

The Art Working Group at the German Institute for Adult Education (DIE)

Project description

The initiative for the project arose from a group of colleagues at the German Institute for Adult Education (DIE) at Bonn (Germany) that expressed its interest in learning more about the assets surrounding their working space. It is a complex of 1970s buildings meant to host ministries of the Federal Republic of Germany when the capital was Bonn. The group also aimed to create a (learning) experience for externals who normally can't gain access to the area and for visitors who come for business purpose. The group is mainly interested in learning more about the pieces of art and architecture on their work space. They intend to create media to transfer this information to external visitors, too. My suggestion to the group was to research if there are values that may be connected with the assets e.g. conceptions of democracy and to give input to the group on the principles of heritage interpretation.



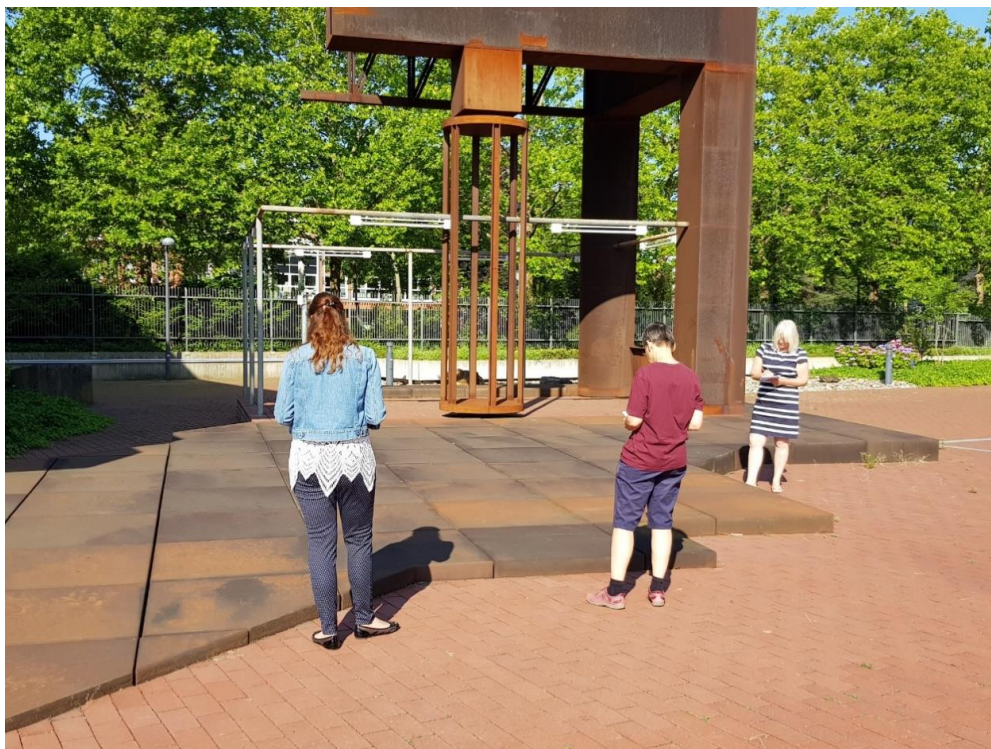
„Plastische Kreuzung“ (1977) by Ansgar Nierhoff

The assets are sculptures and architecture as well as garden design that offer the direct contact with a phenomenon as starting point for an interpretation (see photos). As people who normally see those objects as surroundings of their work place will be one of the target groups it is interesting to work with emotional relations to the assets. That can bear a new attitude to their working space.

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As a research associate for the DIE I suggested to accompany the group for the DELPHI project task on interpretive planning. The objective was to introduce the principles of heritage interpretation to the group and to explore possibilities to relate to them European values that are in the core of the DELPHI project. That suited to the idea of co-creation by involving a group of “locals” very well, too. The group was interested in the heritage interpretation concept formerly unknown to them.

Until now the group had five meetings. During the first meeting by means of brainstorming all participants explained their ideas about possible objectives and activities. The group accepted the proposal to get insight in principles of heritage interpretation. During the next meeting the participants got in contact with elements of an interpretive walk on the area (see photos). The meeting provided a first overview on methods of heritage interpretation. Moreover, the participants developed interpretive talks to different assets, that helped them to understand the opportunities the concept of heritage interpretation provides. The participants liked the approach, especially the inclusion of emotional aspects, and were interested in the finding of new perspectives in the first-hand experience (see documentation of the meeting). At once the participants were aware of strong parallel between heritage interpretation and up-to-date adult education as a holistic concept that includes emotions, too.



The next three meetings the group got input by methods of Design Thinking from a project involved in this topic at the DIE. By using personas target groups were defined and ideas about their needs and interests were developed. In a next step the group prioritized possible target groups:

- Staff of the institutions situated on the area
- Visitors of the institutions situated on the area



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- Residents in the neighbourhood
- Citizens of the city of Bonn
- Teachers and students
- University students (art, art history, history, architecture ...)

Further activities were the (online) research on the assets and on local associations or initiatives that may be interested in the field (see appendices 1 and 2). First results show that there is only scarce information on the actual assets on the area. There is no material to inform the public in-depth on the assets and the history of the area. Until now there has not been any attempt to convey coherent information on the assets or the area.

In a next step the group will discuss how to contact the identified local associations and other persons of interest (architects, artists, locals who were involved/contributed to the area e.g.) and the institution in charge for the area.

Furthermore, the group will get more acquainted with heritage interpretation. The DELPHI project will provide a learning pathway on the DIE-hosted web platform wb-web.de that addresses adult educators to learn about principles of heritage interpretation (in German language) that can be used for this aim.

The group invited the “art delegate” of the DIE (a person that e.g. organises exhibitions at the institute) to join and she accepted. So, the work of the group gets a connection to the cultural initiatives at the institute. Hopefully the results of the group’s work can be presented on the DIE homepage. That would provide a sustainable access.

Context

The area in question encompasses a vast terrain of 132,000 m². In 1974 two high-rise buildings (11 resp. 14 floors) with a cross-shaped ground plan were built – the so called “Kreuzbauten” (cross buildings).

In addition, there are four smaller buildings and three small wooden “pavilions”. The ground consists of two levels, partly used for a garden and partly for parking.

Besides there are several sculptures on the area and the open area is designed with footpaths and beds with shrubs and other plants. There are even trees on the lower level. Since 2004 the area is listed as heritage.

Access to the highly secured, fenced area is restricted to employees and (registered) visitors of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the other federal institutions on the site.



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Action Field

The group itself may be regarded as locals as they daily come to the area. As well the employees of the organisations on the area are locals in this sense. By researching associations that work in the field of local history, clubs and others in the area more locals can be included in the project. The group identified neighbours and citizens from Bonn as one target group so that in a next step contacts will be made e.g. with interviews that ask the people living around the area what they wish or demand in respect of the area.

The group's work is an open-ended process and as a process of co-creation it is not intended to force the group in a certain direction or to implement decisions.

As part of the DELPHI project team I was aware of the connection to European values and developed a potential main theme as a working hypothesis:

Art and architecture reflect the aspiration and the democratic values of the capital city of the new German Republic.

The choice of a main theme and special phenomena has not yet been considered. This will be decided after the group concludes the preliminary works and will be part of the finalized conceptual plan.

The final definition of a main theme can only be done in collaboration with the co-creators after the works mentioned before are finished.

The DELPHI project will provide a learning pathway on the DIE-hosted web platform wb-web.de that addresses adult educators to learn about EU values and how they can be integrated in courses of adult learning (in German language) that can be used for this aim.

Media

The group collected ideas for media use in a brain storming resulting in a very large scope of ideas:

- Leaflet
- Guided tours
- Website
- Apps
- Virtual tours: serious games, augmented reality using smartphone
- Panels on the area with QR-Code
- Information for local media (radio, tv, journals)
- Cooperation with local companies
- (Series of) course/lecture at the local adult education centre
- (Series of) course/lecture at the local university
- Mailings/newsletter content in the organisations on the area (DIE, Ministry, ...)



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The decision on how to realise which ideas has to be part of the planning process in the future. Not least the choice depends on the selection of the target group(s).

Final results

First result of the project planning is the installing of the group at the DIE. About eight participants work together and are interested in the outcomes of the DELPHI project and to become acquainted to the principles of heritage interpretation. In this way the DELPHI project target group of adult educators is addressed.

Hopefully by means of the learning pathways on wb-web.de the interest in heritage interpretation and European values is amplified and the group is interested in finding a main theme that fits well to these aims. As a DELPHI project team member I want to encourage this but it is up to the group of co-creators to decide on this. To prescribe a main theme by the DELPHI project team would be contrary to the idea of a bottom-up process.

The participants took a great interest in the heritage interpretation approach they were not familiar with. They appreciated the methods and were interested in learning more about it.

When the process of defining possible target groups is finished further decisions on main theme, phenomena and media can be made.

In the end the group will create multi-media material for a web page and find ways to convey information and give interpretation on the assets of the area both to the employees and visitors and to people who don't have direct access. This aim needs much more time and is an open-ended process.

As the area is a governmental space the activity of the group has to be well coordinated with the responsible department. That needs a good portion of diplomacy and patience.

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