

Churches as Cultural Heritage



Preserving and Revitalizing Church Buildings

About the Project

What can be done when funding is no longer sufficient to maintain all the beautiful and important, historic and modern church buildings in Saxony-Anhalt? Who funds what, and according to what criteria? And what will happen to the buildings that fall through the cracks? These were the questions posed in the summer semester of 2026 by a collaborative project between Anhalt University of Applied Sciences and the State Office for Heritage Management and Archaeology Saxony-Anhalt – in search of a matrix, an evaluation framework that is both well-founded and pragmatic.

Background

Nearly 2,400 churches and chapels are listed in Saxony-Anhalt's register of monuments. Yet, for many of them, there is a real concern that they will lose their original function, that they will be closed or even demolished. This is due to the fact that more and more people are moving away from rural areas, and fewer young people are entering the ministry. With their dwindling financial resources and membership, dioceses and regional churches are increasingly forced to critically reassess their properties.

Unlike almost any other type of historic building, churches bear witness to the historical, social, architectural,

and artistic developments from past centuries. Many people identify with the churches in their villages and towns regardless of religious affiliation. As "third places," they foster cultural, social, and democratic exchanges. As "fourth places," they invite people to experience a sense of meaning.

Outcomes

During the summer semester of 2026, the project developed verifiable criteria. How can government funding be used most effectively for preservation and conservation? A seminar, a scenario workshop, and a symposium brought students, experts, and interested participants together to discuss these issues.

Using two model regions as a basis, an overview of the existing building stock was created that can be organized, evaluated, and expanded according to various criteria. Thus, the project developed a framework for future scenarios. However, even during the research phase, it became clear that there is a great need for consultation on the part of church congregations.

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