

# Urban Maestro

New governance strategies  
for Urban Design

## International Building Exhibitions (IBA)

an innovative and experimental  
urban and regional development  
instrument of excellence

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# 1. IBA AS A UNIQUE URBAN AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT INSTRUMENT

Cities and regions have always been changing. The speed and degree of that transformation today is particularly extraordinary, with fundamental changes when it comes to the climate, demographics, the economy, pandemics, urbanisation as well as digitalisation. As a result, urban and regional stakeholders must find answers and solutions to these dynamic and demanding framework conditions. In Germany, the highly diverse urban development format embodied by the International Building Exhibitions, or Internationale Bauausstellungen (IBA), has played a major role in facilitating these transformational processes. Following specific key themes, the IBA serve as laboratories to develop and test exemplary urban development solutions within a network of diverse partners within a certain period and in a spatially limited area. Moreover, the IBA are exhibitions intended to display these exemplary solutions and their impact on a city or region.

Over the last decades, the IBA format has attracted growing interest among urban and regional planners, as well as academics and other stakeholders in Germany and beyond. When examining the typology of tools for urban design governance drafted by Urban Maestro, the IBA format corresponds to the characteristics of the “Exploration” urban design tool:<sup>1</sup> IBA, as temporary laboratories for regional and urban development, involve and rely on different actors beyond solely urban authorities. Furthermore, the IBA aim to test new instruments as well as to find and identify new practices and processes in order to create qualities in urban or regional (built) environments and specific places.

To respond to today's challenges, formal planning instruments often do not suffice. Apart from the relatively well-structured, well-developed and well-equipped formal planning system in Germany, informal instruments and approaches like informal collaborations, the participation of citizens as well as local and regional development concepts have gained further and further importance. This is because these informal instruments offer more flexibility and further possibilities to involve a wider range of relevant actors, thus opening up different and sometimes more innovative ways and methods to address specific problems at the local or regional levels.<sup>2</sup> As policy

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<sup>1</sup> <https://urbanmaestro.org/tool/exploration/> (07.01.2021)

<sup>2</sup> DANIELZYK, R. And M. SONDERMANN (2018): Informelle Planung. In: ARL – AKADEMIE FÜR RAUMFORSCHUNG UND

LANDESPLANUNG (ed.): Handwörterbuch der Stadt- und Raumentwicklung. ARL – Akademie für Raumforschung und Landesplanung. Hannover, p. 963-974.

instruments, they directly support the implementation of future-oriented projects with new constellations of actors in a specific period.<sup>3</sup>

Among urban and regional development formats, the IBA set themselves apart because they are open, flexible and self-binding: they are always self-evident, and there is no organisation or institution to designate an initiative as an IBA. Moreover, IBA do not follow a standardized format with pre-defined requirements or specifications regarding organisational forms, topics or timelines. Therefore, former and present IBA not only differ regarding their themes and organisational structure, but also their scale and involved actors. Unlike standardised formats like garden exhibitions (e.g. Bundesgartenschau/the German Federal Horticulture Show (BUGA) or Internationale Gartenbauausstellung/International Horticultural Exhibition (IGA)), the European Capital of Culture or the European Green Capital, the IBA present an “open” and flexible format, with each IBA developing its own specific profile. However, while any IBA should be independent on an operational level, at the same time they should be formally linked to relevant actors at the local, regional or state levels in order to secure their “smooth” implementation. In addition, IBA always aim to combine bottom-up and top-down strategies.<sup>4</sup>

IBA also stand out and set high standards because of their geographical and content-related scale as well as their exceptional programmatic claims and quality goals: IBA always focus on a key theme that tackles specific local or regional challenges as well as issues of international relevance. In addition, as fields of experimentation and temporary laboratories, IBA help develop new and innovative solutions to challenges and problems that standard instruments or everyday practices cannot solve. Moreover, a central focus on quality standards derived from former IBA is just a hallmark of all IBA, as is the claim of significance beyond time and place. IBA also serve as an impetus for a specific region, city or place and have long-term effects on the local and regional planning culture and beyond.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> DANIELZYK, R (2020): Die Organisation des Außeralltäglichen. In: BUNDESMINISTERIUM DES INNERN, FÜR BAU UND HEIMAT (BMI) (ed.): Zur Zukunft Internationaler Bauausstellungen. Thesen und Empfehlungen von Beitragenden der Konferenz „Internationale Bauausstellungen — Anspruch | Alltag | Innovation“ 14. und 15. November 2019 in Berlin. Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat (BMI). Berlin, p. 12-13 ([https://www.internationale-bauausstellungen.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/IBA\\_Arbeitsheft-Zur-Zukunft-Internationaler-Bauausstellungen\\_2020.pdf](https://www.internationale-bauausstellungen.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/IBA_Arbeitsheft-Zur-Zukunft-Internationaler-Bauausstellungen_2020.pdf) (07.01.2021)); Danielzyk, R. and M. Sondermann (2018): Informelle Planung. In: ARL – Akademie Für Raumforschung und Landesplanung (ed.): Handwörterbuch der Stadt- und Raumentwicklung. ARL

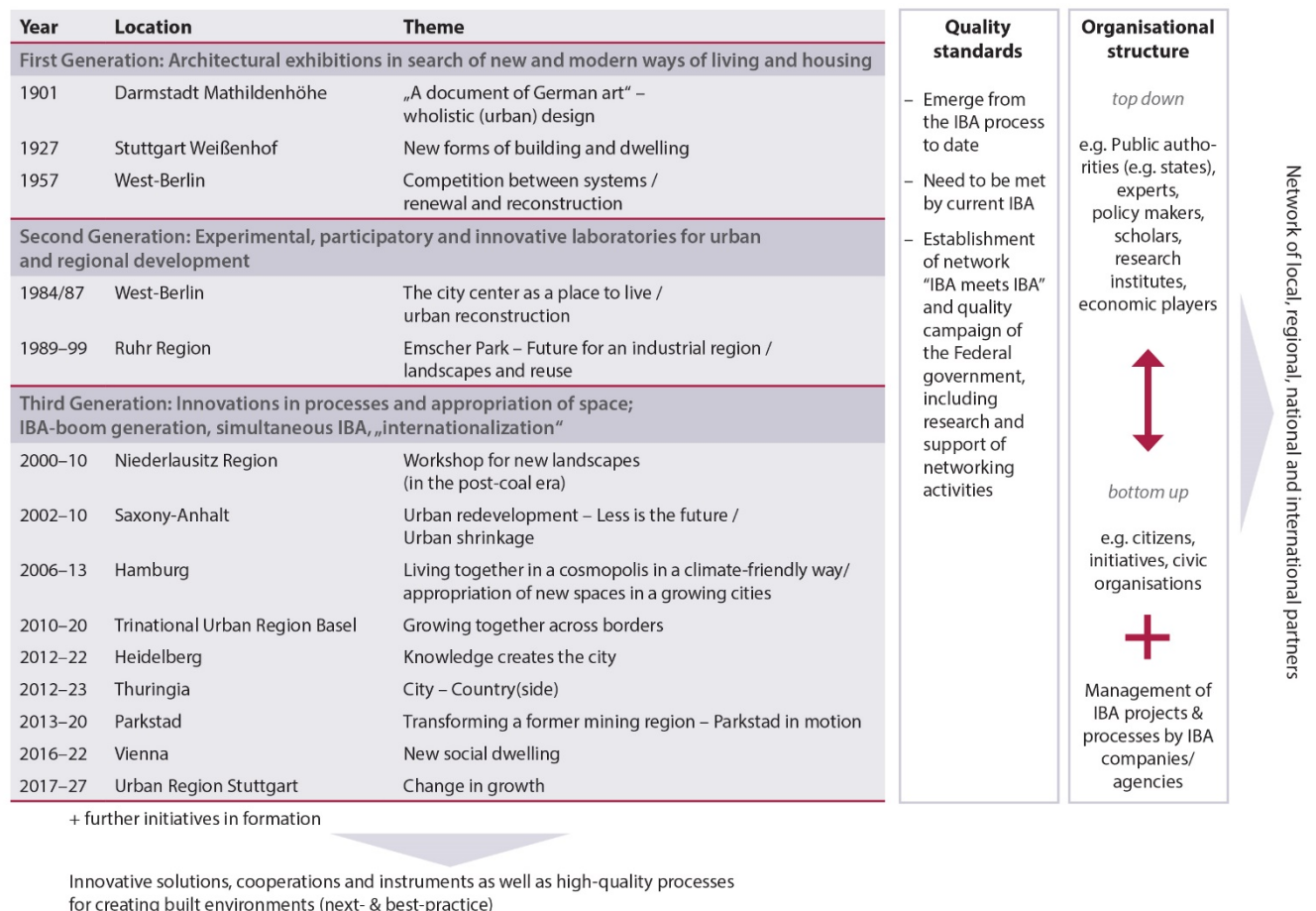
– Akademie für Raumforschung und Landesplanung. Hannover, p. 963-974. (<https://shop.arl-net.de/media/direct/pdf/HWB%202018/Informelle%20Planung.pdf> (07.01.2021)); IBA Advisory Board of the BMI (2017): A memorandum on the future of International Building Exhibitions. Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (BMI) (ed.). Berlin. (<https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/publikationen/themen/bauen/wohnen/iba-momerandum-internationale-bauausstellungen.html> (07.01.2021)).

<sup>4</sup> Walter, J. (2010): Internationale Bauausstellungen als Instrument der Stadtentwicklung – Zum “Warum, Wann, Wofür” aus Sichte der Städte und Regionen. In: Internationale Bauausstellung IBA Hamburg GmbH (ed.): Netzwerk IBA meets IBA. Zur Zukunft Internationaler Bauausstellungen. Jovis Verlag GbH. Berlin, p. 56-63.; IBA Advisory Board of the BMI (2017)

<sup>5</sup> IBA Advisory Board of the BMI (2017)

IBA are always as good as their projects, which constitute the core of each IBA: the so-called IBA projects may take on a number of different shapes and appearances, and play a central role given that they address the key theme of an IBA in different ways: they may support the construction of an exceptional new building or an innovative and temporary intervention, as well as the approbation of existing structures. Different actors such as local initiatives, organisations as well as urban authorities or private-public partnerships implement these small and large projects. Moreover, all IBA projects should set examples and identify new ways stemming from thinking “outside the box” – and these innovative approaches should be highlighted at an exhibition at the culmination of each IBA and have an impact that goes beyond the course of an IBA.

IBA should always have an international dimension: their international scope extends to the relevance of its central theme and the resulting projects, the involvement of external experts and outstanding contributions from abroad as well as public relations and networking.<sup>6</sup>



Over the last century, the themes and scopes of the IBA have changed considerably, yet the search for innovative, high-quality urban solutions lives on (source: © BBSR and BMI).

<sup>6</sup> IBA Advisory Board of the BMI (2017)

## 2. IBA IN TIME AND SPACE – FROM ARCHITECTURAL EXHIBITIONS TO EXPERIMENTAL FIELDS FOR URBAN AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

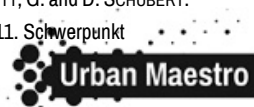
IBA are widely recognised as a flagship of Baukultur and the planning culture in Germany and beyond. In their 100-year-long history, IBA have gained international acknowledgement and evolved significantly.<sup>7</sup> In fact, IBA date back to the well-known “first generation:” Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt (1901-1914), Weißenhofsiedlung Stuttgart (1925-1927) and Interbau Berlin (1953-1957) mainly resembled architectural exhibitions in search of new and modern forms of living and housing, having focused on significant single buildings from well-known international architects.<sup>8</sup>

By the “second generation,” IBA had advanced to experimental, participatory and innovative laboratories for urban and regional development. The IBA Berlin (1979-1984/87) was the first to take on a broader scope and focused on urban repair and renewal based on tradition and the preservation of historical buildings and fabric. This IBA was supported by numerous local initiatives and stimulated a broad discourse about urban development: By developing and shaping the principles of “critical reconstruction” (in German: kritische Rekonstruktion) and “careful urban renewal” (in German: behutsame Stadterneuerung), the IBA Berlin marked a historic shift of paradigms in urban planning and architecture that is still detectible in Europe and beyond today. Solutions that the IBA Berlin developed under these laboratory conditions, like citizen-participation or the adaptive-reuse of old buildings and urban brown-fields, are now considered standard urban planning instruments.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> For more information about all former and present IBA, see: <https://www.internationale-bauausstellungen.de/en/history/> (07.01.2021)

<sup>8</sup> ALTROCK, U. (2011): Internationale Bauausstellungen im Wandel der Zeit. Ein Rückblick auf Veränderungstrends anlässlich des Abschlusses zweier IBA im Jahr 2010. In: ALTROCK, U., KUNZE, R., SCHMITT, G. and D. SCHUBERT: Jahrbuch Stadterneuerung 2011. Schwerpunkt



“Stadterneuerung und Festivalisierung”. Universitätsverlag der TU Berlin. Berlin, p. 51-62.; for more information on the history of IBA, see: DURTH, W. (2010): Eine Zeitreise durch die Baukultur. Zur Geschichte der Internationalen Bauausstellungen. In: INTERNATIONALE BAUAUSSTELLUNG IBA HAMBURG GMBH (ed.): Netzwerk IBA meets IBA. Zur Zukunft Internationaler Bauausstellungen. Jovis Verlag GbH. Berlin, p. 16-31.

<sup>9</sup> ALTROCK, U. (2011); IBA ADVISORY BOARD OF THE BMI (2017); DURTH, W. (2010); see also: [www.internationale-bauausstellungen.de](https://www.internationale-bauausstellungen.de) (07.01.2021)





The IBA Berlin, aimed at "saving the broken city" through careful modernization, contextual additions as well as the conversion of existing buildings, wrote European urban history and set new guiding principles for urban development (source: © S.T.E.R.N. GmbH).

Subsequently, the internationally acclaimed IBA Emscher Park (1988-1999) in the Ruhr area widened the thematic scope of IBAs to landscapes and the regional level alongside addressing environmental, economic and housing issues as well as aspects of identity in this declining industrial region. Under this IBA's umbrella than 100 projects were implemented in a new 70-kilometre-long landscape park across 17 cities, with these projects aimed at demonstrating future development paths as well as preserving and creating new cultural identities for the region. For example, industrial monuments were re-used as places for culture and education, and traditional workers' houses were modernised and preserved, thus fuelling the debate about the conversion of industrial sites.<sup>10</sup>

Up until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the "second generation" IBA set high quality standards in urban development and pointed the way for all following IBA regarding thematic approaches and the implementation of projects with an international scope and attention. Since 2000, the "third generation" IBA have added their own characteristics to this legacy, with a widening range of tasks and topics as well as the likewise widening geographical scope of many IBA. As SIEBEL puts it: "IBA offer the possibility to create places that maintain their unique characteristics in the long run and that embody an exceptional attraction and publicity, in which the spirit of the responsible actors is tangible and anchored in the collective cultural memory over generations. However, the spaces addressed have increasingly become larger."

<sup>10</sup> IBA ADVISORY BOARD OF THE BMI (2017); P. PINCH and N. ADAMS, N. (2013): The German Internationale Bauausstellung (IBA) and Urban Regeneration: Lessons from the IBA Emscher. In: LEARY, M (ed.): The Routledge Companion to

Urban Regeneration. Routledge. London, p. 230-241; REICHER, C., NIEMANN, L. and T. SCHAUZ (2011): Die Festivalisierung der Internationalen Bauausstellung Emscher Park und ihrer Folgeformate im Ruhrgebiet. In: ALTROCK, U., KUNZE, R., SCHMITT, G. and D. SCHUBERT: Jahrbuch Stadterneuerung 2011. Schwerpunkt "Stadterneuerung und Festivalisierung". Universitätsverlag der TU Berlin. Berlin, p. 39-50.



The IBA Emscher Park aimed to provide an impetus for economic change in the Ruhr region using new urban, social, cultural and ecological ideas, preserving and reusing industrial culture, and implementing projects such as the Zollverein Coal Mine Industrial Complex (source: © Thomas Willemsen).

Simultaneously, the intervals between each IBA have shortened and, for the first time, several IBA have been run in parallel – two in Eastern Germany and one in Western Germany: The IBA Fürst-Pückler-Land (2000-2010) induced a new interpretation and transformation of the mostly rural post-mining environments of the Lausitz region, while at the same time the IBA Stadtumbau (Urban Renewal) in Saxony-Anhalt (2002-2010) focused on shrinking small and medium-sized cities and was the first IBA to span across an entire state. Simultaneously, the IBA Hamburg (2006-2013) focused on urban development to connect the disfavoured parts south of the Elbe River with the city centre.<sup>11</sup> Currently, six IBA have taken place, and more initiatives have emerged – among them the idea of an IBA Africa supported by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ).

The current IBA could be considered an “IBA-boom generation”: on the one hand, it is characterised by their simultaneous implementation and the fewer available resources at their disposal compared with former IBA. Thus, there is a notion of competition for important strategic themes among the initiatives as well as the urge to differ from one another. Moreover, the financial resources for the IBA are limited: in Germany, there is no single financial source dedicated to IBA, therefore IBA must pursue the traditional national funding options and as such need to attract subsidy programmes through high-quality proposals. On the other hand, IBA have taken on an increasingly international dimension: they have attracted a growing interest beyond Germany with other European countries entering into the dialogue. This has led to the active involvement of international architects and experts, an expanded reception and scope of themes as compared to earlier building exhibitions, and some IBA or IBA-projects have even resulted from bi- or trilateral initiatives, or have taken place abroad. For example, the IBA Lausitz implemented several German-Polish projects to help experience the border between these two countries that in some cases cuts through formerly united cities.<sup>12</sup> The IBA Basel was initiated by the Trilateral Eurodistrict of Basel, an organization of municipalities and cities located along or near the borders of Switzerland, France and Germany, to overcome existing administrative and planning barriers.<sup>13</sup> While practice has shown that most planning instruments apply to limited territories, typically stopping at regional or international borders, in some cases, plans could be coordinated and made compatible. Moreover, the IBA Parkstad (2013-2021) in the Netherlands and the IBA Vienna (2016-2022) in Austria are the first IBA to take place outside Germany.

<sup>11</sup> DURTH, W. (2010)

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.iba-see2010.de/de/verstehen/projekte/projekt23.html> (07.01.2021)

<sup>13</sup> NEUHAUS, G. and R. MARTI (2013): IBA Basel 2020: Zwischen Distanz und Kooperation. In: Stadtbauwelt. Vol. 197, p. 32-37 ([https://www.bauwelt.de/dl/740141/bw\\_2013\\_12\\_0032-0039.pdf](https://www.bauwelt.de/dl/740141/bw_2013_12_0032-0039.pdf), 07.01.2021).



Furthermore, going beyond the material dimension of buildings, the newest IBA generation focuses particularly on innovations in processes. Thus, the thematic and conceptual emphases of some IBA and IBA projects have shifted from the mere production of space to the more abstract and complex appropriation of space. As ALTROCK (2011) states, IBA have evolved from building shows as exhibitions of “space-production” to “exhibitions of space-practices”<sup>14</sup>. Thus, temporary and performative dimensions through the involvement of artists or scenographers, or the staging of concrete places and their (re)interpretation, now constitute the conceptual core of many IBA projects. For instance, the projects of the IBA Thuringia, with its focus on urban-rural relations spanning across the whole state, mainly focus on the temporary and performative appropriation, reuse, and relabelling of vacant places.<sup>15</sup> For instance, through civic engagement, an unused train station was transformed into a flexible space used both for a grocery store offering regional products, and as a meeting space. In the project proposal “Summer retreat Schwarza Valley”, a landscape which has offered an escape for urban dwellers since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, visitors can now get to know impressive yet derelict former vacation estates, indulge in the scenery and witness the successive activation of the landscape.



Abandoned train stations have become a typical sight in rural regions. As a project of IBA Thuringia, the former station in Rottenbach was revitalized and redesigned as a transport hub for buses, trains, cars and bicycles (image source: © IBA Thüringen, Thomas Müller).

In summary, while the IBA as an instrument has changed and evolved over time, some of its core features have remained: the IBA format has been marked by a great internal diversity, with each IBA having or having had its own focus, and each IBA having had a “tradition of quality” given that they fulfil the highest quality standards

<sup>14</sup> ALTROCK, U. (2011)

<sup>15</sup> ARCH+ (ed.) (2017): Stadtland – Der neue Rurbanismus. Arch+. Vol. 228.; INTERNATIONALE BAUAUSSTELLUNG

as shaped by former IBA. In fact, former and present IBA illustrate how several aspects regarding the formal integration and operational dimensions particularly contribute to successful IBA. These are displayed in the following chapters.

### 3. IBA EMBEDDED IN SPACE AND PLACE – MULTI-LAYER SUPPORT STRUCTURES, PROFESSIONAL MANAGEMENT AND EXCEPTIONAL PROJECTS

Since formal and informal instruments in urban and regional development can be seen as complementary to one another<sup>16</sup>, a successful IBA needs to serve both dimensions. The IBA as an instrument is informal itself, but it does rely on informal tools, concepts and strategies that span individual planning departments in cities and across municipal boundaries. Hence, for the successful implementation of an IBA, it is crucial to link it to formal structures, instruments and actors as well as to other relevant stakeholders in one way or another during the different phases of the IBA.<sup>17</sup>

#### **IBA as major longer-term initiatives require multi-layer support structures**

Various actors or stakeholders can be the main force behind an IBA, and an IBA is manifested through self-empowerment and an open space for discourse: in the case of IBA Emscher Park, the initiative was largely state-led,<sup>18</sup> while a trinational organisation of municipalities in the region initiated IBA Basel. Often, “*key personalities and their vision and charisma as agents of change in complex and fragmented policy and political environment*”<sup>19</sup> help develop and implement an IBA. However, for its setup, local initiatives and the engagement of local actors as well as

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<sup>16</sup> LAMKER, C. (2014): Die Dichotomie von formell und informell überwinden – planerische Instrumente als Bausteine strategischer Navigation. In: GROTHEER, S., SCHWÖBEL, A. and M. STEPPER (ed.): Nimm's sportlich – Planung als Hindernislauf. Arbeitsberichte der ARL 10. Verlag der ARL. Hannover, p. 143-158 ([https://shop.arl-net.de/media/direct/pdf/ab/ab\\_010/ab\\_010\\_gesamt.pdf](https://shop.arl-net.de/media/direct/pdf/ab/ab_010/ab_010_gesamt.pdf) (07.01.2021))

<sup>17</sup> GUERRA, M.W. and U. SCHAUER (2014): Instrumente der räumlichen Planung und ihre Auswirkungen auf die Landschaftsstruktur in der Niederlausitz. Weimar.

<sup>18</sup> P. PINCH and N. ADAMS (2013)

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

external views and inputs are indispensable driving forces. For instance, formal and informal preparatory discussions among local and external experts as well as with the public are crucial to help identify and define the topics.<sup>20</sup> Thus, already at the very beginning of an IBA but also during its implementation, the combination of bottom-up and top-down strategies is essential. Therefore, as a major contributor to its success, an IBA should clearly communicate its main theme, specific projects and the underlying narrative to the public at large. As well, in order to foster public relations, modern communication and presentation strategies help obtain national and international attention. In addition, IBA should develop and utilise suitable tools and formats to encourage and enable the participation of local citizens and initiatives.

Moreover, IBA rely on political support at the city, regional and, in the case of Germany, state levels: they require long-term development processes that often span more than one political legislative period. Consequently, long-term political stability, consent and commitment are crucial for both the set up and implementation of the IBA and should be built up right from the very beginning of any IBA process.<sup>21</sup> In Germany, since the states manage most EU, national and their own state funding programmes, their support and commitment are particularly important for allocating the required financial resources.<sup>22</sup> In addition, IBA should involve private actors and the local economy in order to secure funding. Moreover, since IBA never emerge and develop in isolation, networking at all levels is crucial – from the neighbourhood, the city and the region to the state and beyond, with citizens, initiatives and organisations, authorities, policy makers, scholars and research institutes as well as economic players. All these stakeholders should be involved throughout the IBA process: to get it started and running, to fulfil the high-quality standards, and to ensure the implementation of its long and multifaceted format.<sup>23</sup>

### **IBA as highly complex initiatives of excellence require professional management**

When a city, region or state decides to carry out an IBA, a suitable operational and organisational body with the necessary management and communication skills must be set up. Typically, an IBA company (or agency) ensures adherence to high standards and fulfils the complex tasks required for the development and implementation of exceptional projects in a limited time frame. Furthermore, it is essential that the IBA company is independent in its finances, organisational forms

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<sup>20</sup> IBA Advisory Board of the BMI (2017)

<sup>22</sup> IBA Advisory Board of the BMI (2017)

<sup>21</sup> Walter, J. (2010)

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

and thematic priorities. As a result, IBA companies usually have a quasi-corporate character and, in Germany, often take on the legal form of a limited company (GmbH), making it independent of the public administration. IBA companies may also take on other forms, such as registered organisations, or be integrated into other institutions. In either case, IBA companies should be set outside the established political structures and administration. As well, since they have neither dedicated financial resources of their own nor binding legal competencies, it is important to formally link and integrate relevant actors and *“thereby position[ing] [IBA] simultaneously inside and outside the state”*<sup>24</sup>. This leads to a balancing act: it is always essential to weigh the independent and neutral position of an IBA agency outside the political and administrative system against the need to ensure the resources, support as well as collaborations required for a successful implementation. In any case, the city or region in which an IBA is situated should be a shareholder in the company. Moreover, external experts and relevant actors could be involved in the official bodies of an IBA agency, such as advisory boards or boards of trustees.<sup>25</sup>

### **IBA as “next practice” require exceptional projects**

At the core of each IBA are the exceptional projects that do not simply focus on buildings or built structures, but rather demonstrate innovative conditions, collaborations and instruments for shaping these environments. Moreover, they highlight the quality of these processes and often function as “next practices”: this is self-evident, for example, in the new standards the IBA Emscher Park set for industrial reconversion and the IBA Berlin set for careful urban renewal – approaches that are widely practiced today. Furthermore, IBA projects animate the main theme of an IBA and as such should always be of local and international relevance. Additionally, they address the specific local challenges while at the same time contributing to the international discourse. In addition, IBA projects should always take a participatory approach when it comes to the development and implementation of projects: while IBA often initiate external top-down interventions that are derived from the main theme, their projects should be qualified and implemented through bottom-up activities, initiatives and local partners as well. For instance, IBA can produce IBA projects by promoting existing local projects that contribute to the main theme. Thus, one main task of the IBA company is to launch and manage the participation process (e.g. through workshops and public discussions) as well as to ensure project qualification (e.g. through the use of instruments like international architectural and design competitions as well as feasibility studies). Moreover, IBA

<sup>24</sup> P. Pinch and N. Adams (2013)

<sup>25</sup> IBA Advisory Board of the BMI (2017); Danielzyk, R (2020)

agencies serve as intermediaries between the various stakeholders described above—they build up the specific cross-sectoral networks of relevant actors to implement the projects as well as to attract and allocate public and private sector funds; in fact, professional fundraising is an increasingly important task because most current IBA no longer have their own budgets for project implementation.<sup>26</sup>

During implementation, one main task is to oversee projects, their progress and their function as a next practice as well as how they interplay with the main theme. In Germany, where IBA do not have any legal planning competence, IBA agencies have to cooperate with local authorities to translate or integrate projects into formal instruments like development plans. As well, to ensure an independent and ambitious project qualification, IBA agencies typically do not implement projects themselves—rather, they function as enablers: they assist in getting them started and later monitor them critically while local or external partners are responsible for the actual implementation of the projects. Following the official closure of an IBA, the projects, initiated collaborations, and new planning cultures should have a lasting effect on their cities or regions and beyond.

## **4. BEYOND TIME AND PLACE – SECURING IBA AS A HALLMARK OF BAUKULTUR AND PLANNING CULTURE**

As described above, IBA aim to achieve excellence and innovation. They strive to develop exceptional and new solutions to central and pressing issues facing cities and regions. Hence, IBA fuel and shape the debates and guiding principles surrounding future urban and regional development as well as the creation and evaluation of new instruments and planning cultures in significant ways beyond their time and place.

Why may a city or region want to develop and implement an IBA? There may be several reasons: an IBA is a very “open” and flexible format applicable to various local or regional contexts; an IBA offers the possibility to find and identify new solutions for current and complex problems that cannot be solved with traditional

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<sup>26</sup> IBA Advisory Board of the BMI (2017); Altrock, U. (2011)

instruments; and, importantly, an IBA helps generate and attract local, regional, national as well as international attention to urban and regional development issues.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, an IBA is always an experiment, and as such stakeholders starting and implementing an IBA need to take risks when it comes to individual projects or the whole IBA may fail, meaning the responsible actors may need to find ways to deal with those underlying challenges. Moreover, the IBA boom that has taken place since 2000 has led to an increasing shortage of, and competition for, resources: of money, people, themes and attention.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, it has become obvious that each IBA needs private and public funding, exceptional and highly qualified individuals, main themes of national and international relevance and the attention of the national and international public, experts and politicians.

This “IBA inflation” poses the question of whether current exhibitions still fulfil the high quality standards set by former IBA, and if they actually showcase next practices or simply constitute an example of best practices. As DURTH emphasises (2020): *“It is important to learn from the experiences that IBA made in the last century, but it is dangerous to measure current developments solely in regard to the success of the past.”*<sup>29</sup> In order to review the quality of each IBA, the transfer of knowledge and experience plays a crucial role. For the first time, all current IBA met on the initiative of the IBA Hamburg and established the “IBA meets IBA” network in 2007. Since then, this network, supported by the German federal government, has evolved and thrived. In 2009, it published a “Memorandum on the future of IBA” as a common basis for future IBA that describes features and quality standards for all IBA, as well as recommendations for the implementation of them.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, with the goal of helping to ensure the IBA’s quality, the German federal government started a state-led quality campaign for IBA. The government appointed an advisory board on the future of the IBA that revised the memorandum and added guidelines on important topics such as organisation, financing and projects in 2017.<sup>31</sup> The government also initiated and conducted research projects to monitor and advise the learning processes on IBA. Finally, in 2019, the German government announced the

<sup>27</sup> Walter, J. (2010)

<sup>28</sup> Siebel, W. (2019); Durth, W. (2020): Die IBA als Treffpunkt, Werkstatt und Zukunftsentwurf. In: Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat (BMI) (ed.): Zur Zukunft Internationaler Bauausstellungen. Thesen und Empfehlungen von Beitragenden der Konferenz „Internationale Bauausstellungen — Anspruch | Alltag | Innovation“ 14. und 15. November 2019 in Berlin. Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat (BMI). Berlin, p. 6-7.

([https://www.internationale-bauausstellungen.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/IBA\\_Arbeitsheft-Zur-Zukunft-Internationaler-Bauausstellungen\\_2020.pdf](https://www.internationale-bauausstellungen.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/IBA_Arbeitsheft-Zur-Zukunft-Internationaler-Bauausstellungen_2020.pdf) (07.01.2021)) (quote translated by authors).

<sup>29</sup> Durth, W. (2020)

<sup>30</sup> IBA Advisory Board of the BMI (2017)

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*



establishment of an IBA centre of competence in the following years to develop the state-led quality campaign even further.<sup>32</sup>

The following concluding remarks and lessons learned aim to nurture the debate about the quality standards of today's and future IBA:

- **IBA are never set or fixed, but always in motion and under development.** In order to measure the quality and success of an IBA as well as to ensure its transferability, it is important to understand IBA as representing a learning and developing system.<sup>33</sup> The quality standards established by former exhibitions should form the guiding principles for present and future IBA. At the same time, IBA, their circumstances as well as the background conditions for their implementation change constantly. Moreover, topics, networks of relevant actors, as well as planning processes themselves have become increasingly complex.
- **IBA consist of a strong network of innovative initiatives.** In light of the current "IBA-boom", it is recommended not just to focus on individual IBA, but also on their interlinkages and to go beyond measuring current IBA simply based on the achievements of former IBA given that they have been singular and locally confined events. This approach also allows for the innovative potential of today's heterogeneous initiatives to be fully utilized.<sup>34</sup>
- **Not every initiative is an IBA.** As mentioned previously, IBA represent a very flexible and "open" urban and regional development format that attracts growing interest which has led to an "IBA inflation". However, not every initiative or project must be or can be considered an IBA. As such it is crucial that the key actors driving such initiatives evaluate early on if the IBA is the best instrument or if other formats would be even better suited to pushing their process forward. As well, when starting an IBA initiative, failure is a legitimate option, so the courage to give up may prove indispensable. For instance, there have been several failed attempts at establishing new IBA, among them in Berlin and in the Rhine-Main area around Frankfurt.

**IBA as instruments to foster innovations in planning culture?** IBA aim to create new instruments and ways to address current problems that cannot be solved with traditional methods. Whether an IBA in fact creates a best or next practice can be

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<sup>32</sup> For further information about the state-led quality campaign, see also: [www.internationale-bauausstellungen.de](http://www.internationale-bauausstellungen.de) (07.01.2021)

<sup>33</sup> IBA ADVISORY BOARD OF THE BMI (2020): Thesen zur Weiterentwicklung von IBA. Berlin ([https://www.internationale-bauausstellungen.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/IBA\\_Thesenpapier-IBA-Expertenrat.pdf](https://www.internationale-bauausstellungen.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/IBA_Thesenpapier-IBA-Expertenrat.pdf) (07.01.2021))

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*

identified only ex-post.<sup>35</sup> That is to say, that instead of discussing the question about best or next practice, it may be more helpful to focus on the *alternative* practice that an IBA develops and tests. Then, only time will tell if the *alternative* practice becomes a *next* practice.

## KEY ONLINE RESOURCES

[www.internationale-bauausstellungen.de](http://www.internationale-bauausstellungen.de)

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<sup>35</sup> Jessen, J (2020): Best practices oder next practices? In: BUNDESMINISTERIUM DES INNERN, FÜR BAU UND HEIMAT (BMI) (ed.): Zur Zukunft Internationaler Bauausstellungen. Thesen und Empfehlungen von Beitragenden der Konferenz „Internationale Bauausstellungen — Anspruch | Alltag |

Innovation“ 14. und 15. November 2019 in Berlin. Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat (BMI). Berlin, p. 6-7 ([https://www.internationale-bauausstellungen.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/IBA\\_Arbeitsheft-Zur-Zukunft-Internationaler-Bauausstellungen\\_2020.pdf](https://www.internationale-bauausstellungen.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/IBA_Arbeitsheft-Zur-Zukunft-Internationaler-Bauausstellungen_2020.pdf)) (07.01.2021))

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## URBAN MAESTRO

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