

Action Group ECHO

An introduction

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The cultural heritage community is increasingly utilising remote sensing, through platforms in space, the atmosphere and in the terrestrial and maritime realms, and accessing data on a range of scales; from the global to the microbial. The data, that are gathered and collated, can enhance cultural governance, management, conservation and disaster preparedness and response. In contrast with the benefits of remote sensing are the potentials for cultural disrespect and damage through invasive monitoring. There is also a challenge in the long-term storage of data, accessibility and the ways in which Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence can be utilised. Remote sensing and data storage are issues that are impacting and influencing many individuals and groups across ICOMOS, and will do more so in the years to come. Related issues concern for instance the ecological footprint of accessible servers for big data. In response to rapid developments within remote sensing and data storage related to cultural heritage, an informal group of ICOMOS members has coalesced to raise this issue within ICOMOS and, with other ICOMOS colleagues, consider how to respond to these developments through an action group. ECHO is the acronym for Earth, Cultural Heritage Observation Group. By formulating and addressing topics of concern and initiating the process for developing responses, ECHO intends to create awareness and inform ICOMOS's entities and members, and the broader heritage community, as well as to connect with stakeholders beyond our heritage community and bridge the fragmented gap with them. As coordinating efforts and institutions often act on a regional, rather than a global level, it is essential that ECHO also acts in concert on both levels.

ECHO strives to stir the discourse within ICOMOS across the international scientific committees and working groups. The action group intends to develop an 'ICOMOS Earth Observation Ethical Statement' based on human rights and responsibilities and connected to the existing charters and documents.

In addition, ECHO strives to develop an expert network within the field and especially with emerging professionals. It is anticipated that the realm is developing speedily. There is an urgency

that ICOMOS should become more involved as many aspects relate to our field of work. As such, it should be integrated in the existing ICOMOS documents, as well as it gives rise to the development of specific ethical guidelines. Furthermore, ICOMOS should develop active membership or observer status with the relevant efforts on a global, as well a regional level, such as Copernicus.

Already in 2011, the International Centre on Space Technologies for Natural and Cultural Heritage (HIST) has been developed in China. Concerning the European Union, the Copernicus Program is making steps forward rapidly. This Spring, the initiative for ECHO has been taken-up by ICOMOS-IFLA ISCCL with support by US ICOMOS. The initiating members of the ECHO Action Group include Dr. Douglas Comer, president US ICOMOS; Prof. Elizabeth Brabec, secretary general of ICOMOS-IFLA ISCCL; Ass.Prof. Bryan Lintott, member ICOMOS IPHC and ICORP, and the author, vice-president Europe of ICOMOS-IFLA ISCCL, secretary general of ICOMOS Netherlands and member of ICOMOS ISC SBH, ISCWater and ICICT.

The fledgeling team of the ECHO Action Group already presented the topic at the Living Planet Symposium 2022 in Bonn on 23-27 May 2022, organised by ESA (European Space Agency).

ECHO collaborates with the ICOMOS Climate Action Working Group. It is intended to develop together a conference on the above topic in Spring 2023.

This short paper for the CHNT Round Table "A European Data Space for Cultural Heritage: Closing the gap" is intended as an introduction on the subject and it will especially focus on the regional (European) level.

As is, ECHO is not receiving funding by any organisation. The ECHO Action Group works on a voluntary basis. None of our team has any financial or personal relation with other individuals or organisations, such as sponsors, that could make our work appear biased or influenced.

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