

Urban Maestro

New governance strategies
for Urban Design

Biennial Baukultur Reports

communicating high-quality planning and
impacting public discourse (DE)

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UN HABITAT
UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME

BOUWMEESTERMAITREARCHITECTE

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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research
and innovation programme under grant agreement n° 831704



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. SUMMARY.....	3
2. TOPICS AND STRUCTURE	4
3. EMBEDDING OF EXPERTISE AND FORMATS OF PARTICIPATION	5
4. RESEARCH, DRAFTING & COMPILATION OF THE REPORT	7
5. KEY CHALLENGES	10
KEY ONLINE RESOURCES	13

1. SUMMARY

The Baukultur Report is coordinated and published by the German Federal Foundation of Baukultur. The Foundation is an independent entity, whose purpose is to make the built environment a shared concern and promote Baukultur, given that it contributes significantly to the quality of life in both cities and the countryside. It was founded at the behest of private built environment professionals, who sought to give high-quality building design and construction a voice on the political level and prompt discussion amongst building professionals of various disciplines. Accordingly, the matters of concern go beyond architecture in a strict sense by also embracing engineering, urban design, and standards of good practice in planning and building in their totality – in a single word: Baukultur.

First, to retrace its origins: the German Federal Cabinet voted to pass the bill on establishing the Federal Foundation of Baukultur in 2006. After receiving broad bipartisan approval in the German Bundestag, the federal states also paved the way for the establishment of the Foundation, with its founding convention held the following year in Potsdam. Regarding federal agencies in the field of construction and spatial development, there is the Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning (BBR) and its subordinate, the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR). With 1400 employees altogether, their spectrum of activities ranges from managing federal buildings to conducting and commissioning research. While there is no other comparable institution on the federal level in Germany, there are some initiatives or institutions within the federal states concerned with various aspects of Baukultur. Today the Federal Foundation of Baukultur is partially funded by the Federal Ministry of the Interior and a friends' association counting more than 1300 members today. The Foundation currently has seven established posts and around the same number of project-based employees. It is not a grant-making foundation as it does not financially support other causes and projects, with its core mission being to shape and initiate public and professional discourse towards the goal of higher quality in the built environment.

The Biennial Baukultur Report plays a pivotal role in that regard and is the Foundation's central medium. Aside from the Report, the Foundation publishes collections of essays, handbooks – for example on brownfield development or Baukultur in education – and offers event formats like workshops, dialogues and salons. Each Baukultur Report is not only distributed and communicated to professionals and the general public, since as an official status report on planning and construction in Germany, it is also a political instrument. The Federal Foundation of Baukultur is one of the few institutions in Germany that is requested

and entitled to submit a report to the Federal Cabinet and the Federal Parliament through the relevant jurisdiction. Thanks to this right of submittal, the Baukultur Reports are dealt with by the Federal Cabinet and referred to by the Bundestag and the Bundesrat (see illustration 1).

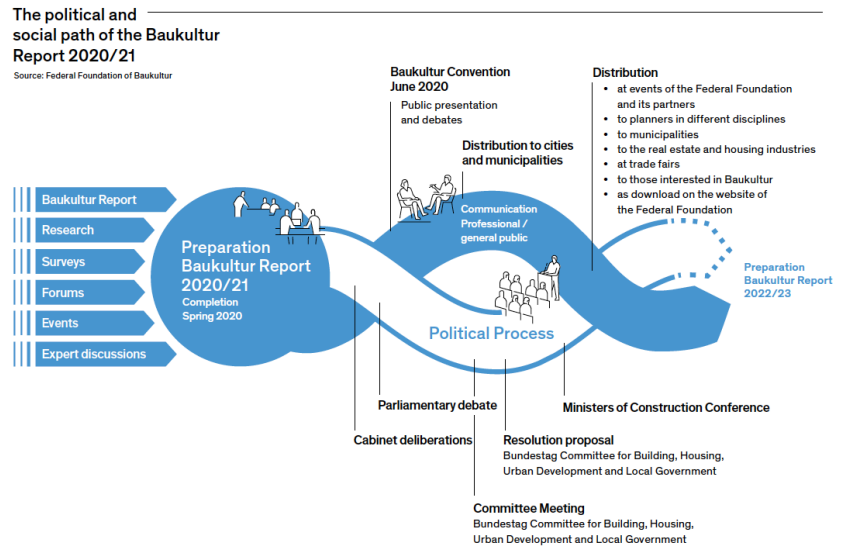


Illustration 1. The political and social path of the Baukultur Report

2. TOPICS AND STRUCTURE

The [Baukultur Reports](#) are official reports on the state of planning and construction in Germany, but additionally focus on a specific topic every two years. The first edition was published in 2014 and dealt with the growth of cities while its successor focused on the (re)vitalization of town centers and rural areas. Our built heritage and the challenges facing the future viability of our designed environment were the main concerns dealt with by the Baukultur Report 2018/2019 “Heritage – Presence – Future.” The current Baukultur Report 2020/21 “Public Spaces” centers on the significance those spaces bear for societal changes ranging from new forms of mobility to demographic transition and climate change.

While the topics under focus are changing, each report’s structure roughly orients itself according to a basic framework: In a broad sense, the first part deals with the current situation of Baukultur in Germany, while topics of prior Reports are revisited and new developments are highlighted. The first part serves the purpose of bringing up points of discussion, raising questions, and outlining current challenges. The second part demonstrates the ways in which these challenges were exemplarily met

and highlights best practices from all over Germany. It is structured in three focus chapters: the first one addresses the focus topic on an urban design scale: i.e. neighborhoods, town centers or open spaces. The second focuses on infrastructures while the closing chapter deals with how processes need to be set up in order to facilitate high-quality output.

3. EMBEDDING OF EXPERTISE AND FORMATS OF PARTICIPATION

As a communicative tool, its impact on the political level materially depends on the involvement of a broad array of stakeholders. The Baukultur Report therefore gathers and concentrates various forms of knowledge and insights from experts, citizens, public officials and private developers. Regular meetings with the Advisory Board of the foundation strengthen the profile of the Reports. Furthermore, a central discussion takes place with construction-related associations and stakeholders to inform them about the state of the Report and gather feedback for its ongoing preparation.

In addition to the Board of Trustees and the Advisory Board, the Federal Foundation is advised by an interdisciplinary advisory group of experts. For the first two reports, this group (“Begleitzkreis”) consisted of the same personnel throughout the drafting of each report and regularly came together to discuss each’s advancements. This practice was altered with the 2018/19 Report, when talks on varying topics with ever-changing experts were introduced. For these expert talks, four to six specialists are invited, with the focused discussions with academics and experts offering the opportunity to delve more deeply into specific topics and have been shown to unearth countless valuable insights and guiding advice. For the 2020/21 Report, four of those expert discussions were scheduled – focusing on health, security, regulative measures, in addition to one taking place in cooperation with the Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning (Bundesinstitut für Bau-, Stadt- und Raumforschung) focusing on the general outlook on public spaces and public funding. These discussions in small groups have proven to be particularly rich in substance as some of the experts from different disciplines do not take Baukultur into consideration on a regular basis in their line of work. For instance, the experts invited for the discussion concerning health topics in the public space were a psychiatrist focusing on the effects of city life on urban inhabitants, a lighting designer, an engineer specialized in noise and vibration protection, and a climatologist. Over the course of these conversations, the diverse input prompted fresh thoughts and ideas as the experts

contributed their own unique perspectives. The extensive dialogues with police officers, lawyers or urban planners have been demonstrated to be a fruitful endeavor and invaluable in drafting each current Baukultur Report.

The Baukultur Workshops (“Baukulturwerkstätten”) play a central role in drafting the Report. The Federal Foundation of Baukultur organizes a series of these workshops, usually two to three a year, in different German cities to gather firsthand knowledge from practitioners and citizens. Those events are open to participation at no charge and draw a mixed crowd of approximately 80 to 200 practitioners from different professional sectors. Lasting for two days, the workshops offer a mixed program of lectures, talks and moderated worktables. These events are hosted in alternating German cities, depending on the topic. For the Baukultur Report 2020/21 “Public Spaces,” the first workshop dedicated to cycling mobility was hosted in Karlsruhe, which is renowned for its progressive transport policies. It was followed by a second workshop in the city of Kiel, which tackled the rejuvenation and revitalization of old industrial places and spaces. The subsequent three Baukultur Workshops topically followed the three focus chapters of the Report. In return, the outcomes were integrated into the content of the Report: issues of urban development and open spaces were discussed in the neighboring cities of Weimar and Erfurt, the event in Cologne focused on designing urban infrastructures while the final workshop in Ulm dealt with the relationship between public spaces, democracy and process culture.

The first day of the “Baukulturwerkstätten” generally has an emphasis on lectures, talks and guided tours of exemplary places in the city that should prompt discussion. The second day is dedicated to interdisciplinary discourse through worktables, which is the core format of the Baukultur Workshops. In general, two realized projects with high standards regarding quality and process culture are presented by their creators at each worktable and put up for discussion. Often, the sites have been visited the day before by the participants, but there are always examples from all over Germany to widen the scope and stimulate discussion. The concentration on positive examples highlights role models instead of demeaning projects that did not turn out well. Even in successful projects, there is enough to learn about how things should not be done. The challenges that have to be overcome are often substantial and include missteps and failures that can be insightful or instructive in their own right. What were the particular challenges in realizing the project? What kind of missteps had to be avoided? What can be learned and is transferable to comparable projects and environments? The concrete examples serve as an impulse, yet the goal over the course of each discussion is to arrive at a more abstract level directed towards recommendations for action. This often comes somewhat naturally as practitioners from other cities and professions share their relevant experiences and reflect on the conditions of successful planning. The discussions are moderated by the team of the

Baukultur Report and other staff members of the Foundation. Since internal staff members now handle the research and writing of the report, the substance of the debates themselves can be directly woven into each Report. For this purpose, the worktable discussions are audio recorded and subsequently evaluated. This process not only offers valuable insights into successful or particularly challenging projects, but also countless clues on where to dig deeper and focus the research. For instance, at the Baukultur Workshop in Ulm, an employee of the parks department of the municipality of Rastatt convincingly presented the argument that more efforts should be made to quantify the benefits of green and open spaces. When the local budget is negotiated on the municipal level, park departments are at a structural disadvantage, given that their budget allocations and items such as maintenance budgets and personnel costs often fall short. Allegedly, softer factors such as cultural and social aspects, image and location marketing, climate and health simply do not receive the same priority when it comes to financial resources as the traffic planning department. A more focused look into this topic unearthed a rich body of work on quantifying the value of public squares and green areas. This drew our attention to a freshly developed toolkit by the Institute for Ecological Economy Research (IÖW), which allows the monetary value of public squares and green areas to society to be quantified and which will soon be made available to municipalities. Beyond such requests to deepen the investigation of certain topics, there are numerous concrete examples presented by the participants, which make their way straight into the Report to illustrate broader arguments.

4. RESEARCH, DRAFTING & COMPILATION OF THE REPORT

The basis for the first three reports was developed by external contractors in close cooperation with the Foundation. For the 2020/21 Report, its coordination, research and drafting were mainly conducted by an in-house team of four full-time employees devoted to the Report with further staff members contributing from their fields of expertise. Additionally, the gathering of qualitative data is systematized, with all expert talks and worktables at the Baukultur workshops being audio recorded and the data evaluated with the MAXQDA qualitative data analysis software. The whole of our literary and database research is also organized and evaluated using MAXQDA. Since the very beginning, the research for the report has been accompanied by commissioned specialist studies. For example, three studies were assigned during the preparation of the Baukultur Report 2018/19 “Heritage – Presence – Future”: one about the preservation of monuments in Germany and another focusing on building materials and material cycles, while the third supplemented the basis of the report

with information about construction in building stock, redevelopment and monument protection. Deemed beneficial, this practice was continued in the course of the preparation of the Baukultur Report 2020/21 “Public Spaces,” during which two studies were conducted by different research institutes – a real estate industry study on the feasibility of ground floor uses and a study on the function of public spaces in small towns and rural areas. The findings of the studies are always intertwined with the results of the general research. The studies add substance to specialized fields the Foundation’s staff does not cover such as law or economics for instance. The commissioning of highly regarded institutes and experts add force to the arguments in public discourse.

The development and commissioning of surveys also play a crucial role in that regard. The report offers facts and figures which are a part of the development of the Baukultur Reports. The results of public enquiries and co-operations with specific expert groups strengthen the contents of the Baukultur Reports. Since the first report, the Federal Foundation of Baukultur has commissioned a representative population survey every two years, with the surveys being conducted by established German market research and opinion polling institutes like ipsos Public Affairs or the forsa Institute for Social Research and Statistical Analysis. More than 1.000 respondents are surveyed to ensure representativeness. The general public is asked about their viewpoints, perception and attitudes towards the built environment. Furthermore, a municipal/urban survey specifically addresses cities and towns of different sizes. With the third edition, a survey by the chamber of industry and commerce representative of its members has been added to investigate the local economy’s perspective on public spaces.

Throughout the reports, infographics are employed to illustrate and express the results of the research, intended to make it easier for the reader to grasp the substance of a statement at a glance. The infographics are based on facts, figures and statistics researched during the writing of the reports or stemming from questions raised at our surveys and, after brainstorming and a brief sketch, developed with external graphic designers (see illustration 2). Beginning with the second report, one core illustration is chosen to vividly illustrate one or several crucial arguments of the Report. For the Baukultur Report 2016/17 “City and Village,” the Doughnut Effect was devised as its central graphic, which illustrates the increasing establishment of single-family housing areas and commercial sites on the edges of town leading to vacancies in the town centre. In contrast, the jam-filled German dessert Krapfen is presented as the ideal urban development pattern where the flavour is at its core. Spanning two pages, it is enriched with results from the population and municipal surveys and is complemented by infographics regarding land use in Germany (see illustration 3).

Elbphilharmonie cost increases and mood barometer

According to the Federal Foundation of Baukultur

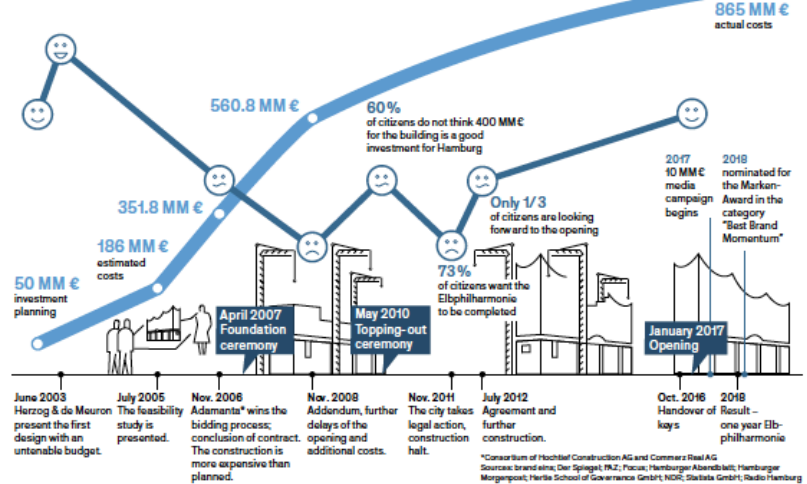


Illustration 2. Elbphilharmonie cost and mood barometer

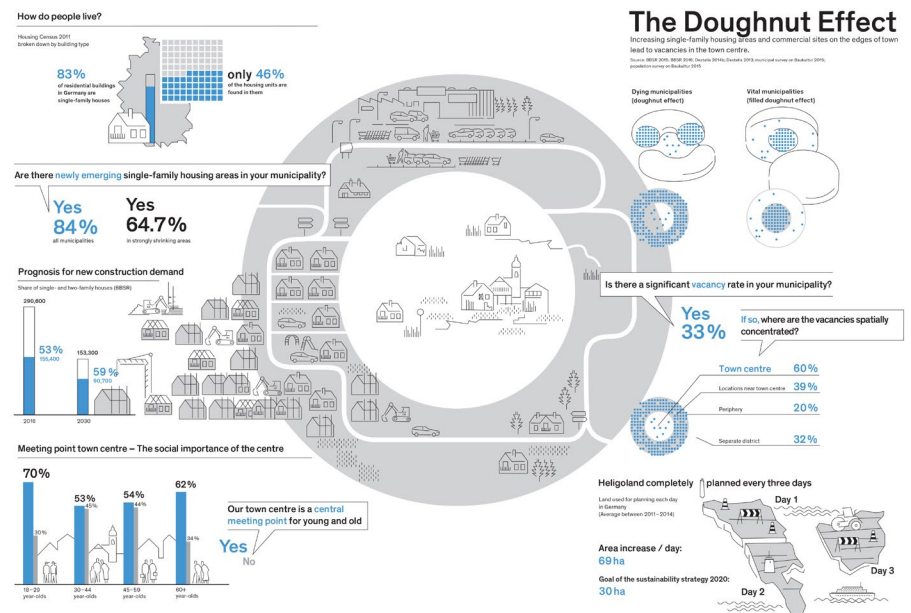


Illustration 3. The Doughnut effect

As a connected and supplementary element, project examples are presented in pictures and text. The Federal Foundation lives up to its communicational mandate by making use of good examples as inspiration and reference points. Based on research conducted throughout Germany, between ten and fifteen project examples addressed in the Baukultur workshops are selected and included in the Baukultur Reports as project descriptions, including the names of all protagonists. These descriptions are stepping-stones by which general insights and recommendations become concrete (see illustration 4).

Baukultur Initiates Processes Federal Garden Show in Heilbronn – Strategic Urban Development Based on Open Space



When the city of Heilbronn decided in 2007 to organize the Federal Garden Show (BUGA) in 2019, it was already clear that what was desired was more than just a big, one-off event for garden lovers. What was instead supposed to be created on the decommissioned area of the inland port at the bend in the Neckar River close to the city centre was a new piece of the city with references to the river and new green spaces. In addition, the city had already purchased the fruit warehouse site on the rear side of the Central Station from Deutsche Bahn. An urban development competition followed in 2009, and was won by Steidle Architekten. A realization competition then took place on this basis in 2011, with the firms SINAI and Machleidt selected as the winners. Two port basins that had been backfilled in the 1930s were recreated as the Karlsee (Lake Karl) and the Flößhafen (Raft Harbour). Around the Flößhafen, three band-like sites are envisioned for construction, the eastern one of which was already part of the BUGA as an inhabited 'city exhibition'. For the BUGA, the western band was given a sea of grassy waves,

which was digitally modelled by Büro Loma and moulded in an automated process by GPS-controlled excavators. Thematic garden cabinets could be experienced on the southern subarea. The other green areas, just like the lakes, will be preserved after the BUGA. They include the bank of the Neckar River, which could be greened after a federal road was relocated to the industrial park on the eastern bank, and the Hafenpark, which is shielded from the active industrial operations on the Neckar Canal behind it by a wall made from uncontaminated waste material obtained from the soil remediation. With the twenty-three buildings in the city exhibition, a BUGA became a building exhibition for the first time. Based on the conceptual process, the plots were allocated in 2015 for the fixed price determined by appraisers, whereby investors could apply for many plots. Each architecture firm was, however, limited to a maximum of two buildings, which could also not be situated next to one another. The selection of projects was made by a jury, which took on the role of a building commission

and was also responsible for construction consultation in the further course of the project.

A key issue was thus not only the architecture of the individual buildings but also structural innovations (construction method, materials, energy concept) and a functioning mixture of uses for an urban district of 800 residents. Until building approval was given, no sales took place, but only an awarding of contracts.

What was created was not only Germany's tallest wooden building, but also two ensembles of buildings, a municipal children's house with a day nursery and flats for single parents, supervised living and an inclusion project, student flats and a boarding house, and owner-occupied apartments. As a whole, round half are rental units, whereby 30 per cent are subsidized. There is also a laundrette, gastronomy, a common area, and commercial spaces on the ground floor, which were used as exhibition spaces during the BUGA.

That it was possible to complete an entire city district only three years after the call for submissions can only be partially explained by the deadline pressure resulting from the big event. Structured, short decision paths were ensured above all by the project steering of the BUGA association, which always brought architects, investors, and administration round one table for the planning sessions. The association kept its role as manager, moderator, and resolver of conflicts until Phase 8. The execution could also proceed smoothly because so-called Phase Zero had been in process since 2009: the concept for the BUGA had thus already been disseminated widely among the population by idea competitions, site tours, presentations, brochures, and an info box. For Heilbronn, the BUGA not only brought media attention and an increase in prestige but also released energies as an engine for urban development. The two other construction fields are supposed to be awarded soon, based on the tried and tested model.

Facts
Planning and construction: 2009–2019
Project developer: City of Heilbronn
Project: middle architecture, Munich, SINAI, Berlin; diverse architecture firms with individual buildings
Area: 32 ha
Cost: 188.5 MM euros
More information in the project description in the appendix on p. 162



BAUKULTUR AT A GLANCE

- Big, one-off event as a starting point for urban expansion
- Early citizen participation and extensive Phase Zero
- Swift structural execution thanks to a consistent planning culture
- Investors, planners, and administrators at one table
- City exhibition with an urban mixture of uses
- Allocation of plots based on a conceptual process
- Courage for innovations in architecture and urban and open space planning
- Larger share of subsidized housing



Illustration 4. Federal Garden Show in Heilbronn

5. KEY CHALLENGES

One of the main challenges in the compilation of the report is to ensure the participation of a diverse range of people. Practitioners and academics aside from the general public should be especially involved in this process, since given the Foundation's stated mission is to make the built environment a shared concern, it is important to also reach those citizens who do not interact with Baukultur on a professional basis. The biennial population survey makes sure that their voices are heard and represented in Baukultur. This is important since the perception of the built environment demonstrably differs between its users and creators – especially when it comes to their stylistic sensibilities. This should not be considered an obstacle that cannot be overcome, but rather it indicates the opportunity to enter into a productive dialogue. Therefore, the participation of the public should not be limited to solely being asked their opinion, but rather they should be more actively involved in sharing their ideas and formulating positions.

The main way in which the Federal Foundation of Baukultur organizes their active participation in the Reports is through the open Baukultur Workshops. The participants' backgrounds often lean more towards private and public sector built environment professionals than members of the public. One reason for this can be found in the particular topics being discussed. Events like "Public Space and Infrastructure" in Berlin in 2014 or "Infrastructure. Innovation. Baukultur." in Frankfurt in 2017 might sound interesting to professional engineers but do not hold the same appeal for the average citizen. Since then, the Foundation has had positive experiences with closely cooperating with local universities and more closely tailoring the topics at hand to local issues of concern in order to draw a more diverse crowd. The Baukultur Workshops organized in 2018 can serve as good examples. The Workshop in Karlsruhe dealing with cycling mobility was hosted together with the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology. The approachable subject matter and the venue for the second day – the university facilities – drew a mixed crowd of students and residents and enabled a lively discussion at the worktables. The same held true for the Baukultur Workshop in the waterfront city of Kiel, entitled "New Places." With a slightly altered concept compared to former workshops, the aim was to search for future perspectives on three significant local sites for which the usages had changed over the course of time. This event was organized in cooperation with the city's urban planning department and involved numerous municipal employees. Moreover, the event was met with considerable interest from local citizens. Working on site plans, ideas were gathered and developed to inform the conversion and future usages of these sites. In the aftermath of the workshop, the city of Kiel established the "Verein für Baukultur Kiel," a registered association that is tasked with the mission of facilitating and deepening the dialogue on urban development with the citizenry.

It is not always possible to identify subject matters that are equally appealing to professionals and interested citizens. It is indeed a delicate balance, but the Foundation will continue to strive to further bridge the gap in the future. With the 2018 workshops attracting up to 200 participants each, the orientation towards the general public can be considered a success and a worthwhile endeavor. The language of the report also has attempted to abstain from technical language and is aimed to be as simple and accessible as possible. The public's perception of the Reports is overwhelmingly shaped by the focus topic it addresses, with the setting of the topic itself undoubtedly being one of the key challenges. The focus topic is always declared two years prior to each Report's publication. It is set by the board of trustees in close coordination with the chair of the Federal Foundation of Baukultur. In preparation, they are thoroughly discussed by its interdisciplinary advisory board, which is appointed to provide expert advice and guidance to the Foundation and is composed of academics and practitioners alike.

In terms of subject matter and content, it has panned out quite well with the four published editions of the Report. This cannot be taken for granted – it always demands both a good nose for future developments and a bit of luck. Over the course of two years, a lot changes in public discourse: While some issues simmer beneath the surface for a great deal of time, some seem to pop up and vanish in a flash. The subsequent issues of the rising costs of living in cities, strengthening rural areas or the future viability of our designed environment have not been matters of concern in German public discourse two years prior to the publication of the corresponding Reports. Societal developments like the massive influx of people and rising building costs in cities, rural depopulation leading, for example, to the establishment of a home (“Heimat”) division to the Federal Ministry of the Interior (since 2018 called: “Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat”) or the ecological/ environmental movement gaining momentum worldwide all occurred prior to the publication of their respective Reports yet all hit a nerve. While you certainly cannot predict how comprehensively a pandemic will alter public life around the globe, the question of how public space has to adapt to climate change and new forms of mobility have been widely discussed within the German public since the summer of 2019.

Communication and response

Total circulation of all publications 2018/19

67.900 copies

49.000 copies (2016–17)

Shipment of all publications within Germany 2018/19

> 25.400 copies

Members of the Foundation's friends association 2018/19

1.380 as of 31.12.2019

1.227 (as of 31.05.2018)

Speeches and participation in panels and juries – nationally and internationally 2018/19

157

141 (2016–17)

Number of press articles, references and interviews 2018/19

470

321 (2016–17)

Persons reached by cinema campaign „Baukultur-Clip“ 2019

19.172

Events organised 2018/19...

... more than **3.700** participants
... more than 2.700 participants (2016–17)

... with **279** experts and speakers
... mit 90 experts and speakers (2016–17)

... more than **90** partners and sponsors
... über 70 partner and sponsors (2016–17)

Website 2018–19

Monthly visitors (2019)

> 9.000

6000 (2017)

Downloads of publications, graphics, surveys etc.

27.759

thereof downloads of the Baukultur Report

6.116

> 1.900 (2016–17)

Social media growth from 12/2017 until 12/2019

Facebook subscribers

+116%

Twitter followers

+237%

LinkedIn followers

+100%

Federal Foundation of Baukultur nationwide

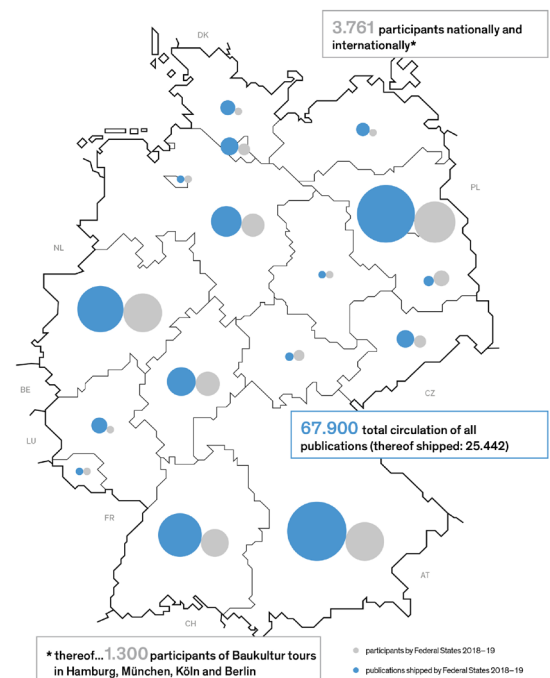


Illustration 5. Communication and response

The pandemic has also affected the public communication of the report, which goes along with both the challenges and opportunities. Generally, the Foundation's chair presents the current Report at countless events over the whole of Germany following its publication. With the organization and administration of public events not yet returning to normal, many events have either gone digital, been delayed or have been cancelled altogether. This also goes for the biennial Baukultur Convention that was postponed from June 2020 to May 2021. While usually following one report's publication the work on the next edition begins, it has been decided to alter the format this year in order to adapt to the unusual circumstances. For the first time, the Federal Foundation will organize a series of three expert discussions ("Praxisgespräche") in different German cities. There, a group of around 10 invited experts will discuss the Report's recommendations for action over the course of a day. The goal is to operationalize the general recommendations in more granular detail. Looking ahead this might also prove fruitful for future publications. While the Foundation's impact has proven hard to measure, the Federal Foundation of Baukultur does recognize a considerable growth in engagement with its products over recent years – a trend we strive to continue (see illustration 5).

KEY ONLINE RESOURCES

<https://www.bundesstiftung-baukultur.de/en/baukultur-report/about-baukultur-reports>

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URBAN MAESTRO

This paper was drafted as an external contribution to the Coordination and Support Action “URBAN DESIGN GOVERNANCE - Exploring formal and informal means of improving spatial quality in cities across Europe and beyond”, also known as “Urban Maestro”. The Action was funded by European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 831704 and implemented from 2019 to 2021 by a consortium comprising the University College London, Brussels Bouwmeester Maître Architecte and UN-Habitat.

www.urbanmaestro.org

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Principal authors: Reiner Nagel, Michael Lesch, Frauke Schacht - Bundesstiftung Baukultur

Design and layout: Kidnap Your Designer, Brussels
Bouwmeester Maître Architecte (BMA)

