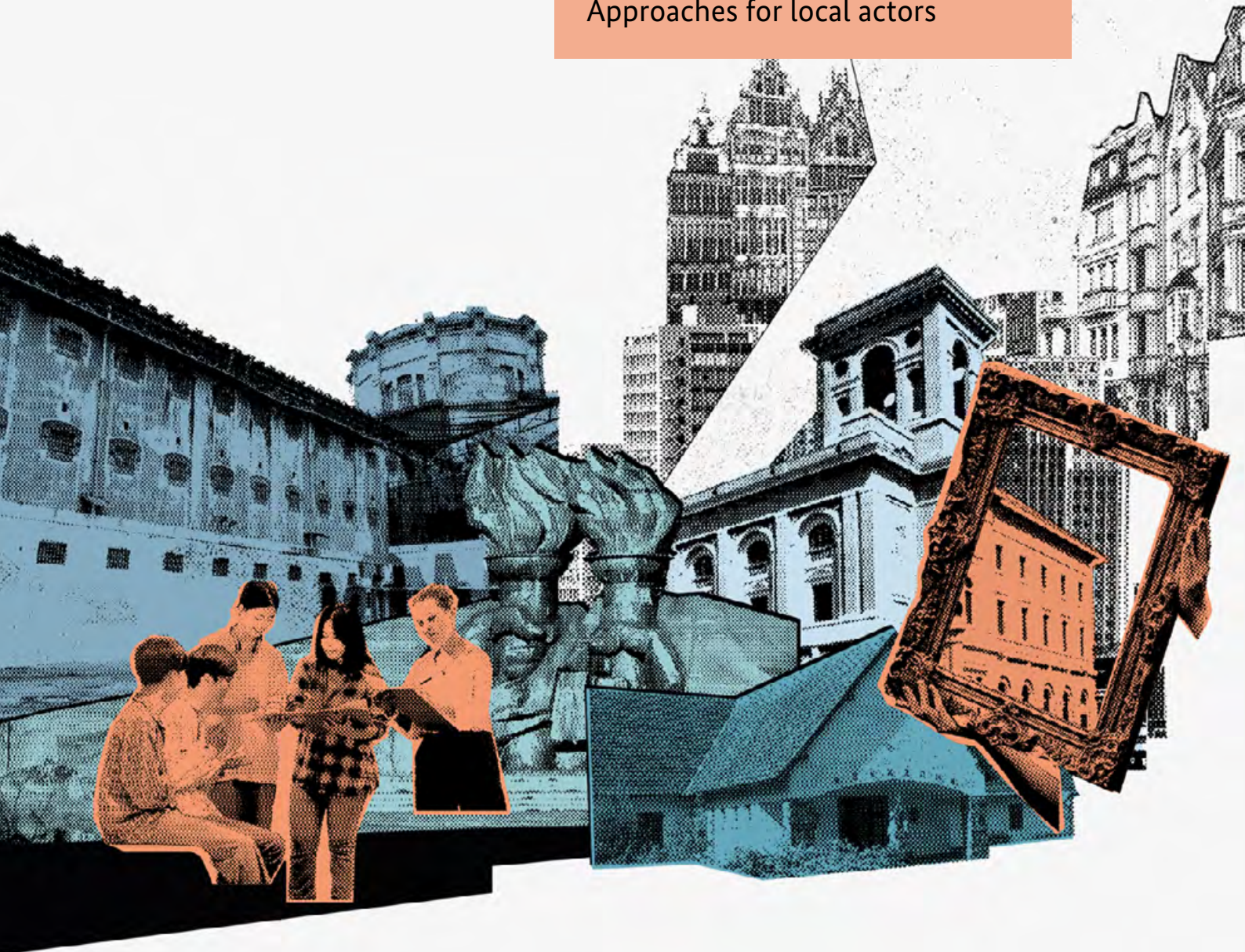


TOOLBOX

Dissonant Heritage in Europe

Approaches for local actors



Federal Ministry
for Housing, Urban Development
and Building

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Approaches for local actors

This publication was developed in the context of the Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU). It is the outcome of two projects within the 'Experimental Housing and Urban Development' (ExWoSt) research programme, managed by the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR) on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building (BMWSB).

Foreword



Europe is characterized by a whole range of different historical places and buildings. They have their own, often multi-voiced stories. Not all of these stories are harmonious, easy to tell, or pleasant to listen to. Some are reminiscent of a burdened past that involved, for example, war and tyranny, or are controversial today because of the people or events associated with them.

It is these places and their stories that form the focus of this publication. As 'dissonant heritage', they make a valuable contribution to our society: they offer space for remembrance and are places of learning from history and for democracy. They encourage us to critically explore the past, they enhance our orientation in the present, and they help us to shape our future responsibly.

For the German Federal Government, it is a matter of state policy to create an awareness of the values and potentials of such dissonant cultural heritage, and it has committed to pursuing this task. This is because addressing the burdened chapters of our past is more important today than ever before – at a time when fundamental democratic principles are under pressure in many places in Europe and it is crucial that we keep the cautioning memory alive.

The dissonant heritage also plays an important role in urban and regional development: to this day, traces of terror, autocracy, or exclusion shape the face of many European cities and regions. If these traces are repressed, eliminated, or built over, their potential as places of societal experience and identity formation is also lost. What these places require is instead a special approach which is finely aware of the respective burdens of the past and which affords space for critical reflection.

The Federal Government therefore focuses closely on the urban and societal significance of dissonant heritage at both the European and national levels in a broad process within the framework of the Urban Agenda for the EU. The 'toolbox' presented here has been developed on the basis of two research projects and in close cooperation with an active European network.

Convincing strategies and solutions, urban planning instruments and methods, and above all good-practice examples are intended to support how the dissonant heritage is addressed in practice. The aim is, in particular, to reach out to local actors who face the exacting task of contextualizing and developing sites with encumbrances from the past and making them accessible to the general public.

I would like to thank the many different collaborators who have contributed to the development of this toolbox and wish everyone using the document an interesting read and much inspiration for your local work with the dissonant heritage.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Verena Hubertz'.

Verena Hubertz
Federal Minister
for Housing, Urban Development
and Building

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Introduction

Background

Why this toolbox?

There are many cities and regions in Germany and Europe with places that are marked by complex and difficult histories. Engaging with these legacies and their histories is of crucial importance for our society today. Often, however, there is a high level of uncertainty in this context: What approach is appropriate? What are the necessary parameters and requirements? What issues need to be considered? Who should be involved and how? How does this heritage interact with the urban and spatial surroundings? Some of these questions can only be answered on a project-specific basis, while others focus on shared characteristics of historically burdened places. In the form of a metaphorical 'toolbox', the present publication is meant as a practical guide that highlights tools, methods, and procedures. It is aimed in particular at local stakeholders who are committed to the urgent task of further developing this culturally and socially important heritage.

What exactly is a dissonant heritage?

This toolbox refers to dissonant, site-based cultural heritage in Europe. In this context, it applies to places and buildings which, due to their history, are negatively perceived by society or specific societal groups because of unpleasant memories and associations and are seen as having a political and/or ethical burden. These include sites and built legacies shaped by crises, war, persecution, or ideological conflicts, such as buildings from the Nazi period, the socialist built heritage, or symbols of the colonial era. Former industrial or nuclear facilities that cause or caused environmental damage can also be part of Europe's dissonant heritage ('toxic heritage'). The spatial and material characteristics of these places vary greatly – from objects, buildings, and neighbourhoods to squares, ground-based monuments, and archaeological sites, through to gardens, landscape monuments, or cultural landscapes.

Why is it important to address dissonant heritage?

Dissonant heritage is part of European history and its cultural patrimony. It helps to make historical events tangible and comprehensible for present and future generations. In this context, dealing with the controversies and conflicts associated with the heritage can be challenging, but also offers significant potential. If this potential is tapped as part of an integrated, participatory approach, dissonant heritage can be a stimulus that can assume key functions in urban and regional development that takes its cue from existing structures, such as:

a *democratic and educational function*: Dissonant heritage can serve as a learning space about history that encourages critical reflection on the past. This engagement is important in order to strengthen democratic social systems and to shape a free, just future.

a *socio-political function*: Different actors or groups view heritage from various, in part competing perspectives. In this context, dissonant heritage sites can become meeting places where diverging or ambiguous views can be debated. This enables connections to be forged, dialogues initiated, and the foundations for societal cohesion conveyed.

a *commemorative and memorializing function*: Dissonant heritage can help make past suffering tangible and thus serve as a cautionary testimony to history and a way to preserve the pain endured in the collective memory. The recognition this suffering thus receives can sensitize society and improve support for social groups currently affected by discrimination, stigmatization, or persecution.

an *economic function*: Dissonant heritage can also serve as a (cultural) tourist destination. If people are successfully encouraged to visit dissonant heritage sites and thus to visit certain places and regions, this may bring economic benefits as well.

Why does dissonant heritage require special attention?

Despite these functions in terms of cultural memory, urban space, and socio-political cohesion, in many places dissonant heritage is highly neglected, not publicly accessible, or is often threatened with demolition, decay, and vandalism. In addition, historical buildings and areas of dissonant heritage are often not protected. Some local officials, stakeholders, and interest groups feel such places are not particularly worthy of preservation or interest, due not only to existing burdens but also to complex requirements. In this context, it becomes evident that the visibility of dissonant heritage varies greatly: some places are barely present in the public mind, for instance due to a lack of knowledge or a desire to avoid difficult debates. By contrast, other places receive special public attention, for example because they are the subject of protest or instrumentalization.

There is often an urgent need for action to address the heritage in order to find an appropriate and sustainable way of engaging with it. Furthermore, in the context of the overall task society has of reducing greenhouse gases, the question of possible conversions of dissonant heritage sites or developing the structures further is also becoming increasingly relevant with regard to the 'grey energy' innate to the buildings themselves.

What should be considered when engaging with dissonant heritage?

The sustainable development of dissonant heritage sites often presents a special challenge, as this is not only about how we handle the physical structures, but also about dealing with the associated, often conflicting histories. Because dissonant heritage often entails many, in part, competing or controversial meanings, individual societal groups and actors may interpret, use, or even instrumentalize it in different ways. In this context, 'dissonance' is not an intrinsic or static property of the heritage: whether or in what way something is perceived as 'dissonant' depends not

only on one's personal experiences but also on the respective societal, political, and historical circumstances, and can therefore change over time.

Addressing the dissonant heritage therefore requires:

- a **sensitive and respectful approach** that takes into account societal and cultural dynamics in the formulations and representations it uses and the decisions it enables, while doing justice to the plethora of possible perspectives.
- an **integrated approach** that includes actors from different disciplines, such as urban development, sociology, and history, as well as diverse perspectives, thus reflecting the many potential layers of dissonant heritage.
- **(local) participation** that integrates different points of view and thus enables a broad dialogue, recognizes the value of local experts, and fosters a shared understanding of the requirements and potential of these places.
- an **ongoing debate and critical reflection** that considers the dynamic nature of such sites and their surroundings.

About this toolbox

Who is the toolbox meant for?

This toolbox is geared to different actors who engage with dissonant heritage locally and can help shape the way it is addressed. These include policy makers, staff in public administration, experts from areas such as urban planning and architecture, cultural creatives, educational professionals, researchers, owners, investors, and civil society actors, among others. They all face the challenging task of finding solutions to the complex requirements of dissonant heritage sites. The toolbox is intended to give them food for thought, sensitize them to specific topics, provide examples of different approaches, and encourage them to pursue concrete activities.

What can the toolbox achieve (and what are its limitations)?

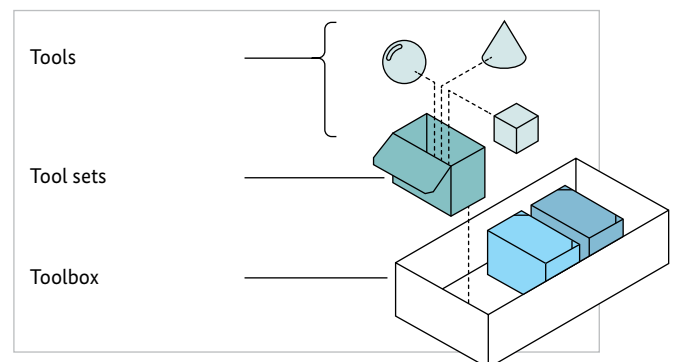
The toolbox is designed to promote an open-ended engagement with dissonant heritage. Offering a wide range of possible approaches, it shows how the potential innate in dissonant heritage can be tapped. In this context, the primary goal is not to establish a consensus: debates and protests are part of a critical reflection that can be stimulated by the heritage. The aim is not so much to resolve conflicts, but rather to moderate them, and to create spaces for deliberation processes. The result of these processes need not necessarily be the preservation or reactivation of the heritage. For example, in some cases where the historical burden is particularly acute, after the careful consideration and navigation of different interests, temporary or permanent relocation or concealment of the heritage can also constitute an appropriate approach as long as the histories associated with the heritage are preserved. The toolbox is intended as a stimulus but is not to be understood as a firm guide to a concrete sequence of action. It therefore does

not offer a closed system, nor does it give model applications that can easily be transferred by ‘copying and pasting’. Rather, it aims to elucidate approaches by different local groups and use their example to encourage readers to try out certain instruments and forms of cooperation.

What does the toolbox focus on?

The toolbox primarily refers to the material, built cultural heritage in an urban context as well as to the stories and attributions associated with that legacy. It concentrates on the dissonant heritage of the 20th century in Europe and focuses primarily on smaller towns and peripheral sites. In addition, the publication considers in particular lesser-known heritage sites (→ *Appendix*, p. 73).

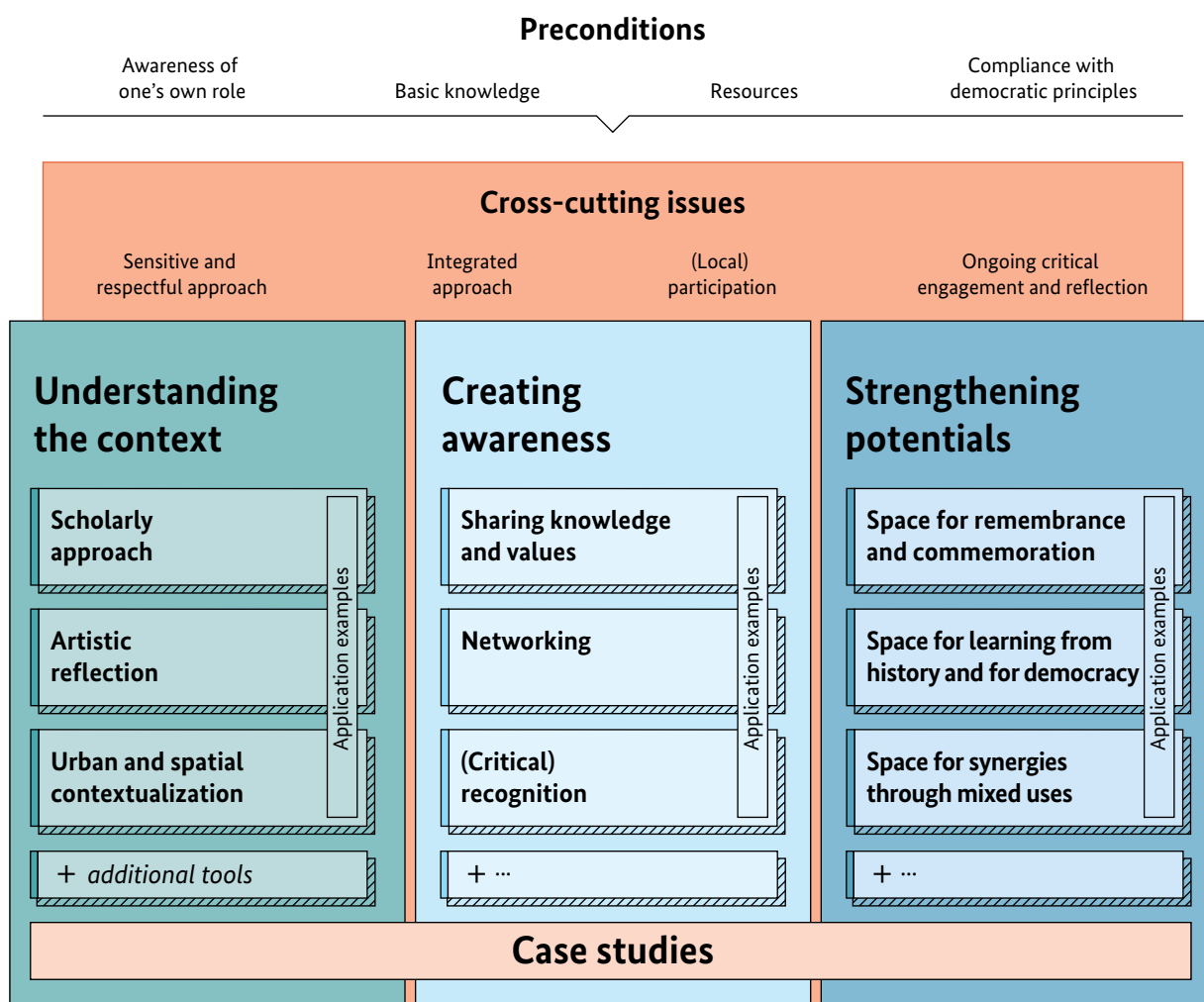
Furthermore, the toolbox concentrates on conceptual measures as well as on communication and education strategies such as those derived from the special requirements of dissonant heritage (→ p. 9). Actual structural measures for a site’s preservation and reactivation that may result from this are not covered.



Conceptual sketch of the toolbox structure

How is the toolbox structured?

- There are three **sets of tools**, each dedicated to an overarching goal in dealing with dissonant heritage. They are designed as flexible, expandable platforms, focusing in particular on the early phase of project preparation or design (also referred to as ‘phase 0’).
- In each set, by way of example, three **tools** are presented that cover different approaches. Their appli-



Schematic outline of the toolbox showing the sets and tools

- cation varies depending on local conditions and the specific requirements of dissonant heritage.
- Three selected **application examples** illustrate each tool. They exemplify possible uses of the tool in different contexts. These good practice examples cover a broad range of problems and possible applications; they also demonstrate how diverse dissonant heritage sites as well as their temporal and thematic development stages can be.
 - Four central **cross-cutting topics** function as guiding principles to steer the application of the tools. They result from the specific requirements for engaging with dissonant heritage (→ p. 9).
 - In order to illustrate the possibilities for combining several tools by way of example, not only application examples but also three **case studies** (→ pp. 58-67) are integrated into the toolbox. They show what a chronological sequence of different approaches can look like.

Instructions for use

What overarching conditions are required?

The following conditions are necessary, in particular at the local level, to implement the methods and approaches presented in this toolbox:

- **basic knowledge of the dissonant heritage site**, which can be acquired even without costly and time-consuming studies. This includes, e.g., information on the building's history, its original and current use, the state of its conservation, ownership, and the legal framework. Equally important is a knowledge of the relevant actors and a basic understanding of the conflicts and burdens that characterize the site.
- **adequate resources**, notably financial means, qualified staff, and sufficient time for implementation. The topic of funding and support is often a central, ongoing task, which is not outlined in further depth in the toolbox, but is reflected in the application examples presented.
- **compliance with democratic principles** such as freedom of expression and science, pluralism, and tolerance, that enable a respectful and open discourse.
- an **awareness of one's own standpoint and role** in dealing with the heritage and the willingness to question any prejudices or rigid patterns of thought.
- **opportunities to influence** the handling of the heritage.

What should be considered when using the tools?

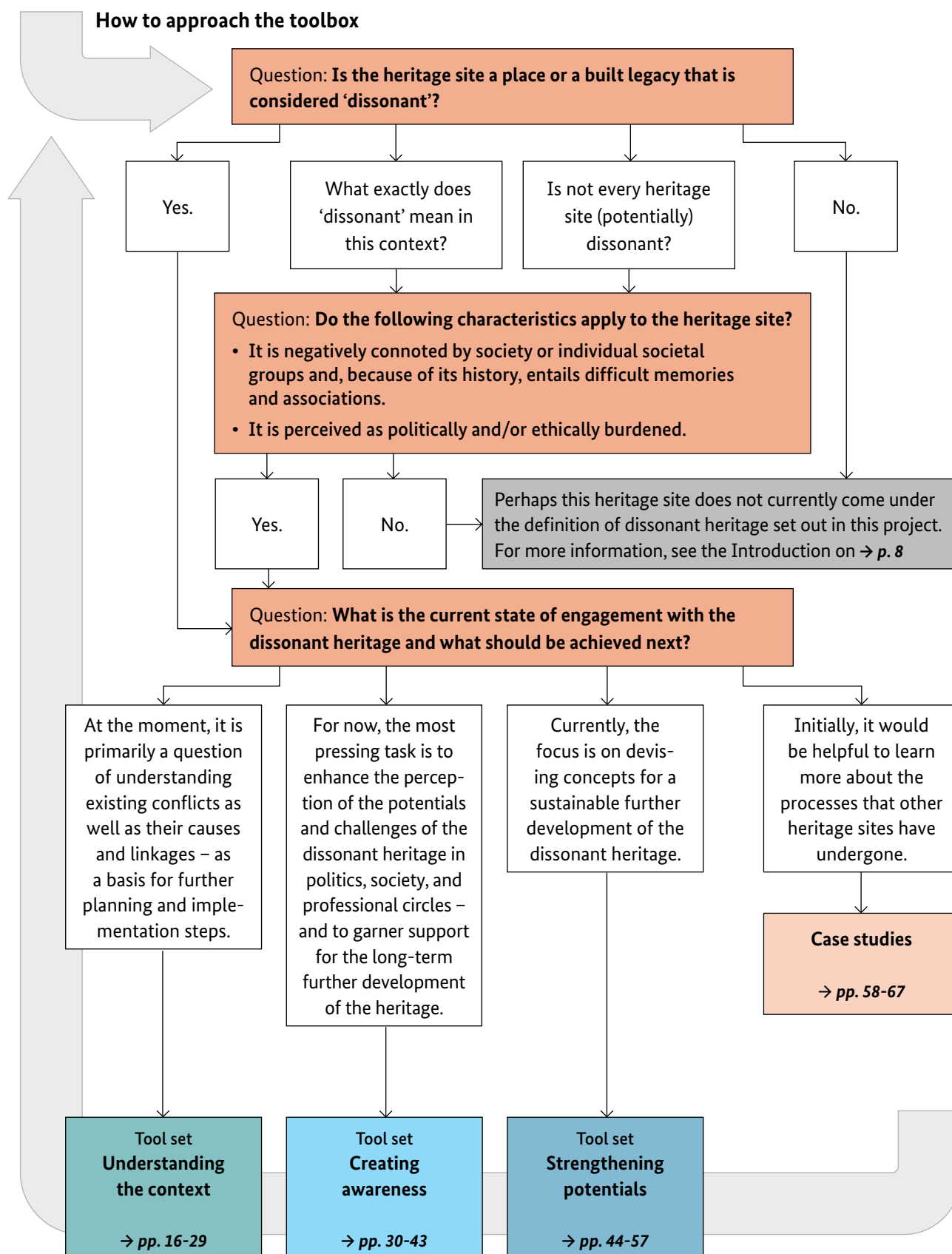
The tools presented here relate to general approaches and are rather abstract. Thus, the toolbox as a whole reflects the wide range of dissonant heritage sites as well as their differing conditions and requirements. Therefore, the application of the tools always requires adaptation to the respective local context.

It should also be borne in mind that the toolbox is a snapshot of topics and places that are currently, meaning in 2026, perceived as burdened or as a burden. This selection does not claim to be complete or to have a balanced geographical distribution (→ *Overview and map*, p. 68 f.).

Which tool set is suitable when?

The toolbox is modular in design and can be used flexibly: depending on the development phase, local context, or current needs, users can get involved at different points and combine different tools. There is no pre-set order, and the application process need not be linear. In some cases, a single tool is sufficient, but often a combination of several tools is recommended given the complex circumstances (→ *Case studies*, pp. 58-67). Sometimes it can make sense to take certain steps repeatedly because dealing with the dissonant heritage is a long-term, constantly evolving process influenced, among other things, by the zeitgeist and societal discourses.

The following navigation chart serves as a guide to identify the tool set relevant to the particular local situation.



Practical section



***Understanding the context:
Accessing the complexity
of dissonant heritage***

Dealing responsibly with dissonant heritage requires a fundamental knowledge of existing conflicts and burdens as well as their causes and interrelations. This tool set offers approaches for analysis and contextualization that provide a basis for further steps in planning and implementation.

Background

There can be various reasons behind whether or how a cultural heritage site is perceived as being dissonant. These range from the memory of traumatic historical events to divergent or underrepresented values, beliefs, and norms. A decisive role here is played not only by the respective societal, political, and historical conditions, but also by personal experiences. The resulting complex and dynamic interrelations represent a particular challenge when dealing with dissonant heritage.

Objectives

This tool set contains methods of analysis and contextualization that can help to develop a deeper understanding of the specific burdens and conflicts of respective dissonant heritage sites, as well as their causes. The goal is thus to create a basis for decisions on how to further deal with such places. This can be done, for example, through scholarly studies that explore the heritage in an interdisciplinary manner and define relevant topics and stakeholders (→ *Tool*, pp. 18-21). It can also be achieved through an artistic approach that explores existing boundaries, experiments with different perspectives, and leaves scope for emotions (→ *Tool*, pp. 22-25). Likewise, examining the reciprocal relationship between the heritage and its spatial and societal setting represents another possible approach (→ *Tool*, pp. 26-29).

Notes on using the tool set

- The tools presented in this set show ways to grasp the complexity of a dissonant heritage site. Their actual application should be adapted to the respective local situation (→ *Application examples*).
- The reasons why a heritage site is perceived as entailing a burden are often dynamic and require continuous reflection and contextualization. Thus, the tools in this set can be used repeatedly in dealing with such sites. This process requires the necessary human and temporal resources.

Tools and application examples in this set

Scholarly approach

p. 18

Interdisciplinary committee for the decolonization of public space p. 19

Opening up the museum archive as a digital knowledge base p. 20

Architectural workshop as a stimulus for local participation p. 21

Artistic reflection

p. 22

Temporary intervention to sharpen perception p. 23

Memorial sculpture as an act of cautionary remembrance p. 24

Artistic intervention as a stimulus for critical reflection p. 25

Urban and spatial contextualization

p. 26

Development of guidelines for urban and civic integration of the heritage p. 27

Contextual and spatial linkage of decentralized places of remembrance p. 28

Conveying connections in an authentic place p. 29

Scholarly approach

A scholarly perspective on dissonant heritage can support an objective understanding of complex relationships. Systematic research can lay the foundations for analysing and evaluating different interpretations within the framework of existing insights and concepts. It can provide pointers to relevant topics, stakeholders, and potential conflicts, in this way creating a sound and comprehensible knowledge base for further engagement with dissonant heritage.



Involving different disciplines

Dissonant heritage interfaces with several disciplines. The combination of relevant fields (such as history and the social sciences, urban planning, or architecture) enables a multi-faceted approach to be taken. This helps to uncover ideological overlays, one-dimensional perspectives, and competing patterns of interpretation, and thus to develop a comprehensive understanding of the interrelationships.

(→ Application example, p. 19)

Making knowledge accessible

Incomplete or selective knowledge of the heritage and its history often causes conflict. Low-threshold access to scholarly data and insights makes it easier to acquire the necessary basis with which to identify one-sided representations and instrumentalizations, and to avoid misinterpretations. In addition, this helps to develop a holistic awareness of potential problems.

(→ Application example, p. 20)

Enabling (local) participation

The inclusion of personal perspectives and individual experiences is important both for gaining scholarly insights and for public acceptance of the steps required when engaging with dissonant heritage sites. For example, the local population can be actively involved through participatory formats such as workshops, interviews, or group discussions.

(→ Application example, p. 21)

Interdisciplinary committee for the decolonization of public space

Brussels-Capital Region (Région de Bruxelles-Capitale / Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest), Belgium

Brief description: Commissioned by the Brussels-Capital Region, in the context of a study a working group made up of experts from various disciplines developed recommendations for dealing with colonial symbols in the public realm. The recommendations published in 2022 laid the foundations for a 14-point action plan on the critical contextualization and potential redesign of colonial traces in the region. The intention is to incorporate the traces into the urban space while taking a variety of perspectives into account.

Local impact: The working group's input helped intensify the debate on the decolonization of public space in the Brussels region. Its broad composition of representatives from various associations, academia, and the regional administration provided an important foundation for this. In 2023, the Brussels-Capital Region adopted the action plan. Initial measures have already been implemented, including the appointment of a steering committee and a regional project coordinator, as well as a mapped database of traces of the colonial period in the public realm. As a strategic

tool in urban planning, the database should be used, for example, when assessing applications for building permits to ensure that colonial symbols are contextualized, redesigned, or replaced by elements that explain the colonial trace.



The bust of Lieutenant-General Émile Storms, known for his violent campaigns in the Congo, after protests in 2020 in Ixelles. It has already been removed and transferred to a storehouse until its future exhibition in a museum. At the original site, an alternative work is planned that will contextualize the contested heritage



Traces of protest at the 'Monument to the Belgian Pioneers in Congo' in Brussels in 2020. The monument is regularly cleaned

Background: Under Belgian King Leopold II, the atrocities of the colonial exploitation system in the 'Congo Free State', which existed between 1885 and 1908, reached a new scale of severity. Many of the monuments, statues, and squares erected in honour of Leopold's rule and of colonial 'heroes' still characterize the public realm in the Brussels region today. The absence of a critical approach to them and the insufficient contextualization of these traces of colonialism recently led to protests and demands for decolonization.

Opening up the museum archive as a digital knowledge base

Peenemünde, Germany

Brief description: The Peenemünde Historical Technical Museum is located on the site of the former main rocket testing facility of the 'Wehrmacht', Nazi Germany's armed forces. In addition to the existing on-site access, its collection will be made digitally accessible to researchers and interested parties worldwide. The extensive materials document the history of the grounds, which were used as a military research facility during the 'Third Reich'.

Local impact: One of the museum's most important tasks is the digitization of the ever-growing archive holdings as a special resource for research. This offers low-threshold access to data such as official records, correspondence, estates, and photos as well as the physical legacies of work and daily life which can thus be accessed regardless of the user's location. As one result, also lay persons, amongst others, can benefit from a research-based approach to history. The acquisition of knowledge helps people develop a differentiated perspective that can be used to coun-

ter one-sided or abbreviated interpretations, e.g., by right-wing extremist groups. The museum also promotes learning and education in other areas: the services include exhibitions, summer camps, cultural events, and an app to explore the area of the former testing sites, which has been designated a heritage conservation area.



Cataloguing and digitizing a find excavated on the testing grounds



Aerial view showing the former power station at the armaments testing sites

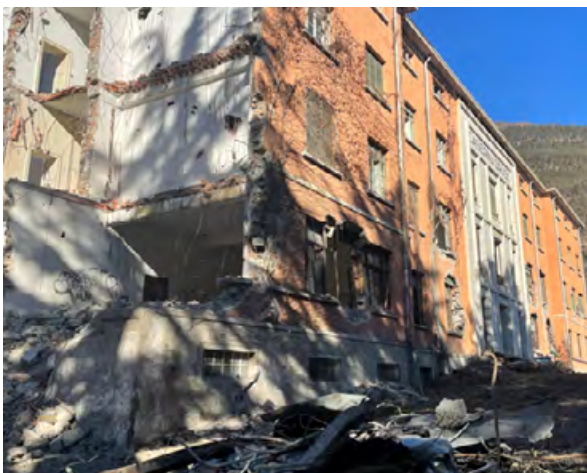
Background: The testing grounds in Peenemünde were the largest military research centre in Europe between 1936 and 1945. During the Nazi dictatorship, novel weapons systems were developed here, in particular the 'V-1' and 'V-2' rockets, both referred to as 'vengeance weapons'. They were produced by forced labour in concentration camps and deployed primarily against Great Britain. After World War II, first the Soviet Army and later the East German 'National People's Army' ('Volksarmee') used the site. Since 1991, the Peenemünde Historical Technical Museum has been based in what was the armaments centre's power station.

Architectural workshop as a stimulus for local participation

Silandro (Schlanders), Italy

Brief description: As part of a workshop in the former Caserma Druso military barracks in the Autonomous Province of Bolzano (Bozen), international students worked together with local residents to develop transformation scenarios for the complex. The barracks had been built in fascist Italy and were acutely threatened by demolition. The workshop took place in 2023 as part of the EU 'Erasmus+' programme and in cooperation with several European partner universities, institutions, and NGOs, including the University of Bologna and the ATRIUM Cultural Route (→ *Case study*, pp. 62–64).

Local impact: The ten-day workshop on site and the involvement of the local population sensitized the students to the diverse perspectives on the ideologically charged heritage. This led to further studies and to graduation theses. At the local level, the interaction strengthened awareness of the special characteristics and potential of the heritage for the culture of remembrance. Since then, residents have increasingly been involved in its conservation and reuse. The workshop and other local initiatives also contributed significantly to the authorities assessing the monument's value.



The former Caserma Druso military barracks after the partial demolition of the 'Palazzina Comando', the base commander's office, in 2022



Students work on floor plans of the former barracks and develop proposals for the site's potential conversion

Background: The former military barracks were built in the 1930s during Italian fascism for the purposes of national defence and border control. After its closure, the complex stood vacant for many years, with only part of it used as a cultural centre. The history of the place as well as the different interests in politics and society led to controversial debates about how it should be used in the future: citing security reasons, in 2022, the municipality as the site owner began to demolish the buildings to develop the site for residential and work purposes. At the same time, the responsible national supervisory authority considered the facility to be important in terms of both urban planning and the culture of remembrance and placed it under temporary monument protection. Although further research, the workshop, and local action confirmed that the most distinctive building parts were worthy of protection, the municipality successfully litigated to obtain the right to demolish the entire complex. Nevertheless, it agreed to review the original plans and to possibly integrate parts of the former barracks into the site's further development.

Artistic reflection

A creative engagement with dissonant heritage can offer new perspectives. This is particularly relevant where complex issues are not accessible or are presented in too one-dimensional a manner. Possible forms of expression and approaches range from temporary actions, such as performances and installations, to permanent additions or structural changes to heritage sites. It is important to critically assess the selected approach with special consideration of the site's specific circumstances and of the sensitivities of those affected by the burden.

Unsettling views

Existing views on dissonant heritage sites are often characterized by rigid thought patterns and dogmatic attitudes. With artistic means, such as commentaries or disruptive interventions, prevailing interpretations and attributions can be challenged. Such a 'shake-up' can deliberately unsettle people and bring to light underlying conflicts.

(→ Application examples, p. 23; p. 25)

Enabling emotional engagement

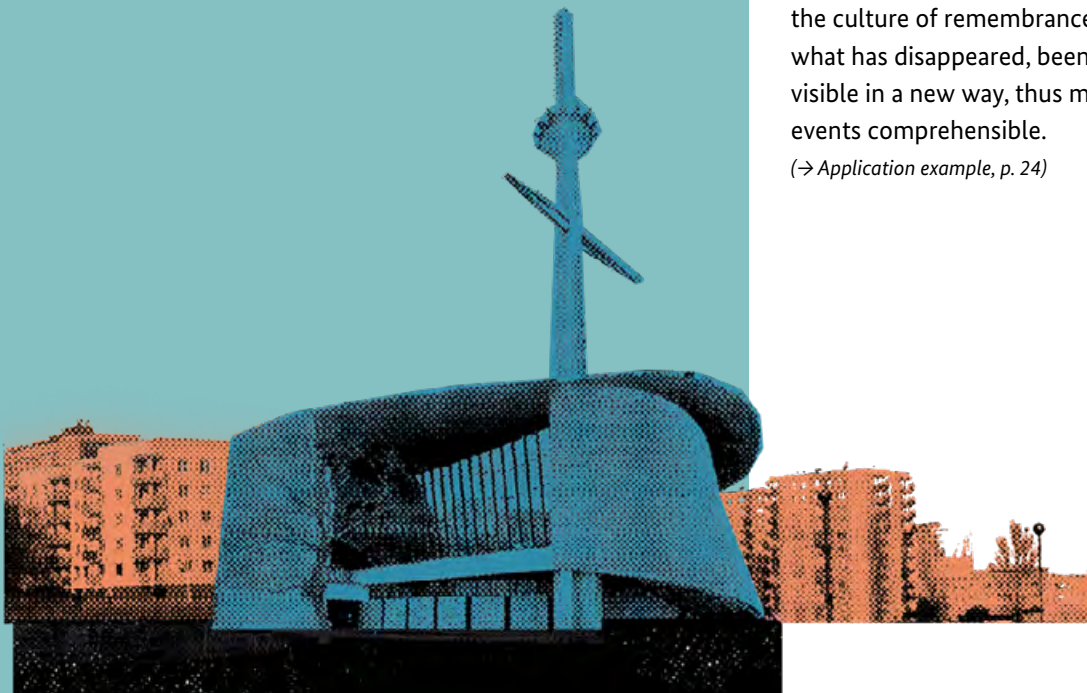
The stories connected with a dissonant heritage site can often not be depicted or understood through factual information alone. An artistic approach, for example via sensory perception, can evoke emotions and facilitate individual forms of access.

(→ Application example, p. 24)

Creating presence

In many parts of Europe, there are dissonant heritage sites that have been partially or completely destroyed or are threatened by demolition. Elsewhere, important perspectives on the underlying history are lacking. Against this background, artistic installations and interventions can make an important contribution to the culture of remembrance, for example by making what has disappeared, been forgotten, or repressed visible in a new way, thus making particular historical events comprehensible.

(→ Application example, p. 24)



Temporary intervention to sharpen perception

Ostend (Oostende), Belgium

Brief description: Artistic elements on the outer walls of the former 'Atlantic Wall' bunkers draw attention to the structural remains of the defensive line built by Germany during World War II. The aim of the art project, which was carried out in the context of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, was to visually dissolve the contours of the massive bunker complex. Formats such as guided tours, workshops, an exhibition, and art performances accompanied the project. It was implemented by the artistic network ARTlantic Wall in cooperation with the Atlantikwall Raversyde open-air museum.

Local impact: The deliberate disruption resulting from the intervention brought the history and original function of the bunkers to the fore in the public mind and sparked a discussion about how to deal with this difficult heritage. While, for instance, some see the bunkers as immutable cultural and historical monuments or memorials, others understand them as transformable structures and sites of societal debate. Still others would prefer that they disappear entirely. The



Intervention of the ARTlantic Wall network on a former look-out bunker dating from World War I, which was reused in World War II

intervention took place from 2018 to 2021 within the framework of the 'Atlantikwall Europe' project, funded by the EU's 'Creative Europe' programme. Its findings show, amongst other things, that approaches to dealing with the bunkers vary depending on the wartime history of the participating countries. Hence, another Europe-wide project is planned, aimed at developing a common ethical framework for the conservation or repurposing of the former defence facilities.



Free evening music event in a World War II artillery gun casemate of the former Saltzwedel-neu battery

Background: The 'Atlantic Wall' was built during World War II by the German army along Europe's Atlantic coastline, the English Channel, and the North Sea. In many places the massive bunkers, partly built by forced labour, still define the coastline. The ones in the Atlantikwall Raversyde open-air museum, owned by the Flemish government and managed by the Province of West Flanders, mostly date from 1941 to 1944 and also include an older bunker complex from World War I. Some of the bunkers have been restored and can be visited.

Memorial sculpture as an act of cautionary remembrance

Jasenovac, Croatia

Brief description: A monumental sculpture commemorating the victims marks the site of the former Jasenovac concentration camp, of which no structural traces remain. The symbolic design in the shape of a stylized flower refers both to resistance and survival as well as to the atrocities committed here. The 24-metre-high monument by Yugoslav-Serbian architect Bogdan Bogdanović, unveiled in 1966, is the central artistic element of the Jasenovac Memorial Site, which also includes an educational section. The memorial site is administered under the auspices of the Croatian Ministry of Culture and Media.

Local impact: In the former Yugoslavia, the large-scale sculpture was at the centre of the official state policy of remembrance. Since the country's dissolution, the memorial site is divided between Croatia and the Serbian part of Bosnia-Herzegovina. During the wars in the 1990s the commemorations on site were interrupted and the museum was partially destroyed; however, the monument itself remained almost unscathed. Some consider that its symbolic form does not adequately reflect the complex burden of the place's history; others regard the design as timeless and particularly value its emotional impulse to engage with the site.



The 'flower monument' on the site of the former Jasenovac concentration camp



View over the memorial site with the museum (bottom) and the monument (centre-left); the river defines the border to Bosnia-Herzegovina

Background: The Jasenovac concentration camp existed from 1941 to 1945. It was operated by the fascist Ustaše regime in the then 'Independent State of Croatia'. It was one of the largest World War II concentration camps in southeast Europe. Serbian, Roma, and Jewish victims were often murdered on arrival or had to work as forced labour; among them there were also Croatian prisoners who were seen as opponents of the regime. The structural remnants of the camp were dismantled from 1945 to 1948. After the site was redesigned as a memorial, the museum and archive were added in 1968. In 2020, the Croatian government issued an official recommendation to all schools to organize state-funded educational field trips to the Jasenovac Memorial Site. This led to a significant increase in school group attendance from across the country, which in turn reinforced the site's role in public education. To this day, the number of camp victims is a subject of political manipulation.

Artistic intervention as a stimulus for critical reflection

Vienna (Wien), Austria

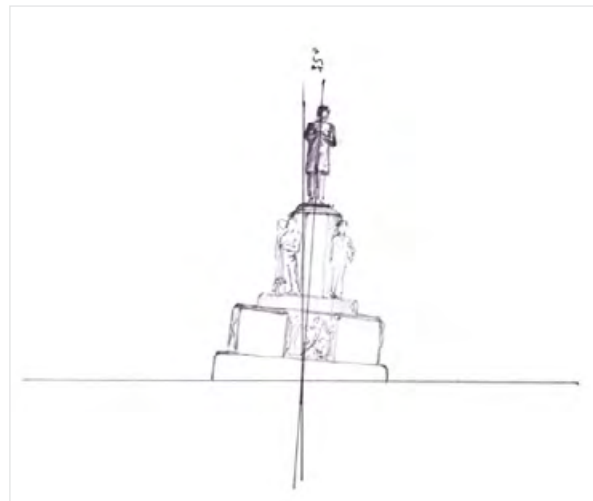
Brief description: The 3.5-degree tilt of the centrally located monument to Karl Lueger is intended to unsettle viewers. The intervention aims to break the sense of monumentality, to stimulate a critical examination of the legacy of Lueger, Mayor of Vienna from 1897 to 1910 and an avowed anti-Semite, and to keep the public debate about this alive. The project is the result of an invited artistic competition in 2022–23 initiated by the City of Vienna.

Local impact: Launched by the University of Applied Arts Vienna, there was a previous open ideas competition for the monument's artistic redesign already in 2009–10; it was not binding since it did not involve implementation. In the course of international incidences of monuments being toppled by the Black Lives Matter movement and ongoing local protests, the debate about how to treat the monument was revived and led to the realization that the existing textual contextualization did not suffice. Subsequently, the municipal agency for art in public space (KÖR Kunst im öffentlichen Raum Wien) and the City of Vienna



The Lueger monument before the artistic intervention and with traces of protest actions

Cultural Department launched an international competition in 2022, which was supported by scholarly experts. The proposal by artist Klemens Wihlidal, who had already won the 2009–10 competition, convinced the jury. The project 'Inclined position' ('Schieflage (Karl Lueger 3,5°)') was implemented by summer 2026. The work does not change the actual monument, but its intimated toppling visually deprives the figure of balance and thus seeks to shift the perspective to Lueger's personality and his historical role. Furthermore, the contextualization is intended as a clear statement against anti-Semitism, racism, and political populism in the present.



Sketch of the artist's ideas for the project 'Schieflage (Karl Lueger 3,5°)'

Background: Lueger played a significant part in anchoring anti-Semitism in Austrian politics. After his death, a privately funded monument was erected in 1926. In the 1990s, calls rose for a critical debate on it. In 2010, the City added an explanatory plaque, which, according to many, does not sufficiently address Lueger's political stance. In recent years, repeated protests have taken place against the monument amid calls for its removal.

Urban and spatial contextualization

A holistic view of the urban or socio-spatial environment serves to gain a better understanding of the complex relationship between a dissonant heritage site and its surroundings. This refers to material conditions of, for example, buildings, squares, and infrastructure, as well as to their cultural, political, and functional dimensions. In this context, it is important to be aware that the overall setting constantly changes and interacts with the heritage.



Integrating into overarching concepts

An integrated approach that incorporates physical as well as societal, economic, and environmental criteria is important for a differentiated way of engaging with dissonant heritage. Embedding the approach in overarching plans such as urban development concepts can help to devise viable long-term strategies that reflect different interests.

(→ Application example, p. 27)

Uncovering connections

The urban-spatial and social interconnections of dissonant heritage sites are not always easily discernible. Support such as information guidance systems or the provision of audio guides and thematic walks can encourage an independent exploration of the content and contexts.

(→ Application example, p. 28)

Developing site-specific learning opportunities

A transfer of knowledge at the original location, for example in the form of guided tours or dialogue-based events, also contributes to understanding dissonant heritage as an integral part of the urban-spatial environment. The scope of analysis can range from individual objects and built structures to entire neighbourhoods, cities, or landscapes.

(→ Application example, p. 29)

Development of guidelines for urban and civic integration of the heritage

Leipzig, Germany

Brief description: A 'code' defines key areas for the future use and development of the downtown area called Matthäikirchhof. During the time of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the district headquarters of the East German secret police, the 'State Security Service' ('Stasi'), and the national police force, the 'People's Police' ('Volkspolizei'), were located there. The code was developed as part of a broad participatory process in 2021–22 under the auspices of the City of Leipzig and with financial support from the German Federal Government (→ *Infobox*, p. 67). Amongst other things, it sets out objectives for the treatment of existing buildings and for the urban-spatial integration of the site.

Local impact: Events and dialogue formats carried out during the participatory process enabled a differentiated critical engagement with the history of the place and helped raise public awareness of its significance. The results of this process, summarized in the 'Matthäikirchhof Code', have since served as the basis for the area's ongoing transformation: they were incorporated into the brief for the urban development compe-

tition the City of Leipzig held in 2023–24. In this way, the city has managed to integrate different perspectives from civic society, the administration and the professional world into the development process for the historically multifaceted site.



At public events, anyone interested was able to inform themselves about the competition entries for the redesign and enter into a dialogue



The area prior to conversion; it was once the district headquarters of the GDR 'State Security Service' and the 'People's Police' in Leipzig

Background: The area of the Matthäikirchhof was once the nucleus of the city of Leipzig, and its architecture changed repeatedly in the course of the centuries. After parts were destroyed in World War II, from 1950 to 1989, the site served as the headquarters of state surveillance institutions, making it a symbol of repression and control in the GDR. As an important location of the 'Peaceful Revolution' in 1989, the Matthäikirchhof also stands for the overcoming of the communist dictatorship in Germany and the subsequent development of democratic structures. The area, which is currently largely unused, is now to be transformed into a place of lived democracy. Plans include establishing a cultural and meeting centre as well as a new building as a central archive for the regional GDR 'State Security Service' documents.

Contextual and spatial linkage of decentralized places of remembrance

Stadtallendorf, Germany

Brief description: Former production sites of the explosives plants from the Nazi era in Stadtallendorf are currently being connected to form a network of history trails as a memorial and remembrance landscape. The erstwhile production facilities are in part no longer recognizable or identifiable owing to their subsequent uses or dilapidation. The trails are part of a current urban development project led by the Municipality of Stadtallendorf and funded by the German Federal Government (→ *Infobox*, p. 67). The project also includes the expansion of the city's related documentation and information centre (DIZ) as well as the redesign of the adjacent urban space. The aim is to enhance the national and international perception of the former armament site and its importance for the culture of remembrance.

Local impact: The concept for the trails is currently being developed as part of a research project at the University of Kassel. Local perspectives are included through different participation formats such as history walks, workshops, and living labs. In the future, the various trails are expected to contextualize the former

production sites which are scattered round town, relate them thematically, and link them in a network of decentralized remembrance spaces and exhibition venues. In addition to guided tours, there will be digital services and print media for personal use. Information boards and maps are intended to mark special buildings and places in urban space. In the long term, the plan is to integrate the history trails into a comprehensive inner-city routing concept.



The former explosives plant management office is now, amongst other things, home to the DIZ Stadtallendorf



The erstwhile Guards House III of the former explosives plant is now used as a residential building

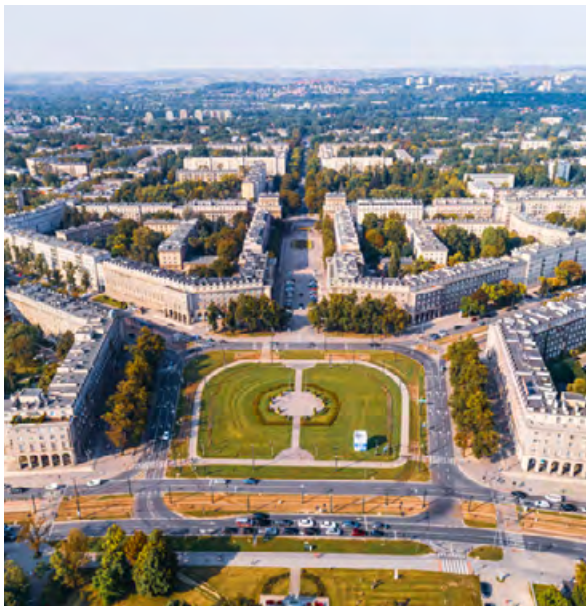
Background: The explosives and ammunition factories in Stadtallendorf built during the Nazi era formed the largest armaments site in Europe during World War II. Large-scale forced labour was involved in operating them. After the war, many of the former bunkers, factory halls, works buildings, railway tracks, guardhouses, and housing estates were transformed and repurposed, amongst other things to become a residential area, for military uses, and to establish industrial enterprises. Since 1994, the DIZ Stadtallendorf, which is situated in a now listed former administration building, remembers the victims and provides insights into the handling of the Nazi heritage.

Conveying connections in an authentic place

Cracow (Kraków), Poland

Brief description: Various public and private cultural offerings convey the history of Cracow's Nowa Huta district in the context of communist urban planning and societal transformation. The spectrum ranges from ironic-nostalgic and substantive thematic guided tours to exhibitions in the district museum.

Local impact: Some of the educational and touristic formats address the district's communist past as a complex and significant cultural as well as historical heritage. Nowa Huta's monumental architecture and emblematic spaces such as Solidarność Avenue (formerly 'Lenin Avenue') provide starting points for reflection on how urban planning is interwoven with local identity, resistance, and political ideology. The offerings reach out to visitors and residents in various ways: they expand knowledge about the district, strengthen a sense of belonging, and contribute to a multi-faceted narrative that also includes aspects of architecture, art, literature, and nature.

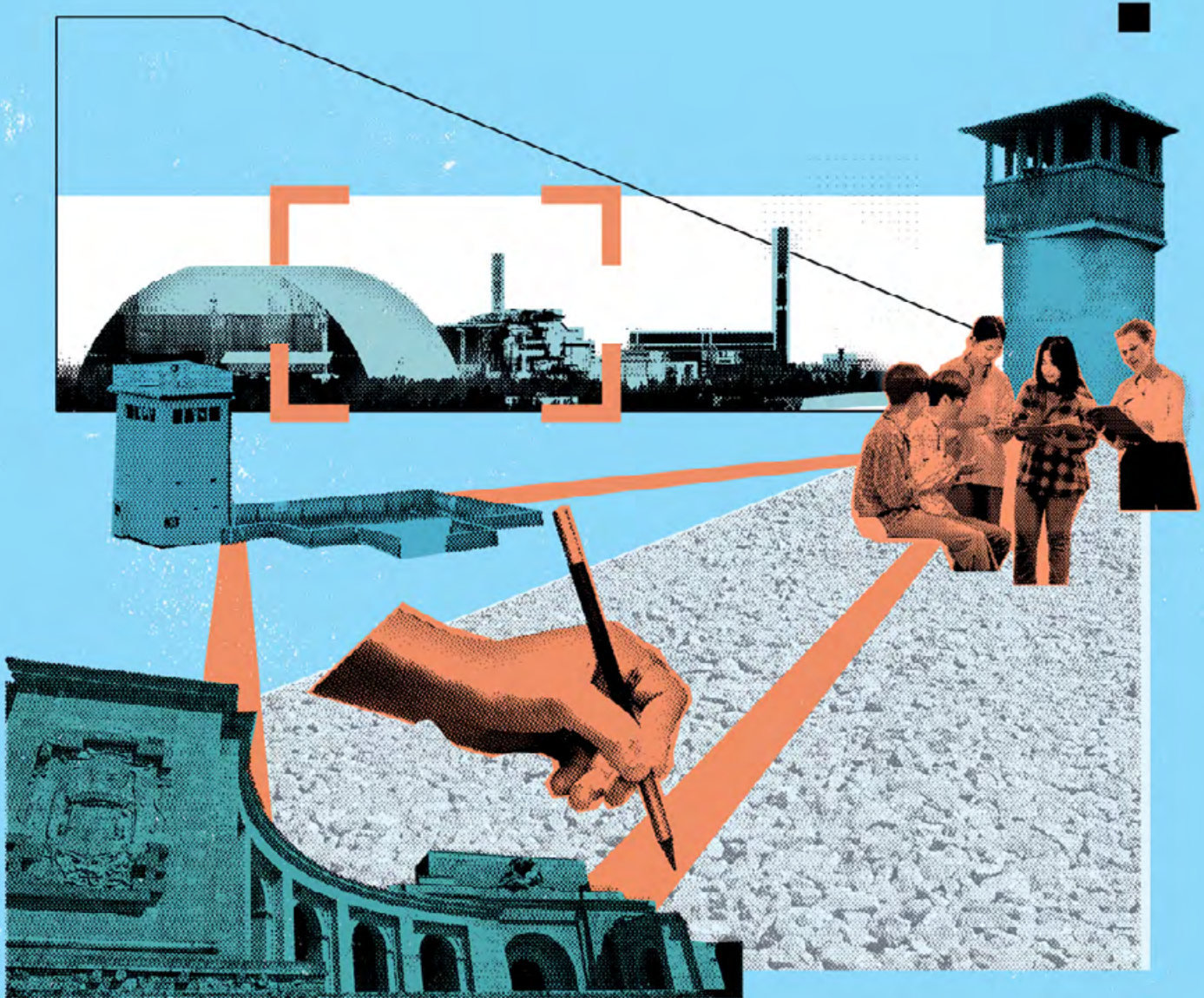


Aerial view of Nowa Huta's central square, built in 1952–56



View of Roses Avenue, constructed in the Stalinist architectural style, linking the central square to the residential districts

Background: Nowa Huta ('New Steelworks') was built starting in 1949 for the workers of the 'Lenin Steelworks' and became part of the City of Cracow in 1951. Like Eisenhüttenstadt (Germany), Ștei (Romania), or Dunaújváros (Hungary), the district was originally designed and continuously expanded as a 'socialist model and showcase city'. The residential district is one of the largest planned in the style of Stalinist architecture. In the 1980s, Nowa Huta was a centre of resistance to the communist dictatorship and played an important role in the Solidarność movement. After 1989, several streets and squares dedicated to Lenin and the Cuban Revolution were renamed and a monumental statue of Lenin was removed; it has stood in a Swedish theme park since 1992. The oldest section of Nowa Huta is now an official national cultural monument. The district, which currently has around 200,000 inhabitants, is popular for its many green spaces, proximity to downtown, good infrastructure, and affordable housing. Cracow is part of the ATRIUM cultural route (→ *Case study*, pp. 62–64).



***Creating awareness:
Drawing attention to the
potentials and special characteristics
of dissonant heritage***

Sustainable development of dissonant heritage needs the support and active participation of politics and society. This tool set features instruments that create public awareness – by sensitizing the public to the particular requirements for dealing with dissonant heritage and highlighting its societal added value.

Background

Dissonant heritage can carry different meanings, some of which are ideologically charged, and can be interpreted or instrumentalized in various ways by stakeholders and individual groups in society. In order to make engaging with this heritage sustainable, it is therefore important to develop a shared understanding of the special requirements but also the potentials of these places. The focus here is not on resolving the dissonances and burdens associated with the heritage. Instead, it is on creating an awareness of them and understanding them as stimulating a critical reflection on the past and the present.

Objectives

The tools in this set draw attention to characteristic features of dissonant heritage. The aim is to better anchor both general and project-specific potentials as well as special characteristics in the public mind so that these are taken into account appropriately in subsequent decision-making. This can be done, for example, by communicating the societal added value of dissonant heritage sites or by pointing to acute threats such as disrepair or instrumentalization (→ *Tool*, pp. 32–35). In this context, the impact of the topics can be increased by various measures, e.g., by cross-disciplinary or cross-stakeholder alliances (→ *Tool*, pp. 36–39), by the formal listing as a monument, or by highlighting the importance of the heritage site in the context of recognized awards and competitions (→ *Tool*, pp. 40–43).

Notes on using the tool set

- The tools presented in this set require adaptation to the specific local situation (→ *Application examples*), and their implementation should be continuously evaluated.
- For example, the tools offered in the set ‘Understanding the context’ provide a basis for this (→ pp. 16–29). They enable a fundamental understanding of the specific conditions of a respective heritage site in order to address and include relevant issues and stakeholders in a targeted manner. In this regard, the question of who communicates which content and topics or who lays claim to providing the control over the narrative of the heritage site may already be part of the conflict associated with it.

Tools and application examples in this tool set

Sharing knowledge and values p. 32

Integration of different perspectives in the context of international educational work p. 33

Using digital formats to explore contested heritage p. 34

Interdisciplinary digital documentation of cultural heritage at risk p. 35

Networking p. 36

Connecting different actors to develop a contemporary approach to the heritage p. 37

Cross-border cooperation to strengthen common values p. 38

Exchanging experiences through thematic networking p. 39

(Critical) recognition p. 40

Civic engagement for the heritage listing p. 41

Recognition of the conservation value by designating a place at risk p. 42

Initiatives to protect and maintain a nuclear exclusion zone p. 43

Sharing knowledge and values

Knowledge and values exchange are of particular importance in relation to dissonant heritage. They contribute to the understanding of complex interrelationships and raise awareness of the special characteristics of historically burdened sites. In addition, such an exchange can also take on a moderating role and provide support when dealing with difficult topics and conflicting opinions. Such a form of objective communication requires both a knowledge of the relevant specialist areas and a particular sensitivity in dealing with emotionally challenging and conflictual content as well as a willingness to critically question one's own perspective.



Considering pluralistic perspectives

Perceptions, attributions, and interpretations of a dissonant heritage site may differ widely. Interaction among the stakeholders enables different perspectives to be voiced and discussed, e.g., in participatory formats such as workshops or seminars. In this context, the inclusion of the local population as well as of contemporary witnesses offering first-hand accounts can give enriching insights and open doors to project-specific contexts.

(→ Application example, p. 33)

Offering flexible and interactive communication formats

Insufficient knowledge of a dissonant heritage site's complex background and one-sided or exclusionary forms of representation are the cause of many conflicts that arise in this context. Digital knowledge-sharing formats, such as interactive apps that enable different users to continuously share their personal stories, complement and expand the communication of facts and information grounded in scholarly research. In the context of dissonant heritage, these digital applications require particularly careful moderation.

(→ Application example, p. 34)

Promoting accessibility

Dissonant heritage sites are often only accessible to the public to a limited extent or not at all, due, for example, to the ownership of the property, existing conflicts, or their poor structural condition. In some places no built remains are left at all. In such instances, the heritage sites can be experienced in new ways with the help of digital knowledge-sharing applications. Virtual reconstructions or augmented reality formats can provide access to lost historical testimonies or hard-to-reach places and establish a link to the present.

(→ Application example, p. 35)

Integration of different perspectives in the context of international educational work

Sighet (Sighetu Marmăției), Romania

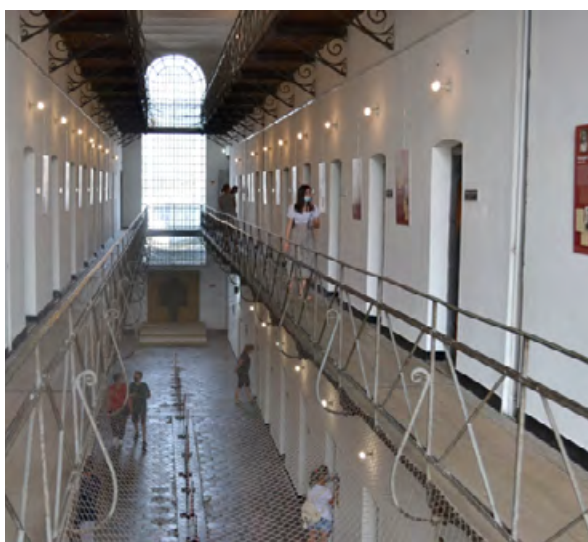
Brief description: A summer academy in the memorial site incorporating the former prison of Sighet aimed to communicate to young people the history of communism and its crimes in Romania. Organized between 1998 and 2014 by the Romanian NGO Fundatia Academia Civica (Civic Academy Foundation) and the German Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the summer academy dealt, amongst other things, with the mechanisms of oppression under the communist dictatorship. Contemporary witnesses contributed their personal experiences.

Local impact: For the duration of the summer academy, more than 1,300 participants from Romania and the Republic of Moldova gained, for example, insights into the history of persecution and resistance through lectures, discussions, and interviews with contemporary witnesses. The academy also helped to raise public awareness of the memorial as a central place for addressing the communist past. Its results were documented and published by the above-mentioned Romanian foundation, for example in 2000–01 in a

publication series developed by young people with a focus on topics such as remembrance, hope, and extremism, as well as in the ‘School of Memory’ series issued annually between 2002 and 2014.



Sculpture by artist Aurel Vlad in the outdoor area of the former prison complex



The former political prison of Sighet now houses a museum

Background: From 1948 to 1955, the communist regime in Romania imprisoned real or perceived opponents under inhumane conditions in the Sighet prison, which had been built in 1897 during the Habsburg monarchy. Since 1993 there has been a memorial in the complex; it has received official support and oversight from the Council of Europe since 1995. In the first years after the end of communism, the institution faced political pressure and was at times portrayed as an instrument of Western influence. Since 1997, it has been recognized and financially supported by the Romanian state as a national cultural site. The memorial, comprising a museum in the former prison and the International Center for Studies into Communism in Bucharest, is organized and managed by the Civic Academy Foundation. In 2018, the European Commission awarded it the European Heritage Label.

Using digital formats to explore contested heritage

Various locations in Cyprus

Brief description: The 'USHer' (Uneasy but Shared Heritage) project led by the University of Cyprus in cooperation with the national CYENS Centre of Excellence makes the modernist architectural legacy (1900–74) of the divided island of Cyprus accessible as a shared educational and cultural heritage. As alternative guides, digital formats enable anyone interested to explore various modernist building typologies, such as hotels or residential and healthcare buildings, both on-site and virtually. The project draws on archival research, fieldwork, and oral histories. It also invites members of Cyprus's diverse communities to share their own experiences, personal impressions, and photos and thus becomes a dynamic platform for documenting individual memories and sharing them. The platform was originally designed as an app in 2022–24 by the national Research and Innovation Foundation under the EU-co-funded 'THALIA' programme and transformed into a website in 2025.

Local impact: The project aims to reveal the complex connections between the modernist cultural heritage and conflicts in Cyprus, as well as to uncover competing or hidden narratives and interpretations. In this way, the digital platform raises awareness of this

common Cypriot heritage and its intangible value. It underlines the significance of abandoned buildings as sites of collective memory. In doing so, it incorporates both Greek and Turkish Cypriot perspectives into an interactive dialogue. The platform is multilingual and regularly updated to ensure its relevance and appeal. Contributions are reviewed prior to publication to make certain they are appropriate.



Overview of the listed locations from the start page of the interactive 'USHer' app



Now in the UN buffer zone, Hotel Ledra Palace, designed by architect Benzion Ginsbürg, opened in 1949 during the British colonial period and served in part as the UN peacekeeping force headquarters since 1974

Background: The island, a British crown colony before its independence in 1960, has been de facto divided since 1974 as a result of Turkey's military intervention and the ongoing occupation of part of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus. The south has remained under the control of the Republic of Cyprus. In the north, the 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' was unilaterally declared in 1983. The latter is only recognized internationally by Turkey itself. The demilitarized UN buffer zone separates the two parts. The conflict-ridden processes of colonization, decolonization, and nation-building shaped the discourse surrounding modernist architecture on the island.

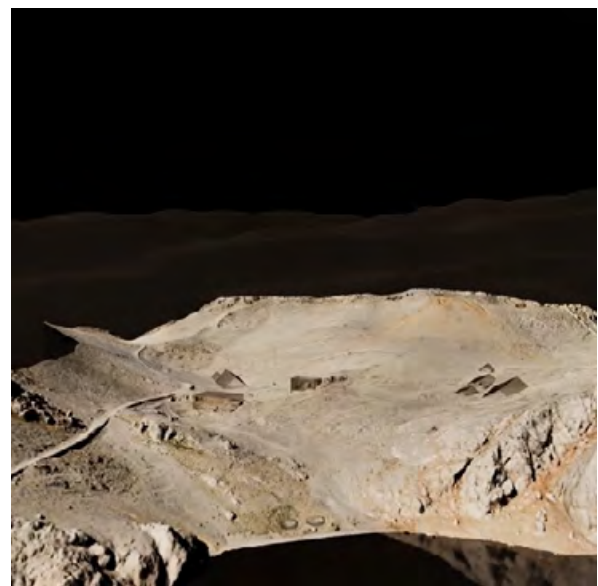
Interdisciplinary digital documentation of cultural heritage at risk

Pag (Otok Pag), Croatia

Brief description: Digital modelling was used to make traces of the former Ustaše concentration camp at Slana visible and to recall the crimes committed there. Coordinated by the Serb National Council in Zagreb and with funding from the Croatian government, two interdisciplinary research projects, one artistic and one scientific, documented the landscape and the camp's materiality by means of field surveys, drone images, and other digital tools in 2017–23.

Local impact: The 'Slana – Radical Landscape' project by Davor Konjikušić, Nika Petković, and Goran Andlar addressed processes of erasing history through experimental film, photography, archival research, and 3D reconstruction. Multilingual content made the digital representations accessible to an international audience. The 'Tracing Oblivion' project, carried out by scholars and researchers, amongst others from the Universities of Durham and Lisbon and the Institute of Art History in Zagreb, examined the site's materiality using archaeological methods such as 3D landscape

modelling to understand the camp's dimensions and spatial use. The results of these works have supported further outreach, educational, and remembrance activities related to the largely derelict and neglected site.



3D model of the former Slana concentration camp, screenshot from the film on the 'Slana – Radical Landscape' project



Remains of the former Slana concentration camp on the island of Pag, 2022

Background: The Slana concentration camp, located on a secluded bay on the island of Pag, was the scene of brutal crimes by the fascist Ustaše regime between June and August 1941; it was one of the most notorious camps in then-occupied Southeastern Europe. Serbs, Jews, and anti-fascist Croats were murdered there. Since only a few physical traces remain, remembering the crimes is challenging. Against the background of broad political tensions after the end of Yugoslavia and the contested nature of wartime memory, the site has faced historical revisionism, threats from unregulated tourism, development on land that remains largely in private ownership, and local resistance to commemoration since the 1990s. On several occasions memorial plaques were destroyed.

Networking

Networks help improve the visibility of dissonant heritage. For example, getting together in groups and associations can draw attention to specific topics and needs, such as the necessary protection against disrepair or the financial support required to engage with a heritage site. In addition, networks also facilitate the transfer of knowledge across disciplines and on different levels, e.g., between heritage sites relating to similar topics. Furthermore, networking also helps when it comes to getting to know different interests better and bringing divergent points of view closer together.

Networking on specific topics

The special characteristics of dissonant heritage (→ pp. 8-9) are often not sufficiently known by the public or those who are actively engaged in the further development of historically burdened sites. Networking on specific topics creates a basis for jointly identifying and highlighting both the encumbrances and the opportunities and making them visible. At the same time, professional interaction facilitates mutual learning.

(→ Application example, p. 37)

Networking nationally and internationally

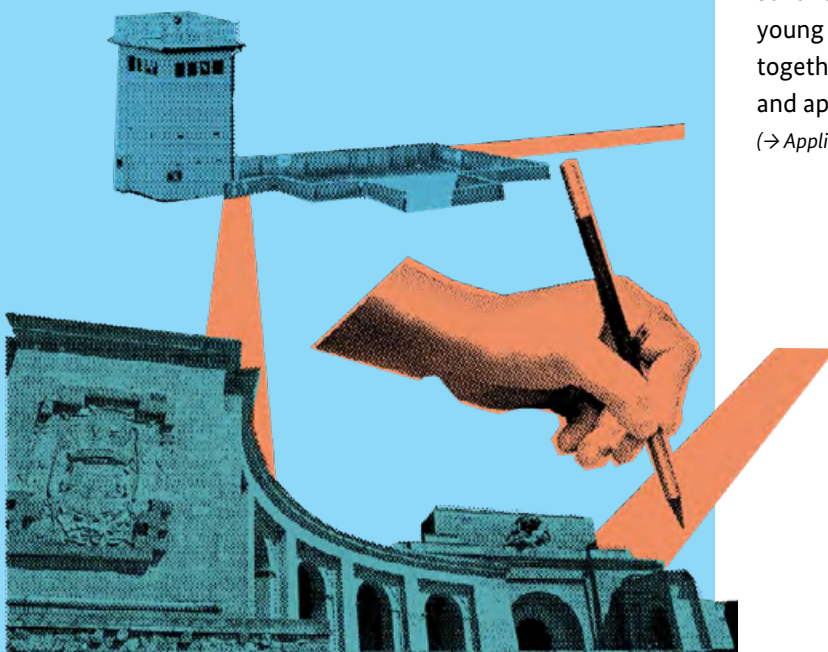
The local parameters for engaging with a case of dissonant heritage tend to differ greatly. It is often difficult to find comparable projects that offer points of orientation. National and international cooperation, for example in the framework of the 'URBACT' exchange and learning programme or the Urban Agenda for the EU (→ Infobox, p. 72), can help to promote local solutions as best practices regionally, nationally, or even across national borders. In addition, such networks may support pluralistic perspectives and promote intercultural understanding.

(→ Application example, p. 38)

Connecting different stakeholders

The inclusion of different perspectives and experiences forms an important basis for engaging with a dissonant heritage site. Interaction, for example between young people and contemporary witnesses, can bring together various views. This can lead to new formats and approaches.

(→ Application example, p. 39)



Connecting different actors to develop a contemporary approach to the heritage

San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Spain

Brief description: A sub-project of the Contested Histories in Public Spaces network carried out in 2021–23 drew international attention to the Valley of Cuelgamuros, a monumental memorial built under the Franco dictatorship. At the initiative of the European Association of History Educators (EuroClio) and the Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation, various stakeholders from the fields of education, heritage conservation, politics, and culture, amongst others, discussed paths to a democratic culture of remembrance for the site. The findings fed into action-oriented approaches for decision-makers as well as into information and working materials, including podcasts, video tutorials, and a toolbox for guided tours in contested spaces.

Local impact: The project promoted local and international engagement with the site and supported the public debate on Franco's heritage and how to deal with the valley in the future. In addition, the network's activities contributed to the site being renamed from 'Valley of the Fallen' to 'Valley of Cuelgamuros' in accordance with the Law on Democratic Memory adopted by the Spanish government in 2022. The law aims to promote knowledge of the history of democ-

racy and to preserve the memory of the victims of the Spanish Civil War (1936–39) as well as the Franco dictatorship; this led, for example, to the creation of a website about the valley.



The monument is located about 45 km northwest of Madrid and was inaugurated in 1959

Background: In 1940, the present-day Valley of Cuelgamuros was built at Franco's order by the forced labour of political prisoners as a state memorial to the victory in the Civil War. It was intended as a final resting place for fallen supporters of the regime. During the 1950s, large numbers of human remains were transferred there from all over Spain, among them also deceased Republicans; these were often reinterments from mass graves, sometimes without the knowledge or consent of relatives. After his death in 1975, Franco himself was buried at the site. For decades, this made the place a central symbol of the Francoist dictatorship and an attraction for its supporters. As a result of political decisions and international debates, the culture of remembrance at this site has been partially redefined in recent years. For example, Franco's remains were re-buried in Madrid in 2019. In 2025, the Spanish government launched a public architectural competition for the redesign of Cuelgamuros; the winning project is expected to be implemented from 2027 onwards. The basilica is still an active Catholic church under Benedictine administration.



The building complex consists of a 152-metre-high concrete cross, a large parade ground, a Benedictine abbey, and a basilica

Cross-border cooperation to strengthen common values

Various locations in Germany and France

Brief description: Multiple memorials in Germany and France commemorate the subcamps of the former Natzweiler concentration camp complex, built during the Nazi dictatorship. In 2016, on the German side, several of those places of remembrance and learning joined forces to present their shared history on a supranational and transnational level by forming the Association of Former Natzweiler Concentration Camp Complex Memorial Sites (VGKN). This umbrella organization is committed to scholarly and educational projects and to nurturing the culture of remembrance; it works closely with the memorial of the former main camp in France, the Centre Européen du Résistant Déporté.

Local impact: This Franco-German cooperation is at the forefront of transnational collaboration. Through joint projects, it seeks to raise young people's awareness of historical and societal contexts, and to strengthen democratic values and a mindset committed to the rule of law. Another focus is on presenting, supporting, and combining current research results. Many Fran-

co-German cooperation projects have already been initiated and are being continuously developed further. These include academic colloquia, the creation of a comprehensive database of all Natzweiler prisoners, artistic cooperation with young people and creatives, multilingual online portals, commemorative ceremonies, training courses for teachers, and the development of guides for tours of the memorials.



Memorial site of the former main camp Natzweiler in France



A remembrance trail on the German side in Spaichingen features trilingual panels with information on the origin of the concentration camp and the prisoners' suffering. It is one of currently 18 Natzweiler memorials

Background: The Natzweiler concentration camp and its more than 50 subcamps formed an extensive camp complex on German and French territory. Many of the prisoners died in the camps, on death marches, or during evacuation transports. For their cross-border joint education and communication work designed to keep the memory of crimes of the Nazi dictatorship alive, 14 French and German memorial sites in the Natzweiler complex received the European Heritage Label in 2018.

Exchanging experiences through thematic networking

Teistungen, Germany

Brief description: As part of the Iron Curtain Network, the Borderland Museum Eichsfeld regularly exchanges information on educational materials and exhibition ideas with six other related institutions along the former inner-German border. Within this framework, the participating historical sites also develop funding applications for joint projects and cooperate on events, amongst other activities. The network was created in the wake of these sites being awarded the European Heritage Label in 2011.

Local impact: The network's efforts offer the Borderland Museum the opportunity to test different formats and to address new target groups. In this way, for example in 2019 and 2024, young people concerned themselves during project days with the question: what was it like back then in autumn 1989 and when the border opened? In this context, the participants from schools on both sides of the former border worked together. Accompanied by media educators as well as contemporary witnesses, they

critically explored the source material on the history of divided Germany and its current impacts from a variety of perspectives. The outcomes were a comics exhibition and various radio features.



Participants in a multi-day media project run by the Iron Curtain Network

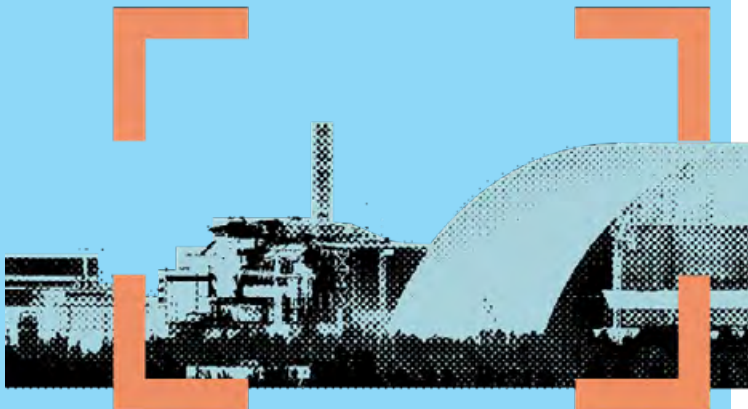


The 'Borderland Trail' with original preserved GDR border installations is part of the museum

Background: Founded in 1995, the museum at the former Duderstadt/Worbis border crossing documents the history of the 1949–90 border between the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the German Federal Republic. In historical buildings and outdoor areas, the museum focuses, amongst other things, on the effects the division had on rural regions and life in the border region. Through permanent and special exhibitions, educational offerings and eyewitness accounts, the museum makes German and European post-war history readily comprehensible and tangible. At the same time, it is part of the approximately 1,400-km-long Green Belt, a unique natural and cultural landscape that was once the 'death strip' or control area patrolled by GDR border guards on the former inner-German border.

(Critical) recognition

Highlighting and recognizing special characteristics of dissonant heritage sites within existing specialist categories and formats can render the heritage as well as its associated conflicts and burdens more tangible. Aspects that were previously less noticed can thus be validated, thereby promoting, for example, public awareness and improving access to financial support.



Determining the need for protection

Dissonant heritage sites often appear to be unworthy of conservation or consideration in light of both the given burdens and the complex requirements. The formal recognition of individual sites, for instance by including them in lists of monuments, emphasizes their architectural, cultural, or urban planning significance and creates a basis for their protection and possible reuse. Civic engagement plays a central role here when it comes to initiating debates on conserving controversial buildings and places.

(→ Application example, p. 41)

Pointing out acute risks

Despite their socio-political and urban-spatial significance and their importance for a culture of remembrance, dissonant heritage sites are often at risk of vandalism, demolition, or falling into disrepair. Acute threats such as these are highlighted by the inclusion in programmes such as '7 Most Endangered' of Europa Nostra, 'Heritage at Risk' of ICOMOS, and 'World Monuments Watch' of the World Monuments Fund. As a result, partners at local, national, and international levels can be mobilized to support the conservation and sustainable further development of such places.

(→ Application example, p. 42)

Emphasizing societal added value

The potentials innate to dissonant heritage are often not known or recognized. Inclusion in national or international (funding) programmes or legacy protection categories underlines the societal added value respective heritage sites can offer. This can be achieved, for example, by a specific place being awarded the European Heritage Label, being included in one of the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes, or being nominated for the UNESCO World Heritage List.

(→ Application example, p. 43)

Civic engagement for the heritage listing

Berlin, Germany

Brief description: In 2019, a petition initiated by various experts, including from the fields of history and architecture, succeeded in providing an – ultimately effective – stimulus for the heritage listing of what is informally termed the ‘Mouse Bunker’ (‘Mäusebunker’) in Berlin. The former animal testing facility of the Freie Universität (FU) Berlin, an example of 1970s brutalist architecture, had ceased operations that same year and was intended to be torn down.

Local impact: The demolition plans were initially suspended due to the broad civil society efforts and public debate. In 2021, the Berlin Heritage Authority, together with the Senate Department for Urban Development, Building and Housing (SenStadt) and the current owner Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin, launched a model process intended to serve as a platform for a comprehensive discourse on the building’s future and reuse. One of the recommendations was to make the property more accessible and to use it temporarily in order to anchor the site more firmly in the local context, to enable civic society to appro-

priate it, and to work towards future concepts. The model process helped raise public and professional awareness of the architectural and urban value of the ‘Mouse Bunker’ and to reassess it in the context of post-war modernism. Not least because of its architectural originality and cultural-historical significance, the Berlin Heritage Authority made it a listed building in 2023 – the previous dispute in civic society had created a broad consensus on its conservation value and thus shored up political and public support for the decision on the formal listing.



The former FU Berlin Research Building for Experimental Medicine, known as the ‘Mouse Bunker’



In 2024, on behalf of SenStadt, the ‘Festival for Urban Well-Being’ explored artistic, socio-cultural, and civil society impulses for the further development of the location and its surroundings

Background: The ‘Mouse Bunker’ was built in 1971–81 to a design by Gerd and Magdalena Hänska in the form of a concrete pyramid. With its laboratories, offices, and animal stables, the brutalist building was used for animal experiments as well as breeding animals for said purpose, including mice, dogs, sheep, and pigs. Because of its use, cost, and the monumental form resembling a warship, the iconic building split public opinion from the outset.

Recognition of the conservation value by designating a place at risk

Skopje (Ckonje), North Macedonia

Brief description: By including the former counter hall of the Skopje Telecommunications and Postal Centre in its '7 Most Endangered' programme (7ME) (→ *Infobox*, p. 61) in 2021, Europa Nostra and the Institute of the European Investment Bank highlighted its conservation value. It is an impressive example of brutalist architecture from the time of Yugoslavia after 1945 and one of North Macedonia's most prominent landmarks. The 7ME programme aspires to raise awareness of endangered cultural sites of European importance, to make recommendations for their conservation and future uses, and to identify possible funding sources. The building's nomination was based on its historical, architectural, and urban significance in the context of post-war modernism.

Local impact: The inclusion in the programme made it possible to conduct a technical evaluation of the building and initiated interaction between European institutions and the North Macedonian government. The public appeal for the renovation of the iconic building as well as other local and international activities increased media attention and general recognition. This



The powerful building structure of the counter hall (front) in the form of a lotus flower was intended to symbolize Skopje's reconstruction after the earthquake

triggered a public debate on how to address the brutalist architecture from the Tito era as well as on concepts for alternative uses and refurbishment options.



A major fire in 2013 severely damaged the dome and the hall's interior; since then, the building has fallen into disrepair

Background: After the devastating earthquake of 1963, the state and party leadership in Yugoslavia saw the reconstruction of Skopje's destroyed city centre as an opportunity to implement a modern vision for the capital with the help of international architectural practices. Macedonian architect and artist Janko Konstantinov designed the counter hall, completed in 1979–81, in expressive concrete shapes. After a major fire in 2013, it was gradually left to decay as a result of a lack of investment and the societal disregard for its dissonant heritage. After the publication of the 7ME report, the Ministry of Culture officially declared the building complex a listed cultural heritage in 2022, thereby creating new opportunities for support. A concrete plan for refurbishment, repurposing, and financing has not yet been developed.

Initiatives to protect and maintain a nuclear exclusion zone

Chernobyl (Чорнобиль) and surrounding area, Ukraine

Brief description: Regional and state actors have taken various measures to preserve the site and surroundings of the former Chernobyl nuclear power plant. The aim is to highlight the national as well as international environmental and historical significance of the exclusion zone that has existed since the 1986 nuclear disaster. In 2016, a biosphere reserve was established to combine research and nature conservation in the area with its unique flora and fauna. In addition, in 2017, an application for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List was proposed by a former ‘liquidator’ who had been involved in the removal of radioactive contamination. This proposal, which was supported by tourism professionals, included the former nuclear power plant complex and the abandoned town of Pripyat, among other sites.

Local impact: These initiatives seek to recognize the conservation value of the exclusion zone and establish it as a place of remembrance, warning, and learning, e.g., on radioactivity and the responsible use of nuclear energy. Partly funded by the ‘UN Environment Programme’, the protected area is the largest of its kind in Ukraine and is today an important site for international

environmental research, amongst other things on the regeneration mechanisms of natural ecosystems. Following the initiative from civil society for a possible UNESCO application, the Ministry of Culture organized a working group process with local, regional, and national stakeholders in 2020. This stalled due to the COVID-19 pandemic and since 2022 owing to the Russian war of aggression. Nevertheless, the accompanying public discourse has helped increase international attention on the cultural and natural value of the exclusion zone.



View of Pripyat with the former Chernobyl nuclear power plant and the new protective shield under construction (completed in 2016) in the background



Former ‘Cultural Palace’ ‘Energetik’ in the abandoned town of Pripyat

Background: The explosion in the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in 1986 has been the worst disaster involving the peaceful use of nuclear energy to date. It led to large-scale evacuation of an area with a radius of more than 30 km. This exclusion zone in Ukraine and Belarus is still uninhabitable. Access is only allowed to people who work and research here. Since 2022, in the course of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, the Chernobyl site and the restricted area have once again been the focus of public attention. Visits that were previously possible with special permission have since been suspended.



***Strengthening potentials:
Advancing dissonant heritage
for the future***

Dissonant heritage sites are of great importance to society today as possible places of remembrance and for learning about history and democracy. This set of tools shows ways to utilize and sustainably develop this diverse potential.

Background

Dissonant heritage sites encompass a broad spectrum of themes, historical layers, and built testimonies that can be interpreted and perceived differently depending on the context. What these places have in common is that they encourage critical engagement with one's own history and (cultural) identity in the spirit of an active culture of remembrance. They thus have the potential to function over and above mere commemoration as places of learning where democratic values such as solidarity, tolerance, and a sense of responsibility are communicated. For example, a dissonant heritage site can serve as an important societal point of reference in urban space. Low-threshold access and flexible approaches that can respond to changing conditions promote this potential.

Objective

This tool set presents various strategies for making the societal value of dissonant heritage sites accessible and securing it for the long term. These places can thus help to ensure that past injustices are not forgotten but rather addressed within society (→ Tool, pp. 46-49). Other heritage sites offer themselves as spaces for constructive exchange, where different opinions as well as positions can be discussed, and democratic processes promoted (→ Tool, pp. 50-53). In this context, various functions and uses can be combined, for example, with a view to balancing divergent interests or to enabling synergies (→ Tool, pp. 54-57).

Notes on using the tool set

- The tools presented in this set are examples of the many different ways of tapping the potentials of a dissonant heritage site and of developing it sustainably. Which application is most suitable depends on the specific local circumstances (→ Application examples).
- Since these circumstances are often dynamic, an ongoing analysis of the issues, stakeholders, and needs related to the specific heritage is necessary (→ Set, pp. 16-29), as are correspondingly flexible approaches for further development.
- Equally important is the involvement of society and political decision makers to enable as nuanced and multi-perspectival an approach to the heritage as possible (→ Set, pp. 30-43).

Tools and application examples in this set

Space for remembrance and commemoration p. 46

Preserving historical authenticity as a cautionary memorial p. 47

Giving visibility to the victims by acknowledging them by name p. 48

Linking different narratives to create a multinational place of remembrance p. 49

Space for learning from history and for democracy p. 50

Creating spaces for remembrance, learning, and encounters p. 51

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Stimulating an engagement with the past and present p. 53

Space for synergies through mixed uses p. 54

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Space for remembrance and commemoration

Dissonant heritage sites can take on an important function in the culture of remembrance. As a cautionary testimony to past injustices, atrocities, or crimes, they contribute to recognizing past suffering and preserving it in the collective memory. As a place of commemoration, they offer a space for grief and necessary processing. These are functions that are particularly valuable for shaping current and future social coexistence.

Preserving historical authenticity

Adequately representing the past often poses a particular challenge with regard to dissonant heritage sites. Engaging with an authentic environment can provide insights and understanding that cannot be fully attained through replicas or the mere presentation of facts.

(→ Application example, p. 47)

From forgetting to remembering

Confronting the past can be emotionally distressing. To counteract avoidance behaviour and repression mechanisms that may arise, it is important to keep what has happened visible, for example by means of memorials or places of commemoration that pay tribute to the victims and encourage reflection.

(→ Application example, p. 48)

Integrating different perspectives on how the past is remembered

A multi-perspectival view of a dissonant heritage site is important in order to better understand the conflicts associated with it. Spaces of remembrance and commemoration which integrate different or divergent viewpoints on the past make complex linkages and contradictions visible; this can be achieved, for example, by means of exhibition concepts, events, or information boards.

(→ Application example, p. 49)



Preserving historical authenticity as a cautionary memorial

Oradour-sur-Glane, France

Brief description: The village of Oradour-sur-Glane was completely destroyed during a massacre by the German 'Waffen-SS' in 1944. The ruins have been preserved and structurally secured by the French state as a place of commemoration and as a cautionary memorial. Deliberately, no historical explanation is given inside the ruined village. Reduced signage and routing create a quiet setting in the authentic surroundings for personal reflection on what happened. The 'Martyr Village', as it is called, is open to the public daily and free of charge.

Local impact: The preservation of the destroyed village makes it possible to experience the sheer extent of the violence. A space of remembrance is created without didactic guidance, which enables an emotional and sensory approach to history. The memorial centre (Centre de la Mémoire), opened in 1999 and run by Département Haute-Vienne, has added a documentary and educational element to the village complex. It conveys the historical background to the massacre, providing, amongst other things, multilingual information, exhibitions, guided tours, as well as educational programmes for school classes and groups.



Ruins of the former market square with destroyed houses and a burnt-out car



Former main street with rail infrastructure still visible

Background: On 10 June 1944, a division of the 'Waffen-SS', an elite and strongly ideological Nazi military organization, murdered almost the entire population of the village of Oradour-sur-Glane, including many women and children. Even before the end of World War II, the decision had been made to preserve the ruins of the destroyed village in their original state as a symbol of the suffering endured. In 1946, the ruins were listed as a historical monument. From 1947, the construction of a new village began in the immediate vicinity. A memorial erected by the French state in the 1950s, which was intended as a burial site for the victims' remains, went unused for many years in protest against the Amnesty Act for Compulsory Recruits as per judgements by the Bordeaux military court. Instead, relatives erected their own memorial with a tomb in the cemetery. Today both sites, together with the ruined village and the memorial centre, form a shared commemorative landscape, which is partly owned by the state, the Département, and the municipality.

Giving visibility to the victims by acknowledging them by name

Ebensee, Austria

Brief description: A commemorative glass sculpture on the site of the Ebensee Concentration Camp memorial pays tribute to the victims of the camp erected during the Nazi dictatorship. It was built in 2011 after several years of research and on the basis of a design competition organized by the non-profit association that runs the memorial. Made to plans by architect Kurt Ellmauer, the sculpture consists of several glass panels on which the victims' names have been engraved.

Local impact: This personalization of the victims makes the extent of the atrocities become visible. The sculpture thus counteracts tendencies in parts of the community, especially during the post-war period, to repress or overwrite the camp's history. This is consistent with the goals of the association running the memorial, which, at the local level as well as beyond the region, is dedicated to the preservation of authentic places of Nazi terror. The regional museum a few kilometres away has been backing up these activities with educational offerings and additional information since 2001. Since the construction of the glass sculpture, other victims' names have been added.



Glass sculpture with the names of the victims of the former Ebensee concentration camp



The archway, once the main entrance to the camp, now marks the entrance to a housing estate

Background: The Ebensee concentration camp was built in 1943 as a subcamp of the Mauthausen concentration camp. The plan was to create an underground network of tunnels in which to store the armaments threatened by airstrikes in Peenemünde (→ Application example, p. 20). Prisoners were compelled to perform forced labour under extreme conditions. Those who died were buried in mass graves and many remained nameless. After the end of the war, the camp was first used to house prisoners-of-war and displaced persons. Afterwards, the local community pushed for its rapid demolition and had the site built over. Today, only the former main entrance to the campgrounds, as well as a walk-in tunnel in which a documentary exhibition has been held since 1997, and parts of the 'Lion Passage' connecting the camp and the tunnel have been preserved. In 1952, near the former crematorium, the present cemetery for the camp's victims was built, on which the memorial is also located. In 2025, it was expanded to include a service centre with sanitary facilities and a room for educational work.

Linking different narratives to create a multinational place of remembrance

Péronne, France

Brief description: In the immediate vicinity of a former battlefield, the historical museum Historial de la Grande Guerre in Péronne, run by the Département de la Somme, conveys World War I from French, British, and German viewpoints. The multi-perspective exhibition addresses military events as well as societal upheavals and individual fates.

Local impact: The museum's pedagogic approach seeks to illustrate World War I from the vantage point of the three main warring parties in the Battle of the Somme. This comparative presentation creates a space that confronts visitors with partly contradictory interpretations and encourages them to critically engage with the culture of remembrance, responsibility, and European interwovenness. The exhibition developed by the commissioned agency Repérages uses, amongst other things, everyday objects, diaries, and biographical fragments. Educational offerings such as teaching materials and guided tours of the former battlefield are intended to stimulate discussion on the impact of historical images and, in particular, to encourage young people to critically reflect on the complexity of past conflicts and their significance for the present. The teaching materials on offer provide new perspec-

tives on various topics related to World War I and the museum; for example, learning games help users to memorize key events and figures.



The exhibition conveys the narratives of the warring parties involved, e.g. through their military equipment and personal belongings



The Historial with the castle and the extension building designed by architect Henri-Édouard Ciriani

Background: Near Péronne in the north of France, the largest World War I battle with the highest number of casualties took place in 1916. In the course of it, more than one million French, British, and German soldiers died here. Today, the 80 km long 'Circuit du Souvenir' memorial route links Péronne, among other places, with the historic battlefields on the Somme, as well as the French and British memorials at Rancourt and Thiepval. In addition, trenches, military cemeteries, and cautionary memorials make the traces of the war visible. The Historial opened in 1992 – the winning design of the preceding architectural competition added a modern extension to the town's war-damaged medieval castle. The museum is connected to an international research and documentation centre.

Space for learning from history and for democracy

Learning from each other and from history can strengthen the principles of democracy such as pluralism, equality, and the rule of law. However, it requires that all parties involved have a special sensitivity and are willing to engage with different opinions and perspectives. This can also mean going through a confrontation with ambiguities, conflicting interpretations, and negative feelings such as guilt, anger, or pain.



Enabling encounters

Dissonant heritage sites create space for divergent encounters. On the one hand, they provide real places where historical events can be experienced and understood by present and future generations. On the other hand, they confront the public with a variety of opinions and thus lay the foundations for engaging in dialogue with others. Programme offerings such as meeting places and educational centres can specifically strengthen this potential.

(→ Application example, p. 51)

Promoting discourses

Open-minded, respectful dialogue is essential for discussing or deliberating difficult topics. Dissonant heritage sites can provide a suitable framework for this by means of accompanying measures, site-specific usage concepts, and participatory formats.

(→ Application example, p. 52)

Encouraging reflection

Dissonant heritage sites serve to bring past suffering and injustice more strongly into the public mind. If it is possible to link this with current societal and political issues, then history can have an impact on the present and strengthen people's own democratic mindset.

(→ Application example, p. 53)

Creating spaces for remembrance, learning, and encounters

Penzlin, Germany

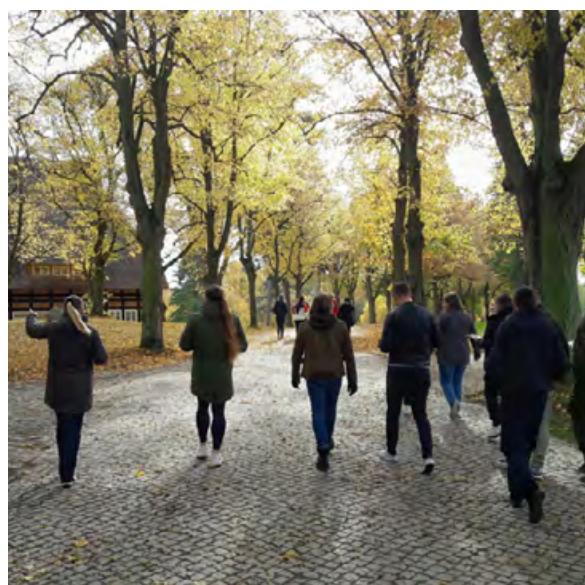
Brief description: The Alt Rehse learning and memorial centre (EBB Alt Rehse) at the location of the former 'Führerschule der Deutschen Ärzteschaft', the central Nazi training facility for medical staff, has provided various educational formats since 2002. These include guided tours, seminars, project days, and events. At the centre of the work of the association that runs the EBB Alt Rehse is a critical enquiry into ideology and medical activities as well as the role of medicine during the Nazi regime. The offerings are dialogue-driven as well as participatory and promote a critical view of the place's past.

Local impact: The association's educational work creates space for encounters and interaction between different target groups and generations. As such it brings together, amongst others, school classes, apprentices, and students of the medical or nursing professions with local actors. On-site educational offerings encourage reflection on ethical issues relating to the present and the future. It also discusses the importance of moral courage, responsibility, and ambivalence in dealing with historical guilt. Digital formats such as the 'Alt Rehse History Podcast'



Residential buildings in the village of Alt Rehse

create attention by providing information on current activities of the learning and memorial centre; virtual exhibitions enable low-threshold, remote access.



Guided tours of the ensemble, consisting of the village and the park that is not open to the public, are part of the association's educational work

Background: Starting in 1934, the Nazi medical association had the central training facility for medical staff built in Alt Rehse, consisting of a model manorial estate, a model village, and the actual training facility in the former estate park. In 1935–41, healthcare workers received ideological training on a large scale here. Today, the ensemble with its largely preserved 60 half-timbered buildings is a listed area monument, which is predominantly privately owned and used in many ways. The houses in the village mostly serve private residential purposes, partly also as holiday apartments and a guesthouse. Moreover, a spa hotel is operated on the park grounds. In addition, the EBB Alt Rehse-run learning and memorial centre is housed in one of the buildings.

Fostering critical discourses about the past and future

Naumburg, Germany

Brief description: Since 2020, annual scholarship programmes curated by Design Akademie Saaleck (dieDAS) have made the burdened history of the former ‘Saaleck Workshops’ (‘Saalecker Werkstätten’) the starting point of interdisciplinary debate. The intention is to encourage a transformation process in contemporary culture. The architectural legacy of Nazi racial ideologist Paul Schultze-Naumburg becomes a space for thought and debate through joint research, workshops, walks, and panel discussions. One focus is, for example, on investigating the historical traces against the background of current questions on space appropriation, power, and responsibility.

Local impact: The discussion formats offered by the dieDAS are aimed at, amongst others, international scholarship holders from design, architecture, art, and theory, interested local residents, and the professional public. They engage in an interdisciplinary and critical exploration of the political and social dimensions of the heritage site and seek potential future-oriented solutions. The deliberate inclusion of marginalized voices and the public visibility of the formats create productive friction. In this way, democratic principles

such as diversity of opinion, critical contradiction, and a willingness to embrace ambivalence can be experienced in practice.



Tour with scholarship holders and guests during a 2024 symposium



The former ‘Saaleck Workshops’ below the medieval Saaleck Castle

Background: The architect Schultze-Naumburg gained influence as a nationalist-racist publicist and ideologue, and was also active in cultural politics during the Nazi era. In 1904, he founded the ‘Saalecker Workshops’. These developed into an anti-modernist counter-model to the German Association of Craftsmen (Deutscher Werkbund) and the Bauhaus. dieDAS and the non-profit Marzona Foundation behind it seek to commemorate the burdened history of the complex built in 1914–24 in a traditionalist style and redefine it as a place for an open exchange of views, socially relevant design, and innovative ideas. Another goal is to counteract its appropriation by far-right groups. As part of the ongoing refurbishment, a contemporary structural and functional level will be added to the building’s historical layers. In addition, there are plans for a documentation and educational centre on the history of the place and its builder.

Stimulating an engagement with the past and present

Gdańsk, Poland

Brief description: The European Centre of Solidarność (ECS) on the site of the former 'Lenin Shipyard' in Gdańsk combines the memory of the Polish trade union and freedom movement with a modern approach to communicating its political and societal significance. The facility includes a new building with a museum, a central archive, a multimedia library, a research and education centre, and offices for civil society organizations, as well as a memorial space and monuments. The ECS was jointly established by the City of Gdańsk, the Pomeranian region, the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the present-day Solidarność Trade Union and the Solidarność Centre Foundation.

Local impact: The ECS, which is integrated into local and international educational networks, permanently anchors the history of the Solidarność movement in the urban space. The conceptual connection to current issues of democracy and workers' rights makes the place with its past relevant throughout Europe. Awards such as the 2016 Council of Europe Museum Prize and the European Heritage Label underline the centre's importance. At the same time, the ECS operates in a politically charged context: in Poland,



The new ECS building, designed by Wojciech Targowski, Piotr Mazur, Antoni Taraszkiewicz, and Paweł Czarzasty, on the site of the former 'Lenin Shipyard'

the question of who has the authority to interpret the history of Solidarność is the subject of continuous discussion. When setting up the centre, care was therefore taken to create an institution that is as pluralistic as possible. Its broad-based financing is hence supported, among others, by the City of Gdańsk, the Polish state, and the Pomeranian region.



Installation in the ECS permanent exhibition, which invites visitors to leave notes with their impressions

Background: The site contains several historical layers: Before 1945, the Gdańsk shipyard was a major shipbuilding hub, which in the Nazi era increasingly served the armaments industry. During World War II, prisoners-of-war, forced labourers, and inmates of the Stutthof concentration camp had to work here. In communist Poland, Gdańsk with its shipyard became the centre of workers' protests from the 1970s onward. In 1980, the nucleus of the independent trade union Solidarność arose here; the latter continued its work underground after being banned in 1981 and helped achieve the transition to democracy at the end of the decade. Since 2014, the ECS facilities have been housed in a new building, co-financed by the EU through the 'ERDF' programme. Its Corten steel-clad facades symbolically reference the sheet metal used in shipbuilding.

Space for synergies through mixed uses

Uses and functions that relate to the culture of remembrance can be linked to other uses and functions, provided that they are compatible with the existing burdens of a dissonant heritage site. This can serve to tap synergies, e.g., relating to the economic impact, combining different concerns, or extending the site's reach.

Jointly deliberating interests

The combination of diverse uses and functions presents a particular challenge in relation to a dissonant heritage site with its burdens. Joint processes of negotiation, in which different (e.g., economic, educational, or cultural heritage) interests are openly discussed, form an important basis for developing a sustainable approach to engaging with the specific heritage henceforth.

(→ Application example, p. 55)

Creating public spaces

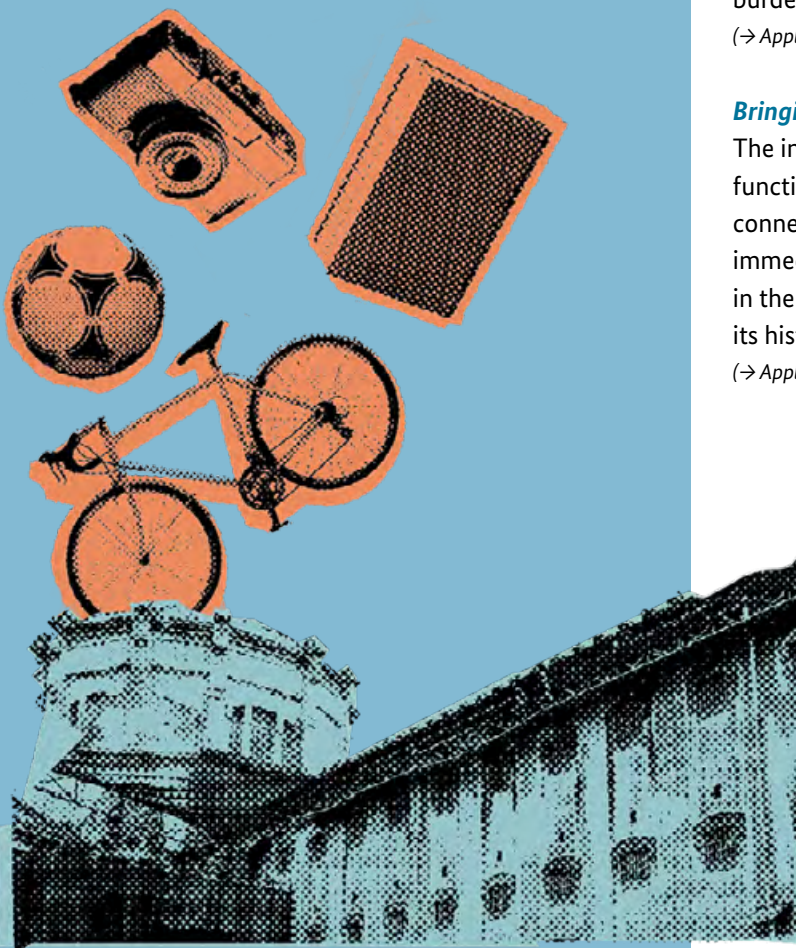
Dissonant heritage is not always evident as such in the public consciousness. Combining diverse uses, particularly those focused on the common good and the public sphere, can help to perceive a dissonant heritage site as a place of learning from history and for democracy. Thus, commemorative, educational, cultural, and social functions, among others, can be mutually reinforcing. Furthermore, this can lead to new ways of engaging with the different layers of burdened historical sites.

(→ Application example, p. 56)

Bringing the past into the present

The integration of commemorative and memorial functions with everyday uses can strengthen the connection between a dissonant heritage site and its immediate surroundings. It makes the heritage visible in the present and thus promotes engagement with its history.

(→ Application example, p. 57)



Integration of commemorative functions into neighbourhood development

Wustermark, Germany

Brief description: In the further development of the former 1936 Olympic Village into a residential quarter, its multi-layered history is integrated conceptually and structurally. To this end, existing buildings are being modernized in compliance with heritage regulations and are being supplemented by new buildings and formats that address the culture of remembrance. Themed stations, exhibition spaces, and guided tours encourage critical reflection on the history of the former Nazi propaganda site and later military barracks. Since 2014, the municipality together with private-sector partners and partly with support from the German Federal Government (→ *Infobox*, p. 67) has been realizing the development of the 50-hectare site in different construction phases.

Local impact: The former Olympic Village has been a listed site since 1993. The further development protects it against the imminent threat of decay. The conversion project is based on an integrated neighbourhood development concept. The concept was

devised by the municipality with the participation of citizens, experts, investors, and the then owner. Through this multi-perspectival approach, it was possible to identify conflicts at an early stage and mutually establish common objectives that take into account economic as well as heritage protection interests, and the culture of remembrance.



The former 'Dining Hall of the Nations', now used for residential purposes, as well as information panels on the buildings' history



Aerial view of the area (2025), in the background the Soviet block buildings being modernized

Background: The Olympic Village was built as accommodation for the athletes of the 1936 Summer Games in Berlin. The facility was a central component of the Nazis' propaganda-driven staging of the Olympic Games. From the beginning, the plan was for the structures to subsequently be used by the armed forces of Nazi Germany ('Wehrmacht'). After World War II, the Soviet Army established itself on the site of the former village. After it was largely abandoned as of the 1990s, the non-profit DKB Foundation acquired the historic site from the Brandenburg State Development Agency, took over conservation and outreach activities, and contributed significantly to the current further development of the site.

Creating a public space by combining the culture of remembrance with other uses

Barcelona, Spain

Brief description: The former La Modelo prison, one of the central symbols of repression in Catalonia during the Franco dictatorship, is being developed into a multifunctional neighbourhood with educational, cultural, and social uses. The coexistence of a memorial space, public school, community centre, social housing, and green areas is intended to meet current social needs and at the same time enable critical engagement with the site's past. After the prison was closed down in 2017, the City of Barcelona initiated a participatory process in which former political prisoners, civil society groups, and local residents were able to submit proposals for its reuse.

Local impact: Civic efforts accelerated the prison's closure, pressing for its conversion into a public facility. The subsequent participatory process, led by the current owner, Barcelona City Council, revealed tensions caused by the planned proximity of the memorial space and social life. Citizens' demands also played a role, such as prioritizing preservation of the entire prison or the creation of more green spaces and hous-

ing. The results of this process formed the basis for a subsequent architectural competition. This entailed the exacting task of incorporating the planned uses into the existing edifice (a cross layout with six axially shaped building wings) and thus productively combining commemoration and other functions. In 2020, the city commissioned the European network EUROM (European Observatory on Memories) to carry out a museum project as part of the planned uses.



Creative temporary uses tested different forms of conveying memory: here, a performance against suppression of LGBTQ+ groups



After the prison's closure, parts of the building were used for artistic experiments

Background: The building complex was constructed between 1881 and 1904 on the principle of a panopticon, which is based on a central surveillance structure, total control, and isolation. For more than a century, the building was the site of various forms of oppression. For example, political prisoners were incarcerated here during the Franco dictatorship of 1939–75; some of them were executed. Even after the end of the dictatorship, La Modelo served as a prison until it was finally closed.

Multiple use of spaces to combine different interests

Munich (München), Germany

Brief description: The multiple use of the site of the former Nazi forced labour camp in Neuaubing strikes a balance between different interests. The aim is to combine new uses relating to the culture of remembrance with those that already exist, among them artists' studios, a daycare centre, and a farm for children as well as young persons. In order to achieve this, two vacant barracks are to be transformed into a branch of the Munich Documentation Center for the History of National Socialism. The City of Munich, which owns the grounds, has been implementing the restoration and further development of the former camp area since 2019 in line with heritage as well as nature conservation requirements and with strong public engagement. The project receives financial support from the German Federal Government (→ Infobox, p. 67).

Local impact: With the early involvement of the existing tenants, it was possible to devise a sustainable usage concept that considers heritage conservation as well as ecological, cultural, and social interests. This common objective formed the basis for a subsequent



A former barracks of the forced labour camp is now used as a daycare centre

planning competition for the grounds' further development. The aim is a mixture of uses that strengthens an awareness of the history of the place and anchors this in everyday life. In the long term, a green belt and a cycle path are planned to link the site to adjacent districts. The site's development is still ongoing.



Another former barracks will house the branch of the Munich Documentation Center for the History of National Socialism

Background: The Neuaubing camp was built in 1942 by the German national railway system at the time (Deutsche Reichsbahn) as a place for the forced labourers from a nearby railway repair facility. Eight of the originally 11 one-story barracks have been preserved and have been heritage-listed since 2009 and 2017 respectively. The former camp grounds have been designated an archaeological monument and have been a listed ensemble since 2009. Since the end of World War II, the site has been used in many ways. After the City of Munich acquired the site from a real-estate company in 2015, the plan is now to forge a link to its past and foster critical engagement with the place's original function.

From individual approaches to processes

The three previously presented tool sets display different approaches ('tools') to dealing with dissonant heritage. Concrete examples from local practice show how the tools can be applied in different contexts. In each case, one aspect in addressing the heritage is highlighted – in order to illustrate a certain strategy. These approaches should not be regarded as self-contained or isolated but as part of an ongoing dynamic process consisting of several steps that in part run parallel to one another.

In the following, three such processes will be explained in more detail by means of case studies. These illustrate the approaches taken by one respective key stakeholder who played or still plays a decisive role in dealing with the dissonant heritage site. The focus is on initiating measures that have intensified the engagement with the heritage and function to stimulate further developments. In this regard, the various contexts of the case studies – i.e., the stakeholders' professional and institutional background, ownership as well as the relevant layers of time, dimensions, and the geographical location of the heritage sites – each lead to different applications and processes.

Cross-references establish links to the respective tool sets of the toolbox. In each case, the set that corresponds especially well to the approach taken is pointed out.



Members of the Buzludzha Project Foundation in front of the monument in Kazanlak at the Open Buzludzha Festival



Guided tour on the sidelines of an ATRIUM conference through the former Aeronautical College in Forlì, which features a propagandistic mosaic frieze



A tour of the Bogensee estate during an international workshop in which the Wandlitz Municipality participated

Transforming the Buzludzha Monument into a place of dialogue, tolerance, and learning

Kazanlak (Казанлък), Bulgaria



View of the peak of Chadschi Dimitar with the Buzludzha Monument. In the foreground the sculpture 'Unity of the Struggle for Social and Socialist Freedom' by Stoyu Todorov

Background: The 'Monument of the Bulgarian Communist Party', better known as the Buzludzha Monument, was built in 1974–81 as a political propaganda site according to plans by architect Georgi Stoilov. Designed in the style of brutalism, the monument consists of a disc-shaped building with a main hall, a gallery of windows, and large mosaics as well as a 70-meter-high tower. Its original function was to grandly put the Communist Party's reputation on display – through guided tours, a special sound-and-light show in the main hall, as well as through political rituals, such as lectures or ceremonies where party membership cards were awarded. After the end of the communist dictatorship, starting in 1989, in light of its now controversial former use and its isolated location the building was neglected and fell into disrepair. The Buzludzha Monument is currently state-owned and managed by the region of Stara Zagora. In 2021, it was heritage-listed as an 'immovable cultural asset of national importance' by order of the Minister of Culture. As part of the future development of the Buzludzha Monument, links are to be established with other cultural heritage, including a UNESCO World Heritage Thracian tomb and the nationally significant Rose Festival.

Focus of the case study: Since being established in 2015, the NGO Buzludzha Project Foundation (BPF) has been advocating the monument's conservation and reuse, as well as engaging in outreach activities. The following section examines various measures that the BPF has initiated or was involved in implementing in recent years.

Key steps in addressing the heritage:

Recognition of the conservation value through an international award

Period: 2018–21

In 2018, the Buzludzha Monument was included in the '7 Most Endangered' programme run by Europa Nostra and the European Investment Bank Institute (→ *Infobox*, p. 61). In this context, cultural heritage and finance experts held discussions with regional and national institutions. They then published a report with recommendations for the building's conservation and repurposing. The inclusion in the programme marked the first international recognition the Buzludzha Monument had received as an example of cultural heritage at risk; it was not yet a listed monument at that time. The broad media response to the recognition contributed significantly to triggering further processes and collaborations.

- Fits in particular with: **Creating attention**, pp. 30–43

Development of strategies and visions for the monument's conservation and sustainable use

Period: 2019–21

In 2019, an interdisciplinary team of international experts and institutions led by the BPF and ICOMOS Germany started to draw up a conservation management plan (CMP). In addition to various studies that analysed the building's state, strategies for its prospective development were drafted. This included a concept for its future use: while maintaining its

authenticity, the concept sketched out a vision for the Buzludzha Monument to become an international cultural destination and a stage for a variety of stories, dialogues, and artistic interventions. The aim was thus to stimulate a critical enquiry into the site and its past. This inclusive vision aroused emotions on various levels, was a source of inspiration, and encouraged action to conserve the heritage site. The CMP was financed with grant funding from the Getty Foundation.

- Fits in particular with: *Understanding the context*, pp. 16–29



The outer mosaics were preserved under a protective roof; the image shows the piece entitled '9 September 1944' by Ivan Kirkov. The date is considered as the beginning of communist rule in Bulgaria

Preserving the mosaics as part of an integrated approach

Period: 2020–21

The mosaics, covering approximately 1,000 square metres on the walls of the main hall and the outside panorama gallery, represent the most valuable and at the same time most endangered element of the building. They were preserved in 2020–21 by an international team of restorers and with the support of volunteers under the coordination of the BPF and ICOMOS Germany. The preservation of the interior mosaics was supported financially by the Getty Foundation, as was the CMP (see above). In order to finance the preservation of the outer mosaics, the BPF launched the 'Adopt a Mosaic' fund-

raising campaign, in which interested parties could cover the restoration costs for a particular mosaic. For this campaign the BPF developed a catalogue of images and stories about the endangered mosaics. The opportunity for direct participation fostered a personal sense of making an impact and of collective responsibility for the monument's conservation.

- Fits in particular with: *Creating attention*, pp. 30–43



The monument's architecture is being reinterpreted with a 3D mapping show in the framework of the Open Buzludzha Festival. The picture shows an installation by the agencies MP-STUDIO and PostStudio

Implementation of an annual festival to convey site-specific potentials

Period: since 2021

Once a year since 2021, the Open Buzludzha Festival has transformed the monument into a stage for art, culture, and history. In addition to concerts, the programme includes guided tours, workshops, art installations, and educational activities. In this way, the monument is not only perceived as a dissonant ruin, but also as an active cultural space. The festival aims to create new memories, interpretations, and associations in order to strengthen public support for the monument's conservation and accessibility, and to encourage ideas for its future without overwriting its past. Funded from various sources, including sponsors and entrance fees, the festival attracts several thousand visitors and reaches millions of people via the media and social networks.

- Fits in particular with: *Creating attention*, pp. 30–43

Developing an inclusive narrative to communicate the site's complexity

Period: 2024–26

A pilot project that runs under the heading of 'Developing an inclusive process for communicating dissonant heritage' has been realized under the leadership of the BPF together with the University of Bologna, the European Observatory on Memories (EUROM), ATRIUM (→ *Case study*, pp. 62–64), and the European Association of History Educators (Euro-Clio). It examines the question of what messages the building should convey today. The aim is to develop a pluralistic narrative that considers the complexity of the Buzludzha Monument and its past. For this purpose, ongoing interviews with eyewitnesses, which have been taking place since 2021, are being expanded and professionalized. They complement existing archive materials, which are influenced by propaganda and almost exclusively reflect the views of those in power at the time. The oral narratives of people who have a personal connection to the building open an array of individual perspectives that make the different layers and the ambivalence of the place more comprehensible for visitors. The project is being funded under the 'Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values' (CERV) programme (→ *Infobox*, p. 61). The results are to be made available on a digital platform.

- **Fits in particular with: Strengthening potentials, pp. 44–57**

Infobox

Programmes to support the culture of remembrance and cultural heritage in Europe

'Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values' (CERV)

With its CERV programme, the European Union (EU) supports projects on the Union's values, equality, participation, and the prevention of violence. This covers initiatives aimed at raising awareness of Europe's cultural heritage, including its dissonant aspects. Funding is provided for public institutions and non-profit organizations such as educational and research institutions at the local, regional, and transnational level based in one of the participating member states. The programme has been in place since 2021 and regularly publishes calls for proposals on various topic areas.

Projects mentioned in this toolbox:

- 'Developing an inclusive process for communicating dissonant heritage' (→ p. 61)

'7 Most Endangered' (7ME)

Since 2013, the 7ME programme has identified the most threatened cultural heritage sites in Europe. The goal is to create attention, network stakeholders, and initiate supportive measures for the sites' protection. Both tangible and intangible cultural assets under public or private ownership located in a Council of Europe member state may be nominated. Public and private organizations active in the field of cultural heritage and based in a member state of the Council of Europe, as well as individual members of such organizations, are eligible to submit proposals. The programme is implemented by Europa Nostra in cooperation with the European Investment Bank Institute and is supported by the EU's 'Creative Europe' programme.

Selected sites referred to in this toolbox:

- Counter hall of the Telecommunications and Postal Centre in Skopje (→ p. 42)
- Buzludzha Monument in Kazanlak (→ pp. 59–61)

Promoting a critical discourse on Forlì's fascist heritage

Forlì, Italy



Along the former Viale Mussolini (now Viale della Libertà – Freedom Avenue) between the train station and the city centre, there are numerous representative buildings from the fascist era, including several educational institutions such as the former Aeronautical College

Background: The northern Italian city of Forlì is located near Predappio, the birthplace of Italian dictator Benito Mussolini. Between 1922 and 1940, it was transformed into a propaganda showcase project by the fascist state and was dubbed 'City of the Duce' ('Città del Duce'). In this context, representative new buildings and a new district next to the old town were constructed. Due to the close connection to Mussolini, the urban fabric was changed far more profoundly than that of many other medium-sized Italian cities at that time. To this day, dealing with this difficult heritage in Forlì remains controversial. The range of positions is broad: some argue, for example, that these sites' historical context should be made visible and subjected to critical enquiry. Others, by contrast, suggest that the buildings and architectural remains should be viewed primarily from an aesthetic point of view and their fascist origins should as far as possible be concealed. Still others fear that not all perspectives are adequately represented and, for example, that Forlì's role in the anti-fascist Resistance, for which the city was honoured by the Italian government in 1975, is being overshadowed.

Focus of the case study: The ATRIUM (Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes of the XX Century in Europe's Urban Memory) Cultural Route has contributed significantly to a critical engagement with Forlì's dissonant architectural heritage in recent years. The transnational network, whose head office is based there, focuses on the physical traces of totalitarian and authoritarian systems of rule in European cities. The following section outlines some activities in Forlì that led to the establishment of the ATRIUM Cultural Route, as well as initiatives the network started and/or in which it has participated.

Key steps in dealing with the heritage:

Conservation of different historical layers at the former Casa del Balilla

Period: 2009–11

The building now known as 'Ex-GIL' on Forlì's central axis was built in 1933–35 for the youth organizations of the Fascist Party (initially 'Balilla', later 'Gioventù Italiana del Littorio') and served as a sports complex. The tower bears a stone inscription with a fascist oath of allegiance, which children were required to swear to Mussolini and the fascist state. During restoration work, the question arose from 2009 onwards on how to handle the inscription, which had been partially destroyed by anti-fascist groups during Forlì's Liberation in 1944. This gave rise to institutional and public discussions involving local stakeholders from politics, the University of Bologna, and the local partisan association, among others. Subsequently, the city council decided to preserve both the original oath and the traces of the iconoclasm. The restored and municipally owned former Casa del Balilla now houses, among other things, sports facilities and an auditorium.

- Fits in particular with: **Understanding the context**, pp. 16–29



The fascist oath is visible in its damaged state on the tower of the restored former Casa del Balilla

International cooperation to establish a themed cultural route on the architecture of totalitarian and authoritarian systems of rule

Period: 2011–13

In the wake of the discussions on how to deal with the inscription, the city decided to raise awareness of Forlì's fascist heritage and networked with other cities in Europe with a similar heritage. It took the leading role in the EU-funded 'ATRIUM' project to document, study, and link examples of symbolic architecture of totalitarian and authoritarian systems of rule, aiming at establishing permanent cooperation between these cities through a planned cultural route. As a first step, an international survey helped to compare over 70 examples of this built heritage and to create the scholarly basis for its valorization.

- Fits in particular with: *Understanding the context*, pp. 16–29

Establishing and managing a new European cultural route based in Forlì

Period: since 2014

In 2014, the Council of Europe formally recognized the ATRIUM Cultural Route, which was developed as part of the above-mentioned project. The certification has since been renewed twice, and the number of participating cities has now increased

from the original ten to 24 municipalities in nine countries. As the location of the ATRIUM head office, Forlì plays a special role in this network. In addition, the city has used the Cultural Route to connect not only with other European cities, but also with institutions and associations dealing with the topic of totalitarian heritage. This has resulted, for example, in a cooperation within the framework of 'URBACT', a European funding programme for sustainable urban development.

- Fits in particular with: *Creating attention*, pp. 30–43

Implementation of initiatives for civic dialogue

Period: since 2011

Initiated by ATRIUM, various exchange formats have taken place in Forlì that have used the heritage to enter into a dialogue with local residents on how to address the city's past. These include guided city tours and the national competition to select a building as a 'place of the heart' – organized annually by Fondo Ambiente Italiana, an Italian foundation for the preservation of monuments and nature conservation; in the contest, participants can choose their favourite places from a list of important and often neglected heritage sites.

- Fits in particular with: *Creating attention*, pp. 30–43

Impulses for cooperative cultural projects

Period: since 2013

The city of Forlì and its history have been the subject of various joint initiatives by ATRIUM and local creative and arts associations since 2013. The aim has been to shed new light on the characteristics of dissonant heritage and to strengthen dialogue and broaden interest, in particular among young people as well as artists. Projects have included the photography contest 'Totally Lost' (2014) on iconic buildings linked to Europe's totalitarian and authoritarian systems of rule, as well as theatre performances and artist residencies that contextualized the dissonant architecture. In addition, the cities of Forlì and Dimitrovgrad (Bulgaria), both members of the ATRIUM network,

realized the joint project ‘Lost Music’ in 2024: young musicians performed concerts at dissonant heritage sites that are either abandoned or undergoing restoration to raise awareness of the need to care for such places and emphasize their special value.

- Fits in particular with: **Understanding the context**, pp. 16-29

Cooperation with local schools

Period: since 2021

Several ongoing collaborations between schools, ATRIUM, the local Institute for the History of the Resistance and Contemporary Italy (Istituto Storico della Resistenza e dell’Età Contemporanea) and the Italian association Deina Torino, which promotes commemorative trips to emblematic places across Europe, have further strengthened historical awareness among young people in Forlì. Through this cooperation, the dissonant heritage of the city and its surroundings has become an instrument for the promotion of education on democracy and history.

- Fits in particular with: **Strengthening potentials**, pp. 44-57



The ATRIUM-funded educational tool ‘Landscape in a Box’ is designed to accompany visits to the city. It contains a selection of symbolic objects representing local culture, a video created by students telling the story behind the objects, as well as a letter to future generations



Under the guidance of Deina Torino and cartoonist Corrado Bianchetti, students collaboratively created materials such as the interactive digital gamebook ‘The Avenue of Consent’ (Il viale del consenso) to support heritage walks along Viale della Libertà

Developing perspectives for the future of the Bogensee estate

Wandlitz, Germany



Aerial view of the estate, in the front left the former Goebbels Villa, on the right the former FDJ youth college

Background: The Bogensee estate, marked by twofold historical burdens, has been listed as a historic site since 1996 and is of national and international significance in terms of the culture of remembrance. The extensive complex north of Berlin encompasses, among others, the former country estate of Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels. It also features the former communist international college run by the ‘Free German Youth’ (FDJ), the official youth organization of the German Democratic Republic (GDR); this includes a cultural building, a lecture hall, and residential structures. The estate thus symbolizes propaganda, ideologizing, and indoctrination. In addition to the history of the two German dictatorships, the site’s peripheral location in the middle of a nature reserve, its relative inaccessibility, the high potential investment needs, and the ownership structure all pose great challenges to any future repurposing of the estate. The responsibilities are likewise complex, because the site is owned by the State of Berlin’s real-estate company BIM (Berliner Immobilienmanagement GmbH), while planning authority is vested in the Municipality of Wandlitz in the State of Brandenburg. The ensemble is threatened with demolition and has largely stood empty for over 25 years. Only basic safeguard-

ing measures have been carried out on the buildings, and their structural condition varies. Several initiatives for the site’s further development have not yet been implemented, among them the 2019 feasibility study commissioned by the State of Berlin, which primarily envisaged the construction of new apartments. At the same time, there was the risk of the area falling into the hands of anti-democratic actors. After public discussions about the planned demolition and with great media attention, viable prospects for conserving and repurposing are currently being developed.

Focus of the case study: In 2024, the owner presented plans for demolition and renaturation of the site. This led to an informal alliance arising in response. It included numerous experts and institutions from politics, culture, and academia – from such fields as heritage protection and architecture, education, as well as the study of the Nazi dictatorship and of the ‘Socialist Unity Party’ (SED) dictatorship in East Germany. They were joined by stakeholders from the municipality and district, as well as private individuals. The alliance’s common concern was to highlight the significance of the heritage, to develop alternative approaches for possible uses and financing options, as well as to promote



The former Goebbels Villa (‘Waldhof’), built on Lake Bogensee in 1939–40

a critical discourse on authoritarian and exclusionary politics, freedom, shared decision-making, and human rights. The Municipality of Wandlitz played a key role in this regard. In the following, some of the process steps planned to date and the outcomes achieved are presented.

Key steps in addressing the heritage:

Cooperation with research institutions and interviews with contemporary witnesses

Period: 2024–27

Since 2024, the Municipality of Wandlitz has been in contact, among others, with the Leibniz Centre for Contemporary History (ZZF) in Potsdam and various universities with a view to analysing the historical and current relevance of the Bogensee estate. The objective is to capture its complex layers of time, and to gain a sound basis for work going forwards. For example, architecture students of the Technical University (TU) Berlin developed ideas for a structural approach to deal with the building ensemble in the context of its possible educational and health uses. In addition, eyewitnesses who once studied, taught, or worked at the FDJ youth college were identified through public calls, among others. They provide deeper insights into the everyday life and the system of the ‘cadre school’ as well as into the political structure of the state apparatus put in place by the SED.

- Fits in particular with: **Understanding the context**, pp. 16–29

Initiating a moratorium on demolition with a petition campaign

Period: 2024

In 2024, the State of Berlin fleshed out its plans to demolish the ensemble. Thereupon, prompted by the Barnim District Administrator and the Mayor of Wandlitz, various stakeholders jointly campaigned for a moratorium on demolition. Numerous people from politics, education, culture, academia, and civil society signed the corresponding petition. The peti-

tion was presented to the owner in a publicly visible way. Together with other initiatives, it contributed to the State of Berlin’s postponement of the demolition decision in order to give the municipality an opportunity to first develop perspectives for conserving and further developing the site.

- Fits in particular with: **Creating attention**, pp. 30–43



Guided tour during a civic reception in autumn 2025 in front of the college’s former teaching building, which housed a lecture hall, a library, and seminar rooms

Application for federal funding

Period: 2024–25

After evaluating possible financing options, the Municipality of Wandlitz successfully applied for support from the German federal investment programme ‘National Urban Development Projects’ (→ Infobox, p. 67). The funding approval for a study of possible perspectives for the ensemble strengthened public perception of the site’s value for the culture of remembrance and enabled the development steps described below.

- Fits in particular with: **Creating attention**, pp. 30–43

Signing of a transfer-of-use agreement between the Municipality of Wandlitz and the State of Berlin for the area

Period: 2025

In order to gain official access to the site and the buildings, the Municipality of Wandlitz and the State of Berlin negotiated a transfer-of-use agreement for the duration of the study, which, among other things, clarified the rights, obligations, and costs as well as liability issues for both parties.

This agreement, which was concluded in 2025 after several years of negotiation, enables analyses to be conducted and workshops, guided tours, cultural events, and other participatory formats to be realized that make the area visible and tangible to the public, potential users, and investors. For example, at a civic reception in the autumn of 2025, the municipality offered guided tours on the history and current status of the estate and its role during the Nazi era and the days of the SED regime.

- Fits in particular with: *Strengthening potentials*, pp. 44-57



The former 'House of Culture', built starting in 1951 in the Stalinist architectural style for the 'Wilhelm Pieck' youth college. The building's great hall served, among other things, as a cafeteria and event venue

Development of prospective uses in the framework of a study

Period: 2025–27

Since 2025 and in the context of the above-mentioned federal grant, a project consortium commissioned by the municipality has been devising new, sustainable perspectives for the conservation, valorization, and appropriate as well as economically viable future uses of the Bogensee estate. Another goal is to find potential investors. This process will take place over a period of three years and is supported by numerous stakeholders. The study includes, among other things, an architectural analysis of the existing buildings, preliminary investigations for infrastructure and urban planning, as well as a marketing concept. It is intended to define parameters for possible uses in the individual building sections, depending on the historical burden, and

the structural as well as spatial conditions. These could include, for example, social, commemorative, and democracy-enhancing uses. In this process, possible interim uses and a gradual development of the grounds and its buildings are also being considered. Experts as well as representatives of the States of Berlin and Brandenburg, of the Municipality of Wandlitz, and of the Barnim District with the involvement of the public are included in defining the goals and options.

- Fits in particular with: *Strengthening potentials*, pp. 44-57

Infobox

Investment programme for urban development projects of national significance in Germany

Since 2014, the German federal funding programme 'National Urban Development Projects' ('Nationale Projekte des Städtebaus') has supported projects of particular national or international significance and of a very high professional quality. An above-average investment volume as well as the fact that funding covers both conceptual and investment measures enable a broad intervention and problem-solving. This makes the programme particularly attractive for projects with complex pre-planning and accompanying processes. Thus, not least since the 2024 call for proposals which focused on the history of democracy and learning from democracy, many dissonant heritage sites are among those receiving funding, such as:

- the Matthäikirchhof in Leipzig (→ p. 27)
- the former armaments site in Stadtallendorf (→ p. 28)
- the former Olympic Village of 1936 in Wustermark (→ p. 55)
- the Neuaubing former forced labour camp in Munich (→ p. 57)
- the Bogensee estate in Wandlitz (→ pp. 65-67)

The BMW SB publication 'Shaping Democracy!', published in German in 2024 in the context of the programme, deals with questions of the qualitative, conceptual, and architectural design of dissonant heritage sites, among other places.

Application examples and case studies at a glance

Understanding the context: Accessing the complexity of dissonant heritage

- p. 19** *Interdisciplinary committee for the decolonization of public space*
Brussels-Capital Region, Belgium
- p. 20** *Opening up the museum archive as a digital knowledge base*
Peenemünde, Germany
- p. 21** *Architectural workshop as a stimulus for local participation*
Silandro, Italy
- p. 23** *Temporary intervention to sharpen perception*
Ostend, Belgium
- p. 24** *Memorial sculpture as an act of cautionary remembrance*
Jasenovac, Croatia
- p. 25** *Artistic intervention as a stimulus for critical reflection*
Vienna, Austria
- p. 27** *Development of guidelines for urban and civic integration of the heritage*
Leipzig, Germany
- p. 28** *Contextual and spatial linkage of decentralized places of remembrance*
Stadtallendorf, Germany
- p. 29** *Conveying connections in an authentic place*
Cracow, Poland

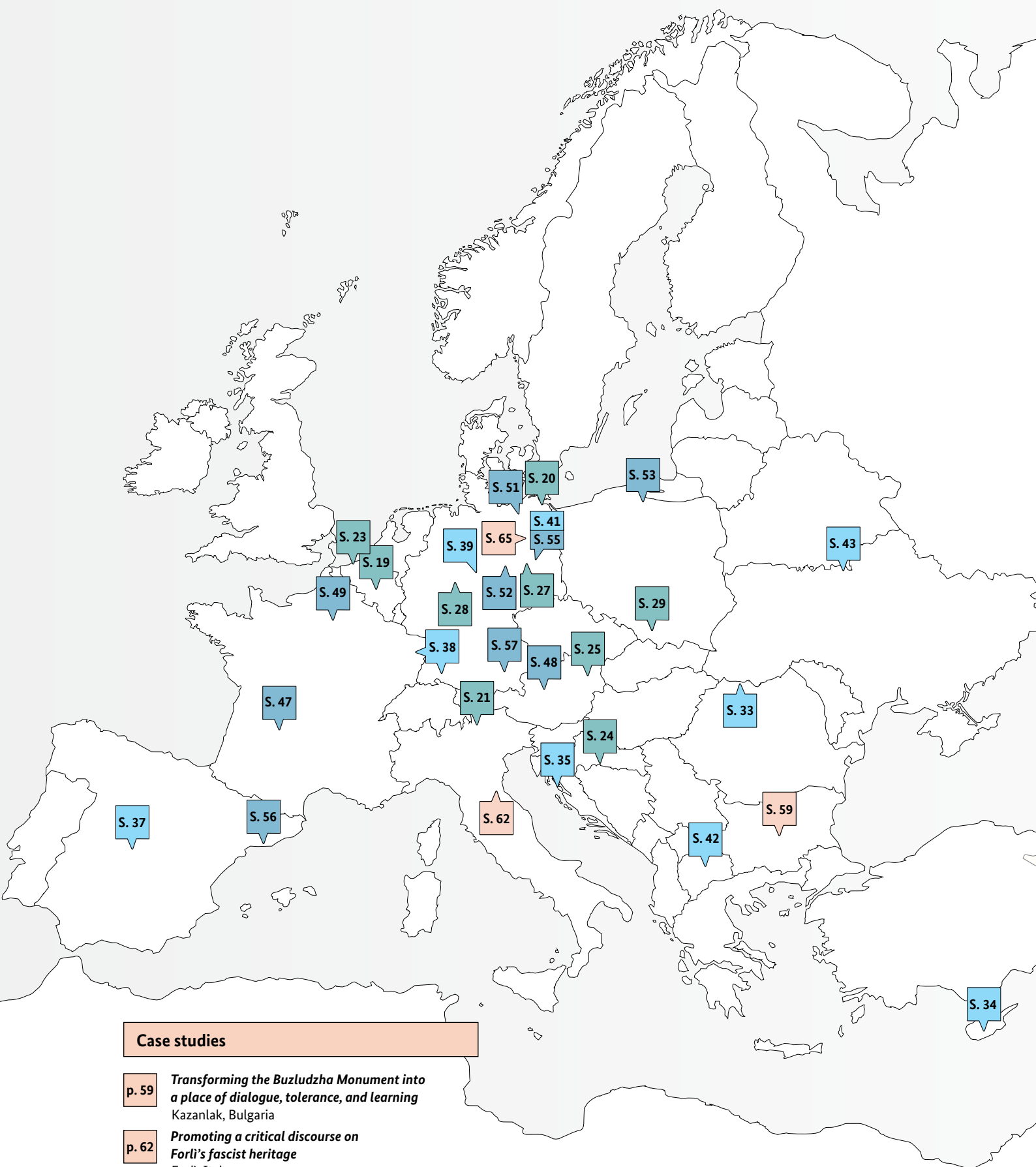
Creating awareness: Drawing attention to the potentials and special characteristics of dissonant heritage

- p. 33** *Integration of different perspectives in the context of international educational work*
Sighet, Romania
- p. 34** *Using digital formats to explore contested heritage*
Various sites in Cyprus
- p. 35** *Interdisciplinary digital documentation of cultural heritage at risk*
Pag, Croatia
- p. 37** *Connecting different actors to develop a contemporary approach to the heritage*
San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Spain

- p. 38** *Cross-border cooperation to strengthen common values*
Various locations in Germany and France
- p. 39** *Exchanging experiences through thematic networking*
Teistungen, Germany
- p. 41** *Civic engagement for the heritage listing*
Berlin, Germany
- p. 42** *Recognition of the conservation value by designating a place at risk*
Skopje, North Macedonia
- p. 43** *Initiatives to protect and maintain a nuclear exclusion zone*
Chernobyl and surrounding area, Ukraine

Strengthening potentials: Advancing dissonant heritage for the future

- p. 47** *Preserving historical authenticity as a cautionary memorial*
Oradour-sur-Glane, France
- p. 48** *Giving visibility to the victims by acknowledging them by name*
Ebensee, Austria
- p. 49** *Linking different narratives to create a multinational place of remembrance*
Péronne, France
- p. 51** *Creating spaces for remembrance, learning, and encounters*
Penzlin, Germany
- p. 52** *Fostering critical discourses about the past and future*
Naumburg, Germany
- p. 53** *Stimulating an engagement with the past and present*
Gdańsk, Poland
- p. 55** *Integration of commemorative functions into neighbourhood development*
Wustermark, Germany
- p. 56** *Creating a public space by combining the culture of remembrance with other uses*
Barcelona, Spain
- p. 57** *Multiple use of spaces to combine different interests*
Munich, Germany



Appendix

About the process behind this toolbox – a European cooperation

Birgit Kann (BBSR), Jan Schultheiß (BMWSB)

The toolbox for dealing with dissonant heritage is one of the key outcomes of a comprehensive and extraordinary European process to which numerous international actors from different disciplines and levels have contributed. Those involved developed the content in partnership, e.g., on the basis of voluntary cooperation and in the context of research assignments. Since 2020, this has deepened insights into the societally relevant topic of ‘dissonant heritage’ and has thus enhanced its visibility. At the same time, this cooperation has given rise to a dynamic ‘network of networks’. In the following, we outline this special approach, highlight substantial outcomes, and identify core participants of the process.

The shared journey to the topic of ‘dissonant heritage’ – a multi-level approach

The impetus for a more intensive engagement with dissonant heritage at the European level came from the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, which focused on the importance of cultural heritage for social cohesion, for a sense of belonging, and for intercultural dialogue. To explore related urban issues and challenges in greater depth through European exchanges, the **‘Culture and Cultural Heritage’ partnership** was established in 2019 within the framework of the **Urban Agenda for the EU** (UAEU → Infobox, p. 72); the aim of the partnership was to generate new insights and to develop relevant approaches for policymakers

and practitioners. The members of the partnership, which was coordinated by Germany along with Italy and included representatives of EU institutions as well as national governments, regions, and municipalities from 15 countries, developed a set of measures on key topics (‘actions’). These were then further elaborated by individual working groups (‘action groups’), which consisted of members of the partnership, other European experts as well as international institutions from the worlds of research and practice.

Infobox

Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU)

The UAEU has supported European urban development since 2016: within this framework, cities and regions cooperate closely with national and EU-level representatives to develop and test innovative approaches to specific urban issues.

One of the main goals of the UAEU is to help implement the principles of the New Leipzig Charter – the reference document for integrated urban development in Europe. In addition to culture and cultural heritage, over 20 topics have been covered to date and include, for example, digital as well as energy transition, building decarbonization, water-sensitive city, urban mobility, and housing.

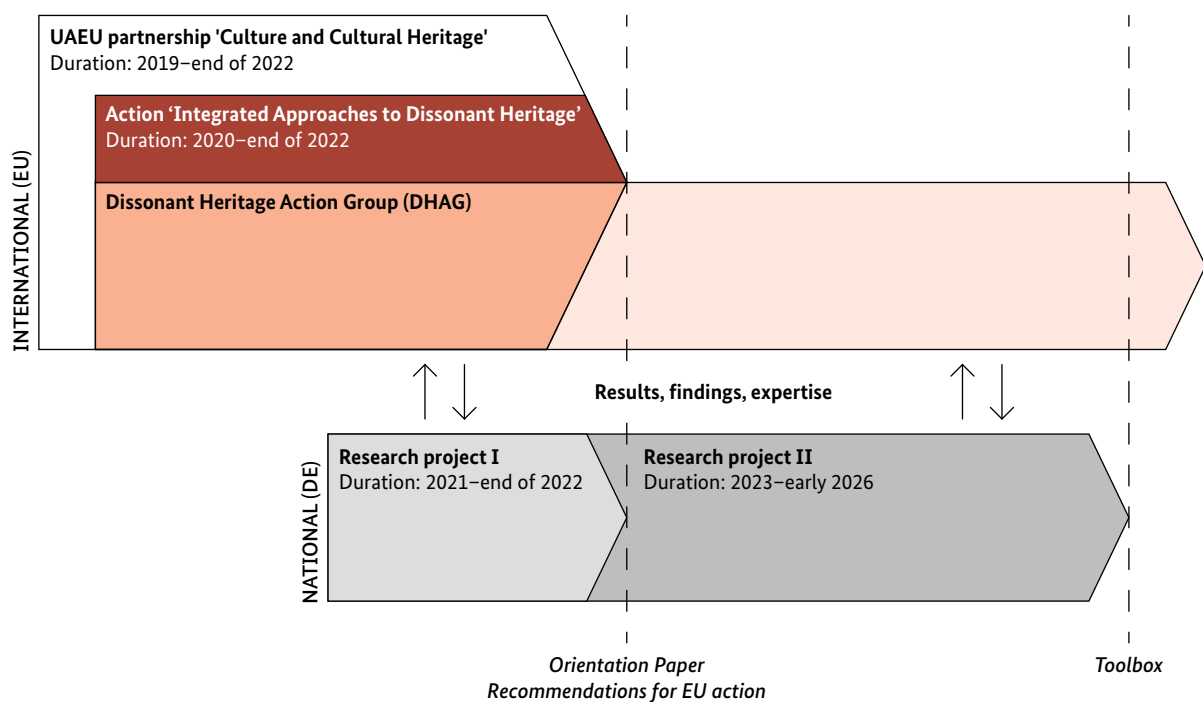
As a result of their three-year cooperation, the partners are expected to develop recommendations for action for the European Commission, EU member states, and local authorities in the fields of knowledge exchange, funding, and regulation.

One of the issues in the set of measures was how to address dissonant heritage in urban and regional planning in the long term. This was prompted by a discussion on the possible further development of the Buzludzha Monument in the city of Kazanlak in Bulgaria, which was a member of the partnership. The ensuing **'Integrated Approaches to Dissonant Heritage' action** focused on historically burdened and contested sites, as well as architectural legacies of the 20th century that continue to profoundly shape our built environment to this day. A central focus was placed on lesser-known heritage sites in smaller towns and peripheral regions, where the requirements for addressing that heritage are often particularly high, for example in terms of resources, visibility, or accessibility.

Approaching the topic with different methods

As of 2020, the **Dissonant Heritage Action Group (DHAG)**, coordinated by the BMWWSB and the BBSR, started addressing the issue outlined above. The aim was to develop and test new approaches that:

- could build awareness of the specific requirements and values of dissonant heritage in the urban context,
- could further integrate dissonant heritage into urban and regional development and thus promote viable long-term solutions,
- could make it possible to more effectively unlock the potentials of dissonant heritage, e.g., fostering learning about history and the importance of democracy as well as promoting tourism development.



The diagram illustrates the timeline, the different levels of actors, and the outcomes of the multi-layered process

In this process, the multi-level approach noted earlier – a key element of the UAEU – was continued. Partly in thematic subgroups and partly drawing on specific external expertise, the DHAG developed the content across various disciplines and levels in regular digital meetings. For example, it defined terms and typologies of contested or burdened places in Europe, and it compiled an overview of relevant modes of remembrance. The specific areas of implementation evolved from the DHAG and were jointly decided by its members. These include, amongst others, the selection of heritage sites for further examination, some of which later served as the basis for the application examples presented in this toolbox.



At an international expert workshop in Barcelona (2021), participants took a guided tour of the Fossar de la Pedrera Memorial (Cemetery of the Quarry), which commemorates, amongst others, the victims of the Franco dictatorship



During a workshop held at the Bogensee estate (2024), European experts discussed and tested the functions and uses of the toolbox, for example through role-playing

The group's activities were supported by two consecutive **research projects** within the framework of the German Federal Government's 'Experimental Housing and Urban Development' (ExWoSt) programme. Relevant issues were addressed using a range of methods and formats, including qualitative and quantitative surveys, semi-structured interviews, workshops, and online forums. Interim findings were then elaborated, tested, and presented to the public. This was carried out with the involvement of external researchers and in consultation with the DHAG and other experts. The first research project focused in particular on the challenges and potentials of dissonant heritage ('Dissonant Heritage – Integrated Approaches to Dissonant Heritage in Europe', 2021–22). The second project took forward the findings from the previous process to arrive at concrete strategies for dealing with dissonant heritage in local practice in the form of this toolbox ('Integrated Approaches to Dissonant Heritage in Europe: Instruments, Procedures and Methods', 2023–26).

Outcomes

The international, interdisciplinary, and cross-sectoral cooperation at different levels and with the use of various methodological approaches gave the process behind the toolbox a special complexity and quality. The incorporation of diverse areas of expertise and resources enabled multi-layered, pluralistic structures. On the one hand, this framework was challenging, for example, in terms of coordination and communication. On the other hand, it enriched the collaborative nature of the task and tapped numerous synergies. Amongst other things, it enabled a mutual learning process among the participants and expanded the topic to include a variety of relevant aspects and perspectives. The aim of this comprehensive approach was to examine the complex topic of dissonant heritage in the most realistic, needs-oriented, and differentiated way possible.

This insightful European ‘journey’ led, among others, to the following outcomes:

- an **orientation paper**: The document, developed in 2021–22, summarizes the interim findings of the process. Above all, it refers to the particular challenges and potentials in dealing with dissonant heritage and explores aspects such as opportunities for cooperation, building awareness, as well as financing and management. The orientation paper is available for download from the BBSR project website.



www.dissonant-heritage.eu

- **recommendations for action for the European Commission, EU member states, and local authorities**: Published on the European ‘Portico’ knowledge platform in 2023, the booklet contains strategic and practical proposed actions, in particular in the areas of knowledge exchange, funding, and regulation. These include, for example, recommendations for addressing, motivating, and involving interest groups in engagement with dissonant heritage sites as well as suggestions for project-related, institutional, and construction as well as investment funding.



www.portico.urban-initiative.eu

- a **network of networks**: The DHAG working group, originally founded in 2020 as part of the UAEU, has evolved into an open, largely self-organizing platform. Numerous European experts and international institutions from the research world as well as practitioners regularly exchange views on a wide range of topics, events, and projects in the context of dissonant heritage. This transnational knowledge transfer has increased the topic’s visibility and has prompted additional international cooperation, e.g., a European city learning network and a project on dissonant heritage outreach and communication.

Anyone interested is invited to participate in the DHAG’s regular online meetings:



www.dissonant-heritage.info

- the present **toolbox with practical approaches for local stakeholders to engage with the dissonant heritage on site**: The BMWSB publication should not be understood as a definitive document, but rather as a stimulus for further development and ongoing engagement with the built environment in Europe and the stories behind it. The toolbox is available in German and English as well as in Open Access for further translations.



www.bmwsb.bund.de/unbequemes-erbe

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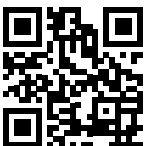
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