See You There: Meeting Point Marktplatz! *Ci vediamo in piazza!*

Young Ideas for Blankenese Market Square

A lively neighborhood needs places where people can meet, participate, and feel welcome. Blankenese's market square already plays that role during its weekly markets and events organized by groups such as Markthaus e. V. Outside these events, however, the square can feel empty and even a little desolate. In response, the Blankenese church brought together local and international partners, students, and residents to explore how it could become a more welcoming place beyond market days.

The initiative began in March 2026, when students at Hamburg's Academy of Fashion and Design (AMD) developed initial ideas during a Spring Academy led by Wolf Kühr. Conversations in the neighborhood informed their work. In May, Wolf Kühr and the students presented their ideas at a Community Academy workshop with Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Willkomm of HafenCity University (HCU), where visitors helped discuss and develop them further.

The project drew on the principle of "urban acupuncture": small, place-specific interventions that can encourage wider social and ecological change. Rather than starting with architectural plans or a conventional consultation process, participants began by talking, creating, experimenting, and testing ideas in the square itself.

From July 13 to 17, 2026, the work continued at a Summer Academy. Jewish and Arab students from Israel took part under the guidance of Yair Engel of the Kibbutzim College of Education, Technology, and Arts in Tel Aviv and Sawsan Masarwa of the Attili Multidisciplinary High School in Tira. They worked alongside students from HCU's international urban development program and AMD students who had participated in the Spring Academy, skillfully guided by Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Willkomm and Wolf Kühr.

Residents were invited to share their ideas and experiences throughout the process. The goal was not to present finished designs ready for implementation, but to make emerging possibilities visible, to test them, and to encourage others to take part. The invitation—"See you at the market square—everyone is welcome!"—captures the project's central question: how can students and neighbors work together to make the square a livelier and more welcoming place for everyone? So, one more time:

"See you at the market square—everyone is welcome!"

Let's keep going!

The collaboration in the project has sparked a desire among those involved to continue, aiming to develop the inspiring beginnings of the Spring Academy and the Summer Academy into a recurring initiative. For example, annual gatherings around the Blankenese Market can set a sign of how the development of public spaces in cross-sector collaborations is particularly well-suited for

- bringing together local and global perspectives across the boundaries of culture, language, and generations in a peaceful interaction.
- making the best practices developed on-site visible, learning from each other, and carry their ideas beyond Blankenese – Act Local, Think Global.
- making conviviality – the art of living and working together – tangible as a symbol of a sustainable and future-proof organization of our community.

For example, conceivable options could be:

- a midsummer festival where the square is redesigned each year through the joint construction of festive infrastructure.
- an Urban Acupuncture Academy, where playful exploration is done on how public spaces can be changed through small, tactical interventions.
- a public celebration for the symbolic renaming of the marketplace to "Village Square" or the inauguration of the market hall as Blankenese's "Town Hall".
- a German-Israeli marketplace partnership, where two or more places exchange experiences on the use, design, and perception of public squares.
- The formation of a committee made up of representatives from the church and civil society, authorities, and local initiatives, as well as involving local businesses to further develop the square and to generate funding for carrying out additional projects.

What are your fresh ideas for Blankenese Market?