Participatory lab

Integrated Approaches for Dissonant Heritage in Europe

in the framework of EURegionsWeek, 11 October 2022, 9:30-11:00

Documentation of results

Summary

All over Europe, dissonant heritage of the 20th century is under discussion. At the same time, new dissonant heritage emerges. During this participatory lab, the interdisciplinary pan-European project offered an in-depth exchange about integrated approaches to dissonant heritage, especially in smaller towns and remote areas. A working group of European institutions, international experts, researchers and local practitioners has been working intensively on the topic since 2020.

The discussions explored past and potential future dissonant heritage and thereby touched upon major current debates around the climate crisis, the current war in Ukraine and colonialism. The event explored, e.g., how integrated approaches can develop the potential of dissonant heritage sites for society, for tourism and for urban and regional development and how make them usable in the long term, e.g. as places of civic participation, learning, democracy building and inclusiveness.

The exchange contributed to the [Partnership on Culture and Cultural Heritage in the Urban Agenda for the EU](#).
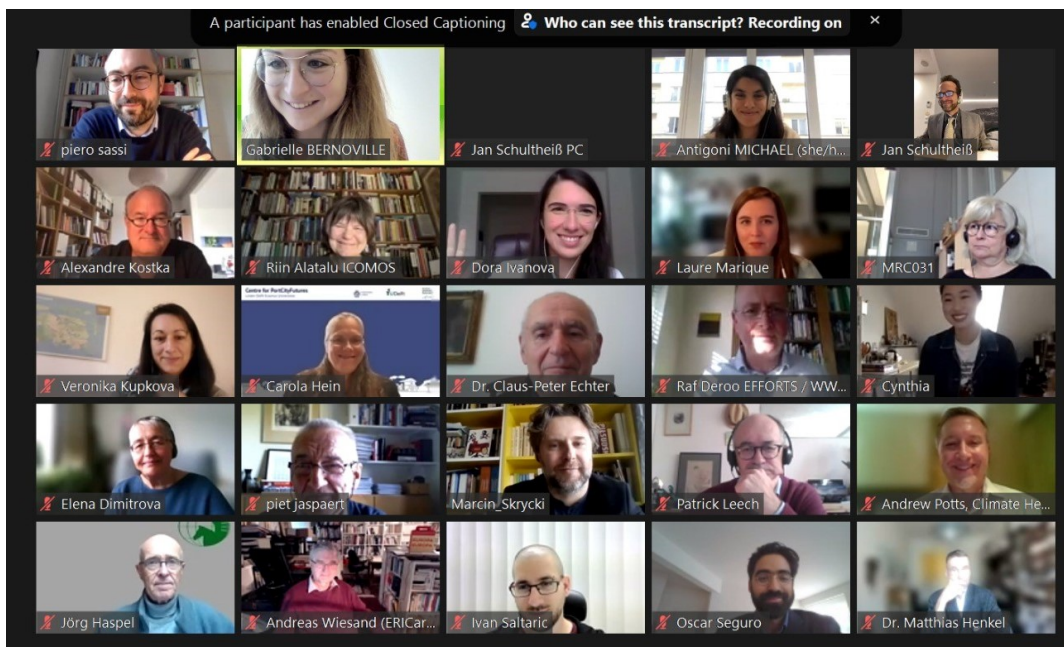
Circa 70 stakeholders participated in the event.

Programme

Introduction   Urban Agenda, Partnership on Culture and Cultural Heritage, European Action Group on "Integrated Approaches to Dissonant Heritage" - Jan Schultheiß, German Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building

Input   Ensuring the (financial) viability of Dissonant Heritage sites - Mario Aymerich, Former Director at the European Investment Bank & Dora Ivanova, Buzludzha Project Foundation

Participatory exchange during three parallel thematic tables

1.   *Dissonance against Environment and Climate*
     Inputs: Prof. Dr. Carola Hein (Delft University of Technology) & Andrew Potts (AC-TION 9 – Observatory on Culture/Cultural Heritage and climate change in the framework of the Urban Agenda)
     Table moderators: Prof Dr. Patrick Leech (Università di Bologna, ATRIUM)
     & Dott. Mag. Piero Sassi (Bauhaus-Institut für Geschichte und Theorie der Architektur und Planung, Weimar)

2.   *Wars and conflicts (previous and current)*
     Inputs: Prof. Dr. Riin Alatalu, ICOMOS International Council of Monuments and Sites & Prof. Dr. Alexandre Kostka, University of Strasbourg
     Table moderators: Dora Ivanova, Buzludzha Project Foundation, Laure Marique, C-SHIP (Cultural Entrepreneurship) & Mathieu de Meyer, Atlantikwall Europe/Atlantikwall Raversyde

3.   *Colonialism / racism*
     Inputs: Rafael Deroo, Efforts Europe, "Forts/Unchained", Prof. Tim Cole, University of Bristol and Chair of the "We are Bristol" History Commission & Dr. Matthias Henkel, Museum Berlin-Neukölln/District Office Neukölln of Berlin
     Table moderators: Marcin Skrycki, Polish Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy
   & Oscar Seguro, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission

Summary   Rapport from working tables and interactive exchange - Gabrielle Bernoville, table moderators

Outlook   Next steps & ways to get involved - Gabrielle Bernoville & Jan Schultheiß

Moderator:
Gabrielle Bernoville, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture,
European Commission

Welcome and icebreaker polls
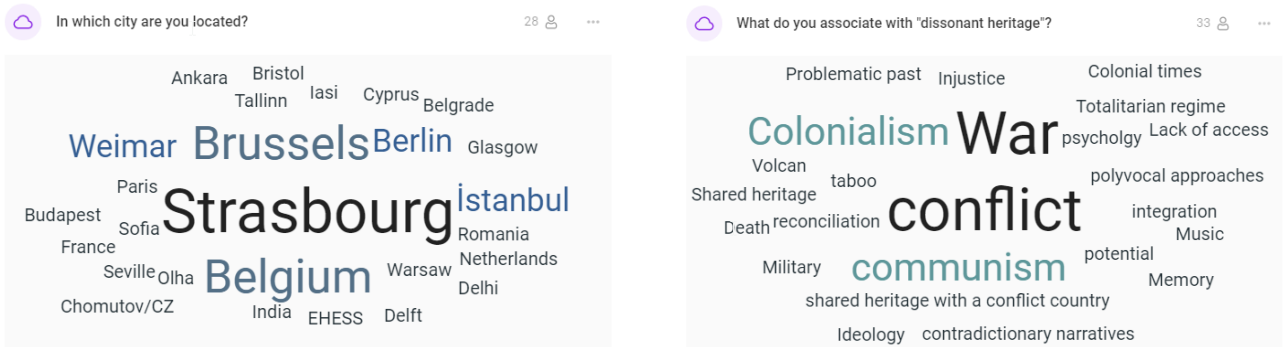
Introduction: Action "Integrated Approaches to Dissonant Heritage"

Jan Schultheiß, German Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building

Dissonant heritage is part of European history and cultural heritage. This can include places related to National-Socialist, fascist, nationalist or communist regimes and state systems, as well as places that reveal structural evidence of war, persecution, or colonisation. Much of Europe's most striking post-war modern architecture and urban planning can also count as part of Europe's dissonant architectural heritage.

'Dissonant' is not to be understood as a property inherent in any specific heritage site, but rather as a symptom that arises against a complex background of social, political and historical conditions. Such conditions may lead a society or social group to associate particular cultural or architectural heritage with negative or unpleasant memories. The site thus becomes politically and/or historically burdened; in other words, it becomes dissonant. Accordingly, dissonant heritage captures the controversies and conflicts in competing and sometimes ambiguous readings of the past.

In many places in Europe, dissonant heritage is badly neglected, inaccessible to the public and threatened with demolition and decay. Historic buildings and areas are often not under protection, and deemed unworthy of preservation to many of those involved, partly because of the unpleasant associations. There is often an urgent need for action to secure, preserve and develop these historic building structures in a way that is fit for the future.

Exploring the potential of dissonant heritage

The aim of this project, or "Action", is to increase awareness, throughout Europe, of the value and potential of dissonant heritage, especially the heritage dating from the 20th century and particularly sites located in smaller towns and remote regions. The Action furthermore intends to promote greater integration of the dissonant heritage into urban and regional development and thus to ensure its conservation and viable development. Another objective of the Action is to promote better use of the potential of the heritage for purposes such as education on history, democracy and the development of tourism. The Action is designed in accordance with the UAEU to test and develop new and innovative approaches to urban issues, as a basis for recommendations to the European Commission, the Member States and municipalities.

The Action 'Integrated Approaches to Dissonant Heritage' has been coordinated in the framework of the Partnership on Culture and Cultural Heritage in the Urban Agenda for the EU by the German Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building (BMWSB) and was supported by the project "Integrated approaches to Dissonant Heritage in Europe" in the research program "Experimental Housing and Urban Development" (ExWoSt). According to the goals of the Urban Agenda, it develops policy recommendations for better funding, better regulation and better knowledge for the EU, Member States, cities and regions.

Input: Ensuring the (financial) viability of Dissonant Heritage sites

Mario Aymerich, Former Director at the European Investment Bank
Dora Ivanova, Buzludzha Project Foundation

- Major institutions support the preservation of cultural heritage goods (e.g., European Commission, EIB, ICOMOS-UNESCO, Europa Nostra, World Bank, Getty Foundation), pursue a similar approach, which can be summarized as considering three dimensions of sites to be protected:
  - (i) their essence and current situation
  - (ii) the feasibility of their recovery
  - (iii) their sustainability in the long term.
- A good example of the way these dimensions have been materialized in a project is the Buzludzha Monument (Bulgaria). Indeed, after the "7 most endangered site" report was issued in 2018, during last years the following actions have been carried out:
  - dimension (i): analysed in detail in the 7ME report and recognized as a "dissonant heritage" representative monument
  - dimension (ii): identification of the future shape and uses of the monument; preparation of the architectural/engineering project of the recovery of the building; repair of the internal mosaics;
  - dimension (iii): preparation of a detailed marketing plan; preparation of a sound business plan; dissemination activities.
- All of this has been possible thanks to the participation of many different both national and international institutions, as well as of numerous stakeholders and volunteers.
- On top of that, several events have been organized in order to disseminate the progress and future of the project (among them, a summer festival of music on site and many presentations).
- In summary, a holistic approach leading to the recovery of an ancient symbol of Communism being transformed into a cultural site where a lot of different cultural events will take place for the benefit of local and international visitors.

- In parallel, the "Barcelona Declaration of Tourism and Cultural Heritage" (2018) identifies these 5 operational principles:
  - Smart and inclusive governance
  - Adding value to the sense of place
  - Using a holistic vision for marketing and preservation
  - Balancing place, people and business
  - Connecting people to people
- The Declaration also embodies a clear statement on the necessity of promoting fair-minded tourism taking into consideration the three classical dimensions of sustainability (environmental, social and economic) to which it adds a fourth one: Cultural values.

- The latter is probably the most difficult element to appraise and monetize, as far as many subjective elements may intervene. Therefore, the key question is: what exactly defines the historic/cultural value of the site? In other words: what must remain unchanged and what can the modernized?
- As a result, in order to guarantee the future life of any historic good (e.g., a dissonant heritage site), the identification of the ultimate "raison d'être" of the object under intervention (including its cultural values) must be clearly substantiated.
- The Dissonant Heritage Action Group in the framework of the Urban Agenda for the EU has dedicated relevant efforts to help site owners and project promoters to provide clear answers to the latter.

- Against this background, the identification of potential financial resources (either public or private), together with setting up a proper management structure, is a key element to reach the materialization of all the necessary activities related to the recovery and stability of the site in the long term (i.e., both during implementation and operation). The following list may help in carrying out these tasks.

- Conclusions/recommendations on Financing and Management resulting from the International Expert Workshop (Barcelona, 2021) on Integrated Approaches Dissonant Heritage in Europe:

  - General approach
    - Need for identifying criteria (beyond dissonance) allowing to prioritize actions
    - Show the potential of the sites, e. g. in terms of education, adapted reuse and cultural tourism
  - Operational Approach
    - Need for capacity building in terms of professional competences with respect for volunteer work + acknowledgement (structures capable of managing the sites, as well as obtaining the necessary funding resources)
    - Go on the ground and enhance public awareness
    - Prepare sound business cases, on the basis of: (i) strong/professional management (ii) sound estimation of investment needs and revenues generation; and (iii) identification of available financial sources and financial structure mechanism > public and private or mix
  - Institutional Approach
    - Need for simplification of procedures / more flexibility during implementation
    - Identify a champion to support your action
    - Networking and communication (workshops, conferences > ideas for projects)
    - Transnational dimension of investment funds
    - Need for considering operation and maintenance as recipient of finance
- The above list (in particular the preparation of a business case) assists in the identification/development of the most relevant actions to be implemented in order to achieve success and to ensure the viability of the site in the long term.

In summary, every cultural heritage site has its own characteristics and values (including its geographic insertion and tourism potential) to be clearly revealed. A main challenge for the corresponding in-charge entities is to investigate to what extent different financial resources would be available for the successful implementation of its recovery and its sustainable operation.

Indeed, this is not an easy task and requires significant efforts. However, many national and international institutions (either public or private) are ready and wishful to help in this matter.

Summary table 1: Dissonance against Environment and Climate

Inputs:
Prof. Dr. Carola Hein (Delft University of Technology)
Andrew Potts (ACTION 9 – Observatory on Culture/Cultural Heritage and climate change in the framework of the Urban Agenda)

Table moderators:
Prof. Dr. Patrick Leech (Università di Bologna, ATRIUM)
Dott. Mag. Piero Sassi (Bauhaus-Institut für Geschichte und Theorie der Architektur und Planung, Weimar)

Within our working table, we discussed dissonant heritage connected with environmental pollution and climate change from different points of view and basing upon different case studies.

- In her input **Carola Hein**, professor of History of Architecture and Urban Planning at Delft University of Technology, pointed out the key-role of the "generational" dimension of dissonance. "Heritage is never fixed. It is always discussed and (re)interpreted."

- **Andrew Potts**, coordinator of the ACTION N° 09 – Observatory on Culture/Cultural Heritage and climate change, illustrated the central role of culture both in producing and in tackling problems deriving from environmental pollution. On the one hand, it was a certain culture connected to resource depletion and environmental pollution (see, for example, "petrocultures", "toxic heritage" and "carbonscapes") that led to climate change and environmental problems we have to face nowadays. On the other, it is a new culture concerned about environmental issues that can achieve a paradigm shift towards sustainable development.

- The discussion underlined some aspects that are peculiar to dissonant heritage connected with environmental pollution and climate change, for instance compared to other legacies, such as those of 20th Century European Dictatorships;

- Dissonance against environment and climate is perceived in rather different ways in different segments of today's societies and within different generations;

- Furthermore, dealing with a diverse built heritage (nuclear plants, infrastructures connected with steel industry, car-based traffic infrastructure…) that is to an important extent still used and barely accessible poses important challenges to local politicians and practitioners. In some cases, this can lead to demolition or musealization.

- With regard to the main topic of our action group, the session underlined the need to further discuss and investigate dissonance against environment and climate both from a theoretical point of view and in local planning and politics. In this, we should consider those aspects that have been neglected – to a big extent – over the past years, for example the relation between dissonance in the heritage of fossil fuel and heavy industry and other dissonances connected with legacies of 20th century history, such as the built heritage of European dictatorships. The session also pointed out the general need to discuss heritage in all its complexity, in the words of Carola Hein: "as a system". In conclusion, the topics discussed pointed out the fact that dissonance against environment and climate represent a main concern, awareness regarding its importance and sensitive character is going to rise and develop in the coming years and within the next generations.

- Another issue that emerged in the discussion was the plurality of perspectives on environmental dissonance. For example, the need to recognize the legacy of cultural celebration of the industrial revolution and its effects, as well as the celebration of the involvement of local communities in specific examples of this (for example, in the reflections of local communities in terms of their involvement in early industrialization in, for example, heritage sites and mine museums).

- The change in perspective, the "disassembling [of] the power of high-carbon imaginaries" (see www.carbonscapes.eu) should not emerge through the demonisation of previous visions.

Summary table 2: Wars and conflicts (previous and current)

Inputs:
Prof. Dr. Riin Alatalu, ICOMOS International Council of Monuments and Sites
Prof. Dr. Alexandre Kostka, University of Strasbourg

Table moderators:
Dora Ivanova, Buzludzha Project Foundation
Laure Marique, C-SHIP (Cultural Entrepreneurship)
Mathieu de Meyer, Atlantikwall Europe/Atlantikwall Raversyde

Riin Alatalu's presentation
Riin Alatalu was exploring the aspect of dissonance in times of peace and in times of conflict.
Peace time:
Even unwanted, the Soviet heritage in Estonia has been protected. The statues of Soviet political persons were removed in the early 1990s, mainly to museums.
- A good example is Maarjamäe memorial. Through a new memorial built in 2018 for the victims of communism and the dignified design of the German War Cemetery, the Soviet memorial built in 1960s was given new meaning. The memory field symbolizes the country's difficult history.
- Another example is the Patarei sea fort, which was part of the 7 Most Endangered initiative in 2016, which is partially turned into a Communism in Prison museum as the former fort was used as a political prison during Soviet repressions.
- The preservation of communist monumental art should not become nostalgic or glorifying; it should serve as a reminder of difficult times.
- There was a big removal of Soviet monuments in Latvia. There were public debates before the destruction.
- Recently there was a proposal to destroy/cover the ceiling painting from 1947 by well-known Estonian artists at the Estonian National Opera. There are intense discussions if it hurts people's feelings or is a reminder of the story of the reconstruction of the opera after Soviet bombarding in 1944.
Conclusions:
Dissonance is to be discussed, not solved.
Dissonance is responsible for the future so we need to keep it.

Alexandre Kostka's presentation
WWI as an example of how to better understand the nature of Dissonant heritage - 1910 - 1925 WWI was not only a military war, but also a cultural war.
- The Germans bombed the Cathedral of Reins in 1914, destroying significant cultural objects. This brought about the signing of the "Manifesto of the 93 intellectuals"

In terms of today's war, there are several important questions:
- How do you give legitimacy to predatory wars?
- What can we do with the cognitive dissonance today? There is no Manifesto of intellectuals today.
- Dissonance heritage is interesting for EU-citizens to prevent us from historical oblivion.

Discussion
1. How do you deal with Dissonant heritage without getting nostalgic?
   - Riin Alatalu: You need to treat the issue honestly, to admit it happened, also to admit that many could not help but be part of the occupational system and avoid collaboration. It is helpful to see problems in comparison. For example, if one compares communism to other totalitarian regimes. The broader context helps to understand the bigger picture.
   - Alexander Kostka: By comparing, you can ask different questions. It is important to focus on the facts and patterns. In the end dissonant heritage is about suffering.

2. How it is decided and by whom what to save and what to protect?
   - Riin Alatalu: In Estonia, figurative monuments such as Lenin statues were removed from public space and exposed in museums. Modest monuments were left in the public space. However, this attitude is now changing. The decisions are taken by politicians on populist way to gain political profit. But the question is: do we really support Ukraine by erasing monuments i.e. reminders of occupation from the streets?
   - Alexandre Kostka: Generally, the state and the authorities decide. However, they are not always following coherent policy. For example, in Berlin the Palace of the Republic was dismantled, but the statues of Marx and Engels were carefully cleaned to be brought back to their original place next to it.

3. Do we need to rethink how we deal with dissonant heritage in the current war in Ukraine?
   - Alexandre Kostka: Europe is becoming smaller. With the war, we realize how fragile cultural heritage is and how weak and forgetful the institutions are.
   - Riin Alatalu: Dissonant heritage is a "useful reminder" as we live in a traumatic time in a state of shock and stress. The discussion on dissonant heritage should never be closed.

Summary table 3: Colonialism / racism

Inputs:
Rafael Deroo, Efforts Europe, "Forts/Unchained"
Prof. Tim Cole, University of Bristol and Chair of the "We are Bristol" History Commission
Dr. Matthias Henkel, Museum Berlin-Neukölln/District Office Neukölln of Berlin

Table moderators:
Marcin Skrycki, Polish Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy
Oscar Seguro, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission

- Focal point of the table was perception and awareness concerning colonial dissonant heritage. Starting point was the consultation and public surveys on the Colston monument in Bristol. The crucial finding was the difference in the perception of the monument between generations. Hence, the need of intragenerational discussion and dialogue was raised.
- The colonial dissonant heritage under the framework of the project "Integrated Approaches to Dissonant Heritage in Europe" was discussed. The starting point was the fact that colonial

dissonant heritage was not a main focus in the project. In a debate there were no doubts that this type of heritage is not different than any other type of dissonant heritage. There where voices, however, that the level of knowledge about this kind of heritage is relatively low and it should have been raised.

- There were also debates about the significance of local communities in dissonant heritage issues. Communities play an important role in re-interpreting and actualizing the meaning of this form of heritage. This relation should be deepened through the means of more democratic processes of heritage governance and through the fostering of spaces for intergenerational dialogue.
- In the case of the Edward Colston statue, after it was toppled by protesters, more than 14.000 people from all ages and backgrounds participated in a survey, reflecting on the future and meaning of the piece, advancing interesting ideas and deepening the discussion.
- The concept of "shelf life" applied to heritage was also mentioned. It relates to the idea that certain symbols and ideologies that are glorified and celebrated in a certain historical time/context need to be updated, actualized and reinterpreted. This concept reminds us that heritage assets, such as public art, statues, etc., displayed in public spaces should regularly be reinterpreted and "updated". Participatory processes should play a key role.

Link to the movie shown by Dr. Matthias Henkel, "The Stumbling Stone Project – decolonizing our future together": https://youtu.be/pa_aJJeipvo

Further information and reading

Video recording of the Participatory Lab (plenary session only)
https://eu.app.swapcard.com/event/euregionsweek-2022/planning/UGxhbm5pbmdfOTYwNTYw

Contact: Jan Schultheiß, German Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building, jan.schultheiss@bmwsb.bund.de *Please get in touch if you are interested in joining the Action Group!*

Further information: www.dissonant-heritage.eu