus der Vereine is a network of associations in Offenbach that aims to collaborate in an existing structure, such as the main station. Joint projects shall promote civic engagement and voluntary work, supporting women and people with a migrant background so that they too can become (politically) involved.  
with City of Offenbach and bb22

## Public fitness trails (Trimm-dich-Pfade)

The goal is to expand and update the concept of Trimm-dich-Pfade (fitness trails) in existing squares, parks and green spaces, e.g. along the Grüngürtel (regional green park belt).  
with the municipalities

Illumination of Offenbach main station at the Luminale festival



## Sport and exercise on unused flat roofs in city centres

This project aims at offering public sport and exercise facilities on unused flat roofs, e.g. along Frankfurt's Zeil shopping street or local shopping malls, expanding on what was previous only a consumer-oriented offer.  
with City of Frankfurt

## Covered skateboard facilities and halls in Frankfurt RhineMain

Covered skateboard facilities and halls are a welcome addition to the existing, mostly scarce, open-air skateboard parks in Frankfurt RhineMain. They can be used year-round, connecting the local and regional skating community, with further potential to link it with the graffiti and street-art scene.

with Concrete Skate

## Integrated sports development planning in Frankfurt RhineMain

The integrated sports development planning in Bad Homburg, that included a participatory approach, is a pilot project in 2023. The findings are to be extended to other similarly situated municipalities in Frankfurt RhineMain.

with the municipalities

## Mainbad, Frankfurt RhineMain

Mainbad is a swimming experience in the river, a natural swimming pool in the Main. A reservoir of swimming water located in the river, separated from it by a barely perceptible membrane. Access, edges and platforms are reduced to a minimum. The riverbank will be used for changing rooms and technical rooms. Its location can be varied, making the Mainbad a nomadic project.

Concept: Freistil and Luis Etchegorry

Open Call Submission



Visualisation of the Mainbad at the Museumsufer (museum embankment) in Frankfurt-Sachsenhausen

# Work

## Digitalisation and the pandemic: an impetus for new ways of working



The way in which our working world has changed due to digitalisation is encapsulated in the term New Work. It encompasses, in particular, the changing demands and needs of both employees and workers, especially in Generation Y and those younger, as well as their new needs regarding how work is organised and how workplaces are designed. In both urban and rural areas, new and changed places of work have emerged, for example, co-working spaces and working from home. The Covid19 pandemic in particular has led to this issue becoming increasingly linked to other fields of action, such as consumption, culture, housing, mobility and public space.

## A mix of functions

Since the 2000s, urban planners in Europe, and especially in Germany, have been increasingly pushing for a mix of functions. This is in order to make better use of existing buildings and to reduce time and emissions by cutting travel distances through the close proximity of housing, work and consumer services. The introduction of a new designation – urban area (urbanes Gebiet) – in the building regulations has brought initial improvement in terms of functional mix. However, in reality, permitting a slight increase in noise values of 3dba has changed very little. In addition, the building area typical for city centres, the core zone, also needs a major rethink, if potential visions are to be fulfilled.

In this field of action, urban planning as well as architectural and interior design solutions are put up for discussion, then developed, with pilot projects launched to illustrate them. Such projects question, for example, the role of multi-functional buildings in cities and in rural areas, the potential for converting and re-purposing existing buildings and making them more accessible, as well as the design of flexible working and living spaces.



↑ Working at Zollamt Studios in Offenbach  
 ↓ Jean-Claude Mawila's bike workshop at Zollamt Studios in Offenbach

# Work Projects

The site of the Innovationscampus  
in Offenbach



## Innovationscampus, Offenbach

Located on the former site of Clariant, not far from the river Main in Offenbach East, the Innovationscampus is an example for a transformation of an industrial site into a modern commercial location with a cultural centre.

with Offenbacher

Projektentwicklungsgesellschaft mbH



↑ Danzig am Platz in Frankfurt-Ostend  
→ Office space at the Danzig am Platz

## Danzig am Platz, Frankfurt

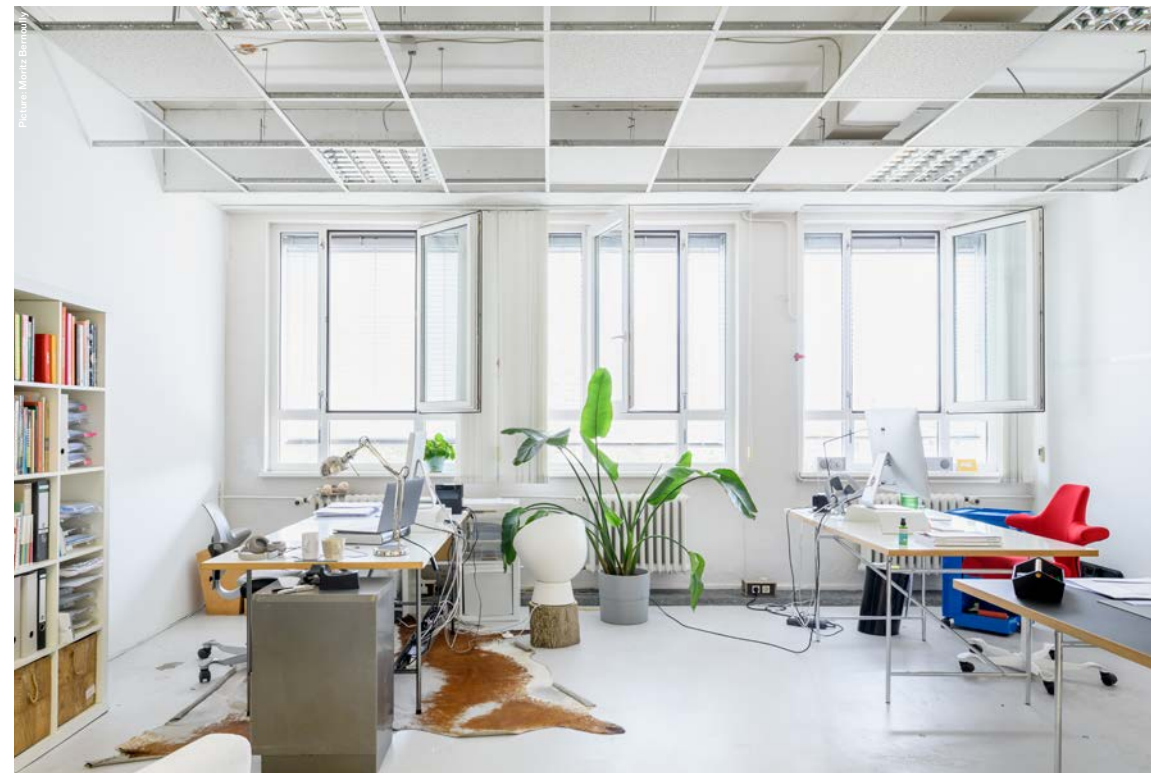
The Danzig am Platz, located at the former Neckermann site at the East Station in Frankfurt, is an experimental example for the conversion of an office and warehouse building into a co-working space for people in the creative industries, with workshops, studios, event spaces, and in combination with gastronomy. Our goal is to extend the previously promised interim use until at least 2026.

with Danzig am Platz

## Hafentor, Hanau

The Hafentor-complex is gradually being modernised, and vacant flats on the ground floor are being converted into artists' flats with public studios. Especially the revitalisation of the ground floor zone is intended to create a meeting place for residents and interested parties.

with Kreativräume für Hessen and IG Hafentor





## Zukunftszentrum Netzwerk Seilerei, Frankfurt

The former Wilhelm Reutlinger rope factory in Frankfurt-Oberrad will be converted into a communal and sustainable work-live-culture project, a future centre, in the coming years. Co-design and participation are included in the process.

with Netzwerk Seilerei



Urban Media Project

↑ A Pinch of Salt ceramics studio  
and shop in a ground floor  
space in Offenbach-Nordend  
← Event at the former rope factory  
in Frankfurt-Oberrad

## Ground Floor programme for Frankfurt RhineMain

The Ground Floor programme, tested in Offenbach in order to promote business start-ups in ground floor zones, should be extended and made permanent and, if possible, expanded to other similarly structurally weak districts and cities in Frankfurt RhineMain, such as Hanau or Frankfurt-Bahnhofsviertel (around Frankfurt Main Station).

with the City of Offenbach am Main  
and other municipalities



Picture: Capus Heubner

# RADAR – creative spaces for Frankfurt RhineMain

The local RADAR agency in Frankfurt is an example for the mediation and distribution of low-priced and existing commercial spaces to the creative class, which includes advice, support and self-organisation of project conversions. The intension is to expand it to other places in the region and to extend it for other user groups.

with RADAR and Kreativräume für Hessen



Talcraft Picture: Günther Diebold



Picture: @leo Herquist

↑↓ Various creative spaces in Frankfurt RheinMain, supported by RADAR

## Bringing (quiet) craft businesses into the city centres

Small workspaces that simultaneously fulfil a service or training objective, e.g. cargo bike delivery service or bicycle workshop or alteration/upcycling tailoring with/for fashion labels should be brought to the city centres.

with EMILIE Wiesbaden, Radraum Offenbach,  
Stitch by Stitch Frankfurt

## Swap Café

Swap cafés that offer repair work (manual skills) for a donation, or in exchange for IT training (digital skills) or language courses, with the elderly helping young people and vice versa, promotes inclusion and offers help among neighbours and in the larger community.

with Repaircafé and Teilerei Frankfurt/  
Stiftung Polytechnische Gesellschaft

Cargo bike transport  
for Kiezkaufhaus Wiesbaden



# Invitation

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***Design for Democracy. Atmospheres for a better life*** is not only the theme we have chosen for our application to become World Design Capital 2026. It is a movement dedicated to addressing the most pressing issues we face today. Through spirited discussion of numerous concepts, we have generated specific projects and far-reaching ideas for the year 2026 and beyond. At its climax, in the year 2026, we are inviting the world to join us and to become involved. What begins in the Frankfurt RhineMain region will eventually ripple out into other regions, countries and continents under the motto:  
**Let us design how we want to live.**

# Imprint

## Application package

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**Project managers:** Olaf E. Ginter, Daniela Kupetz (until 11/2022)

**Project curator:** Anna Scheuermann

**Project consultant:** Roland Lambrette

**Project assistant:** Helena Kiefer

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**Slideshow picture credits:** Eda Temucin (Frankfurt am Main), Ben Kuhlmann (Frankfurt am Main), Sebastian Schramm (Frankfurt am Main)

**Picture Credits:** City of Frankfurt am Main Office for Building and Real Estate, Lukas Kunkel (Offenbach am Main), emson / istockphoto, Cornelius Pfannkuch (Frankfurt am Main), Kirsten Bucher (Frankfurt am Main), Ben Kuhlmann (Frankfurt am Main)

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**Camera:** Christopher Schmidt, Philipp Bernhardt, Daniel Buro

**Drone:** Michael Mann

**Editing:** Bastian Ahrens, Philipp Bernhardt

**Sound:** Daniel Buro, Dirk Buro

**Narrator:** Peter Becker, Kristen Bush

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**Graphic animation:** Daniel Schulz

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