

## UPDATING GERMANY

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# PROJECTS FOR A BETTER FUTURE

The expulsion from paradise was irrevocable, and by now everyone knows it. Nonetheless, paradise, whether *hortus conclusus* or land of plenty, remains an enduring component of our culture's conception of the ideal. Put another way, the apple of knowledge—or the philosophy of the Enlightenment—has left its cultural mark on our society. But given our knowledge that a return to a supposedly ideal primitive state is impossible, we would do well to direct our gaze forward instead. Solutions must be found for the elimination of global inequality, social, economic, and environmental. And yet an affluent Europe continues to insulate itself from this truth, choosing instead to enjoy its bubble of prosperity in an imbalanced world. How much longer can this go on? Can we even afford this indifference for which others are paying?

The greatest social and environmental challenges stand clearly before our eyes. But in facing them, we know that there is no one right path forward. On the one hand, we must endure a condition of unpredictability; on the other hand, we must decide among a large variety of possibilities or pursue various options at once. What is more, we must remember that we effect big changes with our many small decisions in relation to water shortages, climate change, flooding, or anything else. Each of us is stuck in a gray area between knowledge and action, intention and ability.

One can imagine many propositions for changing this situation. The strategy that we have chosen is the “update”. We know updates from our computer, from those moments when our existing systems are enhanced step by step, the given elements improved as required, the malfunctioning parts replaced with functioning ones. Every update brings with it numerous improvements, corrections, and innovations—and, unfortunately, also new mistakes. It is not only this potential for mistakes that makes updates frustrating, but also the fact that for the most part, they are just small steps. Updates, in other words, take a branching trajectory full of detours and impasses. And yet this trajectory, these many small steps, can slowly bring about big changes; after many small updates, after all, comes a complete upgrade. Thus update cannot mean “relax,” but rather “begin immediately” and keep your eye on grand visions all the same. Update means permanent change.

Architecture can and does make a contribution to this process. It seals areas off, dams negative processes, and optimizes positive ones. But doing so far from depletes the possibilities of design and spatial imagination. The “100 Projects for a Better Future” are drawn from the fields of architecture and city planning, design and art. They are creative experiments and research projects, real buildings and developments, as well as utopian visions. They are based on intelligent, surprising and sometimes quite simple ideas. They are small compared to the problems of the world, but they represent compelling examples of approaches and mindsets that can lead the way forward.

The wide range of projects includes various types of update strategy. Maintenance strategies leave the system as it is. They seek to maintain the status quo by making certain adjustments or to treat superficial symptoms that have already emerged from a deeper social and ecological disease. They do not go to the roots of the system, but they are meaningful first steps. Prevention strategies, on the other hand, are comparatively more radical. They attempt to combat the causes of emerging problems with both technical innovation—for example, the use of non-fossil energy sources—and by energy-saving. These updates affect our daily lives more noticeably than the maintenance strategies, and their realization thus faces greater political hurdles, especially when they entail relinquishments or costs.