

## Bjarke Ingels

TED SPEAKER • TEDX SPEAKER

Most sustainability strategies are built around sacrifice – and that is why they stall. Organisations routinely treat environmental and social goals as constraints to satisfy, not as design inputs. The result is buildings, workplaces, and cities that are technically compliant but commercially and experientially ordinary.

The assumption that sustainability requires sacrifice is a design problem, not an economic law – Bjarke Ingels, founder of BIG and originator of the “hedonistic sustainability” concept, has spent two decades showing organisations what they gain when they treat it as a creative brief instead.

### Bjarke Ingels's 2026 Biography

#### Why organisations work with Bjarke Ingels

- His “hedonistic sustainability” concept – coined in a 2011 TED talk with over two million views – gives leadership teams a credible, named argument against the assumption that environmental ambition and commercial performance are in tension.
- The *Yes Is More* manifesto argues against the choice between bold vision and practical delivery; it is taught beyond architecture because the logic is genuinely transferable to any organisation navigating competing strategic demands.
- BIG’s project portfolio – CopenHill’s waste-to-energy plant with a public ski slope, the BIG U flood-defence park in Manhattan, the Google North Bayshore campus co-designed with Thomas Heatherwick – gives executive audiences proof that resolving sustainability and desirability through design produces outcomes superior to either goal pursued alone.
- He has spoken at the World Economic Forum, TED, WIRED, and 10 Downing Street, meaning his frameworks have already been stress-tested in front of heads of government, technology leaders, and senior executives.
- Teaching at Harvard, Yale, Columbia, and Rice runs alongside leading a 400-person practice with major projects on four continents – his arguments carry the authority of both the seminar room and the construction site.

#### Biography highlights

- Founder and creative partner of BIG (Bjarke Ingels Group), established 2006; offices in New York, London, and Copenhagen; team of 400+
- Originator of “hedonistic sustainability,” introduced in a 2011 TED talk

#### AVAILABLE FOR

- Panel Participation
- Speaking

#### BJARKE'S SPEAKING THEMES

- Climate Action and Sustainability
- Entrepreneurship
- ESG Strategy
- Growth Strategy
- Innovation & Disruption
- Leadership
- Organizational Design

**LANGUAGES:** English

now viewed over two million times

- Author of *Yes Is More: An Archicomic on Architectural Evolution* (2009) and *HOT TO COLD: An Odyssey of Architectural Adaptation*
- Named to TIME Magazine's 100 Most Influential People (2016); WSJ Innovator of the Year in Architecture; Fast Company 100 Most Creative People in Business
- Awards include the Golden Lion at the Venice Architecture Biennale (2004), ULI Award for Excellence (2009), Danish Crown Prince's Culture Prize (2011); Honorary Fellow of the AIA (2020) and RIBA (2015)
- Featured as opening subject of Netflix's *Abstract: The Art of Design*; speaker at TED, the World Economic Forum, WIRED, and 10 Downing Street
- Has taught at Harvard, Yale, Columbia, and Rice Universities; honorary professor at the Royal Academy of Arts, School of Architecture, Copenhagen

## Biography

CopenHill is a waste-to-energy plant in Copenhagen that doubles as a public ski slope, climbing wall, and rooftop hiking trail. It is not a compromise between environmental performance and civic amenity. It is Bjarke Ingels' most cited demonstration of what he calls "hedonistic sustainability" – the argument that reducing environmental impact and improving how people experience their city are the same design challenge.

In his 2011 TED talk, now viewed over two million times, Ingels introduced the concept and set out the logic. His manifesto *Yes Is More* pushed the argument further, proposing "pragmatic utopianism" as a design principle: the deliberate rejection of the choice between visionary ambition and commercial delivery. The book was written for architects. It is now taught in business and strategy contexts because the core argument is transferable.

Ingels founded BIG in Copenhagen in 2006, following earlier work at OMA under Rem Koolhaas and the co-founding of PLOT with Julien De Smedt. The firm now operates from New York, London, and Copenhagen with more than 400 staff. Its projects range from the BIG U – Manhattan's Hurricane Sandy flood-defence infrastructure, redesigned as a continuous public park – to Google's North Bayshore campus, co-designed with Thomas Heatherwick, where workplace performance and environmental targets were treated as a single design brief.

TIME Magazine named him one of the world's 100 Most Influential People in 2016. He holds the WSJ Innovator of the Year award, Honorary Fellowships from the AIA and RIBA, and has spoken at the World Economic Forum and 10 Downing Street. He has taught at Harvard, Yale, Columbia, and Rice. Netflix's *Abstract: The Art of Design* featured him as its opening subject. His discipline is architecture; his primary value to organisations is a framework for dissolving the trade-off between ambition and pragmatism.

## Key speaking topics

- Hedonistic sustainability and design-led climate action
- Pragmatic utopianism and innovation strategy
- Urban resilience and large-scale infrastructure design
- Architecture's role in organisational and civic identity
- Creative leadership at scale

- The built environment and corporate space strategy
- Design thinking across disciplines

## **Ideal for**

- C-suite and executive leadership teams at real estate, infrastructure, and large-scale development organisations
- Chief Sustainability Officers and ESG leads seeking to reframe sustainability as a source of commercial advantage rather than compliance cost
- Corporate boards and transformation leads examining how built environment decisions affect organisational culture, talent, and long-term asset value
- Civic leaders and urban planners making large-scale public investment decisions

## **Audience outcomes**

- A named, transferable framework – “hedonistic sustainability” – for challenging the trade-off assumption in ESG, design, and innovation strategy conversations
- Concrete examples, drawn from BIG’s global project portfolio, of how resolving competing constraints through design produces outcomes that neither goal alone would generate
- A reframe of what “innovation” means in large-scale, long-horizon project environments where short-term pragmatism typically wins
- Greater confidence in presenting design ambition as a strategic argument rather than an aesthetic or cost preference
- Practical insight into building and leading a high-velocity creative organisation across multiple geographies and project scales

## **Bjarke Ingels's 2026 talks & topics**

### **Hedonistic Sustainability**

Drawing on the principles behind CopenHill, the BIG U, and BIG’s broader project portfolio, this talk makes the case that sustainable design should – and can – increase quality of life rather than reduce it, turning the environmental brief into a competitive advantage.

### **Key takeaways:**

- The trade-off between sustainability and desirability is a design failure, not an economic inevitability
  - CopenHill and the BIG U demonstrate that civic, environmental, and commercial value can be generated by the same project when the brief is set correctly
  - Leaders can apply the “hedonistic sustainability” framing to shift internal conversations from regulatory compliance to strategic differentiation
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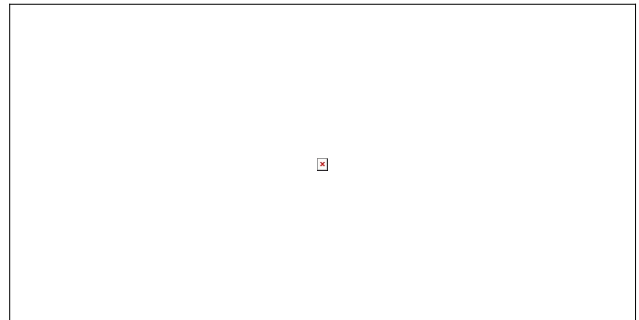
## Yes Is More: Pragmatic Utopianism in Practice

Built around the argument of Ingels' published manifesto, this talk challenges the assumption that bold ambition and practical delivery are incompatible - using BIG's project history to show what organisations gain when they stop pre-filtering their ideas.

### Key takeaways:

- "Pragmatic utopianism" is a design approach for resolving competing demands without defaulting to the lowest common denominator
- BIG's most significant projects emerged from explicitly refusing the either/or framing of the original brief
- The methodology is transferable: organisations that treat constraints as design inputs, rather than limits, consistently produce stronger outcomes

## Bjarke Ingels's Videos



## What Bjarke Ingels's clients say

Bjarke was great. He had a really good presentation on the project he's working on. We had around 700 architects to see him. He really understood the project and he has a lot to offer in his expertise. He has a great vision for innovating.

*NomadX Movement Festival*