

A European Project: The Frontiers of the Roman Empire – Protection and Communication of World Heritage in an International Context

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Abstract

The Upper German-Raetian Limes (ORL) as part of “The Frontiers of the Roman Empire” was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2005, together with the Hadrian’s Wall in England and the Antonine Wall in Scotland (since 2008). At present, two new nominations are on their way (“The Danube Limes” and “The Lower German Limes”). Each one of them is a transnational project in itself with specific challenges and questions. In particular, the participating States Parties are bound in a special way to each other; a threat to a particular section of the World Heritage Site is a threat to the whole. Moreover, ICOMOS expects a common management system and Management Plans that follow that system.

At “The Frontiers of the Roman Empire” World Heritage Site this was the basis for the successful cooperation of the last 15 years as well as for institutions like the Intergovernmental Committee and, principally even more important for the practical work, the Management Group (also called Hexham Group). They provide the foundation for a vibrant exchange and are also to be set up at future World Heritage Sites. The Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Sites shall be connected within a “Cluster”, expandable to future sites. The necessary bracket is the Bratislava Group as an International Advisory Body.

Zusammenfassung

Der Obergermanisch-Raetische Limes (ORL) wurde 2005 als Teil der „Grenzen des Römischen Reiches“ in die UNESCO-Welterbeliste eingetragen, zusammen mit der Hadriansmauer in England und dem Antoninuswall in Schottland (seit 2008). Zurzeit sind zwei weitere Nominierungen auf dem Weg („Donaulimes“ und „Niedergermanischer Limes“). Beide sind eigenständige transnationale Projekte mit ihren besonderen Herausforderungen und Fragestellungen. Insbesondere sind die jeweils teilnehmenden Staaten in besonderer Weise miteinander verbunden; eine Bedrohung eines Teilabschnitts der Welterbestätte bedeutet eine Bedrohung für das Ganze. Und ICOMOS erwartet ein gemeinsames Managementsystem und daraus entwickelte Managementpläne.

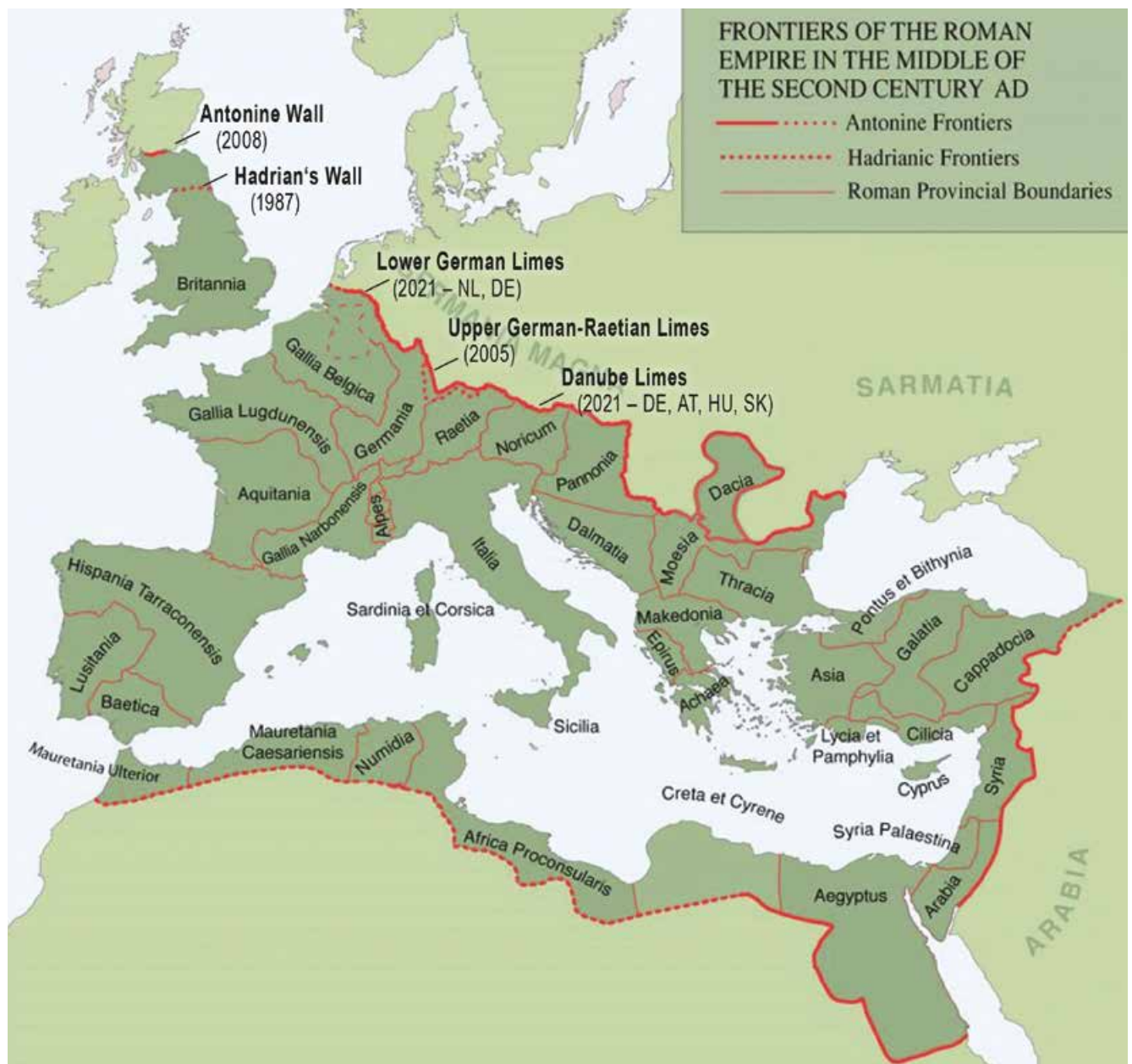
Dies bildete die Basis für eine erfolgreiche Kooperation in den letzten 15 Jahren sowie Einrichtungen wie das Intergovernmental Committee und, grundsätzlich für die praktische Arbeit noch wichtiger, die Management Gruppe (auch Hexham Group genannt). Sie sind die Grundlage für einen lebendigen Austausch und es ist vorgesehen, sie auch in den zukünftigen Welterbestätten einzurichten. Die Welterbestätten der „Grenzen des Römischen Reiches“ werden in einem „Cluster“ zusammengefasst, das um die zukünftigen Welterbestätten erweiterbar ist. Die notwendige Klammer bildet die Bratislava Group als internationale Beratungsgruppe.

The Upper German-Raetian Limes in Germany was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2005, together with Hadrian's Wall in the north of England, already on the list since 1987. Together they form the "Frontiers of the Roman Empire" World Heritage Site (FRE) as a transnational property. With a vision of 'more', i.e. a WHS encompassing the whole of the Roman Empire at some point, the nomination defined the property with the so called 'Koblenz declaration' as follows: "The Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage should consist of the line(s) of the frontier at the height of the Empire from Trajan to Septimius Severus (about AD 100 to 200), and the military installations of different periods which are on that line. The installations in-

clude fortresses, forts, towers, the limes road, artificial barriers and immediately associated civil structures."²¹ In 2005 the World Heritage Committee „Also recommends(ed) that the nomination be seen as the second phase of a possible wider, phased, serial transboundary nomination to encompass remains of the Roman frontiers around the Mediterranean Region."²² In reference, the Antonine Wall in Scotland was inscribed 2008 as third element of the FRE (fig. 1).

When Slovakia, Hungary and Austria and Germany together considered to prepare nominations for their respective parts of the frontiers of the Roman Empire they (we) had to learn in a long painful process with ICOMOS and the World Heritage Centre on the other side that the rules had

Fig. 1: Map of the potential Frontiers of the Roman Empire WHS in Europe, the Near East and North Africa (FRE, amended by C. Sebastian Sommer/Susanne Scherff, Bayerisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege (BLfD))



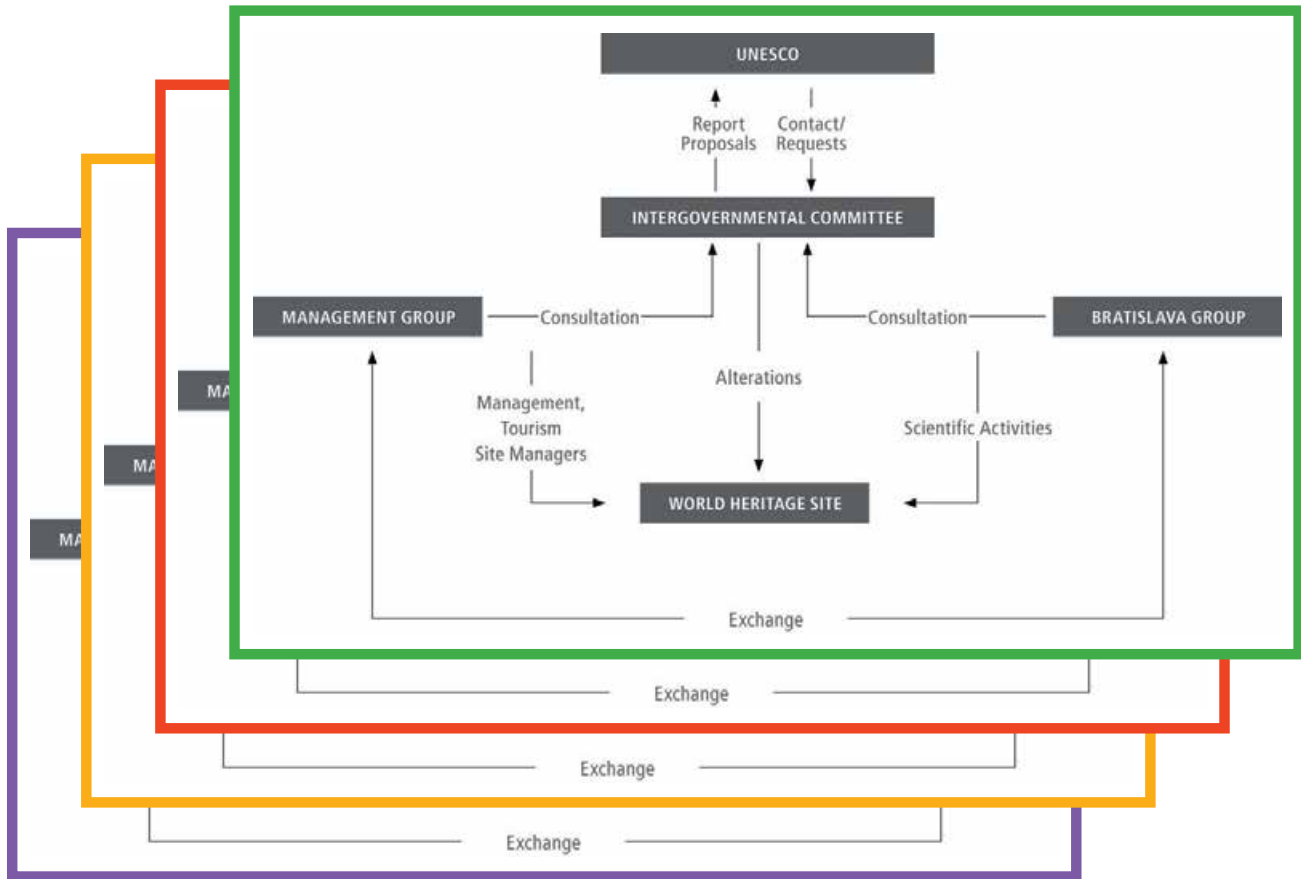


Fig. 2: Structural system of the existing Frontiers of the Roman Empire WHS, duplicated from present to future nominations (DLK, arranged by Susanne Scherff, BLfD)

changed and the original proposed additive enlargement of the WHS FRE would not work any longer. In particular, the so called Ittingen Report of 2010, adopted by the WHC in 2010,³ was the basis for the prerogative that already with the first nomination the extend of the property including potential extensions should be visible. Additionally, there have been worries about the management of a WHS across many States Parties and even continents.

However, with the strong belief that the whole of the Roman frontiers are of ‘Outstanding Universal Value’ heritage managers, Roman archaeologists, but also government officials coming together in an already existing advisory group, the so called Bratislava Group, commissioned on proposal of ICOMOS a thematic study in summer 2016. In an excellent example of transnational cooperation, all relevant States Parties across Europe provided the necessary data in extremely short time. Therefore, and with strong financial support from Austria, Bavaria, and The Netherlands we were able to present “The Frontiers of the Roman Empire – A Thematic Study and Proposed World Heritage Nomination Strategy” already in early summer 2017.⁴ The proposed approach – to nominate separate parts with specific character under individual Statements of Outstanding Universal Value and to separate Europe for the time being under the present political situation from the other potential

parts – was recognised positively by the 41. WHC meeting in Krakow and considered as a suitable way forward.⁵ The opportunity of connected WHSs linking three continents, demanding transnational cooperation, common management principles, initiating coordinated development and international research was and is truly inspiring.

Following the nomination proposal of the Thematic Study Austria, Germany, Hungary and Slovakia prepared a nomination for the “Danube Limes – Western Segment” covering almost 1.000 km along the Danube from Bad Gögging in Bavaria to Kölked in Hungary. The nomination was submitted with an individual SOUV in 2018, subsequently evaluated, and could have been inscribed in 2019, were it not for the untimely withdrawal of one component part in Budapest.⁶ Therefore, the WHC in Baku decided on a Referral and recommended a mission by ICOMOS to revise the situation.⁷ After the mission in November 2019 we received an – in the summary – positive statement by ICOMOS and were hoping for inscription in summer 2020 – alas, another temporary victim of Covid-19.

Parallel The Netherlands and Germany finished and submitted their nomination of the “Lower German Limes”, following the Rhine between Remagen in Rhineland-Palatinate all through North Rhine-Westfalia and The Netherlands down to Valkenburg at the North Sea over approximately

400 km. Evaluation was carried out in September 2020 and the preliminary report after the Evaluation Panel Hearing is expected. The SOUV refers in particular to the opportunities of the preservation of organic material due to the high water level in many of the nominated component parts.

But what does this mean for the management of – hopefully – soon three WHSs Frontiers of the Roman Empire running across half of Europe and more to follow? In order to ease this the relevant bodies of the existing Frontiers of the Roman Empire WHS – Intergovernmental Committee for decisions concerning the value and existence of the WHS and Management Group (also known as Hexham Group after the place of its first meeting) – were ‘copied’ in the new nominations for the Danube Limes and the Lower German Limes (fig. 2). The idea is that parallel structures and organisations make cooperation and exchange across the WHSs easier and therefore more efficient. According to the Thematic Study all the WHSs ‘FRE’ are connected within a cluster, the “World Heritage Cluster ‘Frontiers of the Roman Empire’” (fig. 3). The already mentioned Bratislava Group will form the bracket.

Within this system – we believe – the Management Groups have the most important function in terms of preservation, presentation, management, and research of and on the WHSs. In the example of the existing Hexham Group for the Antonine Wall, Hadrian’s Wall and the Upper German-Raetian Wall site managers for the three parts meet regularly at one of the parts of the WHS to see and discuss best practice-examples not only among themselves but also with representatives of the regional stakeholders and decision makers. Through this intense exchange, – we trust – that we

learn from each other, also from measures that did not go so well, and through the transfer of ideas and knowledge. We feel that in this ‘give-and-take’ of best practice there is a good chance to develop the different parts of the WHS in a good direction jointly. In addition, of course, within the Hexham Group the data for the Periodic Reporting is collected and processed for decision and delivery through the Intergovernmental Committee.

Important aspects of this development are directed through the national Management Plans, following common management principles. These Management Plans contain Action Plans and Development Plans. One of those latter plans and a good example for creative work together is the Danube Limes Interpretation Framework (DLIF) developed by site managers and museum people in Austria and Bavaria.⁸ DLIF is a guideline with advisory character for interpretation and access, strictly based on the archaeological and educational evaluation of relevant sites of the Danube Limes in Austria and Bavaria and potential finds for explaining the FRE Danube Limes Section to all members of the public. It is not intended, however, as a strategy concept for international, regional or local tourism development.

With the goal to give visitors to more than one site along the Limes information beyond “This fort was so and so large, consisted of . . . , and was held by such and such garrison . . .” but rather trying to tell stories over stretches of the Danube Limes the DLIF suggests topics for different sections. It also proposes ways to connect the museums and their finds with the monuments along the Danube.⁹ Moreover, there are possibilities to extend that approach along the whole of the nominated Danube Limes, e.g. in relation

Fig. 3: Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Cluster (Bratislava Group)

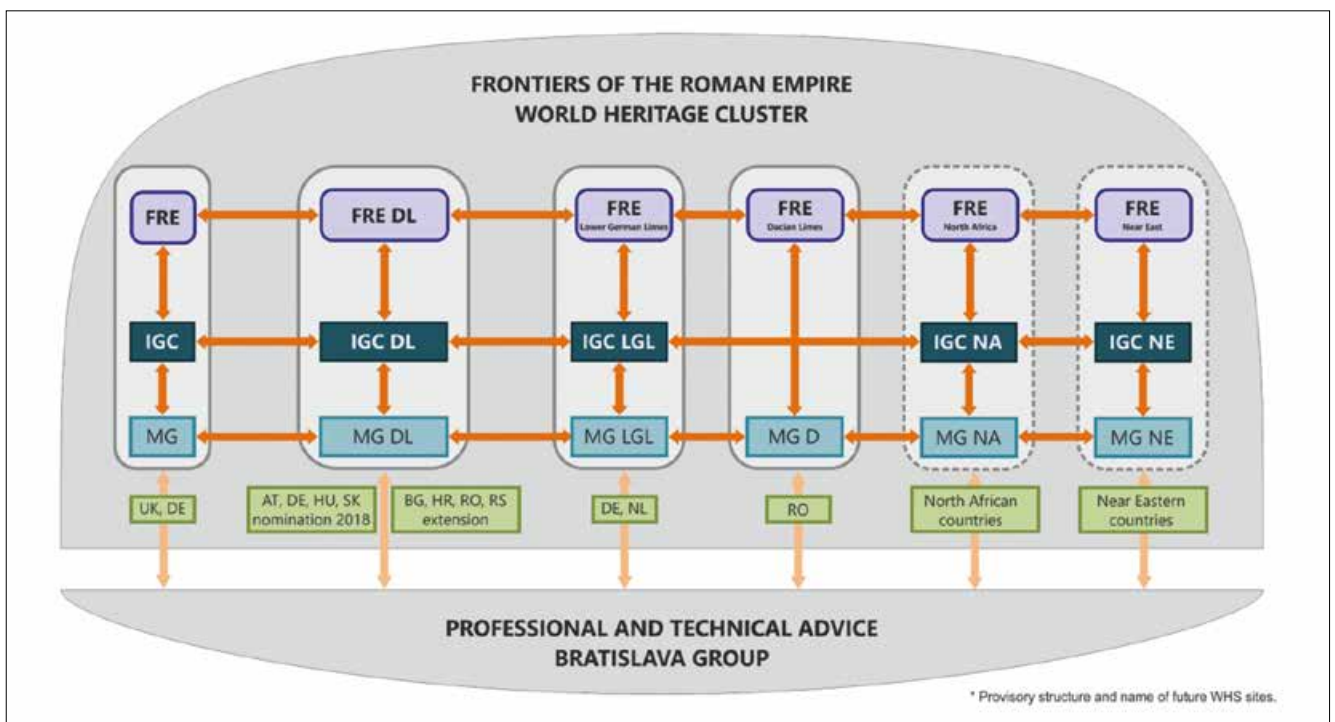




Fig. 4: Scanning the plan to trigger Augmented Reality at Eining-Weinberg (Photo: BLfD, Markus Gschwind)



Fig. 5: Augmented Reality/3-D-reconstructions including 360° view for Eining-Weinberg – watchtower and sanctuary (Photo: Limes mobil)

to the Marcommanic wars in the later 2nd century CE which affected the whole of the northern frontier. As a follow-up of that concept, we can understand a network of independent communal museums along the Danube in Bavaria formed recently.¹⁰

Another example of transnational cooperation is the “alapp”, the Advanced Limes App. Colleagues from Scotland, Austria and Bavaria developed in the past few years a common technical framework as a basis for different multilingual apps for various sections of the FRE co-funded by the Creative European Programme of the European Union.¹¹ Besides overviews and detailed maps, the apps contain ‘classical’ contents, like word/picture-information, videos following the approach of ‘story-telling’, and 3-D-images of objects from the sites connecting them with the museums and collections housing them. A particular feature is the possibility of inserting Augmented Reality; 3-D-reconstructions including 360° view to be viewed ‘live’ on-site (figs. 4, 5). With a full coverage of the Antonine Wall and a partial covering of the Upper German-Raetian Wall visitors and interested people can use it already at two of the components of the FRE.¹² Right now, a contract with Romania concerning the *Limite* there is written up.¹³

Finally, I want to draw your attention to CLIR, *Corpus Limitum Imperii Romani*, a growing scientific database, developed for some years¹⁴ and now in full swing in Pécs, Hungary.¹⁵ Its intention is to create a database to record archaeological features and heritage elements from their own perspective, primarily along the frontiers of the Roman Empire, but perhaps also beyond. If we incorporate our main data from all sections of FRE into that database, we could achieve in transnational instrument of incomparable value.

I would like to end with a thought in relation to my beginning. The Frontiers of the Roman Empire as a potential WHS in its original vision, connecting places and people on three continents as in the Roman times, running nowadays through 18 countries, seems at present almost unachievable. Moreover, even if the goal one day can be reached, its joint management looks like an unmanageable task. However, the

opportunity to bring people and ideas from so many varied parts of the world together dealing with one subject lets the Frontiers of the Roman Empire as a concept seem almost like the ideal World Heritage Site. And, equally important, the Frontiers of the Roman Empire as World Heritage Site(s) would reach its/their highest level of integrity once all its relevant parts are on the World Heritage List.

¹ App. to WHC-08/32.COM/10B, 10 f.

² 29 COM 8B.46. – For the early development see Breeze, D. J./Jilek, S. (eds.), *Frontiers of the Roman Empire – the European dimension of a World Heritage Site* (Edinburgh 2008).

³ WHC-10/34.COM/9B (<https://whc.unesco.org/archive/2010/whc10-34Com-9Be.pdf>) with Decision 34 COM 9B (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/4249>).

⁴ Ployer, R./Polak, M./Schmidt, R., *The Frontiers of the Roman Empire. A Thematic Study and Proposed World Heritage Nomination Strategy* (Vienna 2017); https://www.univie.ac.at/limes/FRE_DOWNLOADS/FRE-TS_FinalVersion.pdf

⁵ WHC/17/41.COM/8B.Add (<http://whc.unesco.org/archive/2017/whc17-41com-8B-Add-en.pdf>) with Decision 41 COM 8B.50 (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/6922/>).

⁶ See Sommer, C. S., *Der Donaulimes auf dem Weg zum UNESCO-Welterbe – Zielgerichtetes Eilen und Stolpern*. Bericht der Bayerischen Bodendenkmalpflege 60, 2019, 225–229.

⁷ WHC 43.COM 8B.23 (Draft); <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/2019/whc19-43com-18-part2-draft-en.pdf>, 53.

⁸ https://www.museen-in-bayern.de/fileadmin/Daten/Landesstelle/161021_Donaulimes_komplett_klein.pdf

- ⁹ Flügel, Chr., *Ein übergeordnetes Vermittlungskonzept für das römische Grenzsysteem*. *Der Limes* 11/1, 2017, 20–23. – Flügel, Chr., *Making the Invisible Visible. The Roman Limes in Bavaria, Germany*. In: Bruin, R. de/Hertog, A./Paardekooper, R. (eds.), *The Roman Frontier along the River Rhine. The Role of Museums in revitalizing Cultural Landscapes* (Utrecht 2018) 24–31; <https://www.icomnederland.nl/pdf/ICOM-Roman-Frontier.pdf>
- ¹⁰ Weindl, R./Spantig, M.; *Ein Netzwerk auf dem Weg zu mehr touristischen Besuchern*. *Museum heute* 57, 2020, 73–75; https://www.museen-in-bayern.de/fileadmin/Daten/Ab_2018_Material_Landesstelle/Themen_und_Projekte/Tourismus/mh_57_Netzwerk_Limes.pdf
- ¹¹ Fischer, V., *Welterbevermittlung „to go“*. Die App „LIMES mobil“. *Museum heute* 57, 2020, 45–45; https://www.museen-in-bayern.de/fileadmin/Daten/Ab_2018_Material_Landesstelle/Ver%C3%B6ffentlichungen/Museum_heute/mh_57_web.pdf
- ¹² <https://www.edufilm.at/alapp/> with links for Android and iOS to the apps “Antonine Wall” and “Limes mobil”.
- ¹³ For further information contact veronika.fischer@blfd.bayern.de
- ¹⁴ E. g. Visy, Zs., *CORPUS LIMITIS IMPERII ROMANI (CLIR). Specimina Nova Dissertationem XXI–XXII*, (Pécs 2013) 335–336.
- ¹⁵ <https://www.clir-research.hu/en/clir-research-center-2/#undefined>