

Thomas Herzog
Munich, Germany

Thomas Herzog works in Munich, where he was born in 1941. He is considered one of the founders of bioclimatic architecture, both as a practitioner and teacher, having spent a large part of his life on this task in Europe, in the US and more recently in China. This committed activist of solar energy is also an expert deeply involved in international action on behalf of ecological architecture.

Thomas Herzog studied architecture in Munich in the early 1960s. His quest for an alternative architecture began in the 70s, when he chose inflatable structures as the subject of his doctoral thesis. This subject excited a whole post-hippie or – if one prefers– pre-ecological generation, in London with Archigram, in France with J.P. Jungmann and A. Stinco's Utopie group, in Germany with Hans-Walter Müller. The aim of inflatable architecture is to be nomadic, temporary, light and easy to install: an early version of "don't touch earth". In 1976, Thomas Herzog published a manual of "pneumatic construction using membranes and air",* which became a world reference in the field, reflecting his vocation as a teacher and his taste for invention and technology.

Thomas Herzog founded his practice in 1971. He was one of the pioneers of the theory and application of solar energy, first with houses and then, very quickly, with larger buildings, like the student residences in Windberg. He has designed large numbers of housing schemes in Germany and Austria. He has developed what amounts to a typology of collective solar housing, with comprehensive constructional systems and units designed to take maximum advantage of the sun and, more broadly, of climatic conditions.

Whilst he likes wood, and uses it masterfully, Thomas Herzog is an architect of steel and glass, which he uses to design architecture on a large scale, giving a different view of ecology than the typical alpine school image. Thomas Herzog's bioclimatic design is the architecture of big industrial nations. It is profoundly urban, since the eco-constructional solutions he proposes are suitable for industrial or economic schemes, able to "come into the city"*** and even the metropolis. The new pavilions of the Hanover Fair, built in 1996 and 2000, and the Wilkhahn factories, are examples of such integration. It is founded on a culture of permanent investment in industrial R&D. Thomas Herzog has transcended the classic architect/engineer combination, and has always worked on a *cluster* model, in Germany with the laboratories of the Munich Technical University and corporate technical departments, abroad in partnership with institutes. As an expert in his field, he also heads research and development programmes for the EU.

The Solar City project begun in Linz in 1992 for the new Pichling district is typical of this approach, involving the Municipality, several developers and building firms in the development of a solar town for 25,000 people, with its own amenities and transport system. The operation was run by the READ (Renewable Energy in Architecture and Design) group, with the engineer N. Kayser and the architects N. Foster, T. Herzog and R. Rogers. The aim of the group was to create an alliance of high density and maximum typological flexibility. The "solar city" project also entails active participation by the future inhabitants, who will develop their own neighbourhoods and certain public spaces. The big innovation is the energy supply. There is a shift of scale in solar energy production from the single building to the whole urban zone. Solar power "comes into the city", as an alternative to the power station economic model. Joint energy production through "solar" facilities will make the district autonomous and even able to feed part of its energy surplus into the urban grid.

M.H Contal

* Pneumatische Konstruktionen, Bauten aus Membranen und Luft – Handbuch für Architekten und Ingenieure - Hatje Verlag 1976

** Hermann Kaufmann uses this expression in explaining that eco-construction in wood needs to be able to build more than 4 storeys in order to meet the requirements of generic urban schemes.

Thomas Herzog born in Munich in 1941 Professor of Architecture at Technical University Munich (TUM) 1974-86; Dean of the Faculty of Architecture at TUM 2000-06; Guest Professor at Tsinghua University Beijing; Graham Professor at University of Pennsylvania (PENN). Chairman of 4th European Conference on Solar Energy in Architecture and Urban Planning 1996. Principal awards :Mies-van-der-Rohe-Prize 1981; Auguste-Perret-Prize for Technology in Architecture 1996; European Prize for "SOLARES BAUEN"2000; Heinz-Maier-Leibnitz-Medal for excellent research 2005; European Award for Architecture and Technology2006; International Architecture Award, Chicago Athenaeum 2007.