

10 Questions for Francesca Ferguson, Initiator and Curator of the festival

How did you arrive at the concept for MAKE CITY and its programme?

The idea really took hold following the Senate of Berlin's decision to cancel the Internationale Bauausstellung in the summer of 2013 whilst at the same time the discussion on a referendum of the 100% Tempelhofer Feld initiative was still in full swing. When the referendum did happen, over a million citizens took part. For me, this made it abundantly clear: we need a discussion about new participation processes; we need an exchange of ideas that encompasses architecture, politics, investors and citizens. Only then can the culture of sharing and commoning become an obvious part of urban development.

What is done differently in Berlin?

Berlin has already proved itself to be an exception and in the future it also has the chance to do things differently: few other cities in Europe have such a volume of free areas and spaces. Similarly, no other city can lay claim to such creative potential, whilst at the same time having so little in the way of capital – also in terms of potential investors. When money is scarce, people are compelled to be active. As a result there are prototypes for what may constitute the 'building of the future' that break the traditional boundaries and even question entire professions and processes.

How can one facilitate such a programme in reality? How can it be created?

What we want the festival to demonstrate are solutions and new urban alternatives. Threads explored include communal living in alternative arrangements, new typologies, the embracing of the challenges ecological, economic and sociological in nature. We show that the boundaries and limitations which are perceived as dividing acts of withdrawal and acts of community, between private and public space, between politicians and citizens, can be overcome and renegotiated. Divisions between modes of living and working, between inside and the outside, between the ground floor and the pavement can be dissolved. There are many ways this can happen – building ground and floor plans can be completely rethought, the manufacturing processes are moving back into city centres. Thanks to the culture of urban gardening, the countryside is brought back into the city. A project like Bauhütte is a perfect example of a project in which the boundaries between the local residents, planners and stakeholders disappear. Architects and residents are able to meet each other on an equal footing, which also improves the understanding of the role of architects and the profession as a whole. It is these kinds of developments which constitute the MAKE CITY programme.

The festival asks a lot of questions: are we going to build (and live) on cemeteries? Will we construct wooden skyscrapers? Can cultural diversity be designed? Who is giving answers to those questions?

The answers – or rather the new approaches to city making, urban alternatives – are embodied within the projects that will be part of the festival. Some of them are still in their infancy and remained in a planning phase, whilst others are being created and reaching completion and can be visited during the event. MAKE CITY showcases all stages of these processes, all over Berlin. We will invite guests to sketch the bridges over the Spree, to delve into hidden courtyards, to scale buildings and climb on roofs. The festival is connected to Tag der Architektur, which traditionally opens up areas of the city usually off limits to the public – this year, the initiative takes place in XL format. Apart from those Open House opportunities, MAKE CITY offers tours through the city, HUBs which serve as thematic beacons during proceedings, Studio Talks which allow for smaller discussions with founding partners as well as bigger panels in the Festival Centre – the Czech Centre, who was one of our first supporters. This only scratches the surface – there are so many interesting and varied events on the programme.

Over 100 founding partners financed the programme and helped to create design its contents. Was this a challenge?

Naturally, it is a challenge to plan such a number of different partners. But this number has meant that there are contributors taking part, who represent all levels and approaches to urban alternatives: architects will represent projects from all around the world with the great support of Architektenkammer here in Berlin bringing them together. It also means we can bring in planners, politicians, and foundations like the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, who have also lent us a huge amount of support. Cultural institutes – in particular the European organisation EUNIC - allow the presence of many other countries – and therefore other cities, such as Prague, Rome and Istanbul. Beyond this, publishing houses and a number of smaller agencies are also involved. As a necessity, the festival focuses on a professional discussion on architecture and urbanism, but it is firmly interdisciplinary in focus. We have included sociologists, philosophers, artists, scientists, and activists within the conversation. A lot of input has come from students. Parts of the programme are for designed specifically with children, teenagers or families in mind. In this way, citizens themselves benefit from the Festival, rather than it being an event that only serves the professional scene. Urban development is increasingly becoming a task for the many. People want to have a say in what is happening around them. For this reason, the term “urban commons” is the one of the core themes of MAKE CITY’s programme.

This year, the Federal Government’s Science Year has the title “City of the Future”. A coincidence?

That only emphasises the importance of the subject. The Science Year is one of the main supporters of the festival – a fact for which we are very thankful. In turn, the festival itself also forms part of the Science Year programme. In our opinion they compliment each other very well as one of the main tasks of Science Year is to connect non-professionals with. We aim to do the same thing – the subject has to be easily communicable whilst also maintaining and respecting the highest standards of knowledge and expertise.

What would you like to be outcome of these three weeks for both the professional scene and the general public who will interact with it?

International guests and professionals should gain inspiration which they can then take back and implement within urban planning processes in their own countries. The participants can build upon their international networks, engage in comparative analysis, and act as examples for those wanting to do something similar. By giving the audience a look behind the scenes, the general public can find out what they can in fact implement themselves – to making the city differently. Overall we want to communicate the critical contribution of architecture to the development of society and to improve the dialogue between the actors involved. Processes and approaches previously deemed expectations to the rule should become regular processes. And Berlin should have an urban think tank bringing together the many mediators – curators, civic groups, architects-as-developers – who negotiate a more intelligent kind of urban planning and architecture: one that works with the Berlin government.

What can Berliners expect in those three weeks? What are the highlights?

The entire constellation of the programme in itself is the highlight. There are many surprises, so many thought-provoking impulses. There is something special for everyone – Berliners are able to find out more about a proposed swimming pool in the Spree, to create an urban garden, get on the roof of the Berlin Cathedral, tour the much overlooked gaps and voids of spaces in between buildings in Mitte or examine Baumscheiben in Neukölln. We leave it to them to decide. It’s well worth taking a look at the programme before the start and – just like with the Berlinale – create your own personalised programme. (At www.makecity.berlin)



Das Festival für Architektur und Andersmachen
A Festival for Architecture and Urban Alternatives
Berlin 11 – 28 JUN 2015

Are all of the event open to the public? Is the entry free?

The events are open to the public. There are many exhibitions in the programme too, for example at the Deutsches Architekturzentrum, HO | Berlin, Aufbauhaus or in the various institutions of European countries who are taking part. These can all be visited for free during the festival. However, the places for many of the Studio Talks and tours are limited – for those, we recommend registering in advance online.

MAKE CITY going to continue beyond 2015? Will there be a 'next edition'?

I would like MAKE CITY as a brand and framework to continue. Within two years enough will have changed to allow us to showcase new projects whilst also revisiting the old ones. Any partners interested for taking part in 2017 are very welcome to let us know.

Press contact:

In case of questions or to find further information,
press representatives can contact

Susanne Kumar-Sinner

press@make-shift.info

Tel. +49 (0) 170 1612274