

Welcome Address by the President of the HafenCity University Hamburg

Senator Prof. Kisseler, Prof. Petzet, Mr. Schoch, Mr. Hesse,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In my capacity as President of HafenCity University it is my privilege to continue the round of introductory statements. The name of our university says it all: It seems natural that we at HafenCity University should dedicate ourselves to the interface between the port and the city. For those of you who have come here from abroad let me tell you that the HCU – its full title is *University of the Built Environment and Metropolitan Development* – was established in 2006. It is a small, highly focused university. At long last, in 2013 we will be able to move into our new building.

In order to fully benefit from the opportunities that such a highly specialised university offers, we have started a general public debate about the most pressing issues concerning the development, the shaping and design as well as the future of our built environment. We would like to question the didactics and focuses of our scientific disciplines. We want to develop our strengths in the various subjects. Also, we strive to define the innovative issues and methods of our future orientation at the interfaces of separate disciplines. And we wish to develop interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary didactic and research approaches. We aim to jointly develop new solutions for the problems of our cities in the 21st century. As a metropolis, Hamburg offers an excellent playground for solutions that need to be compatible with the future requirements of the globalisation age. In this dynamic port city the issues of the future that we must tackle are particularly visible, in fact, you could say they are on our doorstep, more particularly on the waterfront.

Hamburg is not only a city which has a seaport and is situated on a river, but a metropolis that has to *go with the flow* to use a popular local phrase. It is almost inconceivable to take or show photographs or films of Hamburg without the port featuring in them. Poets and literati have been prolific in their *oeuvre* about Hamburg and they describe it as the *Gateway to the World* and a *World Port City*. They speak of the *Hamburg Brand* and the special atmosphere that prevails in this city.

Restructuring and revitalising the water front offers a unique and opportunity to bring together the port and the city the port and the city so they can form a symbiotic whole with a future. Changes in attitude and a positive new appreciation of the formerly derelict port and embankment zones are palpable in the public and in the media. Until fairly recently, these zones played hardly any part in the everyday lives of the people of Hamburg, in fact, that was the case until around a decade ago.

But the future cannot be shaped without recourse to the present and without making reference to the past. Right next to the *HafenCity*, the *Speicherstadt* constitutes a unique example of a series of historical warehouses. Further to the North and adjacent to it is the *Kontorhausviertel* (complex of old store houses buildings). These two ensembles are the envy of many a colleague in other seaport cities. They must be preserved and should continue to be used and well looked-after – due respect being given, of course, to the requirements of heritage preservation. Not only are the two ensembles very close to one another, but their functions of storing goods and conducting trade, respectively, complement each other. They both symbolize the economic might of the port city and at the same time epitomize typical local building traditions.

I am very pleased that Prof. Carola Hein and Prof. Dirk Schubert from the HafenCity University were able to contribute to this exciting agenda of the conference with lectures. We hope, that the launch of the nomination of these two ensembles as World Heritage sites will be crowned by success.

I wish you interesting presentations and thought-provoking discussions during this conference and I hope that you will have the opportunity to get to know for yourselves both *Speicherstadt* and *Kontorhausviertel*; that you will come to appreciate them, and, that we will all learn a great deal about similar cityscapes and heritage buildings in other seaports the world over.

Dr. Ing. Walter Pelka