





# Introduction

This publication contains most of the contributions to the international conference “Conservation and Rehabilitation of Vernacular Heritage: the Cultural Landscape of the Wendland Circular Villages”, Lübeln, September 28 – October 2, 2016, which was combined with the annual meeting 2016 of the International Scientific Committee on Vernacular Architecture (CIAV) of ICOMOS. It was the second meeting of CIAV in Germany after 1992, hosted at that time by the Heritage Conservation Office of the Rhineland (Rheinisches Amt für Denkmalpflege) and ICOMOS Germany in the framework of a joint scientific conference on cultural landscapes, with an expert group of the Council of Europe. The results were published in 1993 under the title *Historische Kulturlandschaften* as volume XI of the series *ICOMOS Journals of the German National Committee*.

Hosted in 2016 by the joint municipality (Samtgemeinde) of Lüchow-Wendland and organised by the Heritage Conservation Office of Lower Saxony (Niedersächsisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege), CIAV and ICOMOS Germany, the conference focused on the circular villages of the Wendland and on the preparations for a UNESCO World Heritage nomination. A first preparatory workshop concerning the World Heritage compatibility of the circular villages had been organised in 2014; it included an investigation of the potential of the villages’ Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) and the comparative analysis (demanded by the UNESCO Operational Guidelines). Unfortunately, the Kultusministerkonferenz (Conference of the Ministers of Culture in Germany) at that time was not convinced of the World Heritage potential and therefore did not include the Wendland villages in the German Tentative List.

For this reason, the Lübeln conference started with presentations of the scientific research on the colonisation and settlement patterns of the villages (*M. Hardt*), the analysis of the characteristic half-timber hall houses (*D. Wübbenhorst*) and concluded with the final research on the OUV and the criteria for inscription on the World Heritage List (*M. Schmidt et al*) and with the final comparative analysis (*Rudolff et al*). In between, an excursion day to the villages took place.

It should be mentioned that for many years members of CIAV have been involved in the evaluation and preparatory work on nominations of vernacular heritage sites for the World

Heritage List, e.g. with regard to the village of Holasovice (Czech Republic) and the villages with fortified churches in Transylvania/Romania, but also in the “Filling the Gaps” (on the World Heritage List) initiative of ICOMOS International (Monuments and Sites, vol. XII, Munich 2005).

As a consequence, some of the contributions from CIAV focus on the circular villages (*M. Čerňanský*) and the settlement patterns of vernacular settlements (*C. Machat*). Other contributions of course reflect the scientific work of CIAV members, like the interesting analysis of the relation between the cultural landscape of an area and the vernacular traditions, including the tangible and intangible heritage (*G. Torres, text in Spanish with English summary*); research problems regarding the typology of wooden vernacular structures in Norway (*G. Jakhelln*) and in Northeast Karelia (*R. Sjølie*), or specific “technical” problems related to the protection and conservation of the built vernacular heritage. This includes alternative energy problems in Egypt (*M. Dabaieh*) or risk preparedness and fire protection in vernacular wooden settlements in China (*Fei Du / Kenji Okazaki*). For the protection of vernacular built heritage threatened by armed conflicts especially in the Middle East an ICOMOS-CIAV task force was proposed (*H. Mahdy*).

All these individual contributions also reflect the different traditions of scientific work and presentation worldwide. Bibliographies and quotations have therefore not been adjusted.

Instead of conclusions, the final *Recommendations* adopted by the conference participants strongly endorse the World Heritage nomination initiative and request the German state and national authorities to include the Wendland Rundlinge on the National Tentative List.

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