

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET SITES
INTERNATIONALE RAAD VOOR MONUMENTEN EN LANDSCHAPPEN
BELGIË-BELGIQUE-BELGIEN-BELGIUM

On the occasion of the publication of "Heritage without Borders"
Volume IV of the MONUMENTA series, published by the ICOMOS National Committees of
Germany, Austria, Luxembourg and Switzerland

The exchange of knowledge and practices between heritage professionals is one of the missions of ICOMOS. How can this be achieved when its members and heritage communities speak, think and publish in different languages?

When I was Secretary General of ICOMOS, cultural diversity and multilingualism were a priority for my work. It was a question of giving a voice to those who had accumulated experience, had knowledge, had a message to convey, but did not necessarily express themselves with ease or fluency in English.

In the field of cultural heritage, research, publications and dialogue with heritage communities most often make use of national or local languages. However, there are many scientific publications dealing with cultural heritage whose bibliography is limited to recent works, i.e. after the 1990s, which are accessible only in English, if necessary through translation.

In some cultures, such as those of countries with minority languages and in German- and French-speaking countries, the scientific and rigorous methodology makes it a matter of course to take into consideration publications published in other languages and to translate them. The number of translations into French or German exceeds the number of translations into English.

In other regions and in the Anglo-Saxon world, there is not yet this automatic reflex to take into consideration what is not published in their language or in English. Is that not deliberately cutting oneself off from the knowledge in other countries and other cultures?

How can we ensure that access to heritage knowledge published in a large number of languages is facilitated? This is a fundamental question for ICOMOS.

Coming from a country with three official languages and many more languages spoken and having always lived in a multilingual environment, this question is very dear to my heart. So, it occurred to me that access to founding documents and new ideas could be facilitated for ICOMOS members by offering them a summary of a selection of really important texts in the two working languages of the organisation.

The four German-speaking National Committees of ICOMOS have made this idea a reality in 2018 – the European Year for Cultural Heritage with the publication "Heritage without Borders", the fourth volume in the "Monumenta" series. Thus, a dream has become a reality. We would like to thank them warmly for this!

Like my colleagues, I am delighted to be able to read the texts and ideas that have had a significant influence on conservation practices in these four countries of the German-speaking area since 1975, the first European Year for Architectural Heritage. For my part, I am sure that exciting and enriching discussions will result. May other national committees be able to follow suit by drawing inspiration from their methodology. Moreover, the discussion concerning the choice of texts has proved to have an added value in itself.

Let us hope that ICOMOS will bring "Heritage without Borders" to the knowledge of all, members and non-members alike, and by all means. Let this publication give rise to an in-depth reflection on the most appropriate modes of dissemination and communication to facilitate access to the knowledge rooted in our different cultures and published in our various national and local languages.

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