

Call for Papers

A Future for *whose* Past? The Heritage of Minorities, Fringe Groups and People Without a Lobby

International and Interdisciplinary Conference on Monte Verità,
Ascona, Switzerland, 22 to 24 October 2025

The motto of the European Heritage Year 1975 was "A future for our past". 50 years later, in view of the consequences of globalisation, migration, communication technology revolutions and civil and human rights activism, the question arises as to who is actually meant by "us". After all, the question of who belongs to society is not answered by the fact that a society claims to be pluralistic and is undergoing an accelerated process of diversification. There is no self-perpetuating trend towards greater social tolerance and openness, as can be seen from the recent rise of right-wing nationalist parties and populist campaigns against immigrants throughout the Global North. Rather, the question of belonging is a continuous process of negotiation in which the boundaries of what is considered as acceptable diversity constantly shifts – largely by determining which history should be remembered and whose cultural heritage should be protected.

Against this background, the questions arise: How do specific knowledge and legal regimes determine what is recognised as culture deserving of protection and which conditions have contributed to the formation of such determination? Who does institutional heritage conservation already unconsciously or consciously exclude today when developing the basis for determining whose heritage should be preserved in the future? What roles do associations, or professional organisations play in this context? Would it be possible to conceive and practice monument preservation in a more inclusive way from the perspective of those who have not been considered so far? Debates on the significance of intangible values that have received little attention to date for the assessment of material cultural assets and the relationship between the preservation and adaptation of architectural heritage are already moving in this direction. They have expanded the concept of heritage to include the architectural testimonies of indigenous peoples, for example, opened it up to areas beyond Europe and sensitised people to the inclusion of changing framework conditions. However, these considerations do not yet centre on the preservation-related and social logics of exclusion and inclusion themselves. When minorities, marginalized groups and people without a lobby designate places that are linked to key experiences that shape their lives in the majority, which monuments become the focus of attention? What new concepts are needed to integrate the relevant interweaving of personal memory and publicly visible traces into the concept of a monument? And what other approaches to conservation could be developed to make these concepts actionable? Would this discourse allow us to extrapolate perspectives for dealing with the heritage of future minorities?

The interdisciplinary conference "A Future for *whose* Past? The Heritage of Minorities, Fringe Groups and People Without a Lobby" is dedicated to these questions. The event will take place from 22 to 24 October 2025 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the European Architectural Heritage Year. The conference is jointly organised by the ICOMOS working group "Architectural Heritage Year 2025", ETH Zurich and EPFL, and the National Information Centre for Cultural Heritage (NIKE) (from March 2025 onwards Swiss Cultural Heritage Network). The aim of the conference is to promote a deeper exchange between science and practice and to create a wide range of networking opportunities between the two areas. The conference venue is the Congressi Stefano Franscini conference centre on Monte Verità, Ascona.

We warmly invite researchers and practitioners from the fields of architectural and archaeological heritage preservation, heritage studies, social anthropology, history and social sciences, architecture and art history, as well as representatives of minorities and persons working in the field of integration sector, to apply for a contribution. Individuals seeking financial support to attend the conference may contact the organizers. (see email contact below).

Possible formats are: 20-minute lecture, 5-10-minute poster presentation, discussions or workshops (please suggest topics). Conference languages are English and the national languages German, French and Italian. The complete texts (full papers) delivered at the conference will be made available as handouts in their original language and in English.

Possible questions to be addressed include

- How is the architectural heritage of minorities currently being dealt with? What are the experiences? What principles, best practices and shortcomings can be identified?
- How does heritage preservation navigate between the conflicting priorities of partial interests and the culturally established interests? In this context, how should the aspect of taking into account the cultural heritage of specific user groups be classified?
- Who defines what counts as minority architectural heritage worthy of protection and preservation? Which minorities have been recognised to date in this context? Is it a top-down process – conducted together with the representatives of the groups mentioned – or a bottom-up process – with the involvement of those affected?
- How suitable are the current inventory criteria and the paradigms on which they are based for the assessment and evaluation of the built heritage of minorities?
- How do minorities value their built cultural heritage themselves? What happens when there is a desire not to preserve certain objects or places?
- How is it possible to find a good balance between the heritage of the “majority culture” and that of the “minority culture” so that the protected/preserved objects are and remain representative of society in the long term.
- How important is craftsmanship in the protection/preservation of the architectural heritage of marginalised groups and minorities? How is this preserved, integrated and promoted? Does this also offer potential for preserving the heritage of the “majority” (disappearing craftsmanship knowledge, shortage of skilled labour and lack of young professionals)?
- What opportunities and risks arise in mediation when the architectural heritage of minorities is placed at the centre?

Please submit an extended abstract (max. one page/500 words) with a short CV by **15 December 2024**. The submitted proposals will then be reviewed by the project advisory board in a peer review process. Feedback will be provided by the end of June 2025. The full paper submission for accepted presentations is planned for the beginning of May 2025. A Proceedings will be published after the conference.

Please send your abstracts, suggestions and enquiries to: denkmalschutzjahr2025@arch.ethz.ch