ABSTRACT

The preservation of sites associated with difficult pasts is a recent development within the field and is one that involves many important, yet controversial, issues. Many countries and cities have constricted memorials and museums to commemorate past events, which are most often related to the experiences of the victims. Another aspect of this developing area in the preservation field is the interpretation of sites that are less obviously associated with the events, but may invoke in the public strong associations with the perpetrators. One country grappling with this question is Germany, with respect to its National Socialist (Nazi) history.

The focus of this thesis study is an analysis of the projects that have been both discussed and implemented at three important Nazi political centers in Germany. Nazi political architecture has an identifiable aesthetic, and many of the buildings constructed during the 12-year period remain intact today. The re-use of these buildings, and their associations since 1945 reveals a variety of issues regarding the physical relics of a difficult past. The issues become more complex because these sites represented the more mundane political functions of the regime, but nonetheless contain associations with the Nazi past because of their function and aesthetic. The sites discussed in this thesis include the Königplatz in Munich with its two government offices and memorials, the Rally Grounds at Nuremberg that contain large arena structures for mass gatherings, and a group of government agency buildings in Berlin that helped create a capital center.

The analysis of past and current practices and interpretation efforts at these structural ensembles reveals and understanding of how a society confronts its past through its physical relics. It is intended that these approaches can have a broader influence for sites in other countries that face similar pasts, allowing Germany to emerge as a leader in this aspect of the field.