

Newsletter 22 (publication date: December 2023)

The end of the year at Doppeltür

As the year comes to a close, we wanted to offer you an overview of Doppeltür's activities in recent months. Several different projects are currently in full swing, from the planned centre in Lengnau to the mikveh in Endingen all the way to the educational modules. And all despite the fact that the building permit for the centre in Lengnau, which we need to have before we can start with the actual construction work, has not yet been secured. The status of the project was also a topic of discussions with the Israeli ambassador to Switzerland and Thierry Burkart, member of the Council of States for the canton of Aargau and member of the Doppeltür patronage committee, who recently visited us in Surbtal. Read on to find out more.

Israeli ambassador in Surbtal

In October 2023, Ifat Reshef, Israeli ambassador to Switzerland, visited Surbtal together with Thierry Burkart at the invitation of the Jewish Community Endingen. Representatives of Doppeltür took this opportunity to share information about our project – one that has taken on even more importance given the difficult times we are experiencing at present, especially considering the fact that Doppeltür's core values of integration, respect, tolerance, mediation and dialogue are the cornerstones that enable people with different cultural backgrounds, religions and lifestyles to coexist in harmony. Ifat Reshef showed a great deal of interest in the Doppeltür project and welcomed its focus on all generations, particularly on schoolchildren.

The people behind the double doors of Doppeltür – an interview with Thierry Burkart



Source: Image provided by Thierry Burkart.

Thierry Burkart, lic. iur., attorney, LL.M., has been a member of the Council of States of the canton of Aargau since 2019, and the chairman of FDP.Die Liberalen since 2021. On the Council of States, he is a member of the Committee for Transport and Telecommunications (TTC), the Committee for Economic Affairs and Taxation (EATC), the Security Policy Committee (SPC) and the Control Committee (CC). Born in Baden in 1975, he grew up in Obersiggenthal and has lived in Lengnau since 2021. Thierry Burkart is a member of the Doppeltür patronage committee.

Doppeltür (DT): At the end of October, together with the Israeli ambassador to Switzerland, you visited Surbtal, a region that represents the coexistence of Jewish and Christian communities in the 18th and 19th centuries. What were your impressions?

Thierry Burkart (TB): Firstly, I would like to thank Ambassador Ifat Reshef for taking the time to visit Surbtal despite the horrific terrorist attack and the difficult situation in her country, which is also impacting Jewish people around the world. I found this morning extremely moving. The inhuman attacks against children, women, the elderly and civilians were extremely present. Surbtal in particular demonstrates that Switzerland has also mistreated its Jewish citizens in the past, and yet it also shows us that a peaceful and respectful coexistence is possible. The recent terrorist attack and its impact, which extends far beyond the borders of Israel all the way to our country, are proof that, unfortunately, our efforts to promote acceptance and respect for our Jewish fellow citizens are still greatly needed.

DT: In your view, how is society in Switzerland and Europe evolving in terms of topics such as mutual respect, tolerance and the treatment of people with different worldviews, all of which are at the heart of the Doppeltür project?

TB: Recently, an ambassador from Europe told me that antisemitism in Europe is a thing of the past. This shocking refusal to accept reality shows me that far too many people are unwilling to accept that active antisemitism, the dissemination of traditional stereotypes and apportionment of blame are more prevalent in Europe and Switzerland today than at any time in the past 80 years. This state of affairs makes it clear just how important it is for us to remember the past. We must fight to learn from our mistakes as well as from more positive aspects of our past. In Switzerland, and even more so in Europe, political and societal discussions have been characterized by polarisation, scandalisation and emotionalisation for some time now. The marginalization of individuals with different worldviews, the defamation of the political opposition, the moralisation of political discourse – these are alarming developments for a democracy and a society. They stand in stark contrast to the Doppeltür concept, which is centred around encounters, mediation and tolerance between different cultures. This proves: while the Doppeltür project focuses on the coexistence of Jewish and Christian communities in Surbtal, its experiences, findings and message go much, much further. It's about asking how we want to broadly organise society and coexist with one another in the future. And therefore, it's always about us. Because every single one of us plays a role in shaping our future society.

DT: In your opinion, what role or responsibilities do political actors have when it comes to the coexistence of different religions and cultures?

TB: As politicians, we need to stand up for tolerance. However, tolerance must also have its limits. With this in mind, politicians must demand non-negotiable fundamental values such as respect for human dignity and the protection of our basic human rights. We must not tolerate intolerance.

DT: What are your hopes and expectations for the Doppeltür project?

TB: As a member of the patronage committee, I feel very strongly about Doppeltür's goals. I hope that by opening our centre, we will increase the visibility of our rich and fascinating history of Jewish-Christian coexistence in Surbtal and introduce it to a wide audience. In particular, I hope it will offer future generations a powerful example of peaceful coexistence between different cultures and religions. I would like to congratulate and thank everyone involved in this wonderful project for their hard work and dedication.

Association and foundation news

Building permit process not yet finalised

During the process of obtaining the building permit, several discussions have taken place with representatives of the Lengnau Municipal Council and the construction department, and negotiations have been held with the objecting parties. Doppeltür feels certain that we will be able to come to a resolution with all stakeholders. We would once again like to thank everyone involved in advance for their constructive approach.

Fundraising goal not yet met

A large portion of Doppeltür's overall budget totalling CHF 11.6 million has already been secured. However, our fundraising efforts are still underway, and our project remains dependent on significant financial support. Help us achieve our goal! Perhaps you could open the door for us to meet an individual or institution that would be interesting in donating? If so, please contact our Project and Fundraising Manager Beat Heuberger (beat.heuberger@doppeltuer.ch). We would like to sincerely thank everyone who has supported us and has thereby contributed to Doppeltür's success.

Project updates

Interviews with protagonists

One day, six protagonists will virtually welcome visitors to the Doppeltür centre in Lengnau and guide them on a tour of Jewish culture and history. The individuals who have been selected for these roles represent different cultures, religions, generations and genders. We will be filming interviews with our protagonists, which will then be edited before being made available in the form of video installations and film sequences. We filmed our first group of protagonists in Zurich in September 2023. Erika Gideon, Alain Bloch and Adil Shirsekar were interviewed about their personal histories, their connection to Surbtal and topics related to Doppeltür. The questions were compiled by the Content working group. Andreas Schwab, a member of the working group, was in charge of the briefing and asking the questions. The group of protagonists quickly adapted to being in front of the camera, which is not always the case, and offered us insights into their lives and ways of thinking. Visitors to the centre can look forward to interesting, intimate and even sometimes surprising statements.



(Filming with Adil Shirsekar)
Source: Doppeltür

Film takes shape

The script, storyboard and animatics (individual images with sound) for the film *Immerse* (DE: *Abtauchen*), which will be shown in the centre's lower level, are now complete. Plus, in recent weeks, the initial versions of the line drawings for the background of individual scenes were created. They bring mid-19th-century Surbtal to life, and feature locations such as Lengnau village square, Guggenheim pub, the house with two doors that belonged to the Meyer family, the two mikvehs, the Jewish cemetery and the Lengnau synagogue. Next steps include the final artwork, followed by filming with actors in front of a green screen.

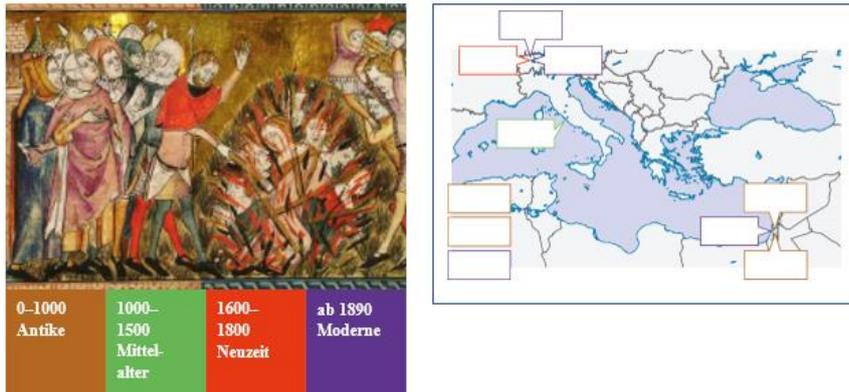


DORFPLATZ Lengnau 1856

Source: Doppeltür

Educational modules being tested

The two school modules "Framework" (introductory module) and "Baden" (city tour) will be tested with secondary school classes in Baden from now until spring 2024. After implementing revisions based on the feedback we receive, we plan to launch the two modules in the form of discovery kits for the students and handbooks for the educators. The discovery kits for the tour of Jewish history and culture ("Expand" module) are currently in development. The fourth and final module will be about the centre in Lengnau. All modules were created in cooperation with the FHNW School of Education, under the aegis of which the accompanying research project is being carried out to gather information on the students' and educators' previous knowledge of the topic and evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching sequences. The Baden Historic Museum is another key cooperation partner for the "Baden" module.



("Framework" module handbook for educators: locating the events on the map)
Source: DT

Mikveh construction project in Endingen in the planning stage

In recent weeks, various access solutions for individuals with disabilities were reviewed, suggestions were drawn up and discussions were held with the Office of Historic Conservation. The corresponding building application has been submitted. Once we have the building permit, we can start the renovation work (total renovation including the addition of a lift, interior design), which is expected to take six to nine months.



(Visualisation of the proposed lift)
Source: DT

Details on the focal points of the scenography in the individual development phases were also defined. At the opening of the mikveh, there will be panels with text and illustrations for visitors. In a second stage, a lighting and audio experience will be added on the ground floor of the historic immersion bath. In the final step, the lighting and audio experience "Worlds of Bathing" (DE: "Bäderwelten") will be installed on the second floor.

Upcoming events

The General Assembly of the Doppeltür Association will take place on 18 March 2024 at 7.00 pm. More information to come.