

## Found in Lostness: Community Visions for Multiple Future-Making

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### Abstract

The question of what becomes of urban future-making when a city loses its institutional anchor has received insufficient scholarly attention. This article addresses this gap through the concept of lostness—developed here as an analytical alternative to deficit-oriented frameworks such as shrinkage or decline. Lost cities are settlements that, following large-scale disruption, have been displaced from the purview of state or corporate control and expert-driven urban development, and find themselves in search of new trajectories. Rather than a condition of passivity or failure, lostness may engender distinctive, place-based forms of agency—and, in some cases, a deliberate resistance to being “found” and absorbed into systems that do not serve local interests. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork at JHQ Rheindahlen, Germany—a former joint headquarters of British Forces and the NATO Northern Army Group, operational from 1954 to 2013 and now poised between abandonment and a deferred state and federal development agenda—the article examines how residents continue to enact futures despite their marginalisation from formal planning. Engaging theories of minor futures, projective grammars, and temporal disenfranchisement, we demonstrate that institutional withdrawal does not suspend future-making but fundamentally reconfigures its character. Expert visions tend toward conclusive futures with defined endpoints and abstract assessments of value, while residents articulate minor futures through transgressive spatial appropriations, informal memory practices, and a persistent prioritisation of use-value and accessibility. These two orders of future-making rarely enter into direct dialogue, producing an asymmetry of recognition we term “limited inclusion”—with significant implications for inclusive urban planning and governance.

### Keywords

future-making; lostness; minor futures; post-military landscapes; projective grammars

## 1. Introduction

Across urban studies and social theory, a growing consensus holds that futures are not simply anticipated or predicted, but actively made, negotiated, and contested (Anderson, 2010; Mische, 2014; Tavori & Eliasoph, 2013). Future-making involves diverse actors operating across multiple temporal horizons, articulating and debating future possibilities. Yet critical questions remain: Whose futures matter, which agents are empowered to shape urban trajectories, and what happens when future-makers exist outside or at the margins of dominant planning structures?

We address these questions through the concept of a “lost city,” a settlement that, following large-scale disruptions such as deindustrialisation or demilitarisation, has been removed from the purview of state or corporate control. Adam and Groves (2007, p. 13) observe that when futures become “decontextualised and depersonalised,” they detach from lived experience and grow susceptible to abstraction and external control. Lost cities, by contrast, may enable more place-based, community-driven forms of future-making. We hypothesise that disconnection from expert-driven development frameworks has the potential to foster rather than foreclose locally grounded urban futures.

Drawing on fieldwork at Joint Headquarters (JHQ) Rheindahlen—a former military base in Mönchengladbach, Germany, which served as the headquarters of British Forces in Germany and the NATO Northern Army Group—we demonstrate that institutional withdrawal does not terminate future-making but fundamentally transforms its character. Rather than producing passivity or resignation, residents respond to structural ambiguity through transgressive appropriations of abandoned space and a persistent desire for order, prioritising use-value and everyday accessibility over coherent long-term master plans. This productive ambiguity generates what we term “minor futures”: open-ended, embodied, and place-specific visions that coexist alongside, but remain largely unrecognised by, expert-driven planning narratives.

The article moves from theoretical grounding through the case study and its methods to empirical findings and broader conclusions. Intended for concise, focused presentations of current research rather than exhaustive accounts, it introduces the problem and invites further discussion rather than offering definitive answers.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. *Projecting Futures: Agency, Articulation, and Coordination*

A key development in debates on urban futures, drawing on social theory and futures studies, is the recognition that future-making should be democratised (Urry, 2016), challenging earlier assumptions that confined it to the exclusive domain of institutions or experts.

Kemmer and Simone (2021) show how urban futures are actively shaped through everyday practices in Rio de Janeiro and Jakarta. The authors conceptualise these practices as “acts of anticipation”—embodied and material arrangements that may not be explicitly recognised as future-oriented, yet do shape urban trajectories. Such practices constitute “minor futures”: scenarios that “never manage to implant themselves fully, but interrupt, redirect, and render a seeming stasis something else” (Kemmer & Simone, 2021, p. 575).

In contrast to the long-term temporal horizons of institutions, these minor futures are sustained through residents' embodied and ongoing commitments to what might yet come.

This insight resonates with Zhelnina's (2023) study of Moscow's Renovation programme—a large-scale state-led initiative to demolish thousands of socialist-era prefabricated apartment buildings and relocate residents to new high-rises. Faced with this top-down imposition of change, Muscovites engaged in future-probing across a range of arenas, from public hearings and homeowner assemblies to private conversations around the kitchen table. Zhelnina calls this latter practice “kitchen future-making”: In domestic spaces, residents developed imaginary responses to imposed change, as memories, anxieties, and hopes converged into alternative visions of urban life. Crucially, such future-making was not confined to formal channels of participation: It unfolded as a polyphony of individual perspectives and personal trajectories, in which the intimate and the political were inseparable.

Heightened attention to future-making has sharpened sensitivity to its nuances and processuality. Anderson (2010) argues that futures are inherently present through anticipatory actions—preemption, precaution, and preparedness—each involving distinct temporal orientations and forms of intervention. He argues that futures can be grasped through articulated forms (insights, trends, models), materialities, and anticipatory affects (fears, hopes, anxieties). Anderson's work reveals that anticipation actively intervenes to bring certain futures into being while foreclosing others.

Focusing on articulations of futures, Mische (2014) develops the concept of “projective grammars”—the communicative structures through which actors articulate envisioned futures and mobilise support. She demonstrates how different temporal framings (short-term vs. long-term, progressive vs. cyclical) and scalar orientations (local vs. global) shape which futures become politically salient. She raises a crucial question: How to bring together well-articulated futures produced by experts with less-articulated futures embedded in everyday actions? Tavory and Eliasoph (2013) advance this analysis by examining how actors coordinate multiple futures through ongoing interaction, negotiation, and strategic deployment of temporal horizons.

These approaches inform our analysis of how futures are made, navigated, and contested in contexts of urban lostness.

## **2.2. Situated Future-Making: The Potential of Lostness**

Cities, once sustained by industrial production, extractivism, successful social projects, or military installations, and whose trajectories have been disrupted, are commonly described as undergoing urban decline or shrinkage (Leyshon, 2021; Oswalt, 2005; Ryan, 2012). In contrast to these narratives, which assume a unilinear shift from abundance to scarcity, the concept of “lostness”—departing from, but extending beyond, Reckwitz's notion of *Verlust* (Reckwitz, 2024)—is open-ended, multiple, and contingent. *Lost cities*, in our definition, are those that, due to large-scale transformations, were removed from the purview of state or corporate control and expert-driven urban development, and are in search of new paths. Lostness does not imply passivity or failure; crucially, sometimes being “lost” can constitute an active choice on the part of residents and communities, a form of resistance to being “found” and absorbed into systems that may not serve local interests or values—echoing Scott's (2009) argument that marginalised communities

deliberately evade state control to preserve their autonomy. Our fieldwork, as we show further in this article, offers concrete examples of such residents' choices.

While the concept of “lost city” is most commonly approached from an archaeological perspective (Zimmermann, 2023), we find urbanistic, historical, and metaphorical framings of this term no less productive. We mobilise the concept not as a neutral descriptive label but as a deliberately emancipatory and unstigmatizing analytical lens, one that offers an alternative to the deficit-oriented vocabulary of shrinkage and left-behindness, and that opens space for attending to local agency and future-orientation.

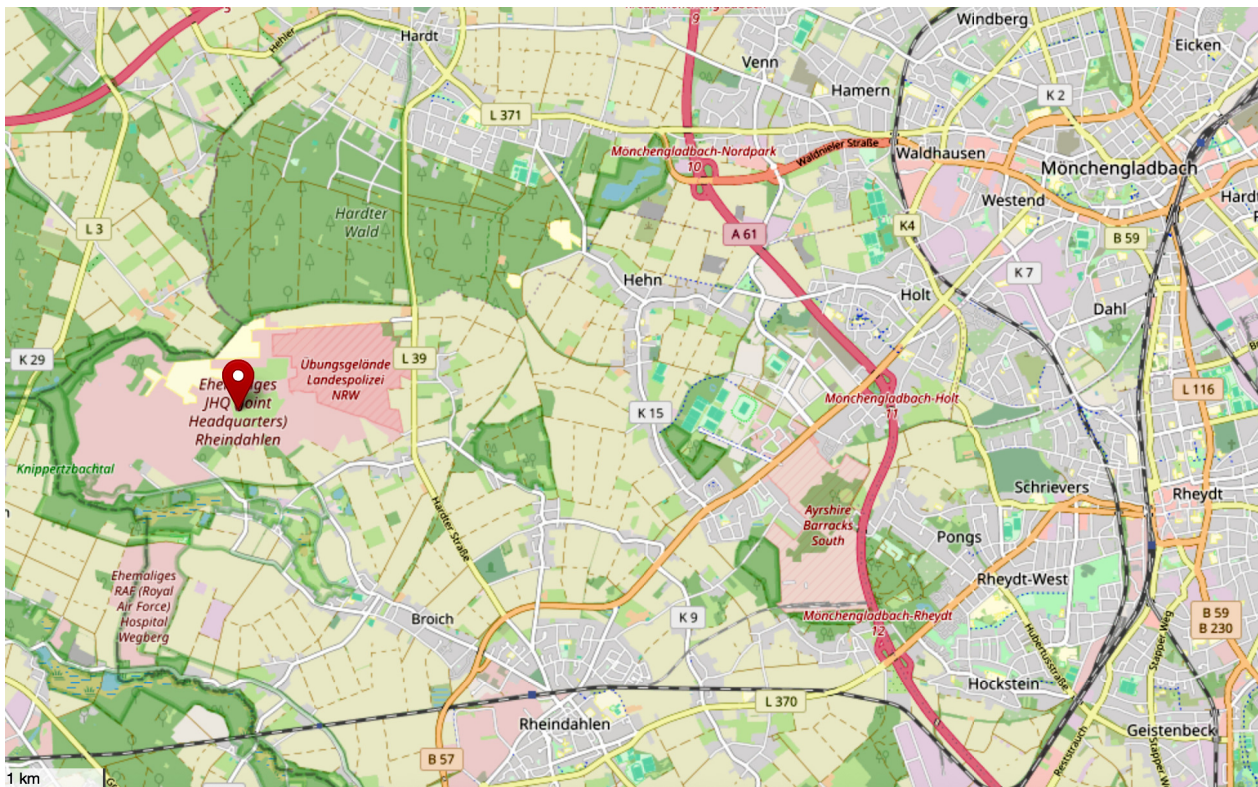
This perspective aligns with broader theorisations of how marginalised or peripheral positions can enable distinctive forms of knowledge and practice (Datta, 2019), allowing communities to envision futures rather than remain immersed in what Davis (1979) terms “simple nostalgia”—a backward-looking entrapment in a prosperous past. Urban lostness, in this sense, can become both a politically and generatively productive condition. It rests on an understanding of crisis not as a barrier to futurity but as a moment of political reordering and redistribution—an understanding that directly aligns with Hilbrandt and Ren's (2025) call for methodological innovation in the study of crisis-affected urbanism and with our own grassroots approach to future-making in “lost cities.”

### 3. Case Study: JHQ Rheindahlen, Germany

#### 3.1. Historical Context

JHQ Rheindahlen (joint headquarters of British Forces in Germany and the NATO Northern Army Group) was established in the 1950s, on approximately 380 hectares of forest in the western district of Mönchengladbach, to house the combined military command of British and NATO forces in Western Europe. At its operational peak, it accommodated up to 12,000 people across 2,000 buildings connected by 36 kilometres of roads bearing British names such as Queens Avenue, Buckingham Way, Oxford Walk, and Londonderry Drive. It functioned as a self-contained urban entity: Three churches, four schools, a theatre, a cinema, a shopping centre, a fire station, an open-air pool, and over 20 sports facilities gave it the texture of a small town. Physically, JHQ occupied a sealed block of land on the western edge of the city, separated from the adjacent settlements of Rheindahlen to the south and Hardt to the north by a perimeter fence and controlled entry points (Figure 1). Over 300 additional dwellings for German civilian employees were built in the surrounding settlements, creating a zone of entanglement between the base and its neighbours that persisted long after the military's departure.

Following the end of the Cold War, the major NATO headquarters were progressively dissolved between 1993 and 1994. The final British withdrawal concluded in July 2013; the site was formally returned to the Federal Republic of Germany in December of that year. Since then, JHQ has existed in a condition of accelerating dissolution: Part of the compound has served as refugee accommodation since 2015, sections have been used for customs and police training exercises, and long-term federal and state plans envisage a Bundeswehr expansion alongside migration infrastructure, nature conservation, and energy generation. The site is formally registered as its own Stadtteil (Hauptquartier) within Mönchengladbach's western district, located roughly eight kilometres from the city centre. Recognised by the Rhineland Regional Council (LVR) as a significant cultural landscape, JHQ today exists in an indeterminate state—too intact to be a ruin, too abandoned to be a



**Figure 1.** JHQ Rheindahlen and its surrounding area. Source: OpenStreetMap, available under the Open Database Licence ([openstreetmap.org/copyright](https://openstreetmap.org/copyright)).

living site (Figure 2), enclosed behind fencing and estranged from the surrounding municipality, yet continuing to inhabit the memory and imagination of those whose everyday lives unfold in its proximity (Figure 3).

### 3.2. Methodological Approach

Our methodological toolkit was shaped by the recognition that future-making can be both explicitly narrativised and thinly articulated, embedded in unconscious and routinised practices (Kemmer & Simone, 2021; Mische, 2014). Accordingly, we supplemented traditional methods—interviews, archival research, and media monitoring—with approaches more sensitive to less-articulated everyday practices: go-alongs, informal conversations, and digital ethnography. Data were collected during two field stays of four weeks each, in June/July 2024 and August 2025.

Local residents showed considerable interest in the topic, frequently bringing friends and relatives to interviews and sharing memorabilia connected to the site. In total, 35 individuals were interviewed, including six married couples and three groups of friends and neighbours (2–4 people each). Interviewees were predominantly of retirement age (60s–80s), with two participants in their 40s, and an equal gender distribution. Beyond individual interviews, we held six group meetings with representatives of the JHQ Rheindahlen support association and a local history enthusiasts’ society, as well as an informal meeting with a multigenerational family of five.



**Figure 2.** Interior of JHQ Rheindahlen, showing decaying structures.



**Figure 3.** JHQ Rheindahlen's current state.

Our research partners are classified into three partially overlapping groups. The first and largest consists of local residents: current inhabitants of the settlements surrounding JHQ within Mönchengladbach, who constitute the majority of our interviewees. The second group comprises former residents of JHQ: individuals who lived within the confines of the base itself prior to its closure, some of whom have remained in Mönchengladbach while others have since relocated elsewhere. The third group consists of enthusiasts: individuals with a strong personal investment in the topic, as evidenced by membership in local societies concerned with JHQ's future, active participation in online communities, or engagement in amateur historical research. These three categories partially overlap—most enthusiasts are also current Mönchengladbach residents, and several were formerly residents within JHQ itself. One participant, Magdalena, represents a particularly dense intersection of all three categories. Her family moved into the adjacent settlement for German civilian employees in the 1950s, several family members worked at the base, and as a child she frequently visited JHQ before eventually working there herself, where she met her future husband, a British soldier—leading her to describe JHQ as “a second home.” Rather than an exception to the typology, Magdalena might be understood as its most complete embodiment.

Eight interviews followed an expert interview methodology (Meuser & Nagel, 2009); the remainder were conducted as semi-structured ethnographic interviews, though in practice the two approaches frequently overlapped, with expert informants also sharing personal narratives and experiential accounts.

## 4. Empirical Findings

### 4.1. *Ambiguous Agency and Unclear Responsibility*

What is lost in JHQ Rheindahlen is clarity about who is responsible for the place and its future. Sixty-seven-year-old Renate, for instance, remarked that “it’s already been decided that the city or the federal state will....They want to knock it down, don’t they,” reflecting a broader uncertainty surrounding the allocation of responsibility. At the same time, there is a widespread perception that responsibility is readily deferred or avoided altogether. As noted in a field diary entry during a meeting of the local JHQ society, “No one feels responsible.” Our research revealed that this ambiguity of responsibility—a primary concern for local actors ranging from decision-makers to residents of nearby areas—produces, in turn, an ambiguity of futures. As 81-year-old Claire, a regular visitor to the former JHQ, put it, “nobody really knows what they’re going to do with it.”

Some visions and narratives are explicit and publicly negotiated (e.g., the desire to reconnect the area to local traffic flows), while others take the form of enactments—the gradual appropriation of space through everyday practices, which coincide with what Kemmer and Simone (2021) call “acts of anticipation.” Unauthorised forays into the fenced-off area, repeated enquiries about the moves of more powerful actors, and private collections of newspaper articles speak to the atmosphere of confusion, speculation, and concern. These are not merely acts of backward-looking, “simple nostalgia” (Davis, 1979), but active attempts by city dwellers to pay attention: to find out what is going on, to predict how it will relate to their lives, and what prospects and opportunities are emerging—a form of collective urban attentiveness that resonates with Simone’s (2010) understanding of residents as active interpreters and makers of urban possibility.

Competing versions of the future are therefore not only well-articulated anticipations or coherent strategies, but also less obvious yet powerful statements made by residents through their everyday engagement with the place. Because of their limited narrativisation, these actions are less noticed in public arenas or recognised channels where the place's future is negotiated. However, they constitute powerful claims to agency—nascent projective grammars (Mische, 2014) through which minor futures take shape and find their voice.

Residents repeatedly attempt to identify responsible agents with whom to collaborate, a search marked by what locals themselves call “annoyance” at the impossibility of doing so: “Since it basically belongs to the federal republic and the federal republic isn't interested in it, nobody is interested” (Renate, 67 y.o.). The only shared knowledge is that BImA (the Federal Agency for Real Estate) currently patrols the site and limits access. However, BImA is not perceived as a future-maker, but rather as an actor projecting the current condition into the future: “Very little was happening with regard to this redevelopment. It's also a situation involving the Federal Agency for Real Estate [BImA], which owns the site” (Arnd, 73 y.o.). This role is viewed critically by residents, as they interpret the present condition as alienation of the place from local communities: “Then I say, that's part of our city. It's our duty to reintegrate it” (Oskar, 71 y.o.).

Residents openly and bitterly acknowledge their lack of agency: “There is no chance for us to participate” (field notes, August 2025). This perception resonates with what Adam and Groves (2007) describe as temporal disenfranchisement, whereby certain actors are excluded from shaping futures that profoundly affect their lives. Yet this exclusion is not total: Residents participate actively in the culture of remembrance—organising, for example, exhibitions of historical photographs in churches—while remaining largely absent from political decisions concerning the site's future: “Personally, I can't decide what should happen to it” (former civilian employee at JHQ). This asymmetry constitutes what we term limited inclusion: meaningful participation in memory-making, alongside systematic exclusion from planning processes. Nevertheless, residents speak extensively about JHQ's future on a small scale: through everyday, informal articulations of desires, concerns, and practices grounded in their lived experience rather than in the plans of urban development experts.

Our research uncovered diverse trajectories of imagining the future among various residents and groups, revealing what Mische (2014) terms “projective horizons”: differing temporal scales, spatial boundaries, and normative commitments that do not necessarily align with one another.

Whereas large-scale futures produced by experts and institutions are typically imagined as defined and desirable visions, minor futures articulated by locals emerge as composites of desired states, concerns, and uncertainty. Minor futures take the form of intuitive orientations emerging at the intersection of desirable and undesirable developments, closely tied to available resources and existing practices. Rather than reflecting merely what is wanted, they reflect who wants it—constituting residents' claims for recognition, grounded in current circumstances and in reliance on their own capacities rather than external intervention.

In the following two sections, we examine how minor futures unfold alongside—rather than in direct dialogue with—the large-scale futures produced by experts and institutions.

#### 4.2. The Desire for Order

A central theme in residents' discussions concerning JHQ Rheindahlen's future is the desire for order, yet this aspiration proves ambiguous upon closer examination. Locals perceive the site's current state as disorder—fenced off, decaying, unclear in both status and trajectory: “You don't know what's happening right now,” said 40-year-old Mara, who lives within walking distance from the fences and whose father worked at the headquarters when she was a child. Local residents want the space reintegrated into everyday life, but not through simple repetition of past practices. This reintegration is already enacted through quiet appropriation: entering the fenced territory to inspect buildings, take photographs, and walk dogs. Thus, their fundamental aspiration for order is paradoxically expressed through rule-breaking and trespassing (Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** Gaps in the perimeter fencing of JHQ Rheindahlen used for unauthorised access.

The desire for order also expresses itself as an aspiration to restore a sensory order. The area's current state of sensory disorder is primarily identified by those living closest to the site. It is associated with uncontrolled noise generated within abandoned areas: Many doors and windows in deserted houses, and especially the heavy metal doors of garages (Figure 5), stand open, and during windy weather slam loudly, producing an unbearable soundscape for nearby residents who want at least basic control over the closure of windows and doors. “I'm not entirely comfortable with this taste of the unfamiliar,” Mara mused. Yet, residents cannot adequately address the problem themselves due to limited site accessibility and insufficient resources. The disruption of sensory order is thus directly linked to the alienation of the territory.

This reveals how future-making capacity depends not only on imaginative or discursive resources, but also on embodied knowledge and material access. Minor futures divide not only local residents from official

authorities, but also different groups among locals. The aspiration towards a sensorially ordered future is not considered important by those living further away, not experiencing the auditory disturbance. These latter groups sometimes dismiss the former as overly sensitive or “ghost hunters” (hearing something that does not exist), revealing how proximity shapes both the content and legitimacy of future claims.



**Figure 5.** Heavy metal doors of military vehicle garages in JHQ Rheindahlen, a source of uncontrolled noise for nearby residents.

Our case demonstrates that marginalisation from dominant institutions does not eliminate future-making, but transforms it—specifically by foregrounding usage as the primary value. As one local resident explicitly put it, “I would be really happy if the area were used, regardless of the form” (Matilda, 76 y.o.). Residents accept even alternative uses that maintain vitality, such as police training: “The Federal Police carry out their exercises there and keep the place going. I’ll put it positively for a moment” (Oskar, 71 y.o.). By avoiding fixed images, this perspective remains open-ended, embracing different forms of future-making.

Rather than a singular, definitive future state, residents prioritise keeping the site in circulation through diverse uses. This emphasis on “being used” over “being planned” suggests that for lost spaces, vitality and accessibility in the present may matter more than coherent visions of future development.

Questions of order connect strongly with questions of responsibility and agency. Residents repeatedly ask: Who is responsible for JHQ Rheindahlen? The passive constructions used in interviews—“it should be,” “could have been done,” “would have to be”—bear testimony to their lack of agency and the power attributed to politicians, planners, and investors. This demonstrates that locals do not consider minor futures, immersed in lived experience and embodied knowledge, equal to the coherent visions articulated by experts.

### 4.3. *Heritage Site or Back to Nature: Envisioning Futures Differently*

If futures are narrativised, then how exactly, and by whom? Among those engaged in discussions of JHQ Rheindahlen's future, we identified what might be termed "culture" and "nature" teams: groups and individuals who frame the site's future primarily through cultural preservation or ecological succession. Crucially, both visions were initially developed and articulated by experts.

On the cultural side, a retired heritage specialist responsible for assessing the site's significance described frequent conflicts between public authorities concerned with landscape conservation and those focused on heritage preservation. Her perspective as a heritage professional clearly positions nature as a potential threat to JHQ as a "built historical document": When nature encroaches on abandoned structures, the appropriate response is not wholesale clearance but selective trimming—intervening just enough to keep the underlying form visible and legible. This is the logic her own words enact: "If nature covers something up...then it's in the sense that you trim things back, or that you try to keep the old, existing structure visible." Supported by historians, the "culture team" envisages JHQ as heritage, proposing the preservation of historically significant structures and their conversion into cultural spaces or a themed post-war park.

By contrast, the "nature team," drawing on ecological expertise, advocates demolishing JHQ and allowing the territory to return to forest, framing natural succession as both inevitable and desirable. This vision is reinforced by a number of regulatory frameworks: Almost the entire western section falls within a landscape or nature reserve, while the border strip is designated as a Fauna-Flora-Habitat (FFH) site under the European Union's Nature Conservation Directive. While expert-driven in origin, the nature vision has since gained broader support among some engaged local residents: The local JHQ association, for example, has organised botanical walks which, according to the organisers, attracted more than 50 participants.

These competing expert frameworks operate according to a shared logic: They offer seemingly fixed, conclusive futures—a heritage site or a forest—with clear endpoints, project timelines, and abstract assessments of value and potential. Oriented outward, they imagine the space as a destination for external audiences rather than as a living part of everyday local life.

Minor futures articulated by residents follow a different logic. Rather than comprehensive visions, they emerge as partial, open-ended practices grounded in lived experience and attachment to the site. The following example illustrates minor futures oriented towards cultural preservation. Through an Erasmus school exchange involving students from Gesamtschule Hardt and a partner school in Spain, the idea emerged of establishing a British pub within preserved or refurbished buildings as a means of fostering a culture of remembrance—an idea that was subsequently discussed with local stakeholders and brought before the city and district councils. Later discussed with a conversion officer and a liaison officer, this vision is not entirely removed from professional planning discourse—yet it operates on a fundamentally different scale, driven by community attachment and everyday use-value rather than by abstract assessments of heritage significance or ecological potential.

Practices of remembrance have also expanded into the digital sphere: A local JHQ enthusiast, together with a vibrant Facebook community and an IT specialist—himself a former JHQ resident now living in England—contributed to the creation of a digital 3D map documenting all houses present at JHQ before its closure.

Significantly, digital memory preservation of this kind may offer a potential common ground between the culture and nature teams: It allows the built heritage of JHQ to be documented and kept alive in collective memory without standing in the way of ecological restoration. These are futures imagined not as destinations, but as extensions of ongoing everyday life, whose beginnings and endpoints remain undefined.

Mische's (2014) concept of projective grammar helps explain why these two orders of future-making—expert planning frameworks on one hand, and the minor futures articulated by residents on the other—rarely enter into direct dialogue. The two are structured according to entirely different logics: one oriented toward institutional legitimacy and external audiences, the other toward everyday life and personal attachment. As a result, neither fully registers the existence of the other—and this mutual invisibility is not symmetrical. Expert visions remain suspended in institutional negotiation, difficult to implement but nonetheless legible within formal planning discourse; residents' futures, by contrast, remain largely unnoticed by planning actors altogether. It is residents' imaginings, rather than expert frameworks, that are systematically overlooked. This asymmetry of recognition is what we identified earlier as *limited inclusion*: Residents participate actively in memory culture while remaining excluded from the planning decisions that will ultimately determine the site's fate. In this sense, the future of JHQ Rheindahlen remains genuinely open—not because all voices are equally heard, but because no single vision has yet proven capable of being realised.

## 5. Conclusions

Our research points to several key directions for rethinking urban futures in times of significant disruption.

First, planning practice should expand its attentiveness to agency as expressed in everyday practices, informal conversations, and spatial appropriations, not only as captured in formal consultation processes. Recognising these as legitimate inputs to urban decision-making requires both methodological innovation and institutional willingness to listen differently.

Second, lostness merits reframing, not as a deficit condition awaiting resolution, but as a potentially generative space. Disconnection from dominant development systems can sustain alternative visions and practices that remain unavailable within conventional frameworks (Datta, 2019). Interventions that rush to “resolve” lostness risk foreclosing precisely the situated knowledge and adaptive capacity it produces.

Third, Mische's (2014) concept of projective grammars invites attention to how multiple, parallel future visions circulate and interact—or fail to engage. At JHQ Rheindahlen, expert narratives and residents' minor futures currently coexist without meaningful dialogue. Designing deliberate spaces for such potential encounters may be a more productive planning goal than imposing any single vision.

Finally, the grassroots methodologies that made this research possible—go-alongs, digital ethnography, informal conversation—deserve wider adoption as tools for rendering the forms of future-making legible that dominant institutions routinely overlook (Hilbrandt & Ren, 2025). Post-military landscapes are not unique in generating conditions of lostness; the insights developed here could be applied to any situation where communities navigate institutional withdrawal and the uncertainties it leaves behind.

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## Data Availability

The data that support the findings of this study are not publicly available due to ethical and privacy considerations. The data contain information that could compromise the privacy and anonymity of research participants. Requests for further information may be directed to the corresponding author.

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