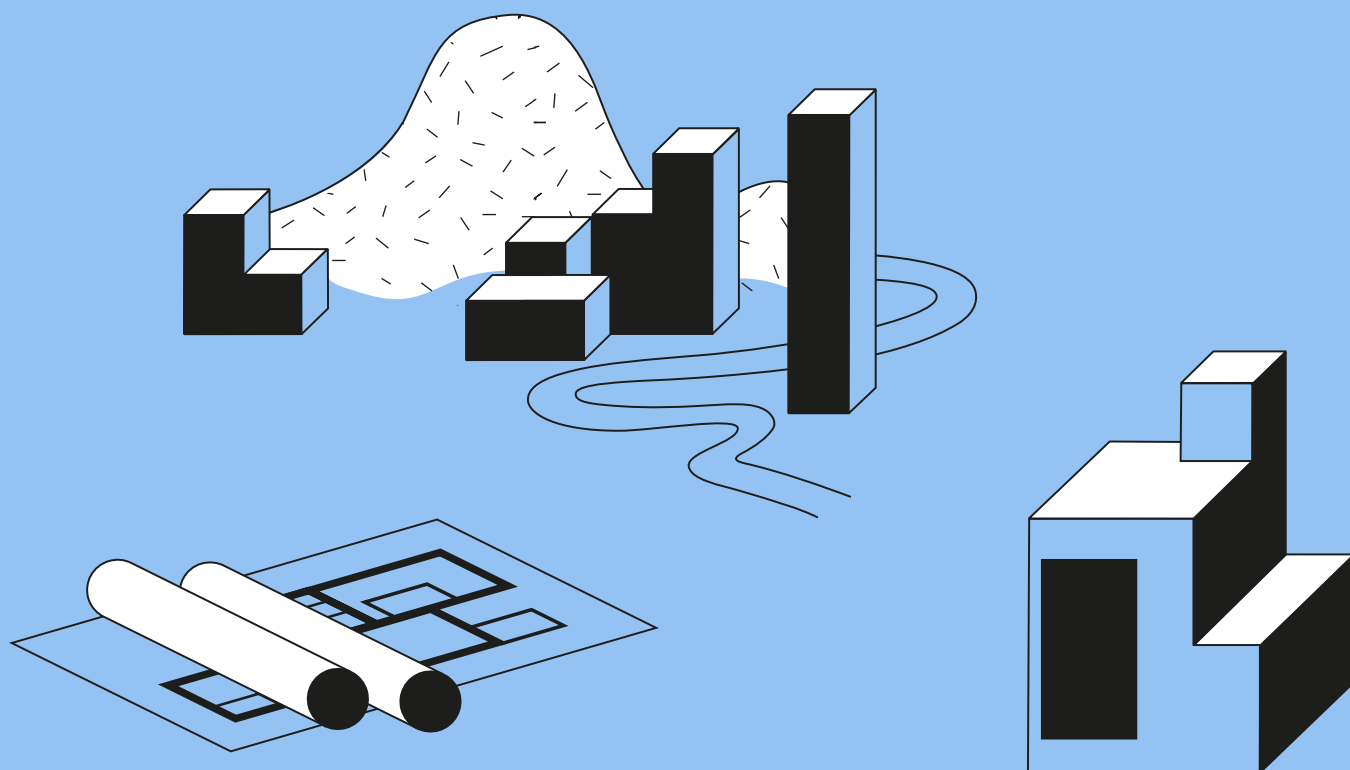



The Davos *Baukultur* Quality System

# Eight criteria for a high-quality *Baukultur*



**Davos**<sup>2018</sup>  
**Declaration**

 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra  
Swiss Confederation



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# THE DAVOS BAUKULTUR QUALITY SYSTEM

The Davos *Baukultur* Quality System proposes a multidimensional approach to defining the holistic concept of high-quality *Baukultur* and to assess the *Baukultur* quality of places.

It is a contribution to the ongoing Davos Process, which began in January 2018, when the European Ministers of Culture adopted the Davos Declaration “Towards a high-quality *Baukultur* for Europe”. The Davos Declaration stresses the central role of culture for the quality of the built environment. *Baukultur* encompasses all activities with spatial impact, from craftsmanship details to large-scale urban planning and development of landscapes. The present paper builds on the Davos Declaration and deepens it in a scientific and political discourse.

### High-quality *Baukultur* and the Davos *Baukultur* Quality System

The term *Baukultur* alone does not make a really specific statement about the required quality. Only high-quality *Baukultur* results in well-designed places that change in line with societal needs while preserving their historical characteristics. It focuses on social needs and sustainable use of resources and adds economic value. High-quality *Baukultur* is more than the absence of defects. Achieving high-quality *Baukultur* goes beyond fulfilling the defined technical requirements, like a desired programme, volume or material; it is equally important to reach a consensus about cultural values debated and defined by society.

High-quality *Baukultur* refers first to a place of any scale or configuration with superior quality, second to the high quality of the processes creating *Baukultur* and third to the excellent capabilities and competencies of all those involved in any transformation of the place.

The present Quality System aims to assess and improve the quality of *Baukultur* and is therefore committed to a high-quality *Baukultur*. It is a tool that assists in communication and indirectly in the implementation of a high-quality *Baukultur*. Space serves multiple purposes: artistic, aesthetic, cultural and social as well as environmental, eco-

economic and technical ones. High-quality *Baukultur* aims to maintain, develop and create places that are fit for purpose, sustainable, safe, comfortable and healthy for residential use, work, leisure or infrastructure. High-quality *Baukultur* brings people together and promotes social cohesion through specific and beautiful places. High-quality *Baukultur* thus promotes overall quality of life, subjective and collective well-being and a sense of community. All aspects of space need high quality, which ensures attractive, diverse and inclusive cities, villages and open landscapes.

### Place

The Davos *Baukultur* Quality System uses the term “place” to designate the different types and scales of objects and situations, varying in time, scale, size and configuration, spanning the whole spectrum of the *Baukultur* concept: interiors, single and multi-part buildings, urban fabric, neighbourhoods, a part of a village or a city, a region, infrastructures, public places, green spaces, cultural landscapes, all including their relative Context. It contains all spaces with a physical dimension – visible or hidden (e.g. built archaeological sites) – and created by human activities and experiences. However, a *Baukultur* place goes beyond the physical expression of space through built structures and in-between spaces. It is perceived as a dynamic, relational socio-physical construct. A place assigns meaning and triggers emotions, influences how people perceive, experience and value their built environment. *Baukultur* refers to all activities with spatial impact of all actors involved over time.

A place includes existing *Baukultur* – taking due account of built heritage – as well as projects, urban and landscape planning. Examples of projects are large-scale planning in urban development, the design of the transformation of an existing building or the planning of the construction of a new bridge. A place can find itself simultaneously in various project and process states. It often consists of heterogeneous component parts of various chronological layers and different historic and cultural values.

*Baukultur* encompasses the whole building stock in its relation to society, including built heritage (immovable objects as monuments and built archaeological sites), gardens and open landscapes as well as today's building and planning for the future. High-quality *Baukultur* is not identical with built heritage quality. Thus places assessed by the Davos *Baukultur* Quality System and judged as being high-quality *Baukultur* should not be mistaken for objects of an inventory or list of monuments. Both are complementary concepts, equally important for the maintenance and sustainable development of places, influencing each other but focusing on different aspects of built heritage. Where inventories and monument preservation in general concentrate on the significance of an object or site for a certain time period from the past and on its cultural-historical testimonial value, the Davos *Baukultur* Quality System and the concept of high-quality *Baukultur* in general aim at the democratic and inclusive connection of people in the built environment and take into account built heritage and its value for a high-quality space shaping the well-being of today's society. Aiming at high-quality *Baukultur* does not just mean protecting built heritage but integrating its substance and values in any planning and building activity makes it a valuable part of encompassing *Baukultur* and preserves it for future generations.

### Objectivity

A place of high-quality *Baukultur* is determined by the values and quality requirements laid down in the Davos Declaration. High-quality *Baukultur* is elusive, but it is neither a subjective matter of taste, nor a purely formal issue. The individual experience of the quality of a place varies depending on the living situation, on prosperity or poverty, age and lifestyle. Yet common denominators and values of high quality can be defined and objectively assessed. Quality is a dynamic concept and depending on the time chosen, an assessment made about the quality of a place may be different. The specific situation must be considered.

The Davos *Baukultur* Quality System proposes eight quality criteria, distilled from the Davos Declaration, with related principles of high-quality *Baukultur*, to assess the *Baukultur* quality of places. A place is determined by Governance, based on participatory democracy, with good processes and management of places. Functionality addresses the level of satisfaction of human needs and purposes. Respect for the natural Environment with mitigation of climate change contributes to the sustainability of a place. Economy with long life cycles and long-term viability of places is an important component of *Baukultur* quality. Diversity ensures vibrancy and social inclusion. The particular spatial Context of a place with its physical and temporal characteristics, such as the shape and design of buildings, neighbourhoods, villages and landscapes and respect for built heritage has a great impact on the quality of a place. A specific Sense of place is created through social fabric, history, memories, colours, and odours of a place producing its identity and the attachment of people to it. Finally, places of high quality are authentic and respond to the human need for Beauty.

These quality criteria are all equally important. They may be weighted differently, taking into account the specificity of each place. Nevertheless, high-quality *Baukultur*, a choral expression of multi-dimensional aspects, requires consideration and quality statements for every single criterion. They address the different aspects of places and establish a comprehensive definition and assessment system. The various aspects of *Baukultur* can be clearly assigned to the eight criteria. Nevertheless, the individual criteria are interrelated and there are thematic overlaps in their content.

### Quality assessment

The Davos *Baukultur* Quality System provides a framework for defining and assessing the *Baukultur* quality of places. It is the first approach to placing social, cultural and emotional criteria on an equal footing to more common technical, environmental and economic criteria. The set of eight funda-

mental quality criteria and principles is completed with questions to be answered. High-quality *Baukultur* is only achieved if there is reflection on all eight criteria in relation to a place and if quality statements are made for all of them.

### Target groups

The main target public to apply a *Baukultur* quality assessment and the Davos *Baukultur* Quality System are *Baukultur* professionals. They are experts from public authorities and administrations as well as specialists in planning, design, construction, manual trades, reuse, conservation and restoration in both the public and private sectors; including investors, developers, owners and operators as well as professional associations in the field of *Baukultur*. These professionals and experts are directly involved in spatial action and development. The assessment of quality shows them which quality requirements are already fulfilled and, in parallel, reveals *Baukultur* quality shortcomings, which are to be improved by fulfilling the quality requirements of the identified specific criteria.

However, the Quality System may also be used by non-specialised target and user groups from different backgrounds. *Baukultur* and its quality concerns all people and is visible, perceptible and experienceable every day in their living environment. It can help to raise awareness; it assists people to reflect on the quality of *Baukultur* and provides a tool to assess the *Baukultur* quality of a place.

### Dialogue and discourse

Maintaining and improving the existing qualities of a place and creating new high quality must be the priority of any activity in space and the central aspect in any discourse on *Baukultur*. Continuous inclusive dialogue and professional and societal debate are important and there is a need for discussion on quality criteria and what constitutes them, to achieve a common and established understanding among people (experts and non-experts) of what distinguishes high-quality *Baukultur*. The Quality System contributes to this discourse.

### Scope of the Davos *Baukultur* Quality System

The Davos *Baukultur* Quality System offers a basis to objectify high-quality *Baukultur* and scientifically deepen its concept. It is complementary to existing processes, tools, consultative bodies, legal systems and regulations. The possible fields of application of the Quality System are wide-ranging. It may be used:

- to disseminate and communicate high-quality *Baukultur* to the public;
- to represent a political and social message;
- as a guideline for citizens' workshops;
- to provide decision-makers with arguments;
- in various consultation and discourse formats;
- to be integrated into a political or legal framework;
- to be incorporated into existing activities and plans;
- to provide guidance;
- as a reference;
- as a quality criteria catalogue in competitions;
- as a quality criteria catalogue in design advisory boards;
- as a quality criteria catalogue in the evaluation of building and planning projects;
- to self-critically evaluate one's own projects;
- to document the success of planning processes in places.

In all these cases, the potential of the Quality System lies in taking into account and making transparent the complete and balanced consideration of central qualitative issues of *Baukultur*.

Answering the questions of the Quality System can improve sensibility and recognition of places with a high-quality *Baukultur* among all societal and functional groups (experts and non-experts), build up knowledge and general awareness about *Baukultur* issues and promote debate in the broad public as well as in professional domains not yet gained for cultural and quality demands.

## For more information

To know more about high-quality *Baukultur*, the need for an objective quality assessment, the relevant criteria and much more, please consult the document.

Eight criteria for a high-quality *Baukultur* - the whole story



To start assessing a place, please use the PDF form to fill in the table and answer the questions.

Assessment form

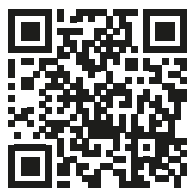


To know more about the Davos Declaration and the Davos Process, please consult the following website.

Davos Declaration (PDF)



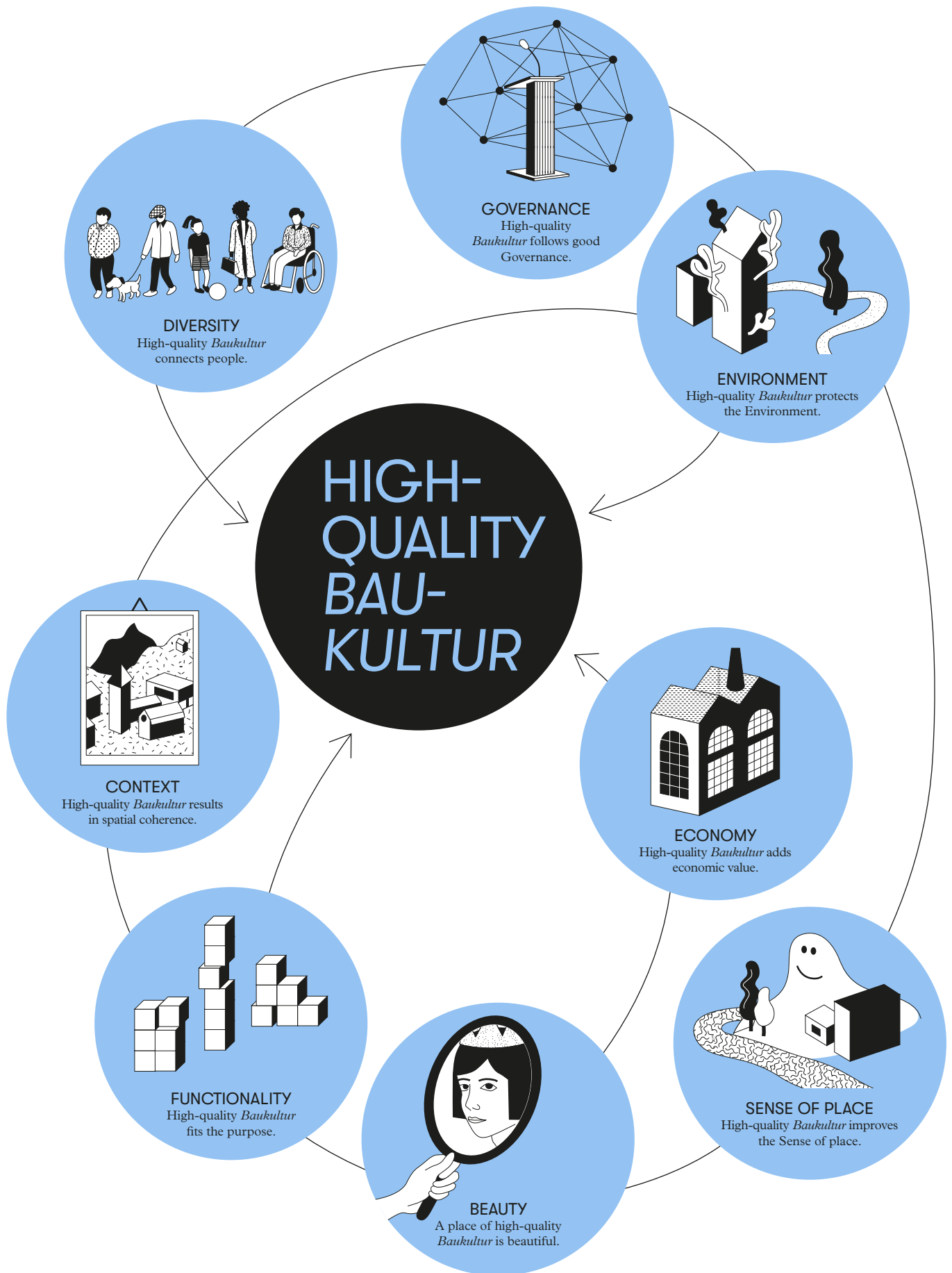
Davos Declaration (website)







# EIGHT CRITERIA FOR A HIGH- QUALITY BAUKULTUR



# Governance

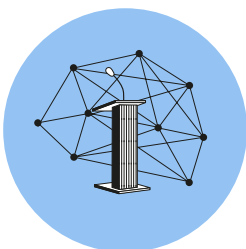
The *Baukultur* quality of places is highly influenced by Governance decisions made by the multiple stakeholders of a place over time. Governance not only concerns the different levels of governmental administration but equally governmental agencies, public-private partnerships (PPPs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the private sector as well as the implication of the communities.

Governments, authorities and public agencies should strive to improve legislation and regulation in a *Baukultur*-compatible and conducive way and make the protection, the development and the design of places with a high-quality *Baukultur* a matter of public interest and vibrant debate. *Baukultur* policies, e.g. architectural policies or policies on the preservation and valorisation of built heritage, at national level and by local administrations lead to spaces that are promising for high-quality *Baukultur*. The establishment of quality-oriented procurement procedures like design competitions and developers and owners working exclusively with interdisciplinary teams leads to a deeper understanding of the place and its multiple characteristics and thus to the implementation of high-quality *Baukultur*.

Engagement between administration and the local community is very important to establish a high-quality *Baukultur*. Discursive processes can be strengthened through the Davos *Baukultur* Quality System, which may be used as a helpful mediation and communication tool. A genuine public participation process involves the following steps. First, real information is needed that is easily understood and accessible to all. Second, education or training in the specific issues raised by the participation process is required for the people involved. Third, there has to be real co-decision between all participants on the issues raised. This promotes the identification of communities with their space and strengthens their sense of shared responsibility and caring for their Context.

Taking the criterion of Governance into consideration also means the provision of effective training and education. Professional actors in development, planning, construction and facility management need training, skills and experience. Communities require access to general education in *Baukultur*. Information concerning *Baukultur* has to be easily accessible by all and mediation activities by the government, NGOs and other actors should be actively supported.

High-quality *Baukultur* thrives in the context of transdisciplinarity. Solution-oriented discourse and negotiations between policymakers, authorities, planners and the business community are important, so is multi-level and cross-sectoral cooperation. High-quality *Baukultur* has to be negotiated and debated across all social groups and professional disciplines. Good Governance thus raises awareness, encourages dialogue and fosters cooperation to achieve places with a high-quality *Baukultur*.



Davos Declaration  
Article 1

“Therefore, culture must be placed at the centre of development policies and its contribution to the pursuit of the common good must be emphasized.”

Article 15

“High-quality *Baukultur* must form part of the relevant legal instruments.”

## Principle

### High-quality *Baukultur* follows good Governance.

High-quality *Baukultur* promotes quality-oriented and place-specific processes, led by skilled actors working in teams. It facilitates public engagement and contributes to transparent and inclusive participatory governance for decision-making, management and care for the place.

## Key questions

Are all stakeholders familiar with the *Baukultur* concept and concerned with the quality of the place?

Is there guidance for *Baukultur* and its quality through legal regulation, standards, norms and policies, by financial or procedural incentives?

Is there a broad public debate on the quality of the place, for example through design competitions, reviews or other?

Is the decision-making process about the place participatory, accessible to all people concerned and transparent at all stages?

Do all professional actors and stakeholders involved have the necessary experience, knowledge, skills and expertise for their tasks?

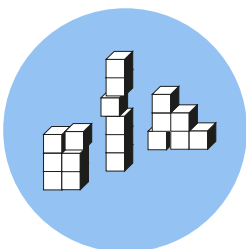
Do professionals work in transdisciplinary teams?

# Functionality

To be functional over the long term, high-quality *Baukultur* places are maintained, planned, designed and built so that they give access to basic public, commercial and cultural services, satisfying the needs of mixed people, allowing mixed uses. High-quality *Baukultur* places adapt as simply and successfully as possible to changing and diverse conditions, requirements and purposes (types of use), as this is one of the main factors for the longevity of a place, integrating and safeguarding built heritage. Planning must take into account and incorporate changing framework conditions, especially with regard to population development, the biodiversity crisis or climate change and the associated increase in natural hazards. If a place does not adapt to changes over time, it deteriorates and loses economic value and its Functionality.

High-quality *Baukultur* distinguishes itself through easy access to technical installations and equipment in order to renew them with minimum effort and through flexibility regarding layout and sufficient room height to change uses in a simple way. Easy access and adaptability of use are required equally for infrastructures, open and green spaces, and landscapes, as they contribute significantly to the health and well-being of people. Open and green spaces as well as mobility and traffic areas are to be conceived in a multifunctional way and designed in diverse manners to reach complete Functionality and resilience. Existing places require careful treatment if converted or switched to a different use from the original one by preserving the main structure, minimising interventions and taking full account of the eventual built heritage (landscape, monument, structure, materials, Context, etc.). Costs must remain commensurate and the appearance aesthetically appealing, while maintaining and using the existing substance.

High-quality *Baukultur* stands out as regards health-relevant aspects through the use of natural, non-toxic and high-quality building materials and an architectural design that provides light and air quality and quantity at the right place, to the right extent and in the right mix. Balanced temperature, light and shade contribute to a good, healthy, comfortable indoor climate and well-being for housing, work and leisure places. Exposure to noise and (ionising) radiation in buildings and their Context must therefore be kept as low as possible. Easy accessibility should be ensured by walkability and bikeability, which contribute equally to healthier mobility and lifestyles. Technical security by adequate lighting of principally public but also semi-private and private spaces as well as high visibility and permeability ensure the individual feeling of safety and security of all people and allow the diverse appropriation of a superior variety of spaces.



## Principle

### High-quality *Baukultur* fits the purpose.

The design and construction methods of high-quality *Baukultur* satisfy the human needs for health, comfort, safety and accessibility. They are enduring and the results adaptable to existing and changing uses and purposes, whilst safeguarding built heritage.

## Key questions

Does the place fit the purpose now?

Is the place functional over a long period, adaptable to changing conditions, needs and uses, while at the same time preserving its eventual built heritage?

Is the place healthy and comfortable for its users in terms of design, materials, light, air, noise and other?

Is the place safe for its users in terms of design, materials, light and other?

Is the place easily accessible for everyone?

Does the place have low traffic and is it walkable and bikeable?

# Environment

High-quality *Baukultur* is climate and environment-friendly, protects and preserves natural resources and landscapes, contributes actively to their high-quality development and promotes biodiversity throughout the entire territory in all planning, construction and preservation processes. It shows responsible land use and adequate occupancy rates. Dense, compact settlement patterns with sufficient high-quality green and open spaces are required for housing as well as for industrial zones, with zero-emission buildings. In rural areas, spatial development should prevent urban sprawl. This ensures sustainable infrastructure works to avoid high individual mobility and commuter flows on long routes. Places of high-quality *Baukultur* implement circular economy (CE) significantly mitigating climate change by conserving resources, promoting their efficient use and reducing greenhouse gas emissions through long-lasting use of materials and constructions. Environmental impact assessments (EIA) should be made regularly for projects, but also for existing places as well as studies about the carrying capacity of places.

In places of high-quality *Baukultur*, the good quality building stock should be maintained, if necessary carefully renewed, upgraded and reused extending its life cycle, renewable energy resources employed and waste management applied. Although renovated buildings emit more CO<sub>2</sub> during operation, they cause around forty percent less grey greenhouse gases than new buildings, since these gases are produced to a large extent during construction. Reuse of building stock and existing structures is to be promoted as sufficiency-oriented behaviour, taking into account the entire life cycle of buildings from construction, operation to retrofitting, conversion, demolition and recycling. High-quality *Baukultur* construction methods are simple, long-lasting and energy-efficient, materials and components contain minimal embodied energy and can be easily re-used; they are pollutant-free, durable, local, recyclable and recycled. Equipment is long-living, often low-tech and presents low maintenance needs.

Biodiversity is to be supported through interlinked and valuable green and open spaces, sufficient unsealed areas with gardens and parks containing mainly native, site-appropriate and site-typical non-invasive species, increasing the variety of possible experiences. Cultural and natural landscapes with sustainable economic and agricultural activities promote biodiversity. Care, management and development of open landscapes, urban and peri-urban spaces, green spaces and urban agricultural areas contribute to high-quality *Baukultur* places and avoid the use of chemical products and pollutants (e.g. fertilisers, pesticides) harmful to the Environment and health. Rural areas foster biodiversity by maintaining precious crop rotation soils.





## Principle

### High-quality *Baukultur* protects the Environment.

High-quality *Baukultur* contributes to conserving natural resources and biodiversity, mitigating climate change and thus supporting sustainability. It preserves, promotes and develops an intact natural Environment and diverse cultural and natural landscapes through responsible land use and settlements, sustainable mobility, energy efficiency, and use of durable construction materials and methods with regard to the whole life cycle.

## Key questions

Does the place show responsible land use (e.g. in terms of open spaces, green spaces, appropriate density and occupancy)?

Does the place promote biodiversity (genetic, species and ecosystem diversity)?

Is the place maintained and sustainably developed, with preservation and integration of built heritage?

Does the place feature simple and thus durable construction methods, long-living equipment and adequate maintenance needs, thus implementing the 5 Rs: refuse, reduce, repair, reuse, recycle?

Is the place free of pollutants (e.g. noise, light, products), that are harmful to the Environment and people's health?

Do sufficiency as well as sound and comprehensive scientific analysis and instruments (e.g. environmental impact assessments) influence the decision-making regarding energy efficiency, carbon footprint (e.g. embodied energy) to minimise the impact on the Environment?

Does the place encourage sustainable mobility?

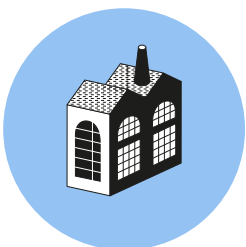
# Economy

High-quality *Baukultur* in terms of Economy is achieved through the best use, maintenance and development of resources over the long term, through a sustainable and sufficiency-based approach and in correspondence with local culture and design. Maintaining, planning and building places of high quality does not add costs, but rather creates and adds value in the long term.

Durable building materials need to be used in construction and renovation. If the construction costs are kept reasonably low, this also increases the affordability of the place, prevents increasing segregation and therefore has positive social effects. Adequate maintenance costs and long life cycles create economically viable places and therefore conserve or increase economic value. The costs of *Baukultur* are considered from planning and construction through operation and maintenance to deconstruction and recycling. The aim is to minimise the total life cycle costs in relation to its location and to operate the place in a sufficient way. However, the place has to add value to the regional Economy. Thus the economic benefit of any maintenance, planning or construction of a property for the Context is taken into account. The more contracts are awarded in the region, the greater the contribution to the regional Economy and society.

The maintenance of an economic dynamic is of vital importance for the quality of a place and the establishment of a high-quality *Baukultur*. This economic dynamic may be very different from one place to another, depending on whether the use is housing or industrial or commercial and on whether it is located in a city or in the countryside. Constructing new places of high quality and maintaining places with valuable built heritage in a responsible way increases the attractiveness of the location and of investment: by companies in industrial and service buildings for economically interesting workplaces, by the public sector in administrative buildings and buildings for public services and cultural activities, in housing, infrastructure and green spaces, but also by the private sector in residential buildings.

Natural landscapes, heritage sites and high-quality architecture positively influence the Economy of a place by increasing the willingness to pay and therefore need to be protected and enhanced, even though their maintenance costs might be higher than a new construction. An intelligent tourism strategy that takes into account the place, its cultural characteristics and the people who live there, can improve the economic viability of rural regions, in particular with valuable cultural landscapes, and thus contribute to the long-term maintenance and enhancement of high-quality *Baukultur*.



## Principle

### High-quality *Baukultur* adds economic value.

High-quality *Baukultur* prioritises cultural values and long-term investments over short-term economic gain, conserves and increases economic value, and is high value in use. It maintains and develops resources through long-term uses in alignment with the location and the design, Economy of construction and operation, and through the use of high-quality, long-lasting building fabric.

## Key questions

Does the place enhance its long-term attractiveness as a life, working, leisure and/or tourism space by being close to diverse resources, facilities and/or public services?

Do construction materials and methods have a long life cycle, thereby reducing maintenance costs, and is the value of the place therefore stable or increasing?

Is the place economically viable over a long-term perspective?

Has best use been made of public and private resources over a long-term perspective against short-term gain, taking into account the costs of the whole life cycle?

Does the Economy of design, construction and operation add to the affordability of the place?

Do ownership and/or investment models of the place contribute to vibrant and mixed-use neighbourhoods?

# Diversity

Residential, work and leisure places have to be developed and structured to allow social and economic mixity, offering diverse layouts and designs. High-quality *Baukultur* ensures Diversity by conceiving barrier-free and gender-equitable places – taking into account the needs of children and young people equally – to be able to contribute to social Diversity and inclusion for all. High-quality *Baukultur* enhances connections between people also, but not exclusively, in well-designed public spaces, allowing diverse forms of living together and at the same time reflecting one's own attitude towards diverse forms of families, social groups and people of various origins and ethnicities ensuring human rights. Shared ownership and shared identity of a place with high economic and social resilience can be created through a shared perception of a place supported by democratic participatory co-decisional processes – in our specific case in the planning and construction domain. People are combined into spaces and linked with each other through imagination or memory, social goods and language. This mixity and proximity prevent segregation through the economic impact of whole urban areas with prohibitive rents for most of society or, at the other end of the scale, the abandonment of large quarters.

Public space, squares and green areas with a high quality of stay are designed, preserved and have to remain public to offer attractive and stimulating possibilities for easy access and frequent interaction among people of different social groups. This is an important element of social integration. Social and design Diversity in high quality thus stands as a premise for each planning or building action of high-quality *Baukultur*, with the aim of preventing gentrification and ghettoisation of specific groups in certain areas by maintaining or creating features of a place preventing it from being claimed by any one group, and indirectly, but crucially, enhancing its safety. In rural areas, traditionally and regionally shaped communities can be, to some extent, very diverse. The uses of living and working often take place in quite confined spaces, the age structure is or was often mixed; on the other hand, it should be noted that Diversity brought in from outside is met with reduced acceptance. Rural Diversity has to be maintained specifically for community resilience in the future, and encouraged as abandonment and depopulation tend to reduce said Diversity.



## Principle

High-quality *Baukultur* connects people.

High-quality *Baukultur* reflects and promotes inclusive societies and encourages mixed uses, thus facilitating interaction and shared responsibility, which lead to social and spatial cohesion. It contributes to a diverse culture of planning.

## Key questions

Does the place ensure human rights of equality, freedom, safety and livelihood?

Does the place contribute to vibrant and mixed uses (e.g. housing, working, leisure, etc.) in relation to its characteristics?

Does the place promote and provide diverse attractive and comfortable private and public spaces to connect people?

Does the place promote a mix of users (e.g. by gender, age, ability, origin, etc.) and diverse communities in relation to its functions?

Does the place show shared responsibility for private, but above all public spaces (e.g. through participatory processes, neighbourhood associations, etc.)?

Does the place prevent segregation, gentrification and ghettoisation of specific groups in certain areas?

Is the place socially resilient?

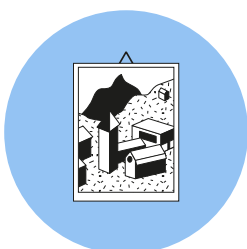
# Context

The key to creating and maintaining places of high-quality *Baukultur* as regards Context is to take into account the surroundings and their history, adopting a deliberate and careful approach to their development. The quality of the spatial Context of a place is influenced by and depends on the specific geographic, social and economic setting. The existing state and character of any place in its historical, physical and spatial configuration is to be taken as a compelling and profitable starting point for high-quality *Baukultur*. Any intervention should be made understanding and in knowledge of the existing place and its Context at the pertinent scale, having executed prior analysis and studies: from small-scale neighbourhood to large-scale cultural landscape. New buildings and settlements need to be embedded not only in the spatial Context but also in the cultural history of the respective places in a way that preserves and develops its coherence and identity.

At the level of regional and supra-regional spatial development, common goals and strategies, clear and binding provisions for joint development endeavours are prerequisites for spatial coherence, key elements are regional development strategies, promotion of cooperation, superior coordination of sectoral policies and their alignment towards a common vision. Spatial concepts with broadly formulated themes and larger geographical units can strengthen horizontal coordination, to think and act more regionally, beyond local self-interest.

At local and building level when contemporary creation – whether planning, new construction or conversion – addresses the built and non-built Context, the required outcome is a respectful dialogue with regard to the existing, regional specificities, built heritage and new creation. Built heritage must be enhanced or preserved, contemporary creation respects the specific features of the natural and cultural heritage, of open landscapes, sites and buildings, including their Context. In the best of cases of high-quality *Baukultur*, contemporary creation provides spatial coherence between existing qualities and characteristics of landscape, urban grain, typology, colour and materiality. The objective of spatial coherence does not mean lacking conviction and timidly fading into the Context: while a design based on the current proportion, scale, materiality and colour can be the best approach, setting a distinct, new emphasis at the right place with adequate means in an existing settlement pattern may reinforce and accentuate its inherent Context quality or bring out a new quality.

Context as a criterion should also not be neglected if a new building or several new buildings or infrastructures are being constructed in more recent Contexts. The skilful reference of the design of objects to their Context or the unrelated juxtaposition of the same, without paying attention to the Context, can occur in every planning and building activity and in any place.



Davos Declaration  
Article 8

“The design of the built environment, the relationships between objects and their built and natural surroundings, spatial coherence, scale, materiality: these are all factors which have a direct impact on our quality of life.”

Article 9

“Cultural heritage is a crucial component of high-quality *Baukultur*.”

## Principle

High-quality *Baukultur* results in spatial coherence.

Places of high-quality *Baukultur* refer to their built and natural Context. They embrace built heritage and contemporary creation, and dialogue with local features and their characteristics in terms of age, scale, typology and materiality.

## Key questions

Was the Context of the place studied and thoroughly analysed prior to the programming of the intervention?

Does the place dialogue – reflecting small and large-sized characteristics – with the surrounding open landscape, urban grain, colour and materiality?

Are built heritage and regional specificities (e.g. unity of built heritage, existing and contemporary creation and landscape qualities) recognised and preserved, adopted and integrated in all interventions?

Does contemporary creation dialogue respectfully with the features of the Context of a place and does it preserve and enhance the quality of the place?

Does the Context of the place contain green spaces that are easily accessible and does it preserve and enhance the quality of the place?

# Sense of place

High-quality *Baukultur* results in places with which people have a special connection, places that the local people are proud of, that they take an interest in and commit to, that are also attractive to others, and therefore express a strong Sense of place. Social research and environmental psychology have shown that people who are familiar with the characteristics of a place, its specific identity and history, can relate more to the place and experience it as a special location. High-quality *Baukultur* improves and supports emotional attachment to a place and thus contributes to people's well-being. People like to live and work in urban and rural places in which they feel rooted and are positive about. Social bonding, interaction and belonging create familiarity and connection with people and contribute to a Sense of place. This also happens, although not exclusively, in the interaction with physical space. Most people prefer places with a distinct identity as opposed to faceless settlements and landscapes. There is a host of connections and interrelations among people (and their identities) and their built and non-built living space (and its identities).

A respectful dialogue with the existing spatial Context simultaneously respects the existing place identity and strengthens the Sense of place, which is fragile and can react sensitively to excessive violent or ill-considered interventions. Sense of place can emerge or be congenially enhanced and "built up" through a smart upgrade of urban sprawl, by maintaining existing and creating new identities in the space, and through neighbourhood development with strong civic participation. Specific, non-standardised solutions strengthen design variety, thus preventing regional or local differences from becoming levelled out and giving people emotions and reasons to develop an attachment. Design tradition, technological innovation and social change therefore serve as equal starting points for high-quality contemporary work and reuse creating places where people are proud of their special identity and attractiveness. Sense of place can be threatened and endangered by political, social, economic and other changes as well as by planning and construction activities, which do not add layers of meaning but destroy or dilute them. Cultural heritage is fundamental to anchoring people's understanding of history. Places – consisting of family, friends and enemies, work and leisure, nature and landscape, colours and smells – offer a number of built and non-built references contributing to individual and collective emotion and memory.

High-quality *Baukultur* in terms of Sense of place is achieved by measures that must be especially defined for each spatial situation. It can be accomplished in a variety of ways, as long as the locally-specific human requirements are included among the central goals. High-quality *Baukultur* recognises and respects all aspects of multi-diverse identity to offer a specific Sense of place for everybody.





## Principle

### High-quality *Baukultur* improves the Sense of place.

High-quality *Baukultur* shows characteristics that foster people’s emotional response to the place establishing a positive relationship with it. It promotes attachment to the place through its strong identity and distinctiveness, thus contributing to fulfilling social, psychological and cultural needs.

## Key questions

Is the place set apart by its local character, distinctiveness, authenticity and identity, which promotes people’s bonding to the place?

Does the place foster place identity, place attachment and thus contribute to a sense of belonging?

Does the place show nature and landscape qualities, enhancing nature and landscape bonding?

Are local and regional values and the history of communities and individuals respected by materiality, design, construction and management of the place and transmitted to future generations?

Is the use compatible with the carrying capacity of the place, maintaining or improving the quality of space as well as the integrity of human life within it?

Does the place contribute to spatial and social cohesion by creating or enhancing opportunities for social interaction, reinforcing a shared vision of its identities and civic pride?

# Beauty

Beauty in *Baukultur* results from a highly positive aesthetic, spatial and atmospheric impact on the beholder. The beholder, whether a person or society in general, has a sensory perception of a place, expresses an opinion and judges its Beauty. Beauty must be an explicitly declared objective of any place-making, of any planning and building activity to achieve high-quality *Baukultur*.

There are no universally valid Beauty standards or canons anymore and the values ascribed to a place and the meanings allocated may vary among individuals and over time, but this does not make Beauty arbitrary. Professionals and experts must engage in an ongoing, broad debate on what is or can be perceived and judged as “beautiful” based on rationally founded experience, going beyond the simple question of “good design”, in parallel taking into consideration discussion and empirical data on what local people like. Lively debate must take place on different levels, as Beauty in *Baukultur* is relevant to everyone and has to be conceived not as an exclusively expert issue and additional cost factor, but as an essential cultural value and shared perception.

Specialists and non-specialists are to be invited to give a judging ascription of the characteristics and values of a place that provides them with a perceptual experience of pleasure or satisfaction, leading to feelings of attraction and emotional well-being. Besides the subjective perception of the Beauty of a place, there are objective characteristics determining Beauty by mechanisms and properties that seem to be preferred irrespective of culture or personal preferences. Professionals and experts are called to conduct research and establish the reasons for qualifying a place as “beautiful”. That requires empirical qualitative surveys of local views and preferences, and may include formal indicators, e.g. balance, proportion, symmetry, simplicity, complexity and variety, composition, rhythm, movement, articulation, expression, materiality, transparency, illumination. Such indicators may differ depending on the place in question and full transparency is required regarding the applied value judgements.



“A high-quality *Baukultur* is therefore expressed in the application of conscious, well-debated design to every building and landscaping activity, prioritizing cultural values over short-term economic gain.”

## Principle

A place of high-quality *Baukultur* is beautiful.

High-quality *Baukultur* takes into account the sensory perception and understanding of the relationship between objects, spaces and people, increasing people’s life satisfaction and quality of life. It emphasises the need for positive aesthetic appreciation and a fulfilling relationship between people and the place.

## Key questions

Does the place have an aesthetic, spatial and atmospheric impact on the beholder?

Does the place make people feel at ease?

Do people perceive the place as beautiful?

Is the place attributed specific aesthetic values, balanced between its formal qualities and its integration in its complex Context?

Does the place’s Beauty contribute to people’s well-being and life satisfaction?

**ASSESSES**

**YSOUR**

**PLACCI!**

The Davos *Baukultur* Quality System helps assess the quality of *Baukultur* of any type and scale of a place, both of a project and an existing place. The assessors, whether a single person or group of people, may need to adapt the questions according to the specificities of the place, while still considering and taking into account all eight criteria for high-quality *Baukultur*. The time reference of the assessment is always “today”, which means that, depending on the place, either a grown condition with all its time layers, a just completed object or a planned intervention can be assessed.

Before starting the assessment, it must be defined which framework conditions apply to the assessment, which data are available, which time and knowledge expenditure is feasible or desired, what is the object of the assessment (the assessed place). Depending on these definitions, the questions of the catalogue are to be adapted individually and the answers to them will be more detailed, more specific and longer for certain criteria with comprehensive, available bases than for criteria for which only limited or partial bases are available and answers will therefore be more general, shorter and summarised.

The best assessment results are achieved when the Quality System is completed in an interdisciplinary and participatory way. The concept of *Baukultur* is complex and, accordingly, the criteria to be assessed in a more detailed and objective manner are usually not manageable for one person or professional group alone. The Quality System therefore represents a useful instrument to stimulate interdisciplinary, cross-sectional dialogue involving specialists and non-specialists in administration, economy, planning and construction, cultural heritage, etc. as well as locals in the discourse on *Baukultur* quality, the goals and measures to achieve it, and enabling them to participate and co-decide and co-shape space because they feel responsible for it. The questionnaire provides a low-threshold basis for addressing the issue in public workshops, etc. and may be helpful to create a dialogue between professionals and locals.

As a practical assessment method, the Davos *Baukultur* Quality System proposes a form to be

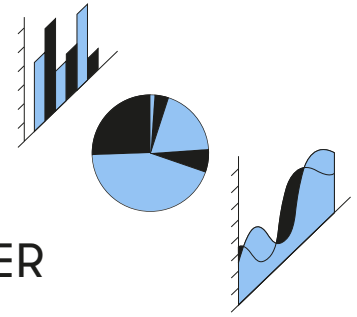
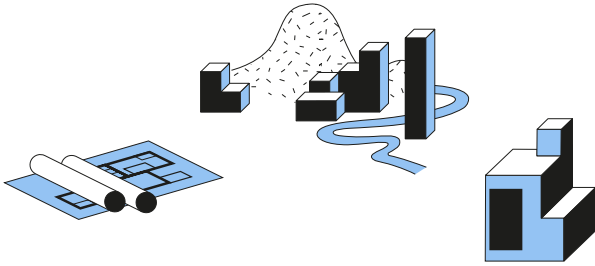
filled in with answers to the questions for each of the eight quality criteria. The answers will define the grade of fulfilment of the quality requirements for each criterion, to be explained in text form as well as to be ranked on a scale.

The final result of all answers to all criteria will show the level of *Baukultur* quality of the place. The Quality System proposes a non-exhaustive list of possible questions, which can be adapted, and individual, place-specific questions may be added. For a detailed objective assessment, indicators and their benchmarks may be defined for each criterion, according to the scale and the type of place to assess.

A place is of high-quality *Baukultur* if all eight criteria solidly meet the quality requirements. The specific situation must be considered, the assessment of rural and urban locations, of monofunctional buildings (e.g. schools) and mixed-use neighbourhoods may be based on different weighting of criteria reflecting the specificity of the place. The concluding statement in text form and ranked on a scale should give an overview of the specific qualities of the place, both its high-quality *Baukultur* strengths and its potential for improvement, reference the statements given for each criterion and make it comprehensive and plausible for third parties.

# 1. CHOOSE YOUR PLACE

Define the scale and the typology of the place you wish to assess. It may be a single building, a neighbourhood, a landscape, a city, etc. It may already exist or be in the planning stage.

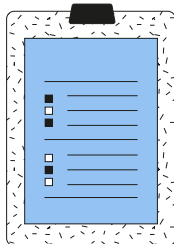


# 2. GATHER DATA

Collect accessible and existing general information and data on the place. You may research additional data (e.g. conducting surveys) for a more in-depth understanding of the place.

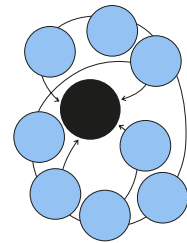
# 3. ACCESS THE FORM

Use the comprehensive form provided by the Davos *Baukultur* Quality System to assess the *Baukultur* quality of your place.



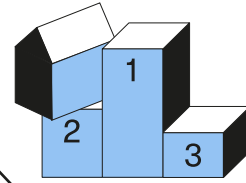
# 4. DISCOVER THE CRITERIA

Discover the eight quality criteria of the Davos *Baukultur* Quality System. They are distilled from the Davos Declaration, formulate related principles of high-quality *Baukultur* and will structure your assessment.



## 6. STATE OBSERVATIONS

Express your general observations on how the quality requirements for each criterion are met in text form, based on your answers to the questions. Rank the level of quality for each criterion on the scale in the form.



## 7. DRAW CONCLUSIONS

Express your concluding statement on how the overall quality requirements for all the criteria are met based on the observations for each criterion. Rank the overall quality of the place on the scale in the form. You may also stress the specific strengths of the place and the potential for improvement.

## 5. ANSWER QUESTIONS

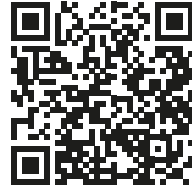
Answer the questions on each criterion to the best of your knowledge. You may adapt them to the specifics of your place or add questions. Use hard data and indicators for a more in-depth and evidence-based assessment.



Eight criteria for a high-quality *Baukultur* -  
the whole story



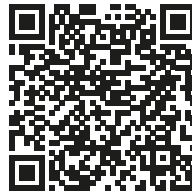
Eight criteria for a high-quality *Baukultur*



Assessment form



Davos Declaration (PDF)



Davos Declaration (website)







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The system has been reviewed during an international consultation from 19 October to 20 November 2020 by *Baukultur*-stakeholders and experts, the Davos Declaration Community and consulted broadly with professional organisations and administrations in Europe. In parallel the Davos *Baukultur* Quality System has been tested in real case studies of different types of places in different countries and assessed for its applicability. The feedback of the international Davos Community contributed successfully to its improvement and finalisation.

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