

Welcome by ICOMOS Germany

On behalf of ICOMOS Germany, I would like to welcome you to this conference.

ICOMOS Germany was founded in 1965 and today has over 450 members. ICOMOS is one of UNESCO's advisory bodies on World Heritage issues. However, we also see ourselves as experts on everyday heritage issues and, in recent decades, increasingly as advocates for an extended and pluralistic concept of heritage. This concept is committed to cultural diversity and considers conflicts over heritage sites as an opportunity to define a current position regarding our own past. This applies to conservators and cultural managers as well as to citizens and civil society actors in politics and administration.

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the opening of the Iron Curtain in Europe were a signal for the unification of Berlin and the two post-war German states. This break was also a precondition for the unification of the ICOMOS National Committees of East and West Germany 30 years ago.¹ Since then, the debate about the legacy of Germany's undemocratic predecessor states has repeatedly formed a thematic priority of the work of ICOMOS Germany. In addition to the question of how to deal appropriately with state and party buildings from the Nazi system, which often enough continued to be used pragmatically by government and administrative bodies in East and West, the legacy of socialism in Central and Western Europe was frequently at the centre of controversial debates. The demolition of Lew Kerbel's Lenin Monument in 1992 or of the Palace of the Republic (between 2006 and 2008) in Berlin are among the most prominent monument losses that the reunified German capital has had to record.

Since German unification in 1990, however, there has always been the central question of conservationists: How can democratic societies deal with the legacy of persecution, oppression, and resistance without eliminating the evidence of an undesirable history? Do democratic societies need the memory of war and tyranny in order not to repeat the mistakes of the past?

From the very beginning, ICOMOS Germany has been concerned to broaden the view beyond the socialist part of East Berlin and East Germany and to include the experiences of socialist neighbouring countries of the former

Eastern Bloc.² Conference and meeting titles, most of them published in the publication series of the German National Committee or by co-organisers, highlight the diversity of topics, but also the changing perspective over the course of a generation. A milestone, perhaps even a turning point in the negative reception of socialist monumental art that had predominated up to that point, was marked in 2012 when the Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO) and ICOMOS discussed the topic "From Rejection to Appropriation? The Architectural Heritage of Socialism in Central and Eastern Europe"³ and explored new ways of interpreting and accepting or tolerating negative monuments by means of artistic interventions. The latest ICOMOS Discussion Paper, *Evaluations of World Heritage Nominations related to Sites Associated with Memories of Recent Conflicts*,⁴ stands for the current position statement on this topic. Can we convert/transform troublesome heritage conflicts into positive location factors?

In addition to Poland in the East – Germany's most important neighbouring country alongside its western neighbour France – and the tried and tested exchange with colleagues from the former Soviet Union, it has also repeatedly been contributions from Bulgaria that have provided essential reference material for heritage debates on the legacy in post-socialist states of Europe. One of the most fascinating case studies has certainly been the memorial landscape of Buzludzha with the landmark on Chaji Dimitar, which was opened 40 years ago in these weeks (23 August 1981). I am very pleased that we can continue and intensify the discussion on "Integrated Urban Approaches to Dissonant Post-war Heritage of Art and Architecture in Central and Eastern Europe" at the foot of the Buzludzha Monument directly on site these days. And I would like to cordially thank all those involved, especially our partners and hosts from Bulgaria and on the spot in Kazanlak, namely Mayor Galina Stoyanova and her municipal Iskra History Museum with director Momchil Marinov and his team.

Jörg Haspel
President of ICOMOS Germany

¹ See Eiserner Vorhang und Grünes Band. Netzwerke und Kooperationsmöglichkeiten in einer europäischen Grenzlandschaft/Iron Curtain and Green Belt. Networks and Opportunities for Cooperation in a European Border Landscape (ICOMOS – Hefte des Deutschen Nationalkomitees LXXII), Münster 2020.

² See Bildersturm in Osteuropa. Die Denkmäler der kommunistischen Ära im Umbruch (ICOMOS – Hefte des Deutschen Nationalkomitees XIII), München 1994

and Stalinistische Architektur unter Denkmalschutz? (ICOMOS – Hefte des Deutschen Nationalkomitees XX), München 1996.

³ A. BARTETZKY, C. DIETZ, J. HASPEL (eds.), Von der Ablehnung zur Aneignung? Das architektonische Erbe des Sozialismus in Mittel- und Osteuropa, Köln/Wien/Weimar 2014.

⁴ <https://openarchive.icomos.org/id/eprint/2051/>.