



Unesco World Heritage Convention

Belgian efforts for global heritage care



United Nations
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World
Heritage
Convention

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Dear reader,

Soon Unesco will recognise a world heritage site for the thousandth time. Only sites with an Outstanding Universal Value are added to the World Heritage List. This recognition emphasises the general importance of the heritage site and the need to continue to protect it.

Of the long list, everyone undoubtedly knows the Chinese wall, the Egyptian pyramids and the Taj Mahal in India. But do you also know the Belgian world heritage sites? Do you know what makes those sites so special? And do you know what efforts our country makes to help protect the world heritage in other places or continents? You will find the answers to all these questions in this brochure.

However, this publication is also a beautiful example of the good cooperation between the different authorities and partners in Belgium, which I have been privileged enough to experience on a daily basis in the Permanent Delegation of Belgium to Unesco.

My special thanks go to the Flemish Commission for Unesco and the Commission belge francophone et germanophone pour l'UNESCO, at whose initiative this brochure was compiled. Moreover, I would like to express my gratitude to the various partners to this project, in particular, Development Cooperation, Belgian Science Policy Office, the Walloon Heritage Institute, the Flanders Heritage Agency and the Directorate for Monuments and Sites of the Brussels-Capital Region. I also particularly appreciate the valuable work of Unesco Platform Vlaanderen, which was responsible for editing the brochure.

Finally, I would like to thank you, the reader and user of this brochure. Your interest in and care for our unique world heritage express our joint responsibility for this heritage in need of protection, so that the generations to follow can learn how our rich culture and communities have developed and grown through the centuries.

Enjoy your reading,

Francine Chainaye
 Ambassador of Belgium
 Permanent Delegate to Unesco



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On the 16 of November 1972, the General Conference of Unesco adopted the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, better known as the World Heritage Convention. The idea of creating an international movement for protecting the shared heritage of humankind first emerged after the first World War, in the work of the league of nations. Unesco's international campaign in the 1960s to help Egypt and Sudan save Abu Simbel and other Nubian temples from flooding by the Aswan High Dam on the Nile galvanized the international community around heritage and the shared responsibility in its safeguarding. Some 50 countries made financial contributions which funded the campaign to move the monuments out of harm's way. In the run-up to the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Environment a heightened awareness on environmental degradation emerged together with a sense that also magnificent natural places were part of our common heritage and a proposal for an international treaty to conserve these places was tabled at the conference by IUCN. Eventually, it was agreed that a single Convention for the conservation of the world's natural and cultural heritage would be developed under the auspices of Unesco.

Today, when celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Convention, we have to acknowledge how visionary this decision was. It recognized areas of outstanding natural and cultural sites as common heritage of humankind, long before the idea of global public goods was launched. The Convention has become one of the most

successful global instruments and enjoys with 190 States Parties an almost universal acceptance. The World Heritage List currently includes 962 sites in 157 countries and the label has become one of the most sought after international recognitions in the field of heritage. In its 40 years of history, the Convention has proven itself as a powerful tool for conservation and has established a system of international cooperation to protect the identified sites.

The Convention also has evolved and has embraced new categories of heritage such as cultural landscapes, industrial heritage or modern architecture. It has been playing a pioneering role in the conservation of globally important ecosystems such as tropical forests and marine ecosystems. It is setting new standards in the conservation of historic urban landscapes. And perhaps most importantly, the Convention has succeeded in mobilizing the general public for its mission, reaching out to diverse stakeholders and building a strong constituency for the conservation of World Heritage sites. The theme of this 40th anniversary celebration is World Heritage and Sustainable Development; the Role of Local Communities. It reflects the growing recognition of the vital role local communities play in the preservation and management of our heritage sites which, at the same time, must have a function in their lives and contribute to sustainable development.

Of course the challenges ahead are enormous in the face of global phenomena such as population explosion, diminishing

financial resources and climate change. These are responsible for a wide range of environmental and socio-economic pressures that pose a serious threat to World Heritage properties. Resolving potential conflicts between heritage conservation needs and legitimate development aspirations of especially developing nations is another important challenge for the coming decades. These challenges are calling for new and innovative solutions, a new visionary approach which will allow us to conserve our global treasures for the next 40 years and beyond.

To address these challenges, the Convention will need the full support of all State Parties and indeed all partners. We are happy that we are able to count on the strong support by the Kingdom of Belgium for the Convention. Although Belgium was one of the last countries in Europe to ratify the Convention in 1996, it has since become an active player in the Convention. Belgium currently has 11 properties inscribed on the World Heritage List, including some sites in poorly represented categories of heritage such as modern architecture, with the *Major Town Houses of the Architect Victor Horta* and the *Palais Stocklet* or industrial heritage including the *Four Lifts on the Canal du Centre and their Environs*, and the *Major Mining Sites of Wallonia* which were inscribed this year at the 36th session of the World Heritage Committee in St Petersburg. Belgium was also one of the first countries to propose serial sites to the World Heritage List such as the *Flemish Béguinages* and the *Belfries of Flanders and Wallonia*, in 2004 extended

as a transnational site to the *Belfries of Belgium and France*. As a member of the World Heritage Committee from 1999 to 2003, Belgium was instrumental in proposing some changes to make the working methods of the Committee more efficient and also currently it is playing an active role in discussions to ensure that the credibility of the Convention is maintained. Belgium also is embracing the Convention as an instrument for international cooperation. It has provided significant financial support in particular to the activities for the conservation of the World Heritage sites in the Democratic Republic of Congo and is supporting thematic programmes of the Convention such as the marine programme and the cities programme. It has made available scientific expertise through cooperation with its universities and research institutes. This cooperation is very much appreciated, not only by Unesco but especially by the different States Parties who have been benefiting from these activities.

In celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Convention, this brochure will give you an overview, not only about the Convention and the Belgian World Heritage sites, but will also highlight this international cooperation, which lies at its heart. I therefore want to conclude by thanking the Belgian authorities for their continuous support for the Convention and look forward to continuing this work together in the future.

Kishore Rao
Director Unesco World Heritage Centre

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World Heritage in Belgium

La Grand-Place, Brussels



World Heritage
since 1998

La Grand-Place in Brussels is a real jewel of western architecture and one of the most beautiful squares in the world. It is therefore not surprising that La Grand-Place is one of the first sites that Belgium proposed to be included in the World Heritage List. The earliest recorded entries on La Grand-Place in Brussels date back to the 12th century. Its architecture and consecutive historic events make the square unique. Magnificent construction works and private architecture display Europe's cultural history: the Burgundy century with its flamboyant Gothic style (15th century), the beginning of the 18th century Baroque and early Classicist forms and shapes and, finally the 19th century during which historicism developed.

Because La Grand-Place in Brussels lies on the right bank of the Zenne River, not far from the old Bruges-Cologne trading route, it quickly became the city's most important place of trade, and this was the pinnacle of its welfare. Seven streets end up on this market square that dates

back to the Middle Ages - a square which, at that early stage, was already cobbled. The market square was only given its definitive form by the halls and wooden houses that surrounded it after terrible bombardments had destroyed it in 1695. Marshal Villeroi bombarded the center of Brussels, ordered by Louis XIV in retaliation for the destruction of coastal cities and French ports by Dutch and British warships.

La Grand-Place in Brussels thanks its richness to the luxuriance of the architecture, which was dominated by gilded and etched features, and to the extraordinary cohesion between the buildings, despite their distinct diversity in style. As a whole, the square is impressive because of the different historical periods reflected in. To a large extent, it owes this to the regulations which the City Magistrate imposed on the guilds and architects in 1697. These regulations were imposed when a reconstruction campaign was initiated after the bombardments. Despite the great damage that Brussels had suffered, the city recovered

Europe's cultural history is reflected in magnificent buildings of public and private architecture.

rather quickly. Reconstruction remained true to the image of what the market square had looked like before the bombardments. It is the ultimate symbol of the power and pride of the Brussels bourgeoisie, which opted to restore the city to its former glory instead of reconstructing it in the modern style at the time, as was being done in so many other places. The baroque style, which symbolises the pomp and ceremony of a trading city, dominates the façades, save for a few places derogating in the decoration here and there. It is interesting to note that there is no church or other house of prayer on the market square, which illustrates its dominant trading and administrative nature.

The masterpiece of La Grand-Place in Brussels is undoubtedly the City Hall, which occupies the largest part of the southern side of the market place. It is an ensemble of buildings surrounding an inner courtyard. The Belfry of the City Hall is a pyramid-like pointed tower, on which is poised the statue of Michael, the Archangel. The City Hall was constructed between 1401 and 1454 and a large part of it was restored in the 19th century. It has retained its function even to this day and is a prime example of the dominant and flamboyant Gothic style of the day.

The King's House, with its façade of arcades, a pitched roof and a central tower with a lantern, is directly opposite the City Hall. It was constructed as instructed by Charles V in approximately 1512 and re-built in Neo-Gothic style in 1875. It now accommodates the Museum of the City of Brussels, which provides a summary of the city's history.

The Guild Houses adorning the remainder of La Grand-Place date back to the 17th century. They symbolise the power of the traders who were members of the City Council and who wanted to embellish the city's image. Every house has a name and is decorated with specific symbols in



La Grand-Place, Brussels



gold, each of which stood for the occupation of the residents: a horn, a swan, a deer, the house of the tailors, etc. The houses have been subdivided into three groups according to their status and decoration on the façades. The houses are currently run by restaurant or café owners.

The Department for Monuments and Sites of the Brussels-Capital Region regularly runs City Council and Restoration campaigns to maintain the integrity of La Grand-Place. Since the market square was entered on the World Heritage List, morphological studies of every house have been carried out and additional protective measures have been taken to guarantee that the old structures and interiors are conserved. The size of the market square is limited per definition. That is why the immediate surroundings of La Grand-Place, which also form part of the inner city - sometimes also referred to as the "holy island" - are marked as a buffer zone. There are very particular rules on management and conservation in this zone. Various buildings of great patrimonial importance are to be found in this zone and these are subjected to legally prescribed conservation measures. We make special mention of the Brussels Stock Exchange, the Royal St. Hubert Galleries, the Bortier Gallery, the Brussels Parliament and St. Nicholas Church. Since the entry on the World Heritage List, more than 150 buildings in the said zone have been recognised as protected monuments.





World Heritage in Belgium

The four lifts on the Canal du Centre and their environs (La Louvière and Le Roeulx)

Guy Focant © SPW



Many relics from the industrial past are to be found alongside the canal, such as the Italian canteen, a place where meetings were held and accommodation offered, which was constructed for the Gustave Boël Company to house single employees recruited by the firm in Italy.

The Four Lifts on the Canal du Centre are unique. Of the eight hydraulic boat lifts that were constructed at the time, the Four Lifts on the Canal du Centre are the only ones that have been preserved without having had the original steel replaced, and which still work according to the techniques conceived by the English engineers.

The works are an example *par excellence* of the 19th century. However, the Canal du Centre soon no longer met the requirements of modern shipping and in the 1970s its future was uncertain for a short time because there were plans to fill it up and to construct a motorway. An alternative was found, however. A new route was constructed for the thoroughfare of ships weighing a maximum of 1,300 tonnes. A large new boat lift made it possible to span the distance of all four hydraulic boat lifts.

The 19th century canal was afforded a new destination: pleasure boat trips. It is one of the most important tourist attractions in Wallonia. Visitors can go on excursions on the canal, for which the four hydraulic lifts are used.

The Directorate-General for Operational Waterways in Wallonia is liable for maintaining and conserving the canal. Engineers base the decisions on maintenance and conservation on the original plans of the lifts, which they have at their disposal.



The Centre Canal links the basins of the Maas and Scheldt rivers. It is part of a project to promote Hainaut and its industrial region. Coal mining was very important but there were not enough natural waterways, which meant that there was a problem in transporting raw materials and goods. In 1811 Napoleon took the initiative of linking the two river basins. However, it would still take a long time before this project could be accomplished. Various options that took account of the limitations in connecting these were considered: unstable soil, steep descents over a short distance and a lack of water to provide the canal with enough water. Finally, it appeared that the technique of hydraulic lifts, which is the same system as the one in Anderton (England) was the best solution. The gradient meant that it was necessary to construct four boat lifts extending over a distance of 7 km. The lifts could span 15 to 20 metres.

In 1871 the Belgian government decided to finance the construction of the canal. Excavations started in 1884, the first lift was finished in 1888 and the other three followed in 1917.

The lifts operate on the basic principles of fundamental physics and only use hydraulic energy. The design reflects the successful collaboration between engineers of the English company which developed the system, on the one hand, and Belgian engineers of the Directorate of Roads and Bridges and the company Cockerill, which was responsible for manufacturing the machines and parts, on the other.

Besides the unique row of four boat lifts on the Canal du Centre, there is also a series of buildings and characteristic properties, such as the functional buildings, locks, pivot bridges, drawbridges, fixed bridges, etc. The engine rooms, especially in lifts 2 and 3, are most impressive.



Guy Focant © SPW

Besides the unique row of four boat lifts there is also a series of buildings and characteristic properties.

World Heritage in Belgium

Flemish beguinages



© Onroerend Erfgoed, photo Kris Vandevorst

Beguinages are a fascinating physical reminder of the Beguine movement that originated and developed in North-Western Europe in the Middle Ages. Beguines were women who led a life devoted to God without withdrawing from public life. The Beguinages originated as semi-closed religious communities in the 13th century. The Flemish Beguinages are architectural complexes consisting of houses, churches, utility and ablution blocks and green spaces. They were constructed in typical Flemish style. Today Flanders is the only place still bearing any trace of such concentrations of Beguinages, which, together with the historical, aesthetic and socio-cultural facets, is why they are of such outstanding universal value. In Europe, the Beguine movement can be traced back as far as the 12th and 13th centuries and is now almost entirely extinct. Beguines were widows or unmarried women who wished to lead an independent, yet religiously committed life outside the recognised denominational orders

which imposed vows of poverty and eternal fidelity. The Beguines settled in Beguinages, unique places of spiritual experience, of women's culture and solidarity which, even in this day and age, still reflects of the socio-religious Beguine movement. Almost every Flemish city of any significance had one or more Beguinages. Beguines could thrive particularly well in the Low Countries because this is where they could count on the support of the church, local nobility and the feudal lords and their successors.

The Flemish Beguinages were constructed like small walled-in cities, with one or more gates. They were constructed along a watercourse at the edge of the primary fortified inner city centre. They were integrated in the cities when these gradually expanded. Some Beguinages - such as the Great Beguinage of Mechelen - were relocated and re-constructed inside the city after they had been destroyed during the 16th-century religious wars.

The lay-out of the Beguinages was often strongly determined by an effort to make optimal use of the local topography, whereby the watercourse was employed for daily use, including the manufacture of textile or lace-making. By and large, there are two types of Beguinage constructions. The *square type* consists of a central space or courtyard, varying in shape, paved or covered in grass and hemmed in by rows of trees. Examples are still to be found in Bruges, Dendermonde and Turnhout. The *city type* is characterised by a series of streets according to the lay-out of a chess board and based on the design of the "new cities" of the time. The Beguinages of Diest and Lier are examples of this type. Because they expanded so rapidly during the 17th century, a number of these Beguinages were given an additional square. This mixed type originated in Tongeren and Leuven (the Great Beguinage), both of which started out as city types.

The same communal functions are to be found in almost all of them, which, due to their design and volume, are eye-catching in the overall street view. This concerns places such as the church and the infirmary, with the adjoining farmstead and the "Holy Spirit Table", which was meant to feed the needy Beguines and poor people in the neighbourhood. Besides individual houses, a Beguinage also had convents or communal houses where less well-off Beguines lived all together.

During the 16th century the Counter-Reformation caused an even greater increase in the number of Beguines. The peak in the 17th and 18th centuries led to the renovation of existing buildings and construction of new ones. The urban ordinances, which laid down those wooden premises of the Middle Ages, were to be bricked to avoid destructive fires, tapped into this trend.

During the French Revolution and the Dutch Occupation, the Beguinages were disbanded and taken over by the forerunners of the current OCMWs (Public Social Welfare Centres). As of that moment, especially the poor families of the city were to be found in the Beguinages. Not much later, a number of Beguines who once again



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wanted to re-start their previous lifestyle and religious habits started mingling with them. The Beguine movement subsequently experienced a short revival, including the construction of the Neo-Gothic Beguinage of Sint-Amansberg (1873-1875). But after the First and, more particularly, the Second World War, the Beguine movement once again experienced a serious decline. In Leuven, the university took control of the Great Beguinage in the 1960s, restoring the complex and giving it a new destination as hostel for the students. This project served as a catalyst to re-assess twenty-six Beguinages still conserved, an on-going process to this very day.

Although Flanders had suggested that all twenty-six conserved Beguinages be recognised, the final decision was made to enter a carefully considered selection of them on the World Heritage List. Some of the factors taken into account for the selection were soundness, integrity and authenticity of the residential communal living units. The following thirteen Beguinages were eventually recognised as world heritage: Bruges, Dendermonde, Diest, Ghent (Small Beguinage), Hoogstraten, Kortrijk, Leuven (Great Beguinage), Lier, Mechelen (Great Beguinage), Sint-Amansberg, Sint-Truiden, Tongeren and Turnhout.



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- ↑↑↑ Bruges.
- ↑↑ Kortrijk.
- ↑ Hoogstraten.
- ← Ghent.



World Heritage in Belgium

Historic centre of Brugge (Bruges)

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The historic centre of Bruges is an exceptional example of a medieval historic city. It has preserved its historic urban architecture, which has gradually evolved with the course of time. The original Gothic and Neo-Gothic constructions round off the typical image of the city. Bruges was one of the cultural and commercial capitals of Europe, which made it an important place in which to exchange ideas on matters such as art and architecture. Bruges is also regarded as the birthplace of the Flemish Primitives, who played a major part in influencing the art of painting in the Middle Ages.

The outstanding universal value of Bruges is based on attributes such as its urban development and architecture, which represent important periods in Western history. Urban architecture, with its network of squares, streets and canals, jointly reflect the variety of historic buildings and Gothic brick architecture which defined the socio-economic and artistic aspects of the history of the Middle Ages.

Its natural location played an important part in the origin of Bruges (7th – 8th centuries). The first settlements were concentrated on the sandy ridges along the Reie River. At the end of the 9th century and particularly during the 10th century, the area around the Burg square developed into an important nucleus following the construction of a fort initiated by the Counts of Flanders. The fort was steadily expanded and walled and consisted of the Count's residence, a chapel and St. Donatian's Church and its chapter. The first urban expansion started around the nucleus, around which, in turn, a bulwark and rampart were built in 1127. This protected an inhabited area of 75 ha. The market square, which was the commercial heart of the city, developed alongside the Burg, which expanded to become the administrative and religious centre. Initially, Bruges' major economic trumps were the import of English wool and export of Flemish broadcloth.

The second and final bulwark (with double ditches and city gates) which was constructed in the



Bruges was one of the cultural and commercial capitals of Europe, which made it an important place for the exchange of ideas on matters such as art and architecture.

form of a ring (the so-called "Bruges egg"), was originally conceived in 1297 and envelops an area of 370 ha. The connection with the sea was always borne in mind. The extended city comprises numerous religious institutions, including the Beguinage, which had originally been allocated premises outside the city walls and had been provided with large open spaces (some of which exist to this day). Besides that, many residences were built around the most important access roads to the city. Four impressive city gates and a tower of this second urban fortification were included in the substitute 19th century green promenade and are still standing.

An abundance of architectural style, ranging from Roman to Neo-Classical and Neo-Gothic, is reflected in the Bruges town houses, religious buildings and complexes. Stylistic choices were linked to time-related mentality, the availability of materials, such as the more expensive imported natural stone and bricks typical of the region, and the economic situation. As the final stop of the Hanseatic Route, Bruges contributed to the evolution of the Brick Gothic in Northern Europe. Important late-Gothic town houses, which may or may not have been provided with terraced towers, enrich the different urban quarters. As of the 16th century, successive urban ordinances laid down that average wooden houses were to be (mandatorily) bricked. Brick houses with simplified Gothic plans and ornaments in typical terraced façades replaced or complemented earlier construction. Centuries later, contemporary houses started complementing or replacing the constructions.

Until the 16th century, Bruges remained a leading commercial and financial centre which traded a substantial number of products such as salt, iron, (precious) metals, spices, wine, broadcloth, many luxury products, manuscripts and works of art (particularly paintings), because it was the last link in the Hanseatic chain. However,

the increasing amount of sand entering the harbour and a political crisis with Maximilian of Austria caused urban welfare to decline. Consequently, there was a cut-down on new developments in the city, although these were never fully obliterated, as is apparent from the development of the Coupure in the 18th century and the construction of the railway station and the City Theatre in the 19th century. Nevertheless, Bruges has managed to preserve its authentic (medieval) character. This became one of its most important trumps in the 19th century. The city was (re-)discovered by artists, writers and English tourists. Bruges became a "mandatory" stopover on their program: a real must, second only to the site of the Battle of Waterloo. Bruges acquired its image of quiet and peaceful romantic city. The city was to cultivate this and link it to its artistically-minded and cultural past. In addition, Bruges emerged as the laboratory for the conservation of monuments in the 19th century. During the past forty years, this has evolved from strictly conserving monuments to a structural policy regarding the historic centre and its expansion.

Bruges is also world-renowned as the centre of art and culture of the Middle Ages. Influential Flemish Primitives such as Jan Van Eyck, Hans Memling and numerous other masters from abroad lived and worked in Bruges and contributed to the innovative movements in the painting art of the Middle Ages. Even at that time, their work conquered the European art market and, with its sense of civil realism, plasticity and beautiful colours influenced the painting art of the Middle Ages. Today their work is spread all over the world but Bruges still preserves a number of top pieces in their uniquely original location.

The Belfry of Bruges and the Beguinage had previously already been included individually in the World Heritage List. Bruges is to this day also the only World Heritage City in Belgium.



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World Heritage in Belgium

Notre-Dame Cathedral in Tournai



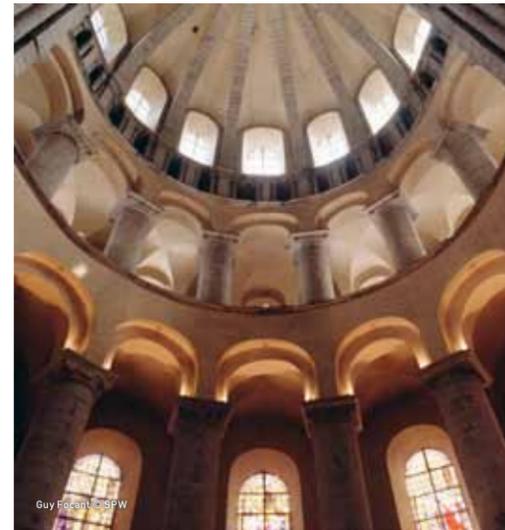
The Notre-Dame Cathedral reflects the interaction between the architecture of the Île-de-France, the Rhineland and Normandy during the brief period before Gothic architecture made a breakthrough (start of the 12th century).

The cathedral is situated in the heart of the old city, not far from the left bank of the Scheldt and at a distance that is visible from the Belfry. The cathedral distinguishes itself by the sustainability of the episcopal power that it represents: the Bishopric of Tournai was established in the 5th century and still exists, even to this day. Besides playing a role as a place where mass is said, the complex also has important cultural and intellectual functions.

The church building is not homogeneous as far as its architecture is concerned but it is the product of three separate and clearly distinct, consecutive phases. These are the nave, the Roman transept and the Gothic choir.

The nave and the transept were mainly built in the 12th century. Apart from some renovation work, no fundamental changes were made during the following centuries. The project was extremely ambitious and the cathedral is the largest preserved Roman building in Belgium.

The Anglo-Normandy finishing is distinct but not unique. It shows great originality in a number of important innovations, such as the transformation on the outside of the triforium of the high windows having four joints, and the double gate on the eastern side. These innovations make the nave unique in the history of Roman architecture. On the other hand, it seems that the plain shapes were influenced by Carolingian tradition, which was to be found especially in the old Netherlands. The constructor of the nave made a remarkable synthesis of the most innovative aspects of the architecture of his time, interpreted them rather freely and combined them with local traditions.



The cathedral is the largest preserved Roman building in Belgium.

The magnitude of the nave with its five towers is undoubtedly the most characteristic feature of the Tournai cathedral. It is difficult to discover the origin and may probably be attributed to influence by the "Lombardo-Rhine" and the harmonious façades in France and England. This model was particularly popular during the second half of the 12th century.

The Gothic choir emphasises the introduction of the new shapes of the classic Gothic style in Belgium in the 13th century. It strongly represents the building styles of the constructions at that time and reflects the enormous technological progress in the late 12th and early 13th centuries. The choir is also an example of the speedy spread of such architecture from the creative centres of Île-de-France in the middle of the 12th century. It is indeed a building that was modern at the time, for which the newest techniques and state-of-the-art architectural cornice moulding patterns were employed.



Notre-Dame Cathedral in Tournai



The Notre-Dame Cathedral of Tournai also houses many treasures and extensive archives. The treasures consist of a great deal of silver, including relics from the 13th century, relic holders, chalices, ivory, wall tapestries from Arras dating from the 15th century, a few paintings and sculptures and a collection of over 800 vestments, the oldest of which date back to the 12th century. Some of these treasures are used during the great annual procession that takes place on the second Sunday of September to commemorate the city's deliverance from the plague in 1092. The archives have never left the Cathedral. They take up both rooms on the first floor of the Sacristy. These rooms were specially designed for this purpose in the 17th century. The oldest document dates back to approximately the year 1000 and there are no archives missing for the period 1566 to date. The archives consist of valuable books, charters, copies, registers, accounts, chapter deliberations, testaments, etc.

The Cathedral has withstood the test of time reasonably well. Only the bombings of the Second World War occasionally caused the roof of the nave and a part of the buildings of the main part to catch fire. Since it has been included in the World Heritage List, the cathedral has become the subject of a large project that will take twenty years to complete to renovate the church building and upgrade the neighbourhood where the cathedral is situated.





World Heritage in Belgium

Neolithic flint mines at Spiennes

Guy Focant © SPW



The Neolithic mines of Spiennes are an example of the technological ingenuity of pre-historic man in mining Neolithic flint. They appear in two chalk-like plateaux, with a surface of approximately 100 hectare, south-east of the city of Mons.

There was intensive flint mining during the Neolithic period (the 5th century to the first half of the 3rd century before the Christian calendar). Various techniques were used at the time, whereby the most spectacular and typical method was digging holes. The diameter of these holes ranged from 0.8 m to 1.20 m in diameter and was 16 m deep. Neolithic man also dug shafts that could sometimes be as long as 2 m under the layers of flint. They dug up the flint with the aid of a special technique referred to as "striking". With this method, entire blocks were extracted and a notch was made in the centre of a little chalk wall. Wooden supports were then put in position and the wall was pulled down so that the top layer caved in under its own weight and broke into various blocks.

There are up to 5,000 holes in the area, which is known as "Petit Spiennes" (14 ha). The holes and shafts were filled up again with bore grit as the mining construction progressed. Cutting workshops were linked to these pits, which is why there are still numerous pieces of flint on the site, from which the name of that part of the site has been derived: Camp à Cayaux (Field with Stones). Products manufactured were axes to fell the trees and long knives, which were transformed into sickles, scrapers or knives. The fact that production was normalised shows the high technical level at which the stone cutters of Spiennes worked. A wide range of objects, over and above the mass manufacture of axes and knives, were made on the site: scissors, cutting styluses, scrapers, drills and even pikes that were used to mine the flint.

The site was out of production by the end of the Bronze Age. On the old maps one can see how the area was later used for agriculture or left untilled because the abundance of flint made the



area unsuited for cultivation. The largest part of the site is currently being used for agricultural purposes.

In the 19th century, flint was mined once again, especially at the surface, to make canon. The flint was also used as raw material to produce fine pottery. This mining did not last long, however, and was only done in a few places on the site (spanning an area of less than 100 m²).

The waste that was to be found on the site caused Albert Trim to suspect that there had been a flint axe workshop there at some stage. 25 pits were discovered during excavation works for the construction of a railway line in 1867. This eventually led to the discovery of the mine site. It was the first discovery of its kind. Others followed in Europe and America.

There are two important excavation periods on the site. The first excavation (1912-14) opened up pits that were 16-metres deep. The second excavation started in 1953 and is still being continued to find out more about the area. A

scientific base to protect the site has been built on top of the mine.

Only a limited part of the site is excavated and studied. Wallonia hopes that this excavation can preserve its scientific value and will be regarded as an archaeological find.

Accessibility to the site is limited: entrance to the mine is allowed sporadically and there is no clear explanation for the public to clarify the importance and riches of this exceptional site. A visitors' centre will be built to remedy this shortcoming. It is to be built on the site and will only allow a limited number of visitors after it has been completed, so that these will be able to put themselves in the position of the archaeologists and re-live the working conditions of the Neolithic period.



Guy Focant © SPW

Various techniques were used for flint mining, the most spectacular and typical method was digging holes.

World Heritage in Belgium

Major town house

of the architect Victor Horta



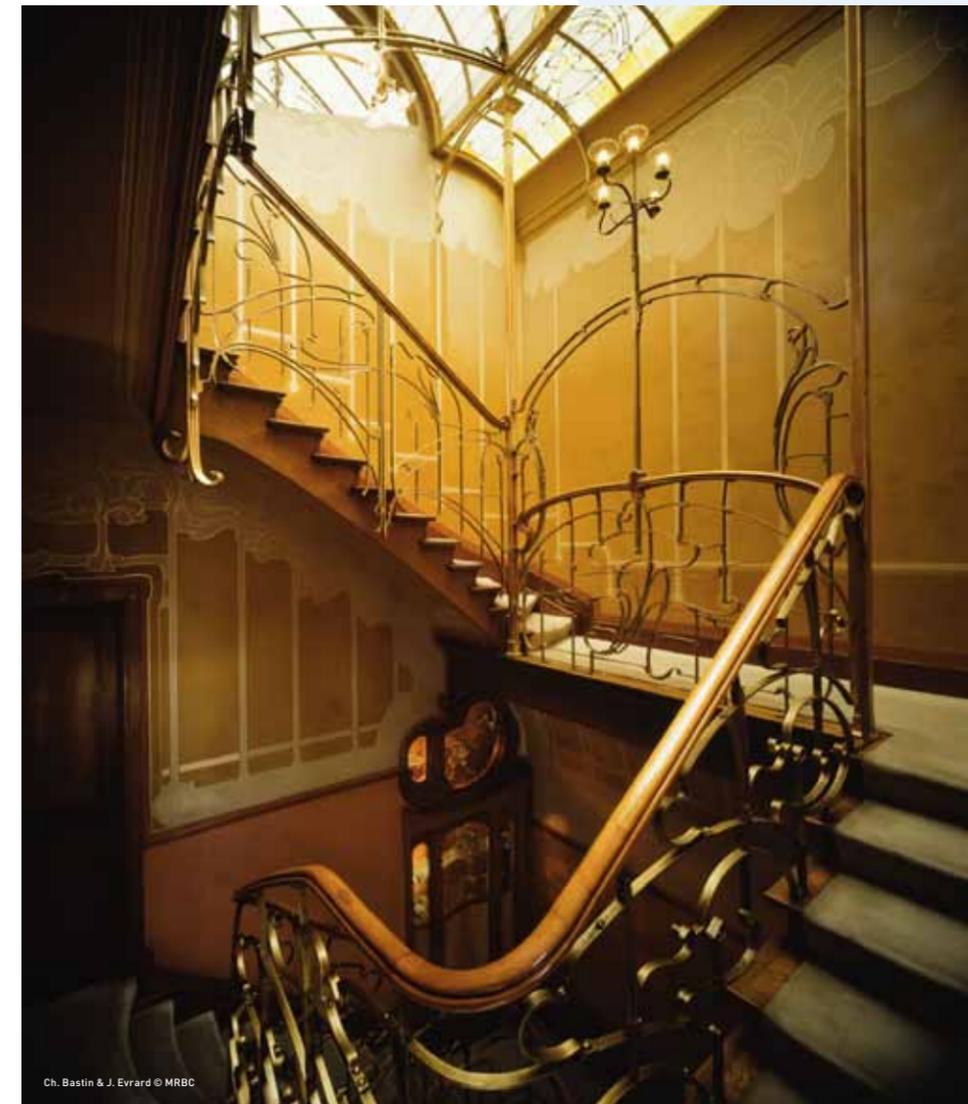
Ch. Bastin & J. Evrard © MRBC



Ch. Bastin & J. Evrard © MRBC



Major town house of the architect Victor Horta



Ch. Bastin & J. Evrard © MRBC



World Heritage
since 2000

There are many Art-Nouveau houses in the streets of Brussels, which reflect the innovative approach that young artists adopted at the transition into the 20th century. Four of those houses were built by Victor Horta (1861 - 1947). They display his exceptional creativity and are an essential contribution to the history of architecture. These are the houses Tassel, Solvay, Van Eetvelde and the artist's own house and workshop. Victor Horta was one of the pioneers of Art Nouveau and of the modern movement. Taking the classic period as the point of departure, he radically changed architectural opinions. To be more specific, he introduced open plan, let the intrinsic properties of the materials guide him when applying them and created an original and decorative approach.

Horta's town houses break with the traditional pattern of the 19th-century terraced and town houses and allow their residential function to blend in perfectly with outward display. Horta approaches each room in a different and creative manner. In this way he succeeds in reflecting

the personality of the person commissioning the project. The result is a coherent unit which focuses on the harmonious oneness of architecture and ornamentation. The greatest architecture historians agree that the Tassel house is to be regarded as the first finished Art Nouveau building.

The style revolution that Horta's works show are characterized by the introduction of the free plan, a design that ensures optimal distribution and transformation of light, an ornamentation which utilizes the wavy energy of the curved lines and that merges with the structure of the building. Through the rational use of metal structures, which often remain visible and sometimes subtly hidden, Victor Horta managed to create vibrant, smooth areas that bathe in light and are closely associated with the personality of the inhabitants. The principle of the double house which is connected by a circulation space under a glass dome is used in houses Tassel and Van Eetvelde. This space can also accommodate a winter garden, which gets a magical allure in the house Solvay.

The Art-Nouveau houses of Victor Horta display his exceptional creativity and are an essential contribution to the history of architecture.

The stairwell in his own home-studio uses this type of device in a particularly elegant and refined manner. The interior decoration of each house witness an astonishing ingenuity: the created motifs flow on smoothly from the mosaic floor of the painted walls to the wrought ironwork and each personalized item of furniture.

The houses have been exceptionally well preserved and reflect the essential contribution that Horta made to the history of architecture. They illustrate the different elements of the techniques he used, which is also to be seen in other projects. Horta had an enormous influence on the generation of architects following him.

The Horta houses are a type of heritage seldom to be seen on the World Heritage List. More particularly, they concern contemporary urban architecture at the end of the 19th century. There have been multiple restoration campaigns to have Horta's house regain its original aura since it has been entered on the World Heritage List. The residence is accessible to the public at large and is also home to the Horta museum. The Solvay and Van Eetvelde houses are two private properties open to visits upon reservation or under certain conditions. Tassel House is not accessible.



World Heritage in Belgium
**Plantin-Moretus
 house-workshops-museum complex**



The printing and publishing house was established by Christoffel Plantin in the second half of the 16th century. The complex is located in Antwerp - one of the most prominent centres of the art of European printing - and, together with Paris and Venice, it is associated with the invention and spread of the art of printing. The printing complex is of exceptional architectural value. The whole unit is unmistakable evidence of the life and work of one of the most active printers and publishers in Europe at the end of the 16th century. The printing house continued operating until 1867. For the three centuries during which it operated, it gathered an extensive collection of typographic material, a substantial library, an invaluable collection of archives and works of art, including paintings by Rubens.

The central point of the former Plantin-Moretus residence and workshops dates back to the years 1576-1580. Christoffel Plantin (approximately 1520 - 1589) settled in "De Gulden Passer" ("The Golden Pair Compass") mansion in Antwerp.

He built his printing house in 1579, which was originally a single-storey house. Four rental homes that Plantin had built were later integrated in the business and residential parts.

The heirs of Jan Moretus, Plantin's son-in-law who took over the workshop from him, had further adjustments made to the entire complex between 1620 and 1640. The printing house was given a second storey and additional business spaces, and offices were built on the eastern side, with an adjoining, partly perimeter, gallery; the Baroque busts of the members of the Moretus grace the top storey. The gallery and typical façades of brick and sandstone afforded the courtyard the look and form that it still has to this very day. Finally, from between 1761 and 1763 the little 17th-century façades on the "Vrijdagmarkt" were replaced by the Louis XV/XVII-style façade as it currently stands.

The interior is richly upholstered. The eight rooms are wall-papered with gold leather (16th-18th century) and a number of wall tapestries,

paintings, including 19 works by the artist friend Rubens, which have been exceptionally well preserved, also adorn the walls. The collection of Renaissance, Baroque and other period furniture makes the representative and homely atmosphere in the living rooms even more tangible.

Because the City of Antwerp and the Belgian Government took over the historical complex in 1876, which led to its new function as a museum, it was possible to preserve the authenticity and integrity of the buildings. Using them as museum buildings has since then only necessitated a minor number of adjustments. These were executed in keeping with the mentality on museums at that time and the care for monuments which also have acquired documentary and historical value more than 130 years later.

The building complex with its residential and working rooms and its perfectly preserved library, collection of works of art and historic printing equipment on the premises, reflect an unrivalled image of cultural life and the scientific Humanistic and Baroque world until the 19th century. The blend of the residential and business cultures at that time was expressed in the neat and well-preserved interior of the living rooms and in the functionally arranged business quarters. In particular, the typesetting room, type case room, printing office, the correcting room, owner's office and bookshop are all exceptional evidence of the manufacturing process in the world of books, and of the resources and techniques which this "industrial printing house" of the *ancien régime* had at its disposal. The printing presses that were preserved on the premises, which date back to approximately 1600 and other examples dating back to before 1800, the typographic collection containing printing tools, including stamps and matrices for various modern fonts, together with the alphabets, are of exceptional value to the world today.

The business archives of the "Officina Plantiniana" were included in UNESCO's *Memory of the World* Register in 2001. These archives offer unique evidence of how the printing and publishing house, which was managed by means of carefully considered planning and in keeping with the standards of the *ancien régime*, operated.



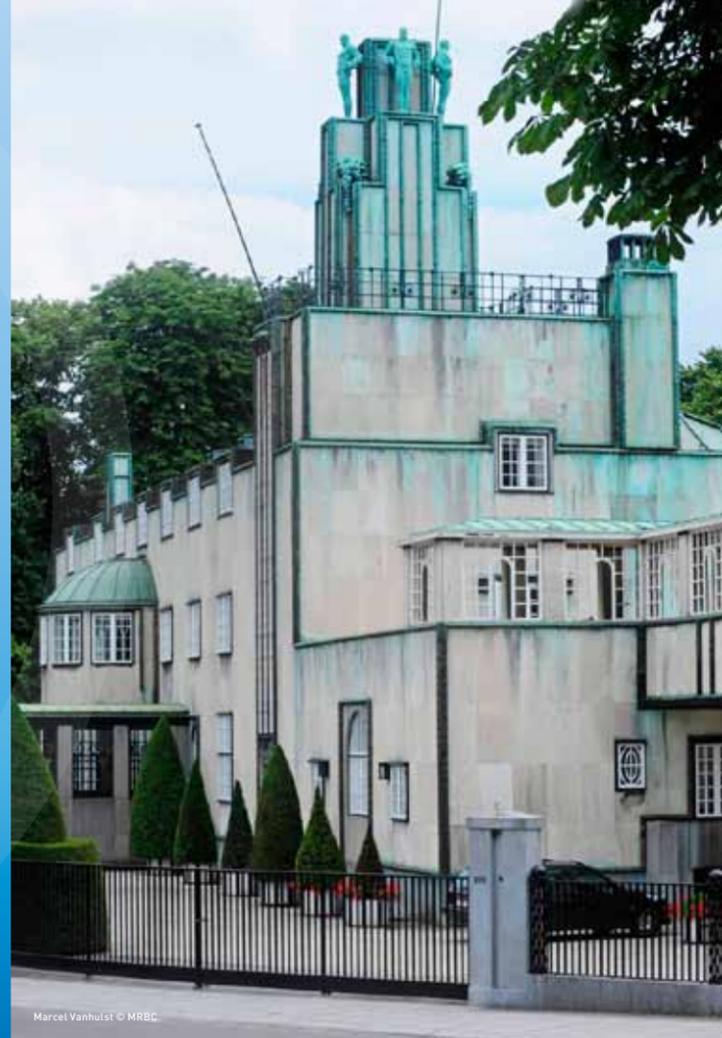
The complex is unmistakable evidence of the life and work of one of the most active printers and publishers in Europe at the end of the 16th century.

In addition to the Plantin collection of older manuscripts and other works, the library also houses almost 90% of the works the "Officina Plantiniana" produced. Its pioneering role as centre of European Humanism in the 16th century, is clearly expressed in religious and scientific production, not least reflected by the atlases of Ortelius and Mercator, who contributed greatly to international trade and cooperation. The entirety is evidence of a watershed in the history of communication.



World Heritage in Belgium

Stoclet house



Marcel Vanhulst © MRBC



Stoclet house

further enhanced by the entrance, which is preceded by a long passage and watched over by a sculpture of Minerva, and augmented yet again the magnitude of the tower with a monumental group of statues by Franz Metzner. The interior displays impressive decorations that blend in effortlessly with the architecture. The decoration is surprising because of its modernity, the richness of the materials used and the quality of the way in which it has been done. The material used for the floors is also valuable and richly decorated, in contrast to the plain cement ceilings. The interior decoration was designed entirely by the *Wiener Werkstätte*.

The fact that both the inside and outside of Stoclet House has been preserved almost in its original state is to be credited particularly to the owners-descendants of the first owner, who keep meticulous watch over the building. Although Stoclet House has been particularly well preserved, it was still in need of some restoration. This was started in 2008 and will continue for another few years to come. The first



© Ville de Stoclet / NBC / DMS

phase, which consists of restoring the railings, has been completed successfully and contributes to this mythical building on the Tervurenlaan.



World Heritage since 2009

Stoclet House in Brussels is an icon of the Wiener Secession and the masterpiece of the architect Joseph Hoffman (Pirnitz 1870 - Vienna 1956). It was added to the World Heritage List in 2009.

This extraordinary building, which is dedicated to arts, was constructed as commissioned by banker and collector Adolphe Stoclet. He was an admirer of the progressive ideas of artists such as Hoffmann. Right from the start, the building offered the members of the household ideal living conditions and exceptional comfort, which is why it was referred to as a palace. Stoclet House was distinctive because its design and the programme were perfect examples of the integration of all arts and applying the principles of *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

Even in Brussels, where Art Nouveau of work by Horta, Hankar or Hamesse generated innovation, Hoffman's work was regarded as ultra-modern. The decorative style is based on the use of a parallelepiped, squares, balance symbols and parallel lines. By designing Stoclet House,

Hoffman created an original concept dotted with elements of symbolism and idealism here and there. The inside and outside of the building and the gardens are in the same style. It is a mixture of plain shape and elegance.

The edges of the outside walls are bordered in bronze, which creates cohesion between architecture and decoration. While the simultaneously developing Art Nouveau architecture trend aimed to display the structural elements of the building and the decoration, Hoffman attempted to achieve exactly the opposite. All structural elements are carefully hidden, which is what affords the building an almost intangible and timeless character. The building is clad in gold and marble and the interior is characterised by the contrast between black and white, bright and dark shades.

The long marble façade of over 60 metres on the street side gives the building an aura of austerity and reticence. This feeling is even



© Wim Robberechts © MRBC

All structural elements are carefully hidden, which is what affords the Stoclet House a timeless character.



World Heritage in Belgium

Major mining sites of Wallonia

Guy Focant © SPW



Four sites in various basins in Wallonia have been jointly registered under a single name in the World Heritage List. These are the Grand Hornu in the Borinage, Bois-du-Luc in the watershed of the Centre-du-bois, Bois-du-Cazier and the basin of Charleroi and the Blegny mine in the Liège basin.

Each site reflects a period of the history of coal since the industrial revolution arrived on the European Continent in the early 19th century, until it receded in the second half of the 20th century. Apart from telling a chronological tale, they also provide theme evidence of four fields: architecture, society life, memory and skills.

The Grand Hornu is the oldest of the four sites. Henri De Gorge started operating the coal mines in 1810. He used techniques which had only just reached the Continent from England to tackle the problem. In order to meet the needs of his labourers and to make sure that they were loyal to him, he decided to build them a city which

had all the necessary comfort and convenience available at the time. To achieve this, he called on the architect Bruno Renard who drew a labourers' complex in Neo-Classical style, which was inspired by the work of the French architect Ledoux, who had designed the salt works of Arc-et-Senans. The city consisted of approximately 400 houses and various social amenities: a hall for festivities, schools, shops and a park. The intention was to provide the miners with clean and well-equipped houses according to the standards at that time. The city was finished when Henri De Gorge died. His heirs continued to operate the business.

Coal mining operations in Bois-du-Luc go back very far indeed. The "Société de Grand Conduit et des Mines de Charbon" (Organisation of the Large Canal and Coal Mines) of Houdeng, which was translated into a project for miners and citizens, originated in 1685. The company expanded and developed its operations with the aid of the newest techniques available. The

mine site of Saint Emmanuel opened in 1846. This was a promising operation. Taking the Grand Hornu as an example, the company decided to build houses for its employees. Proximity allows one to better control employees and keeps the temptations of the city at arm's length. The "cité" was square-shaped, as we still know it today, to make optimum use of the space available. Here too, the intention was to provide comfort and safety. It is actually a village that gradually developed in the early 20th century. Houses, schools, a church, hall for festivities, hospital, care home, pharmacy, park, grocery and fanfares were provided.

The operations of the mine of Bois-du-Cazier, which lay in the basin of Charleroi, began in the 19th century and blossomed in the 20th century. On 8 August 1956, at 8.10 a.m., the mine of Bois-du-Cazier entered the annals of history and acquired sad and international fame. That morning, human error, combined with technical problems, caused a fire to break out, whereby the smoke killed 262 miners who were trapped underground. The disaster was broadcast on radio and shown on the upcoming television. All of Europe followed aid workers' efforts and the suffering of the victim families for a whole month. This tragic incident drew attention to the foreign population and their (often very difficult) living conditions. Following the disaster, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) laid down new rule which forbade children under the age of 14 to work in the mines and which made breathing appliances mandatory.

The fourth site is located in the Liège basin. The Blegny mine blossomed during the 19th century. The mine called "Mary" was only closed down in 1980. Before it was finally closed down, the Province of Liège decided to hold an exhibition of the mine and its operations. The mine was the only part that was not broken down. It is an excellent example of a fully production-focused coal mine in the second half of the 20th century. The mine is still equipped with a cable tier and an extraction tower of reinforced concrete. Lifts taking visitors accompanied by ex-miners underground are operated from an engine room.



Guy Focant © SPW

Apart from telling a chronological tale, the mining sites also provide theme evidence on four fields: architecture, society life, memory and skills.

Besides the unique stories by their guides, the visitors discover the underground world of the mine and various tools used by the miners. The unloading floor where the carts arrived, coal was sorted and the slag heap was made, and the compressors, are important components of this site.

The four sites are currently being successfully converted into cultural attractions: the Museum of Contemporary Arts in Grand Hornu, the eco-museum and the mine museum of Bois-du-Luc, the museums on the glass industry and the commemoration plaque of the disaster in Bois-du-Cazier, the mine museum and visits to the systems of the Blegny mine.



Guy Focant © SPW



Guy Focant © SPW

- ↑↑↑ The Grand Hornu.
- ↑↑ Bois-du-Luc.
- ↑ Bois-du-Cazier.
- ← Blegny.

World Heritage in Belgium

Belfries of Belgium and France



In 1999 twenty-six Flemish and six Walloon belfries were included on the World Heritage List. These were extended to one more Walloon and 23 North French belfries in 2005. At that point in time, the World Heritage Committee also decided that the series was regarded as complete.

The belfries in Belgium and Northern France, which had been built between the 11th and 20th centuries, were mostly erected in the prevailing style of that construction period. They are significant evidence of the increased civil urban liberties. Whereas the Italian, German and English cities preferred to construct town houses, belfries were afforded more attention in this part of North-Western Europe. Compared to the donjon or keep (which symbolised aristocracy) and the bell tower (symbolising the church), the belfry represented the increased power of the aldermen. The belfry gradually also became a symbol of the influence and welfare of the cities.

The origin and history of the belfries are closely related to the rise of the cities in the Middle Ages. The blossoming of industry, its associated diversified international trade and the rise of the middle class in the 12th and 13th centuries strongly contributed to the emancipation of urban settlements, which were gradually moving away from the dominant feudal regime. That urban emancipation was translated into the appearance of the centrally located belfry, a third landmark in the urban landscape alongside the church tower and the keep. In addition, multi-functional halls with administrative and commercial functions, which often adjoined the belfries, originated in the Flemish trading cities.

Belfries gradually became more important as city clocks and watch towers. That is why the constructions were made increasingly higher and were given pinnacles, which also befitted the Gothic style that had in the meantime become prevalent. As of the 15th and 16th centuries, the belfries were in many cases integrated in the newly constructed city halls.

A belfry was a practical and multi-functional building: charters and treasures could be kept, the arsenal could be stored and aldermen could hold their meetings there. As has already been said, it also served as watch tower or as a prison. Furthermore, the city bell and later, clock and carillon, which regulated civil life, were housed in the belfry. This meant that the belfry was the symbol of urban power and welfare. The belfry was regularly destroyed during armed conflicts for this reason, and also because of the part that it played as watch tower. The belfry was invariably reconstructed after such destruction. That was sometimes done in a different place or in the prevailing style. As a symbol of urban independence, the belfry transcended all conflicts.

The Belfry of Tournai is the oldest belfry in Belgium (1187). It is allegedly a re-used and raised stone tower that was previously part of the city bulwark. In other places, such as in the North French Boulogne, the keep of the fort was recycled. Here the belfry literally represented the absolute power of the emancipated city over



The origin and history of belfries are closely linked to the urban emancipation in the Middle Ages.

feudal rule. In some cases the existing stone church tower (originally) served as watch tower with a city clock and to house charters and the like. These church belfries were kept, especially in the early Duchy of Brabant, whereas separate belfries were erected elsewhere.

Flanders has no Baroque belfries. However, the belfry built in Veurne in 1628 does have a Baroque steeple but the body consists of late-Gothic ornaments. However, the *Tour de l'horloge* in Mons, which was re-built after 1661, is unmistakably a Baroque construction.

In the 19th and even early 20th centuries, city and town halls were constructed and these incorporated an ideal model-type belfry - such as in Sint-Niklaas or in the municipalities of the Brussels periphery. After the First and Second World Wars, reconstruction was differentiated. For example, in Ypres and Comines, the belfry was reconstructed in a manner that made history. In other places, more contemporary techniques such as the foundations of concrete structures were used. More new belfries were built in places such as Lille and Charleroi, even during the time between the wars. These contemporary-style belfries once again took on the characteristic elements of the original belfries, such as the *landmark* function, the clock and the carillon.

Belfries in Flanders:

Aalst, Antwerp, Bruges, Dendermonde, Diksmuide, Eeklo, Ghent, Herentals, Ypres, Kortrijk, Lier, Leuven, Lo, Mechelen (belfry), Mechelen (Saint Rombout's Tower), Menin, Nieuwpoort, Oudenaarde, Roeselare, Sint-Truiden, Tielt, Tienen, Tongeren, Veurne, Zoutleeuw.

Belfries in Wallonia:

Mons, Binche, Charleroi, Tournai, Gembloux, Namur, Thuin.

Belfries in France:

Armentières, Bailleul, Bergues, Cambrai, Comines, Douai, Dunkerque (city hall belfry), Dunkerque (Saint-Eloi Church), Gravelines, Lille, Loos, Aire-sur-la-Lys, Arras, Béthune, Boulogne, Calais, Hesdin, Abbeville, Amiens, Doullens, Lucheux, Rue, Saint-Riquier.

↑ Ypres.
↖ Mons.
← Oudenaarde.



Every state that joins the World Heritage Convention must consider the following: which sites or places within our borders qualify as a possible entry on the World Heritage List? Those buildings, complexes and sites are included in the national tentative list. The Belgian tentative list currently includes the following suggestions:

- The architectural work by Henry van de Velde
- The Battlefield of Waterloo: the end of the Napoleonic era
- The Bavay-Tongeren trajectory of the Roman paved road Boulogne-Cologne, situated on the territory of the Walloon Region
- The Brussels Galleries / the Royal St. Hubert Galleries
- Commemoration place and monuments of the "Great War": the "Westhoek" and adjoining regions
- The Guiette house, Populierenlaan 32, Antwerp
- The historic nucleus of Antwerp - from the Scheldt River to the old city ramparts back to approximately 1250
- Hoge Kempen: rural-industrial transition landscape
- The Law Courts of Brussels
- Leuven: university buildings, the heritage of six centuries in the heart of the historic inner city
- The medieval nucleus of Ghent, known as the "Kuip" and the two abbeys around which it originated
- The Meuse Citadels
- The Palace of the Prince Bishops of Liège
- The panorama of the Battle of Waterloo: particularly significant example of the "panoramic phenomenon"
- The plateau of the Hautes Fagnes
- The thermal complex of Spa: from mundane care to luxury tourism



International Cooperation on World Heritage

Africa

Improved management of natural world heritage sites

The Unesco general programme affords as much attention as possible to the particular needs in Africa. Special efforts are made regarding world heritage. The African region is actually continually under-represented on the World Heritage List: only 9% of the elements registered lie in this region. In contrast, African sites constitute 40% of the elements on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

The outstanding universal value of the African world heritage sites can only be protected if sites management is improved. The basic principle for good management is sound information and appropriate manager training.

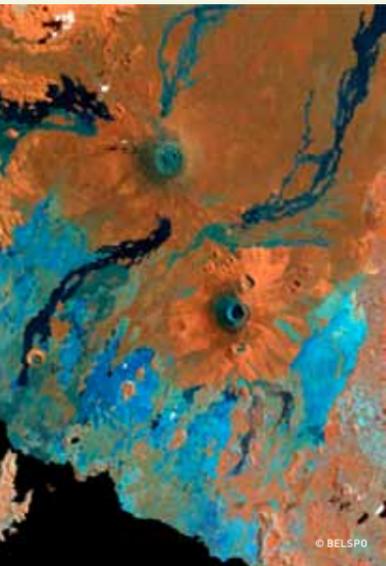
The Unesco World Heritage Centre developed the *African Nature Programme* with the support

of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the advisory body for the recognition of natural heritage sites, the African World Heritage Fund (AWHF) and other partners. This programme intends to improve the management of African natural world heritage sites by means of targeted awareness-raising and by providing adapted training courses and expertise. The General Flemish Trust Fund (FUT) supports this initiative.

The *African Nature Programme* will run for a term of six years. Flanders funds the first 24 months of the programme, so that a solid foundation can be laid to further develop the programme.

The intention is to improve management of the African natural world heritage sites, including transparent assessment mechanisms in

African sites constitute 40% of the elements on the List of World Heritage in Danger.



↑↑ Endemic okapi in Congo.

↑ Earth observation image of Virunga National Park in Congo.

accordance with the requirements of the World Heritage Convention. Furthermore, a knowledge platform ensures that there is an exchange of knowledge and experience between people and institutions working on managing natural world

Endangered biodiversity in Congo

The Democratic Republic of Congo has unique ecological riches, including five world heritage sites, for which the Congolese Institute for the Conservation of Nature (ICCN) conducts an active conservation policy. The sites are the National Parks of Virunga, Kahuzi-Biega, the Okapi game reserve; Salonga and Garamba. They appeared on the World Heritage List between 1994 and 1999 and all five of them appear on the List of World Heritage in Danger. The unrivalled variety of natural habitats in the country houses various rare and characteristic animal species, such as the mountain gorilla, the endemic okapi and the northern white rhinoceros. Despite the difficult political and economic situation and with an armed conflict that has been dragging on for years in the eastern region, an international mobilisation is now focusing on the urgent conservation of these natural world heritage sites. It is essential to have relevant and up-to-date observations and data available in order to keep track of the conservation status of the national parks. However, none of the stakeholders, including the ICCN, have the necessary information systems at their disposal to enable them to assess the state of the sites, to take the necessary measures to counter their further deterioration and to sustainably conserve them.

To meet this need, the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office supported the - SYGIAP project, which ran from 2003 to 2006, to develop a system to inventory and monitor the endangered world heritage sites in Congo. The project covered both establishing the system as training the management staff to correctly collect data and process these to provide relevant information. These data were used to improve management and conservation of the sites.

heritage sites. The people involved are given the necessary training to identify the challenges of conserving the sites, to monitor them and to tackle them in order to guarantee and improve management efficiency.

After the project proved its usefulness in managing the world heritage sites, a second phase focused on monitoring other protected areas in Congo. The intention was to strengthen their sustainable management and to contribute to national and international reports on the situation of the forests and the biodiversity. By way of various official meetings, the Congolese administrative services, international agencies and partners of the ICCN received relevant information on these protected areas.

The SYGIAP project succeeded in filling the databases of the five world heritage sites with socio-economic data, on the one hand, and with photographs and historic documents that were available in the Belgian federal scientific institutions on the other. These data were georeferenced in order to develop an on-line interactive map.

The applications of the cartographic data generated by the SYGIAP project go beyond improving the management of the world heritage sites. By sharing them with the mining cadastre and the forestry sector, it came to the fore that mining and logging concessions were granted in protected areas. This led to the establishment of a consultation platform where forest managers and other administrative services were able to exchange information and interact. In the long term, the SYGIAP system could also be useful to plan and steer eco-tourism in the right direction.

An educational map showing the rich biodiversity of the world heritage sites in Congo has been developed in cooperation with the Unesco

World Heritage Centre to draw the attention on the results of the project and to raise public awareness of the situation of the world heritage sites in Congo. This map displays the world heritage and protected sites in Congo and showcases their extremely rich biodiversity.

Within the scope of the SYGIAP project, the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office contributed to the *Congo: Nature and Culture* exhibition. The exhibition wanted to raise public awareness on the unique but endangered biodiversity to be found in Congo. The Royal Museum for Central Africa organised the exhibition that could be viewed at the Unesco headquarters in Paris in September 2004 and in Tervuren from November 2004 to October 2005. A limited version of the exhibition was shown in Lubumbashi in 2008. The Belgian Development Cooperation and the UN Foundation have collaborated with other partners on a programme to support the conservation of

Ilha de Moçambique

Ilha de Moçambique is an island situated to the north of Mozambique. It is a former Portuguese trading post on the route to India. In 2007 the World Heritage Committee tackled the alarming situation of the island, which had been listed on the World Heritage List since 1991 because of its historic importance.

Flanders decided to support, by way of the General Flemish Trust Fund (FUT), a project that responded to the recommendations by the World Heritage Committee to secure the conservation of Ilha de Moçambique. The project consists of four parts: a detailed study of the architecture on the island and an evaluation of its situation; the drafting of a management plan; contributing to constructing a water reservoir in the Fortaleza de São Sebastião; restoring a building of the fort to serve as administrative services and information centre for the monument. A documentary on the restoration is also being produced to make the project visible and create awareness among the local population.

the biodiversity in the five world heritage sites in Congo. The programme is running from 2001 to 2013 and its strategy is twofold. Political support for conservation is extended by means of "conservation diplomacy": active contacts with political and military leaders to remind them of the binding obligations regarding the World Heritage Convention. In addition, the park wardens of the world heritage sites are provided with support to perform their conservation tasks in difficult and dangerous circumstances, *inter alia*, by providing training courses and expanding the equipment and infrastructure in the parks. The Belgian contribution to the programme particularly serves to set up and implement urgent plans of action in the most endangered parks. This is done in close collaboration with Unesco and the ICCN.



↑ Landscape of Virunga National Park in Congo.

The Fortaleza de São Sebastião has a complex rainwater catchment system. The Portuguese founders of the fort built it five centuries ago and it has continued to be a vital source of water for the island inhabitants all that time. A new water reservoir has been built outside the walls of the fort to permanently make water available to the local population. Access to the original sources in the fort has been restricted since then.

The purpose of restoring a part of the fort to serve as administrative service and information centre is twofold. Firstly, it makes it possible to receive visitors in the fort and to make its importance and history known. Secondly, it is an important exercise in establishing which restoration techniques are required and which work best. The knowledge gained will be useful in restoring other buildings and other heritage on the island.

On Ilha de Moçambique, the tension between the preservation of the historical heritage and the current socio-economic development is visible in a particularly confrontational way. The island is almost literally divided into two parts: the upper old Portuguese "Stone City" occupies the northern part, while the lower "Makuti Town" occupies the southern part of the island. There live most of the 14,000 residents of Ilha. The development of a heritage project with socio-economic dimensions is very difficult. The integration of the Makuti community is nevertheless essential for the future of the entire island. Tourist guides usually pay no attention to "Makuti Town", but only have an eye for the "Stone City". Also international donors focus mainly on the reconstruction and renovation of the stone world and too little to the development of the island community.



International Cooperation on World Heritage Securing heritage in and around water

Marine heritage

The Unesco World Heritage Committee established six comprehensive topical programmes, one of which focuses on marine world heritage in particular. It targets the conservation of exceptionally universal valuable marine areas and the identification of such areas that have not been listed on the World Heritage List.

Activities that are being performed within the context of the programme for marine world heritage include expanding expertise and providing training courses on efficiently managing marine sites; developing a scientific approach to identify potential marine world heritage sites; drawing up a practical, gradual manual on managing marine sites, which uses the characteristics of the ecosystem as point of departure; and raising awareness of the programme to boost the establishment of a

global conservation network for marine sites that links up with the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.

An important part of the programme focuses on marine and coastal areas in south-east Africa, which distinguish themselves by their exceptional characteristics, which qualifies them for the World Heritage List.

The project proposal that led to the programme being launched was developed by the Unesco World Heritage Centre, in close deliberation with the Department of Economy, Science and Innovation (EWI) of the Government of Flanders, the Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ) and the IOC Project Office for IODE (International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange) in Ostend. The VLIZ and the IODE project office play an important part in executing the programme

that is monitored by the Flemish Department of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with the EWI Department (Economy, Science and Innovation).

Preparation for the programme is co-funded for the purposes of organising a workshop with financial resources of the Directorate for the Environment of the Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment. This funding falls within the context of the agreement with the Unesco World Heritage Centre. The agreement runs from 2009 to 2012 and funds the Unesco activities relating to biodiversity in forest and marine areas and the interaction between biodiversity and climate change.

Preserving coral reefs

Coral reefs are amongst the richest ecosystems in the world: they host an exceptional variety of fish, invertebrate animals and marine plants. They are also extremely vulnerable and are seriously endangered. Coral reefs are deteriorating all over the world. That is due to certain destructive fishing techniques, tourism, pollution and changes in the environment that are causing the coral reefs to bleach.

Conserving coral reefs requires a detailed inventory of their distribution and state of health. This can be recorded locally based on field observations. Observations by satellites or aeroplanes are an easier and less expensive alternative for vast and poorly accessible areas. Because various coral reefs form part of the World Heritage List, Unesco showed interest in the possibilities of remote sensing for mapping and monitoring coral reefs.

The KABAR project focused on Fordate, a small island in the Tanimbar archipelago of Indonesia. With almost 600 species, Indonesia has the largest coral diversity in the world. Tanimbar belongs to the top 10 coral reefs proclaimed by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) refers as "exceptionally rich in endemic species but facing extreme threat". The conservation of these coral reefs is important not only because of their ecological value but also because of their socio-

The General Flemish Trust Fund (FUT) helps the World Heritage Marine Programme to perform its core tasks - support that cannot be neglected seeing that the programme is only receives and extremely limited amount of funding from the World Heritage Fund.

economic function. As is the case on many small islands, a large part of the population depends on the coral reefs to provide for its support. Scientists have succeeded in distinguishing and identifying various types of coral and algae by combining field measurements, atmospheric data and airborne hyperspectral data. This technique can be modified for use in all types of coral reefs and allows to monitor, in the long term, vulnerable areas that qualify to be recognised as world heritage and to identify those that run the greatest danger.

The research lasted from March 2005 up to the end of 2006. It was funded by the STEREO programme of the Belgian Federal Science Policy and was a collaboration effort between the Flemish Institute for Technological Research (VITO), Ghent University and the Agency for Assessment and Application of Technology in Indonesia (BPPT).



↑↑ Coral reefs host an exceptional diversity.
↑ Hyperspectral image of Fordate, a small island in the Tanimbar archipelago of Indonesia.

International Cooperation on World Heritage Tackling climate change



The exhibition was designed pursuant to the 16th UN Conference on Climate Change (COP16) in Cancun (Mexico) at the end of 2010, with financial support by the Government of Flanders UNESCO Trustfund (FUT) and the contribution by various partners: the Belgian Science Policy Office, Planet Action (France), the European Space Agency (ESA) and the German Space Agency (DLR). The exhibition was also shown in other places in Mexico and in Beijing (China), Paris (France) and Durban (South Africa).

The Belgian Federal Science Policy Office, privileged Unesco partner in the field of remote sensing by satellites, made the exhibition trilingual (in English, French and Dutch) to present it to the Belgian public. An accompanying brochure in Dutch and French has been developed in collaboration with the Unesco Platform Flanders. In 2012 the exhibition could be viewed in Brussels, Leuven (thanks to the cooperation of the Government of Flanders, the Flemish Commission for Unesco and the KU Leuven) and Mons.



Exhibition on climate change and world heritage

The exhibition *Satellites and World Heritage Sites, Partners to understand Climate Change* takes the visitor to world heritage sites all over the world, each of which suffers from the consequences of climate change in some way or other.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states that "global warming is an unequivocal fact" and is "largely the consequence of the increasing greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide (CO₂) generated by the combustion of fossil fuels."

Global warming has various negative consequences: rise of the sea level, change in the frequency and intensity of precipitation, more intense and frequent storms, acidification of the oceans, etc. Each of these consequences has an impact on both natural and cultural world heritage sites.

An increase in temperature causes the glaciers in Patagonia or at Mount Everest to melt. The rise in the sea water temperature and acidification of the ocean endanger the coral reefs of Australia and Guatemala. Desertification lies at the bottom of every increasingly heavy sand storm which damages archaeological sites such as the Great Mosques of Timbuktu or the Pyramids of Giza. The rise in the sea level endangers the continued existence of sites situated near the coast, which belong to the most unique in the world.

The exhibition focuses the attention on the threats to which the world heritage sites are exposed by using satellite images. It also illustrates how remote sensing from space can contribute to a better understanding of the consequences of climate change and to managing and conserving heritage sites.

Frozen tombs of the Scythians

The archaeological patrimony located under the permafrost of the Altai Mountains is threatened by global warming. With the aid of the General Flemish Trust Fund (FUT) and in cooperation with Ghent University, the first steps have been taken to set up a detailed inventory of the hidden treasures. This has been made possible by the use of satellite observations.

The Altai Mountains run through Russia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and China. There are numerous tombs of the Scythians. It was the custom of this nomadic people to bury their nobles in tombs deep underneath the permafrost. Because of these very low temperatures all the organic material, including textiles, carpets, bodies and horses, were particularly well preserved. However, global warming is threatening to change this. It is necessary to have a good overview of the number and precise location of the tombs to be able to develop a conservation plan.

Two regions in the Russian and Kazakh parts of the mountains were studied in the first phase, in cooperation with Ghent University and the support of the General Flemish Trust Fund. The location of the tombs was mapped and a detailed inventory was made of their contents.

In 2003 and 2004 the Federal Belgian Science Policy Office co-financed the excavations and expeditions to support a Ghent University research project. Satellite images were used to analyse the landscape of the Altai Mountains and to detect tombs quickly and cost-efficiently. The results were the basis of a Unesco project to conserve the frozen tombs of the Altai Mountains.

↑↑ These square monuments date back to the Turkish era (end of the first millennium). They are remembrance places for Turkish warriors.

↑ Tall stele (ca. 2m) with the image of an axe. Valley of Yustid, Bronze Age.



↑↑ Asia, a continent that is hit particularly hard by climate change.

↑ The exhibition travelled all over the world.



International Cooperation on World Heritage Reinforcing management and protection of the world heritage sites

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Better information for better management

Following the thirtieth anniversary of the World Heritage Convention, Belgium entered a fascinating decade of collaboration with the Unesco World Heritage Centre. The aim was to make Belgian expertise available to assist the signatories with the development of the necessary capacity to manage world heritage sites through the use of innovative technologies (remote sensing, GIS and GPS, 3D modelling) to support the conservation of cultural and natural sites. The Belgian Science Policy Office and the World Heritage Centre signed an agreement to that end in November 2002.

During the past decade interdisciplinary teams composed of Belgian research institutions and private companies collaborated with various international and local bodies and the World Heritage Centre in following domains: the mapping and monitoring of remote, endangered

natural world heritage sites that were difficult to access (Congo), the development of an advanced information system for a "mixed" world heritage site (site of exceptional cultural and natural value) in Mexico, the establishment of a multi-lingual system for collecting and managing documentation to prepare the nomination of a cross-border site for the World Heritage List (the Central Asian part of the South Route).

The Science Policy Office funds demonstration projects at a regional level as well as the World Heritage Centre. These efforts are backed by initiatives within the frame of the national programme for remote sensing, STEREO (KABAR and UNESCO-WATCH projects, Satellites and World Heritage exhibition). Attention was paid in particular to promoting world heritage to the public, more specifically to young people.

Guarding tropical rainforests

The Unesco World Heritage Committee not only decides on inscribing nominated sites on the World Heritage List. It must also monitor the situation of the world heritage sites, identify possible threats (urban or agricultural development, conflict, natural disaster or the effects of global warming) and propose counteractive measures.

Tropical forests often span vast areas and are difficult to access. Consequently, it is difficult to monitor their situation and assess how well they have been conserved. In 2009 this had been done for just over 15% of the 97 registered forest world heritage sites.

A semi-automatic tool is required to detect changes in order to enable Unesco to improve managing this natural world heritage. Scientists of the UC Louvain used funding provided by the STEREO programme of the Belgian Science Policy Office to develop a system founded satellite images and expert knowledge.

The scientists selected 15 tropical forests of different types (from mangroves to mountain forests), size (from less than 150,000 ha to over 5,000,000 ha) and location (the entire tropical forest belt is represented). An exceptional biodiversity distinguishes the sites selected and it is often the case that they accommodate unique animal species, such as the giant panda in Sichuan, the jaguar in Calakmul or the gorilla in Virunga.

The UNESCO-WATCH project was started from an extensive collection of 850 satellite images which were taken in three periods (1990, 2000 and 2010) by various sensors. Tropical forests are often shrouded in mist, which means a complete overview of the territory can only be obtained by combining a large number of images.

The challenge is to develop a system which, despite the variety of the sites and the fact that the data are generated by different sources, enables



↑ Giant panda reserve in Sichuan.

one to make maps at regular times, in order to show what has changed in the forests. With this system, Unesco and the local managers have at their disposal a tool that reflects the in situ situation in an objective way, so that a relevant policy can be elaborated.

The system that has been developed can also serve other purposes. For example, it can benefit the REDD+ initiative, which is aimed at putting a stop to deforestation and at increasing the capacity to store carbon dioxide by rewarding those countries that preserve their forests and practice sustainable forestry. A sound monitoring of the changes in and around the forests is of great importance for this purpose in view of proper management and efficient measures.

The above-mentioned REDD+ initiative is funded by the Environment Directorate of the Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment, within the scope of a collaboration agreement with the Unesco World Heritage Centre.

The UNESCO-WATCH project (2011 - 2013) was financed by the STEREO programme of the Belgian Science Policy Office.



↑↑ Large Maya pyramid in Calakmul.

↑ Jaguar: symbolic species of Calakmul.

Nominating "mixed" world heritage sites

The Maya City Calakmul in Yucatan (Mexico) has been on the World Heritage List since 2002. This valuable archaeological site lies in the middle of a biosphere reserve which forms part of a tropical forest accommodating various plant and animal species requiring special protection.

An international project prepared the nomination of this "mixed" site for the World Heritage List. For this purpose, it was necessary to highlight both the exceptional cultural and natural value. Thanks to the Calakmul 4D GIS project, financed by the Belgian Science Policy Office in the framework of an agreement with UNESCO's World Heritage Centre, an information system has been developed for heritage managers to fund the schedule planning and conservation of the site. Data ranging from the assessment of the conditions on the site to applying conservation measures must be generated, preserved and exchanged between all stakeholders. The project took all types of data into account and developed an extensive system to integrate all data and to make it possible to use 3D-models and satellite images.

The system is based on the needs of the heritage managers and the Unesco prescriptions. Managers can create, preserve, share, visualise and analyse the information by using the system.

Both the outstanding cultural and natural value must be highlighted.

This information concerns the state of the site and to its conservation, restoration and management as well as the elaboration of action plans. It has been developed by a multi-disciplinary team of Belgian experts, in close collaboration with Mexican partners who are responsible for managing the cultural and natural heritage. The system uses an open standard. Other mixed sites can benefit from the capabilities of the system. The Mexican partners are trained to keep the system up to date and to use it to support their daily work on the cultural and natural heritage.

Researching, developing and giving a demo of the project contributed to drawing up a nomination dossier for a "mixed" site, conserving a site that had already been classified as an archaeological site, planning an ecological corridor for the jaguar, gaining a better understanding of the history of the Maya site and making it even more accessible, reporting to the Unesco World Heritage Centre, promoting the site, developing eco-tourism and raising awareness of world heritage and sustainable development.

Silk Routes as cultural world heritage

The Silk Routes are a network of caravan routes that crossed Eurasia from the Mediterranean Sea to China in ancient times and during the Middle Ages. It served as a route to transport goods and exchange inter-cultural knowledge between the East and the West. By now the historic and cultural relevance of the Silk Routes is beyond dispute.

An initiative for the serial transnational World Heritage nomination which is representative for the Silk Roads was launched in 2005.

A team of Belgian experts headed by the Raymond Lemaire International Centre for Conservation is working on an online information system supporting the preparation of the nomination of the Central Asian Silk Roads. It is collaborating with five Central Asian countries, namely Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. The project "Silk Roads

Cultural Heritage Resource Information System (CHRIS)", financed by the Belgian Science Policy Office, was established in collaboration with the World Heritage Centre and national and local authorities. It provides a holistic approach to managing potential World Heritage Properties with regard to documentation, conservation and monitoring.

The project provides a systematic approach for monitoring and managing archaeological sites and monuments and the information system that has been developed makes it possible to guarantee the congruity and quality of serial transnational nomination dossiers. The method applied might also be used in compiling dossiers for the nomination of other serial transnational World Heritage properties.

The Silk Routes served two purposes: transporting goods and intercultural exchange between the East and the West.

→ Bukhara, Uzbekistan.





→ Palestina.

Preserving and repairing cultural heritage

By way of its Centre des Métiers du Patrimoine de la Paix-Dieu and with the support of Wallonie-Bruxelles, l'Institut Patrimoine wallon is involved in various collaboration projects. The Centre is responsible for training courses and provides support for the conservation and repairs of cultural heritage in less fortunate countries.

For example, Walloon craftsmen, coaches associated with the Heritage Skills Centre and an architect contributed to restoring the Conde Canongo, an old building in the historic centre of Havana (Cuba) between 2002 and 2004. This was done in collaboration with the Bureau de l'Historiador de La Havana. The ground floor of the building had already housed an exhibition which acquainted visitors with Wallonia for a number of years. In addition, until 2010, different courses, in particular, regarding carpentry and metalwork, were organised for students at the school workshop Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos of Havana. Work was also done on controlling

termites to protect the biology laboratory of the cabinet for conservation. The project was completed by publishing an inventory of the ironwork in Old Havana and a technical manual of how to restore woodwork. Work is currently still being done on a practical manual for controlling termites.

In Saint-Louis (Senegal), the Centre des Métiers du Patrimoine de la Paix-Dieu collaborated on restoring the former "Assemblée territoriale du Fleuve" by providing technical assistance to the architects when drawing up the specifications and by training labourers in the field of making woodwork, ironwork, filling, decorative painting and research on damage to wood. The renovated building was ceremoniously inaugurated in December 2009. A publication on the building was issued by l'Institut Patrimoine wallon in the series *Dossier de l'IPW*. In the meantime, cooperation with Senegal is continuing with a new training project with a view to restoring the Admiral's House on the slave island of Gorée.

At the request of the Vietnamese Institute of culture and arts studies, the Heritage Skills Centre has since 2007 coordinated a project to conserve tangible and intangible cultural heritage and to develop the village of Phuoc-Tich in the province of Hué for tourists. The village is famous for its pottery. A traditional wooden house could be restored, thanks to this project. Other partners collaborated in the field of pottery and tourist development in the village. Work is being done to compile a route passing through various Vietnamese villages where pottery and making pottery plays an important part in daily life.

L'Institut Patrimoine wallon has been collaborating with the RIWAQ Centre for Architectural Conservation in Ramallah (Palestine) since 2010. It was possible to repair and restore various buildings on the Hosh al Atem site in the historic centre of Birzeit, thanks to the collaboration. Training courses were also given to craftsmen and coaches on making an inventory of architectural heritage, ironwork and decorative painting. A new project has been scheduled in the vicinity of the Bethlehem Nativity Church.

L'Institut Patrimoine wallon entered into a large joint project with a number of other international and local partners, which is aimed at conserving the traditional *Gingerbread*-houses in Port-au-Prince (Haiti). A field school was established there within this scope in September 2012, which offers training courses on problems of stability, humidity, the presence of termites and restoring masonry and carpentry to prepare for the restoration of the Maison Dufort.

The assistance provided to these countries for the conservation and restoration of their heritage and to ensure that knowledge is transferred, help keep the collective memory intact, which is an important aspect of cultural identity. Besides the purely material aspect, each of these projects is an exchange of experiences and mutual enrichment.



↑↑ Senegal.

↑ Cuba.

Cultural landscapes in South-East Europe

The General Flemish Trust Fund (FUT) funded a project to teach managers of world heritage sites in South-East Europe to cope with the tourist pressure pursuant to the recognition as world heritage.

The world heritage label draws many interested visitors. However, a flood of tourists can threaten the natural equilibrium and the outstanding universal value of a site.

The project wants to accommodate this by way of training courses for managers of world heritage sites in the region to expand the tourist capacity of sites and to develop a strategy to

properly manager tourism. For example, new management plans were drawn up for places like the Durmitor National Park in Montenegro and for Ohrid in Macedonia - both of which are world heritage sites.

The management plans were made after a training course on Tourism Management was given to the local staff. The strategy that was developed for and applied to both sites serves as an example for other sites. The tourist sector, local community and local traders are involved in the project. The World Heritage Centre involved various regional institutions in the project to guarantee continued support.

A surge of tourism can threaten the natural balance and the outstanding universal value of a site.



© Onroerend Erfgoed, photo Kris Vandevorst

The goal is to improve the follow-up of the state of conservation of World Heritage Sites.

↑ Bruges hosted an international conference on the management of World Heritage Cities in the 21st century.

World heritage cities

The context of world heritage cities differs substantially from those other world heritage sites. It does not make the application of the often strict and not all too clear prescriptions for the World Heritage Convention no easy matter. That is why the *World Heritage Cities Programme* was created. Its aims are to further develop a theoretical framework for the conservation of urban heritage on the one hand and the provision of technical assistance to local and national authorities on the other. Another point of attention of the programme is the protection of world heritage sites against new, global threats, such as the consequences of climate change and non-sustainable tourism.

The immovable Flemish heritage is located particularly in urban surroundings. The issue which this Unesco programme deals is very relevant within the context of various dossiers, such as Bruges and Leuven as a university city.

In his policy paper the Minister for Immovable Heritage states that Flanders must ensure that the argument concerning "historical urban landscapes and dealing with world heritage in dynamic surroundings is evolving in a viable direction." The *World Heritage Cities Programme* makes a substantial contribution towards this

and taps into the practical question of the World Heritage Committee meeting of 2005 to develop a new recommendation on this matter. It is one of the six large topical programmes of the Committee which is funded by the General Flemish Trust Fund (FUT), as is the case with the *World Heritage Marine Programme*.

Various activities such as the organisation of training courses for managers of world heritage cities and funding for scientific research are currently running within the context of this programme to develop a tool kit for heritage conservation in an urban environment. In addition, the programme draws up guidelines and it distributes school examples to assess the impact of contemporary architecture on the exceptionally universal value of world heritage.

The project proposal has been drawn up by the World Heritage Centre in close deliberation with the policy areas of Town and Country Planning, Housing Policy and Immovable Heritage (RWO) of the Government of Flanders and with the Raymond Lemaire International Centre for Conservation (RLICC of the KU Leuven), which is also holder of a Unesco chair for "Preventive Conservation, Monitoring and Maintenance of Monuments and Sites (PRECOM³OS)".

In November 2011 the city of Bruges and the Agency for Immovable Heritage organised an international conference on the management of World Heritage Cities in Bruges in the 21st century. During the meeting attention was explicitly afforded to aspects such as awareness-raising and expanding expertise to link up with the new Unesco recommendation on historic urban landscapes.

Opening up treasure of information

The Unesco World Heritage Centre, which provides the secretarial services for the World Heritage Convention, has a treasure of information, which is important for the conservation of world heritage. However, that information is not preserved in a practical manner that is easy to consult, which is largely why its potential remains unused in matters such as statistical analysis and the preparation of a well-considered heritage policy.

More than 2,000 reports have been compiled since 1994 on the state of conserving world heritage sites. These reports contain not only background information on the sites but also focus on the factors exercising influence on the outstanding universal value of the site and they contain proposals to avert possible threats. In some cases they even make mention of practical measures and a time frame within which they are to be implemented.

Based on such reports and in deliberation with the respective Member State, the World Heritage Committee makes decisions on additional measures to conserve the heritage, on whether or not to remove a site from the List of World Heritage in Danger or even from the World Heritage List if a site has lost the properties for which it was originally put on the List.

In the forty years of the existence of the World Heritage Convention, thousands of such reports have been drawn up by Unesco and its advisory bodies on world heritage. All the reports form an exceptionally extensive source of documentation on many issues related to conserving heritage. It is the most comprehensive follow-up system to an international convention, with information at almost a thousand web sites.

The General Flemish Trust Fund (FUT) contributes to making these documents accessible. The aim is to develop a database in which targeted search can be done into particular data to extract relevant information from it. This will not only make it easier to monitor the state of the conservation of world heritage sites but it can also provide all kinds of information, which will make it possible to make better informed policy choices.

The databank will also facilitate identification of the various threats for world heritage sites and record their evolution. In this way countries can conduct a better policy and limit the impact of certain disruptive factors as much as possible.

The Convention

The *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* of 1972, usually referred to as the World Heritage Convention, is an international legal tool that links the material heritage and the natural conservation with one another. The cultural identity is, after all, strongly linked to the natural environment in which it develops and human creativity is often inspired by amazing things in nature. 190 countries have signed the Convention to date. They jointly form an international community which conserves both the cultural and the natural heritage.

The lists

The **Tentative List** is a national list on which the Member State indicates which cultural and natural heritage within its borders can qualify to be presented as an entry on the World Heritage List.

The **World Heritage List** contains the most exceptional cultural and natural heritage in the world. The list now has almost 1,000 entries. Three-quarters of those are cultural sites such as monuments, historic cities, etc. Approximately half of all world heritage is located in Europe and North America.

The **List of Endangered World Heritage** is the red list of the world heritage. The World Heritage Committee puts sites whose outstanding universal value is threatened by natural disasters, deterioration of the environment, armed conflict or far-reaching building plans, for example, on this list. The intention of this can be twofold: as a signal to start up solidarity and aid or as a means of pressurising those responsible to remember the commitment that they made to conserve heritage.

The parties

The **Member States** are the countries that have become a party to the Convention. By signing the treaty, they commit to conducting a heritage policy that finds not only world heritage important but also all forms of immaterial cultural and natural heritage on their territory.

From its headquarters, the Unesco **World Heritage Centre** in Paris manages the daily affairs of the Convention. It collects the nomination dossiers and the periodic reports that the Member States send concerning their world heritage, organises the World Heritage Committee meetings, coordinates the (emergency) aid which the world heritage sites are given and issues publications for the Convention.

The **World Heritage Committee** consists of 21 elected Member States and draws the lines within which the World Heritage Centre must implement the Convention. It decides which nominated sites are eventually listed on the World Heritage List and monitors the state of the world heritage all over the world.

The **World Heritage Fund** can fund to Member States to draw up nomination dossiers, train staff, execute restoration, make periodic reports or execute urgent (emergency) repairs



Inscription on the World Heritage List

1. After a country becomes a party to the Convention, it draws up an indicative list: an overview of heritage that presumably meets the world heritage criteria. Each country may then present one cultural and one natural or mixed site to be recognised. To this end it compiles a nomination dossier describing the heritage, showing that it is of exceptional value and explaining how the conservation is organised. It submits the dossier to the World Heritage Centre.
2. The World Heritage Centre considers the nomination dossier and then presents it to an advisory body. The Centre keeps a paper and a digital archive of all the nomination dossiers.
3. Three advisory bodies are responsible for the technical input. The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) assess the nomination dossiers regarding cultural and natural heritage, respectively. The third advisory body is the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) which gives advice preserving cultural sites and organising training courses in that field.
4. Once a year the World Heritage Committee meets to deliberate on the nomination dossiers. It can decide to enter a site on the World Heritage List or to request additional information in the case of doubt. If the Committee is of the opinion that a site inadequately meets the criteria of world heritage, it rejects the nomination.
5. Once the site is entered on the World Heritage List, the Member State must take good care of it and regularly report on its condition. Based on these reports, the World Heritage Committee provides guidelines to the countries on how to conserve their heritage and the Committee can also put a site on the List of World Heritage in Danger if the condition is too alarming.

Who has authority?

The World Heritage Convention is a convention for national states. It was ratified by the **Kingdom of Belgium** in 1996. Because it is a convention concerning a matter which is managed by the regions, it is de facto the **Brussels-Capital Region**, the **Flemish Region** and the **Walloon Region** that follow up the World Heritage Convention. They are supported in this matter by the federal government, more specifically by the Permanent Representation of Belgium to Unesco. In addition, various federal public services such as Development Cooperation or the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office also give a financial contribution or are actively involved in the establishment of heritage-related UNESCO activities.

World Heritage in Belgium

La Grand-Place, Brussels

<http://www.bruxelles.be>
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/857>

The four lifts on the Canal du Centre and their environs (La Louvière and Le Roeulx)

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/856>
<http://www.canal-du-centre.be>
<http://voiesdeau.hainaut.be>

Flemish béguinages

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/855>

Historic centre of Brugge

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/996>

Neolithic flint mines at Spiennes

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1006>

Notre-Dame Cathedral in Tournai

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1009>

Major town house of the architect Victor Horta

<http://www.hortamuseum.be>
<http://www.hotelsolvay.be>
<http://www.arau.org/fr/t/bruxelles-1900-art-nouveau/1>
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1005>

Plantin-Moretus house-workshops-museum complex

<http://www.museumplantinmoretus.be>
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1185>

Stoclet house

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1298>

Major mining sites of Wallonia

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1344>
<http://www.minesdespiennes.org/>

Belfries of Belgium and France

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/943>

International cooperation on world heritage

Africa

Improved management of natural world heritage sites

<http://unesco.flanders.be/activities/all-activities/africa-natur-improving-the-management-effectiveness-of-the-natural-wor1/>

Endangered biodiversity in Congo

<http://cartogis.ugent.be/sygiap/index.php>
<http://eoedu.belspo.be/whp/Virunga/index.html>
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/83>
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/700>
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/63>
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/137>
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/136>
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/280>
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/718>

Ilha de Moçambique

<http://unesco.flanders.be/activities/all-activities/improvement-of-the-state-of-conservation-of-ilha-de-mocambique/>
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/599>

Securing heritage in and around water

Marine heritage

<http://whc.unesco.org/uploads/activities/documents/activity-13-23.pdf>
<http://www.vliz.be/projects/marineworldheritage/>
<http://unesco.flanders.be/activities/all-activities/development-and-implementation-of-the-world-heritage-marine-programme/>
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/marine-programme/>

Preserving coral reefs

<http://eoedu.belspo.be/vgt10> → Oceania
http://lms.seos-project.eu/learning_modules/world-of-images/world-of-images-c03-p02.html

Tackling climate change

Exhibition on climate change and world heritage

<http://eoedu.belspo.be/unesco/>
<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/science-technology/space-activities/space-for-heritage/activities/exhibition-cc/exhibition-2011/>

Frozen tombs of the Scythians

<http://unesco.flanders.be/activities/all-activities/preservation-of-the-frozen-tombs-of-the-altai-mountains/>
<http://www.archaeology.ugent.be/altai/>
http://www.unesco.org/science/remotesensing/?id_page=61&lang=en

Reinforcing management and protection of the world heritage sites

Guarding tropical rainforests

<http://eo.belspo.be/Directory/ProjectDetail.aspx?projID=868>

Nominating "mixed" world heritage sites

<http://calakmul.gim.eu/>
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<http://www.silkroad-infosystem.org>
<http://www.geo.ulg.ac.be/old/wwwroot2/eduweb/poster/en/routes-soie/index.html>

Cultural landscapes in South-East Europe

<http://unesco.flanders.be/activities/all-activities/preserving-natural-world-heritage-and-cultural-landscapes-in-south-eastern/>

World heritage cities

<http://unesco.flanders.be/activities/all-activities/support-to-the-development-and-implementation-of-the-world-heritage-cities/>
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/cities/>

Opening up treasure of information

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/691>
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