



Conference
(IN)VISIBLE TRACES
20TH CENTURY CULTURAL HERITAGE IN DANGER

Panels and Tours on March 4 and 5



Wednesday, March 4

10am

Introduction and Welcome

Uljana Sieber, Bautzner Strasse Memorial, Vesna Teršelič, Documenta
Annekatrijn Klepsch, Deputy Mayor for Culture, Science and Tourism

Presentation of the projects by Jurica Vitković, Tena Banjeglav, Documenta

Keynote Speech by Hana Ćurak, Humboldt University

12am

Panel 2: Fascist violence in between two World Wars, Holocaust and Genocides: cases of neglected sites of suffering and resistance

Tomas Porena (Topografia per la Storia), Milan Radošević (HAZU), David Gonzalez Vazquez (EUROM)
Moderator: Vesna Teršelič (Documenta)

3pm

Panel 3: Rising visibility of neglected cultural heritage sites - Art as an answer

Ryts Monet, Patricia Morosan, Andreja Kulunčić
Moderator: Anamarija Batista (Institute for Art and Cultural Studies at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna)

4:45pm

Thematic Dresden City Tour

Alter Leipziger Bahnhof – Altmarkt – Kulturpalast – Neumarkt/Frauenkirche



Thursday, March 5

10am

Panel 4: Transferring knowledge at memorial sites

Nick Wetschel and Uljana Sieber, Bautzner Strasse Dresden Memorial
(short input and tour at the historical site)

12am

Panel 5: Challenges related to European remembrance

Małgorzata Pakier (ENRS), Anna Kaminsky (Bundesstiftung Aufarbeitung), Oriol López-Badell (EUROM; online), Aleksandra Janus – TBC
Moderator: Martin Bock (EVZ Foundation)

3pm

Panel 6: Promoting protection of Cultural Heritage in Danger - Strategies and Recommendations

Vesna Marjanović (EUROPA NOSTRA), Bruno Boyer (Mémorial de la Shoah), Gilly Carr (Cambridge University, online)
Moderator: Tena Banjeglav (Documenta)

4:45pm

Individual visit of the Bautzner Strasse Memorial's permanent Exhibition: in dialogue with the curator

5pm

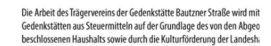
As part of the conference, we are offering a free special event on March 5 to the general public: The German language city tour entitled "[Traces of Nazi Rule](#)" for (young) adults, starts at the Kreuzkirche and runs between the Semperoper and the New Synagogue.



An audio loop is available for events in the conference hall.



The work of the Bautzner Strasse Memorial Association is co-financed by the Saxon Memorial Foundation from tax revenues based on the budget approved by the members of the Saxon State Parliament, as well as by cultural funding from the state capital of Dresden.



Background Paper: Neglected memory sites as a shared European Challenge

Across Europe, memory sites related to the twentieth century's most violent chapters remain unevenly recognized, protected, and integrated into public memory. While some places of remembrance have become central to national and European narratives, many others (especially those connected to the less researched genocides and other mass crimes and to political repression during the Cold War) remain neglected, abandoned, or almost invisible. These sites are often physically degraded, poorly marked, or completely unmarked, and their histories are fragmented, contested, or actively silenced. Even where such places are preserved or accessible, they are frequently decontextualized: removed from their historical, social, and political frameworks, reduced to isolated landmarks, or abstract symbols devoid of critical interpretation. This decontextualization weakens public understanding of the structures of violence, responsibility, and resistance connected to these sites and limits their potential to function as spaces of learning, reflection, and democratic dialogue. This situation poses a shared European challenge. Neglected memory sites are not only a heritage problem; they are also a democratic, educational, and ethical issue. When places connected to mass violence, state repression, and genocides disappear from public space and collective awareness, the stories of victims and survivors are marginalized, and the opportunity to critically reflect on Europe's past, and its relevance for the present, is weakened.

The two historical periods involved in this joint conference, prepared by *Documenta* and partners, approach these challenges from complementary perspectives. At the conference, the main problem that will be addressed are **neglected Holocaust and other genocides-related sites**, and **abandoned and less-known Cold War heritage sites**, especially former prisons, camps, and locations of political violence. Together, they reveal structural similarities in how difficult heritage is treated across different historical periods and national contexts.

The crucial problems the conference is going to deal with are the following:

- Lack of visibility and recognition of the Holocaust and other genocide related locations and the Cold War heritage sites
- Decontextualization, lack of historical context, personal stories and transnational perspectives, revisionist and distorted narratives of the Holocaust and other genocides, related locations, and Cold War heritage sites
- Politically created and promoted narratives that distort and deny historical facts and events, resulting in national myths that are difficult to combat and deconstruct
- Lack of institutional responsibility, because of which many neglected sites fall between administrative competencies, and are not fully protected as cultural heritage, lack stable funding, or depend on short-term project initiatives.
- Because of a lack of institutional responsibility, civil society organizations, artists, educators, and local activists often carry the burden of remembrance of these locations, without sufficient long-term structural support.

European policies and strategies we are going to specifically address:

- The EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life (2021-2030)

- The New European Agenda for Culture and AgoraEU programme (2028-2034)
- Towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe

The crucial questions the conference is going to deal with are the following:

- How to increase visibility, recognition and protection of the Holocaust and other genocides related locations and the Cold War heritage sites?
- What are the most constructive approaches and practices to challenge distortion of historical facts, decontextualization and ever wider spread of revisionist and distorted narratives of the Holocaust and other genocides related locations, and Cold War heritage sites? How to confront the spreading of narratives that contribute to the formation of national myths?
- What are the risks involved in advocating a critical and facts based approach to remembrance policies and how to mitigate them?
- What is the role of institutions, civil society organizations, artists, educators, and local activists? How to motivate and support all stakeholders?
- How to improve network(s) and connections of civil society organizations, artists, educators, and local activists who often carry the burden of remembrance of these locations, without sufficient long-term structural support?

The Dresden Context: Connecting destruction, memory, and reconstruction

The Conference in Dresden *(In)visible Traces - 20th Century Neglected Cultural Heritage and Remembrance Challenges* provides a particularly meaningful space to bring these issues together. Dresden itself embodies layered histories of destruction, reconstruction, and memory politics from the devastation of the Second World War, through the Cold War period, to contemporary debates on remembrance and heritage protection. As a city with extensive experience in post-war reconstruction and heritage debates, Dresden offers a powerful setting to reflect on how societies choose what to remember, restore, reinterpret, or leave behind. Within this context, the conference creates a platform to connect Holocaust memory and Cold War heritage not as competing narratives, but as **interlinked European experiences of violence, repression, and survival**. Both are essential for understanding the foundations of contemporary European values such as human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

Complementary Approaches: Where the two topics meet

The strength of the joint activity lies in the **intersection of approaches** developed within both topics. The first theme on Holocaust-related memory sites, brings long-standing expertise in documentation, oral history, victim-centered narratives, and educational work. Its emphasis on marginalized sites challenges dominant memory hierarchies and insists on the inclusion of local, lesser-known, and often uncomfortable histories into European remembrance. The Cold War–focused theme contributes innovative methodologies that combine **artistic practices, heritage research, and public space interventions**. By engaging artists, cultural professionals, and younger audiences, it opens new ways of interpreting abandoned sites and reactivating them as places of reflection rather than static monuments.

Together, these approaches suggest that neglected memory sites cannot be addressed solely through traditional memorialization. Instead, they require **multi-layered strategies** that integrate historical research, artistic interpretation, education, and advocacy.

Shared Solutions: From neglect to engagement

Drawing on ideas from both topics, several shared solutions emerge:

a) **Re-contextualization rather than monumentalization**

Not every site needs a traditional monument. Temporary artistic interventions, performative actions, digital tools, and guided memory walks can reintroduce sites into public consciousness without fixing a single, closed narrative.

b) **Increasing visibility and recognition on local level and connecting local sites to European frameworks**

Promotion and increasing visibility of previously neglected and marginalized historical sites, improves its visibility and recognition on local and national levels. On the other hand, placing neglected sites within transnational networks helps overcome national isolation and politicization.

c) **Activating education through place-based learning**

Both topics demonstrate the importance of using historically significant sites as educational spaces. Study visits, workshops, and youth engagement turn abstract history into embodied experience and foster critical thinking about past and present forms of exclusion and authoritarianism.

d) **Bridging research and artistic practice**

Artistic approaches can make complex histories accessible and emotionally resonant, while research ensures historical accuracy and ethical responsibility. Their combination is particularly effective for sites that are physically damaged or symbolically contested.

e) **Advocacy for sustainable protection**

Temporary visibility must lead to long-term responsibility. Joint recommendations developed through the conference can address policymakers, cultural heritage institutions, and local authorities, advocating for legal protection, maintenance, and inclusive interpretation of neglected sites.

Conclusion

Neglected Holocaust and other WWII genocide-related sites and abandoned Cold War historically significant sites are not peripheral issues; they are central to how Europe understands itself and its common past. By bringing these perspectives together in Dresden, the joint activity demonstrates that remembrance is not only about preserving the past, but about shaping the ethical and political frameworks of the future.

Through dialogue, research, artistic engagement, education, and advocacy, the two topics together propose a model for addressing difficult heritage; one that transforms silence into reflection, neglect into responsibility, and forgotten places into active spaces of European memory.