ARCHETHICS

Bétera, Spain
28.560 inhabitants

Challenge

In Bétera, eight air-raid shelters and the Puig-Carasols defensive line from the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) remained largely forgotten. The memories of surviving witnesses risked disappearing, limiting educational use and sustainable tourism potential.

Local heroes

Elderly war witnesses, local historians from the CELB, archaeologists, teachers, veterans and residents co-create this initiative. By sharing testimonies, archives and expertise, they transform painful memories into inclusive educational and cultural opportunities for future generations.



Lessons learnt

Act before memories fade. Combine historical research with personal testimonies to create emotional connection. Link heritage with ecology to broaden appeal. Design accessibility from the start. Co-creation with local associations builds trust, authenticity and long-term sustainability.

Solution

Activates Civil War heritage for sustainable tourism and inclusion.

Bétera's Integrated Action Plan leverages Spanish Civil War heritage to promote sustainable tourism, education and inclusion. A key action was a participatory documentary featuring testimonies of survivors in their 90s, presented publicly during the Core Network meeting in December 2025. The film will be integrated into school programmes and tourist visits, preserving memory while strengthening community pride. It also supports the "War Stories Tours", which connect archaeology, local biodiversity and intergenerational learning, enhancing year-round cultural attractiveness.



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BÉTERA

ARCHETHICS

Vila Nova de Cerveira, Portugal
9.000 inhabitants

Challenge

Castelo D. Dinis, a strategic border fortress in the town centre, has long been abandoned and disconnected from daily life. Its physical deterioration and limited public use weaken its potential as a cultural, social and economic landmark.

Local heroes

Students, teachers, elderly residents, cultural mediators and municipal teams lead the transformation. Through filmmaking, storytelling and civic initiatives like "O Castelo é Nosso", they reconnect the community with the castle and reinforce shared ownership.



Lessons learnt

Reclaiming heritage requires both institutional action and grassroots energy. Youth engagement fosters long-term ownership. Combining physical rehabilitation with storytelling strengthens identity. Small creative actions—like films or social media campaigns—can trigger wider civic movements and renewed pride.

Solution

Castelo – A Community Hub for Social and Cultural Development

The IAP re-activates Castelo D. Dinis as a meeting point for residents and visitors, driving social, cultural and economic development. After cancelling the private concession, the Municipality will rehabilitate the castle, ensuring accessibility and heritage preservation. A co-created Interpretative Centre, based on New European Bauhaus principles, will host workshops, artistic residencies and educational activities. Community Labs will document oral histories and intangible heritage. Youth initiatives such as Curtas no Castelo engaged 130 students, producing five short films screened to 350 people, strengthening emotional connection and civic pride.



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CERVEIRA
VILA DAS ARTES

ARCHETHICS

Cesena, Italy
95.000 inhabitants

Challenge

Give new life and cultural meanings to the network of buildings from the Fascist period (1922-1945) transforming this sleeping heritage to an inclusive Living Lab on dissonance, democracy and active citizenship.

Local heroes

A local association specializing in twentieth-century education and memory, the Historical Institute provided original audio recordings and archival documents, while young creatives designed soundscapes, encouraging students' creativity through innovative languages and approaches.



Lessons learnt

Start from specific historical sources on your heritage. Then collect hidden histories and memories both individual and collective, looking for dissonances without being afraid of conflicting memories. Choose a key cross-cutting theme that goes from the past to the present events and let creative and young people guide you.

Solution

Cesena 1944: Women and Men Facing War

An interactive workshop was co-designed and tested with 50 high school students at the former air-raid shelter, inviting them to critically explore this symbolic World War II site through the perspective of ordinary men and women. The activity promoted active engagement with history through inquiry-based learning and on-site exploration. To enhance the experience, a specially developed soundscape recreated historical atmospheres and encouraged multiple investigative viewpoints. Participants particularly appreciated walking through and physically engaging with the space. The workshop took place on October 20, 2025, during the official celebrations of Cesena's liberation from the Nazi-fascist regime.



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Comune di Cesena

ARCHETHICS

Gdańsk, Poland
488,000 inhabitants

Challenge

After WWII, large parts of Gdańsk were rebuilt in socialist realist style. In districts like Grunwald and Nowy Port, this "dissonant heritage" remains undervalued. A total of 148 survey respondents revealed fragmented knowledge, limited protection measures and weak stakeholder coordination.

Local heroes

Residents, former builders, local historians, architects, district council members and community leaders are the driving force. By sharing memories, photos and expertise, they transform contested socialist-era architecture into a shared cultural resource.



Lessons learnt

Start with listening. Combine expert knowledge with personal memories to build trust and shared ownership. Use small, visible actions to demonstrate change. Mix cultural activities with practical urban improvements. Monitor media and community reactions carefully—unexpected bottom-up initiatives can become powerful allies in regenerating dissonant heritage.

Solution

The Future of the Past – learning from the past for a better future

Gdańsk launched an integrated action plan to reconnect people with their post-war heritage. Not just one event but a series of different types of events were organised to involve different targets in the districts and in particular: eight open lectures with historians and urban planning experts (up to 60 participants each); a public open-air event showcasing the urban context and collecting private photographs and books; exhibition, tours, games, snacks and creating a specially designed temporary place for rest and activity at a potential key point in the district - a pop-up community centre.



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GDAŃSK

ARCHETHICS

Kazanlak, Bulgaria
41.537 inhabitants

Challenge

The Buzludzha Monument, inaugurated in 1981 and abandoned after 1989, stands as a controversial symbol of the communist regime. Despite its 2021 national heritage status, it lacks full conservation, structured visitor access and integrated strategic planning.

Local heroes

Local citizens, photographers, students, historians, municipal experts and the Buzludzha Project Foundation drive the initiative. Through creative actions and shared responsibility, they transform a former propaganda site into a space for participation and cultural dialogue.



Lessons learnt

Contested heritage requires dialogue, not erasure. Combine conservation with creativity to broaden public interest. Test ideas through small pilot actions before large investments. Multi-level cooperation between municipality, state authorities and civil society strengthens legitimacy and long-term sustainability.

Solution

Buzludzha as a Global Cultural and Tourist Destination

Kazanlak's IAP reimagines Buzludzha as a space for dialogue, education and sustainable tourism. The strategy strengthens heritage protection, integrates the monument into municipal plans (2028–2034) and develops a conservation management plan. A visitor access strategy will improve orientation and transport. A new Information and Archive Centre will collect and digitise materials. Educational programmes, citizen guide training and a documentary will foster engagement. In 2025, a photo competition engaged 57 participants, reached 30,000 people online and attracted over 1,000 visitors, confirming strong public interest and cooperation.



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ARCHETHICS

Kraków, Poland
806,000 inhabitants

Challenge

The Nowa Huta district, built in 1949 is a rare and complex example of socialist realist urbanism in Europe. Once stigmatized, today it is necessary to re-evaluate it to reinterpret its layered history and strengthen community identity.

Local heroes

The event was held in cooperation with the Krakow City Council, municipal units, cultural institutions and local activists and politicians for which/whom Nowa Huta is extremely important.



Lessons learnt

The testing action showed that the middle of the Central Square could become again an active meeting place. The success of these initiatives to reinhabit spaces depends on the ability to engage residents in simple, collaborative events.

Solution

Diamond Anniversary of Nowa Huta

On 22 September 2024, an intergenerational meeting of the district community was organized in the Central Square to celebrate the 75th anniversary of Nowa Huta founding. The testing action aims to activate the urban space of Central Square and restore its status as a neighborhood center for residents through interactive activities and outdoor exhibition "Once upon a time in the New Town - the history of Nowa Huta from 1949 to 2024" by Tomasz Bereźnicki. The event aroused great enthusiasm of the local residents, as more than 300 people attended (families with children, teenagers and the elderly).



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Kraków

ARCHETHICS

Leipzig, Germany
628.000 inhabitants

Challenge

The former Matthäikirchhof, once the operational centre of the Stasi, embodies memories of surveillance and dictatorship. The site's layered history—from medieval origins to the Peaceful Revolution of 1989—requires democratic reinterpretation, participatory governance and sustainable activation.

Local heroes

City planners, Leipzig+Kultur, civil society organisations, cultural actors and local residents co-create Matthäikirchhof's future. Through participation, storytelling and temporary uses, they transform a former site of control into a vibrant space of democratic encounter.



Lessons learnt

Difficult heritage must be activated, not frozen. Temporary uses allow testing governance and building trust before permanent investments. Clear democratic values, cross-departmental

Solution

Matthäikirchhof – From Control to Democracy.

Leipzig's IAP transforms Matthäikirchhof into an open, non-commercial third place for remembrance and dialogue. Supported by municipal departments and civic partners, it tests participatory models to strengthen democratic identity and civic ownership. From May 2026, temporary uses will activate the site through cultural events and a kick-off festival, ensuring visibility and public engagement while piloting sustainable governance. The action combines three elements: a small gastronomic "anchor use" (outdoor kiosk), a civil society body coordinating activities and reinvesting revenues, and a diverse steering group to curate and evaluate uses in line with democratic values.



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Stadt Leipzig

ARCHETHICS

Përmet, Albania
7.980 inhabitants

Challenge

In Përmet, sites from the Italian occupation (1939–1943) and communist era (1944–1991) remain contested and underused. Bunkers, monuments and military structures spark debate over preservation and reinterpretation, limiting their integration into education and tourism strategies.

Local heroes

Young people, teachers, local historians, municipal staff and cultural actors drive the initiative. Through theatre, archives and educational activities, they transform difficult memories into dialogue, fostering empathy, critical thinking and community pride.



Lessons learnt

Contested heritage can unite rather than divide when approached through education and creativity. Engage youth early. Combine physical restoration with digital innovation. Integrate heritage into tourism strategies while safeguarding critical reflection. International exchange strengthens local confidence and vision.

Solution

Dissonant Heritage for Sustainable Tourism and Education

Përmet's IAP repositions dissonant heritage as a resource for sustainable tourism and education. Actions include installing signage, restoring key sites and integrating them into the local tourism strategy, in cooperation with tour operators and EU networks. A key testing action, Through Art and Memory, involved a theatre performance inspired by Albanian films on the Italian occupation and dictatorship. On 15 October 2025, 24 young people engaged with this heritage, transforming difficult memories into dialogue and reflection. These measures turn contested sites into spaces for learning, culture and community benefit.



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