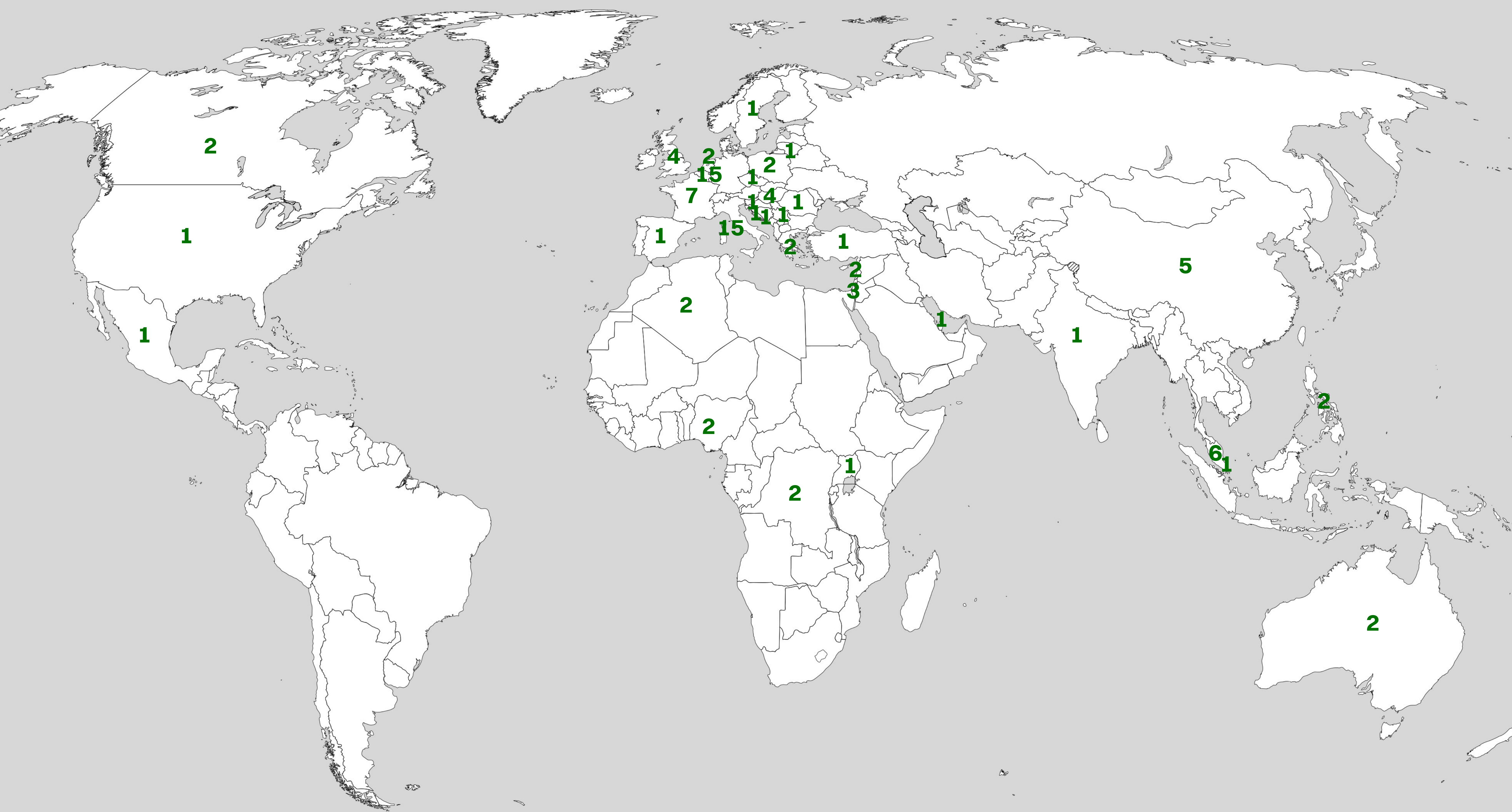


The Development of an International Doctrine

The First Thirty Years of ICOMOS

Claudine Houbart, 20 November 2025





The History of ICOMOS

HOW WAS ICOMOS CREATED?

ICOMOS was founded on the 22nd of June 1965 in Warsaw one year after the adoption of the Venice Charter of 1964.

What is the Venice Charter?

The Venice Charter established international guidelines for conserving and restoring historic buildings. Drawn up by heritage conservation professionals, it is a set of principles providing an international framework for the conservation and restoration of cultural heritage.

The Charter, officially entitled the International Restoration Charter, was adopted as the first resolution of the IInd International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments in Venice, on the 31st of May, 1964. At the same Congress, the second resolution, put forward by UNESCO, called for the creation of an International Council on Monuments and Sites, paving the way for the founding of ICOMOS.

Background to the Venice Charter

Prior to the Venice Charter, there was no dedicated association or set of internationally agreed guidelines on conservation and restoration of built cultural heritage, apart the conclusions of the conference organised in Athens in 1931 by the International Museums Office.

After the devastation of World War II, the importance of preserving and restoring heritage was seen in a more pressing light. As such, UNESCO sponsored the First International Congress of Architects and Technicians on Historical Monuments, held in Paris in May 1957, which recommended that all countries should establish organisations for the protection of historic buildings, if they did not already have one. The Congress ended with the invitation of Guglielmo De Angelis d'Ossat to hold the second congress in Venice in 1964.

[Read the Venice Charter](#)

THE FOUNDING OF ICOMOS: THE CONSTITUTIVE ASSEMBLY

The Warsaw General Assembly, held on the 22nd of June 1965, is known as a Constitutive Assembly as its purpose was the constitution of the association of specialists that the second resolution of the 1964 Venice Congress called for. The Constitutive Assembly established ICOMOS' initial Statutes, including its name, aim and membership, all of which were adopted by vote.

ICOMOS AND UNESCO

One of ICOMOS' important roles is its collaboration with UNESCO. ICOMOS helped UNESCO to write the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. Adopted in 1972, it names ICOMOS as an Advisory Body. Central to the Convention was the creation of a World Heritage List to recognise heritage of 'outstanding universal value'. ICOMOS supports the implementation of the Convention's provision for protection of cultural heritage, including evaluating nominations for World Heritage Status.

ICOMOS' HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Historically speaking, until the late 19th century, questions of architectural heritage had only been considered on a national level.

One consequence of World War I was the emergence of what is now called Cultural Internationalism, notably with the creation of the League of Nations. In the interwar period, a growing worldwide consciousness amongst specialists led to the Athens Conference, whose conclusions were a first attempt to agree on international conservation principles. After the Second World War, the League of Nations was transformed into the United Nations, accompanied by the founding of UNESCO, which would go on to contribute to the establishment of ICOMOS.

Historic Gardens (Florence Charter) - 1981

Available in 5 languages →

Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas (Washington Charter) - 1987

Available in 5 languages →

Valletta Principles for the Safeguarding and Management of Historic Cities, Towns and Urban Areas - 2011

Available in 14 languages →

Document on Historic Urban Public Parks - 2017

Available in 3 languages →



Industrial heritage

Joint ICOMOS - TICCIH Principles for the Conservation of Industrial Heritage Sites, Structures, Areas and Landscapes (Dublin Principles) - 2011

Available in 4 languages →



Intangible cultural heritage

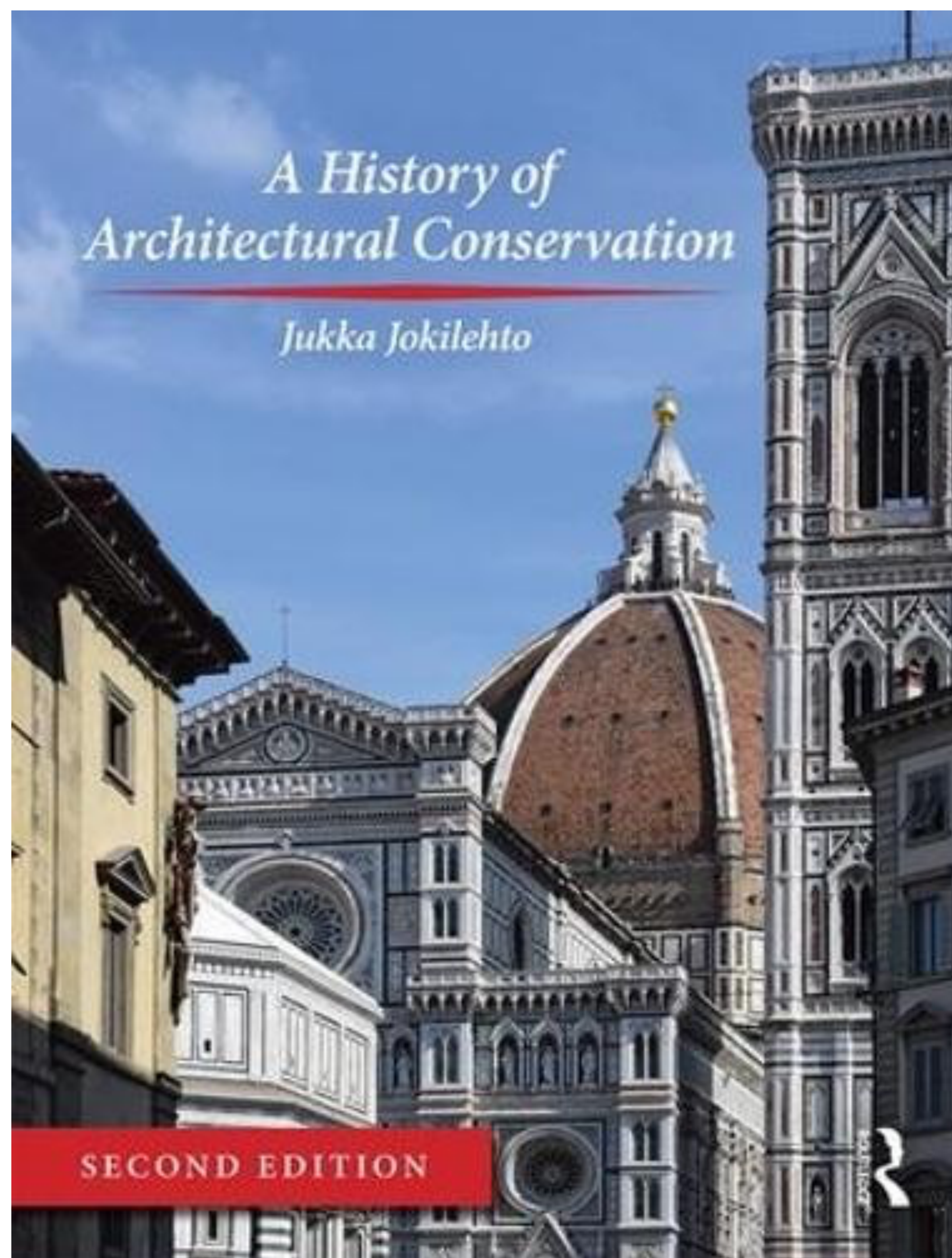


THE CONSERVATION MOVEMENT
A HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION
ANTIQUITY TO MODERNITY



*A History of
Architectural Conservation*

Jukka Jokilehto



HERITAGE, CULTURE AND IDENTITY



Many Voices, One Vision: The Early Years of the World Heritage Convention



CHRISTINA CAMERON
AND MECHTILD RÖSSLER



The Making of the Nara Document on Authenticity

Author(s): Christina Cameron and Nobuko Inaba

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VENICE CHARTER

CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES **ICOMOS** INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES

INTERNATIONAL CHARTER FOR THE CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION OF MONUMENTS AND SITES (THE VENICE CHARTER 1964)

11nd International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, Venice, 1964.

Adopted by ICOMOS in 1965.

Imbued with a message from the past, the historic monuments of generations of people remain to the present day as living witnesses of their age-old traditions. People are becoming more and more conscious of the unity of human values and regard ancient monuments as a common heritage. The common responsibility to safeguard them for future generations is recognized. It is our duty to hand them on in the full richness of their authenticity.

It is essential that the principles guiding the preservation and restoration of ancient buildings should be agreed and be laid down on an international basis, with each country being responsible for applying the plan within the framework of its own culture and traditions.

By defining these basic principles for the first time, the Athens Charter of 1931, contributed towards the development of an extensive international movement which has assumed concrete form in national documents, in the work of ICOM and UNESCO and in the establishment by the latter of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and the Restoration of Cultural Property. Increasing awareness and critical study have been brought to bear on problems which have continually become more complex and varied; now the time has come to examine the Charter afresh in order to make a thorough study of the principles involved and to enlarge its scope in a new document.

Accordingly, the 11nd International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, which met in Venice from May 25th to 31st 1964, approved the following text:

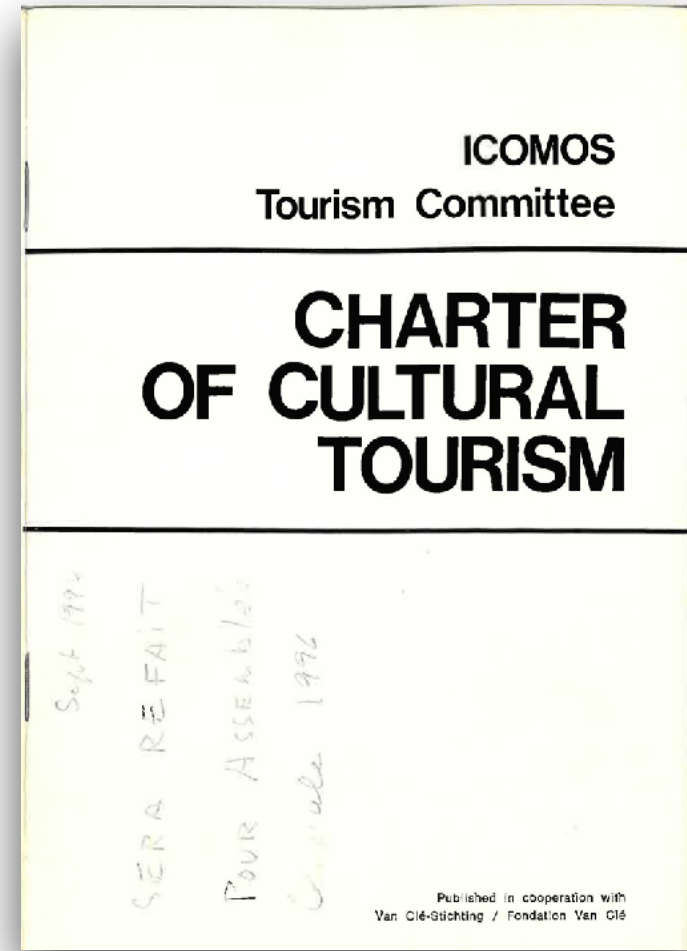
DEFINITIONS

Article 1.

The concept of a historic monument embraces not only the single architectural work but also the urban or rural setting in which is found the evidence of a particular civilization, a significant development or a historic event. This applies not only to great works of art but also to more modest works of the past which have acquired cultural significance with the passing of time.

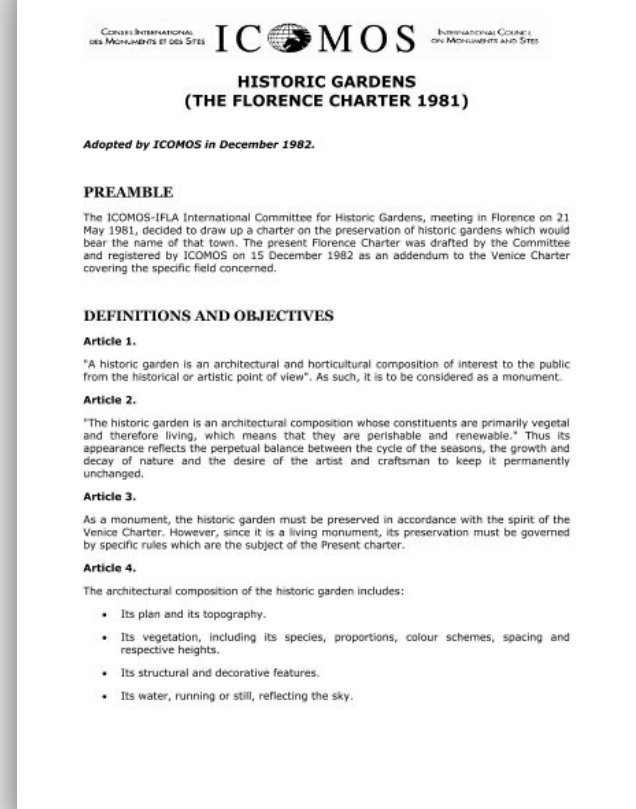
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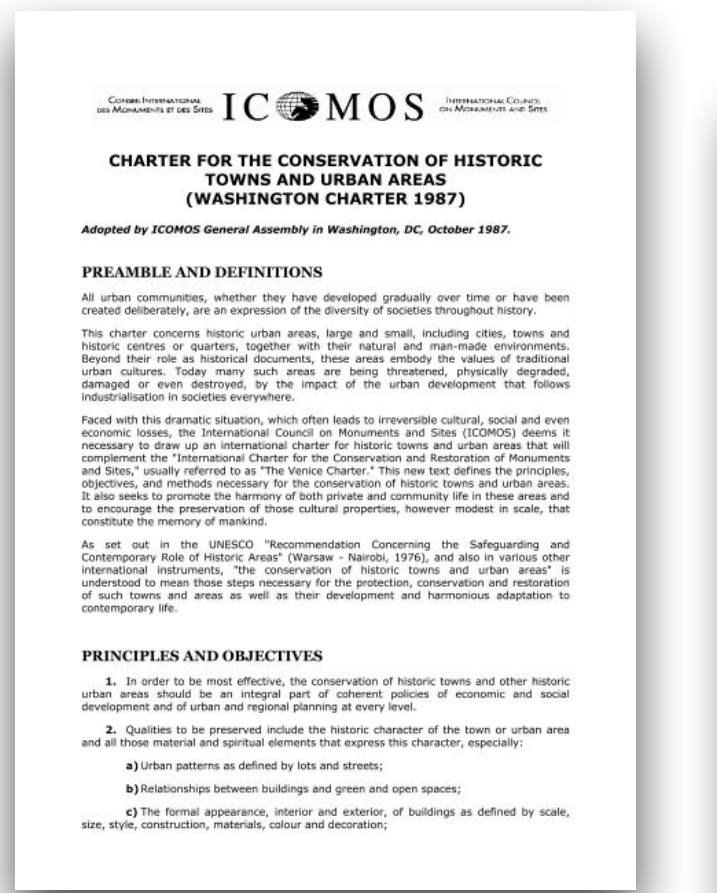


CULTURAL TOURISM

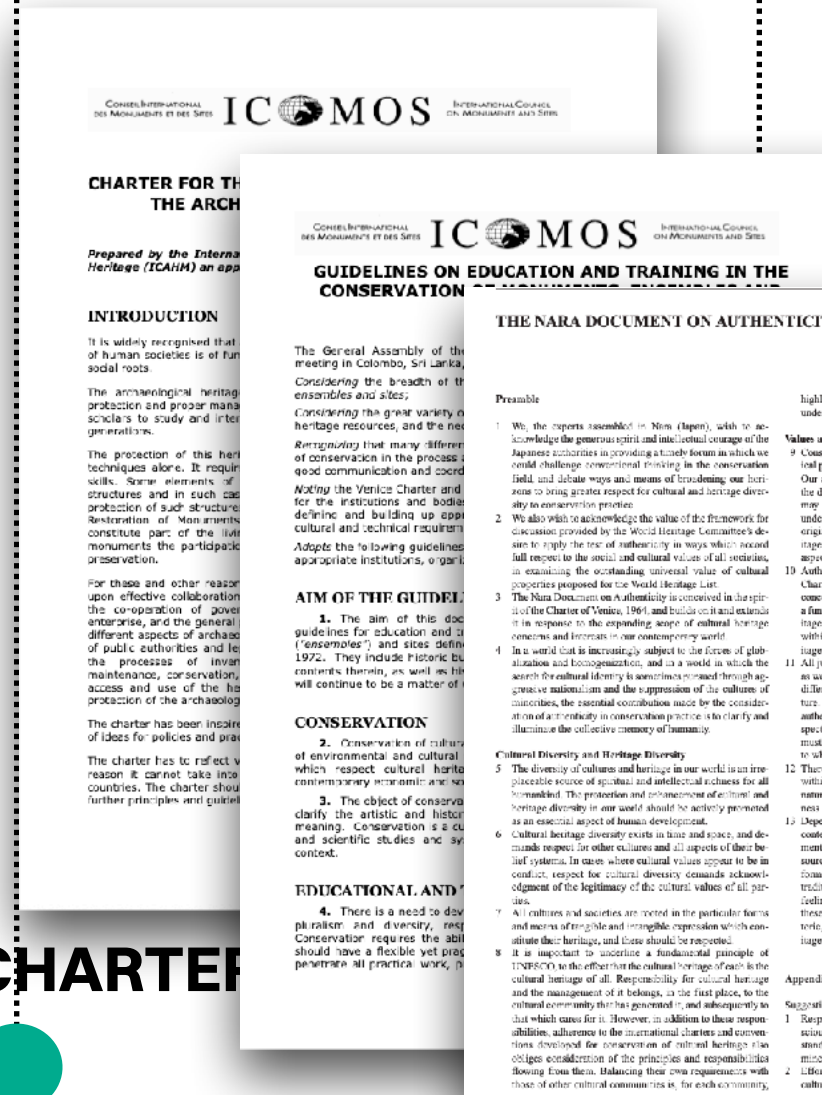
FLORENCE CHARTER



FLORENCE CHARTER



WASHINGTON CHARTER



ARCHAEOLOGICAL H. EDUCATION

NARA DOC.

VENICE CHARTER



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1965

1970

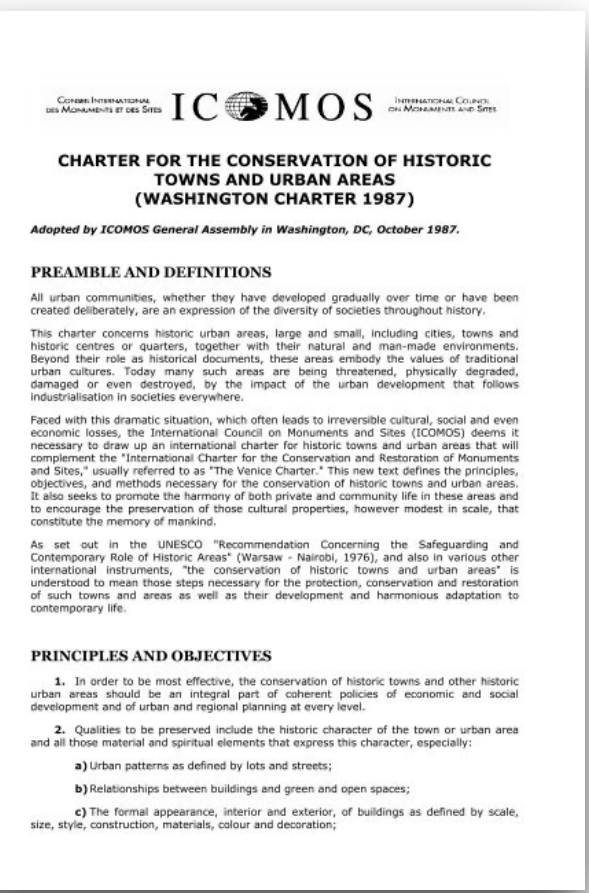
1975

1980

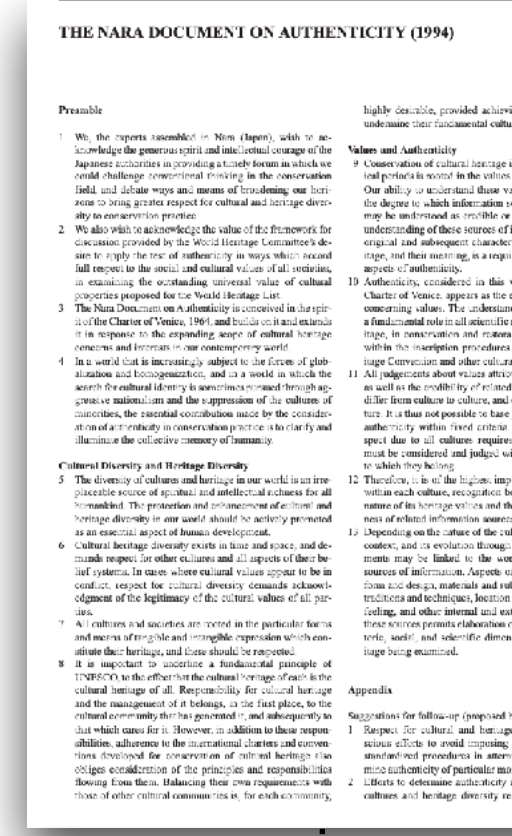
1985

1990

1995



WASHINGTON CHARTER



NARA DOC.

RL/NG/705

Verone, le 19 juillet, 1967

A Monsieur BERTRAND,
Sous-Directeur général p.i. pour
les Sciences sociales, les
Sciences humaines et la Culture,
UNESCO,
Place de Fontenoy,
75 PARIS 7e
France.

Monsieur le Directeur Général,

J'ai bien reçu votre lettre du 5 juillet concernant l'organisation par l'UNESCO d'une réunion d'experts chargés de coordonner en vue de l'adoption éventuelle à l'échelle internationale des principes des critères scientifiques, techniques et juridiques permettant d'établir un système efficace de protection des monuments et des sites.

Le projet tel qu'il nous est présenté se limitera à étudier :

- A. les conceptions scientifiques qui constituent la base de la doctrine de protection et de mise en valeur des monuments et des sites;
- B. les principes scientifiques et techniques qui doivent régir la mise en oeuvre des travaux de protection;
- C. les dispositions juridiques nécessaires pour assurer la protection du patrimoine monumental;

Ce programme ne pourrait constituer une bonne base pour la réunion envisagée pour autant qu'il s'agisse de rester dans le domaine des généralités et que le lbut de la réunion ne dépasse pas l'établissement du "status questionis".

- A. **the scientific concepts that form the basis of the doctrine** of protection and enhancement of monuments and sites;
- B. the scientific and technical principles that should govern the implementation of protection work;
- C. the legal provisions necessary to ensure the protection of monumental heritage.

VENICE CHARTER

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WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION



UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANISATION

CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

Adopted by the General Conference at its seventeenth session Paris, 16 november 1972



English Text

RECOMMENDATION CONCERNING THE SAFEGUARDING AND CONTEMPORARY ROLE OF HISTORIC AREAS (NAIROBI RECOMMENDATION)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura
Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'éducation, la science et la culture
Организация Объединённых Наций по вопросам образования, науки и культуры
منظمة الأمم المتحدة للتربية والعلم والثقافة

Recommendation concerning the safeguarding and contemporary rôle of historic areas

adopted by the General Conference at its sixteenth session Nairobi, 26 November 1976

Recomendación relativa a la salvaguardia de los conjuntos históricos y su función en la vida contemporánea

aprobada por la Conferencia General en su decimosexta reunión Nairobi, 26 de noviembre de 1976

Recommandation concernant la sauvegarde des ensembles historiques ou traditionnels et leur rôle dans la vie contemporaine

adoptée par la Conférence générale à sa dix-neuvième session Nairobi, 26 novembre 1976

Рекомендация о сохранении и современной роли исторических ансамблей

принята Генеральной конференцией на девятнадцатой сессии, Найроби, 26 ноября 1976 г.

توصية بشأن صون المناطق التاريخية ودورها في الحياة المعاصرة
اقراها المؤتمر العام في دورته التاسعة عشرة
نairobi ٢٦ نوفمبر تشرين الثاني ١٩٧٦



CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES **ICOMOS** INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES

CHARTER FOR THE CONSERVATION OF HISTORIC TOWNS AND URBAN AREAS (WASHINGTON CHARTER 1987)

Adopted by ICOMOS General Assembly in Washington, DC, October 1987.

PREAMBLE AND DEFINITIONS

All urban communities, whether they have developed gradually over time or have been created deliberately, are an expression of the diversity of societies throughout history.

This charter concerns historic urban areas, large and small, including cities, towns and historic centres or quarters, together with their natural and man-made environments. Beyond their role as historical documents, these areas embody the values of traditional urban cultures. Today many such areas are being threatened, physically degraded, damaged or even destroyed, by the impact of the urban development that follows industrialisation in societies everywhere.

Faced with this dramatic situation, which often leads to irreversible cultural, social and even economic losses, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) deems it necessary to draw up an international charter for historic towns and urban areas that will complement the "International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites," usually referred to as "The Venice Charter." This new text defines the principles, objectives, and methods necessary for the conservation of historic towns and urban areas. It also seeks to promote the harmony of both private and community life in these areas and to encourage the preservation of those cultural properties, however modest in scale, that constitute the memory of mankind.

As set out in the UNESCO "Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas" (Warsaw - Nairobi, 1976), and also in various other international instruments, "the conservation of historic towns and urban areas" is understood to mean those steps necessary for the protection, conservation and restoration of such towns and areas as well as their development and harmonious adaptation to contemporary life.

The following principles are intended to guide the work of ICOMOS and its member States in the conservation and restoration of historic towns and urban areas.

1. In order to be most effective, the conservation of historic towns and other historic urban areas should be an integral part of coherent policies of economic and social development at every level.
2. The conservation of historic towns and urban areas should be based on the historic character of the town or urban area and its evolution over time. The following principles express this character, especially:
 - a) Urban patterns as defined by jobs and streets;
 - b) Relationships between buildings and green and open spaces;
 - c) The formal appearance, interior and exterior, of buildings as defined by scale, site, style, construction, materials, colour and decoration;

3. Cultural diversity and heritage diversity

4. The diversity of culture and heritage in our world is an irreplaceable source of spiritual and intellectual richness for all mankind. The protection and conservation of historic towns and urban areas is an essential aspect of human development.

5. Cultural heritage diversity exists in time and space, and demands respect for other cultures and a regard for their belief systems. In cases where cultural values appear to be in conflict, respect for cultural diversity demands a balanced acknowledgment of the legitimacy of the cultural values of all peoples.

6. All cultures and societies are rooted in the particular time and space in which they developed and continue to evolve. The conservation of historic towns and urban areas should be based on the historic character of the town or urban area and its evolution over time.

7. It is important to consider a fundamental principle of ICOMOS: the obligation to conserve the heritage of all peoples and the management of it in relation to the cultural heritage of all. Responsibility for cultural heritage and the management of it is shared by all peoples and governments.

8. The conservation of historic towns and urban areas is a responsibility of the government and, subsequently, the local community. However, in addition to their responsibilities, authorities to the national, State and municipal levels should be encouraged to conserve historic towns and urban areas through the conservation of their heritage and the implementation of the principles and responsibilities set forth in this Charter, following their responsibilities with regard to other cultural communities in the same community.

WASHINGTON CHARTER

THE NARA DOCUMENT ON AUTHENTICITY (1994)

Preamble

1. We, the experts assembled in New Orleans, wish to acknowledge the general spirit and the cultural heritage of the historic centres and quarters, together with their natural and man-made environments. Beyond their role as historical documents, these areas embody the values of traditional urban cultures. Today many such areas are being threatened, physically degraded, damaged or even destroyed, by the impact of the urban development that follows industrialisation in societies everywhere.

2. We also wish to acknowledge the value of the framework of the conservation provided by the Venice Charter for the conservation of historic towns and urban areas. It also seeks to promote the harmony of both private and community life in these areas and to encourage the preservation of those cultural properties, however modest in scale, that constitute the memory of mankind.

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NARA DOC.

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE
COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Strasbourg, le 13 septembre 1963

AS/Cult (15) 20
Or. fr.

ASSEMBLÉE CONSULTATIVE



COMMISSION CULTURELLE ET SCIENTIFIQUE

DEFENSE ET MISE EN VALEUR DES SITES ET ENSEMBLES
HISTORIQUES OU ARTISTIQUES

Rapport sur l'avis
présenté par M. We
de la Commission

1. Recommandation 365 relat
des sites et ensembles h

L'ensemble du rapport
sites et ensembles historique
examiné par le Groupe de trav
turelles du C.C.C., qui fait
le recommande au C.C.C.

Suite à cette recomme
pour le représenter au sein

(1) AS/Cult (15) PV 4

A 82.740

Le Comité d'organisation se réunira les 2 et 3 décembre
à Paris. Les personnalités suivantes seront invitées à participer
à la réunion, qui se tiendra sous la présidence du rapporteur
de la Commission :

Professeur Gazzola (Délégué du Gouvernement italien chargé de
la préparation de la Conférence de l'UNESCO),

Professeur Rosi (UNESCO, Paris),

Professeur Branca (Fondation Cini),

Professeur Beerli (Conseiller de la Commission),

Professeur Astengo (Conseiller de la Commission),

Dr. Reinink (Représentant du C.C.C.);

un représentant des Pouvoirs locaux,

un représentant des associations privées.

La date de la conférence a dû être reculée (1965) à
cause du congrès international des architectes et techniciens
des monuments historiques, organisé par l'UNESCO, à Venise,
en mai 1964.

La défense et mise en valeur des
et ensembles historiques ou artist

COE
H.2.4/63
DE



1965

VENICE CHARTER



INTERNATIONAL CHARTER FOR THE CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION OF MONUMENTS AND SITES (THE VENICE CHARTER 1964)

11th International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, Venice, 1964.

Adopted by ICOMOS in 1965.

Imbued with a message from the past, the historic monuments of generations of people remain to the present day as living witnesses of their age-old traditions. People are becoming more and more conscious of the unity of human values and regard ancient monuments as a common heritage. The common responsibility to safeguard them for future generations is recognized. It is our duty to hand them on in the full richness of their authenticity.

It is essential that the principles guiding the preservation and restoration of ancient buildings should be agreed and be laid down on an international basis, with each country being responsible for applying the plan within the framework of its own culture and traditions.

By defining these basic principles for the first time, the Athens Charter of 1931 contributed towards the development of an extensive international movement which has assumed concrete form in national documents, in the work of ICOM and UNESCO and in the establishment by the latter of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and the Restoration of Cultural Property. Increasing awareness and critical study have been brought to bear on problems which have continually become more complex and varied; now the time has come to examine the Charter afresh in order to make a thorough study of the principles involved and to enlarge its scope in a new document.

Accordingly, the 11th International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, which met in Venice from May 25th to 31st 1964, approved the following text:

DEFINITIONS

Article 1.
The concept of a historic monument embraces not only the single architectural work but also the urban or rural setting in which it is found, the evidence of a particular civilization, a significant development or a historic event. This applies not only to great works of art but also to more modest works of the past which have acquired cultural significance with the passing of time.

Article 2.
The conservation and restoration of monuments must have recourse to all the sciences and techniques which can contribute to the study and safeguarding of the architectural heritage.

1970

WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION



UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANISATION

CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

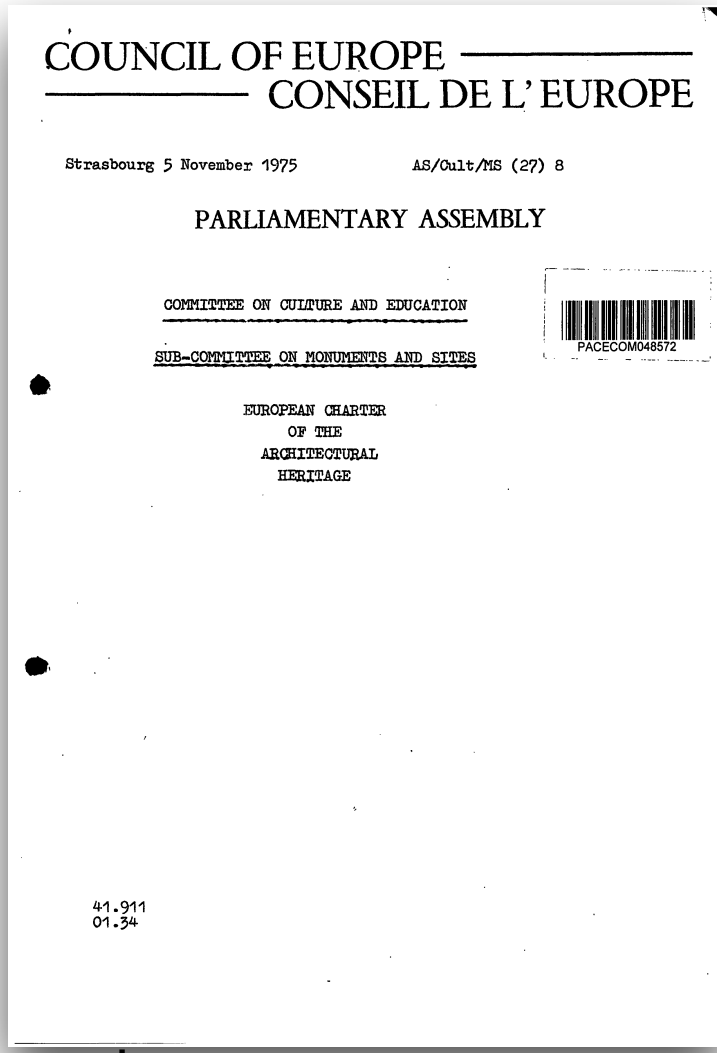
Adopted by the General Conference at its seventeenth session Paris, 16 november 1972



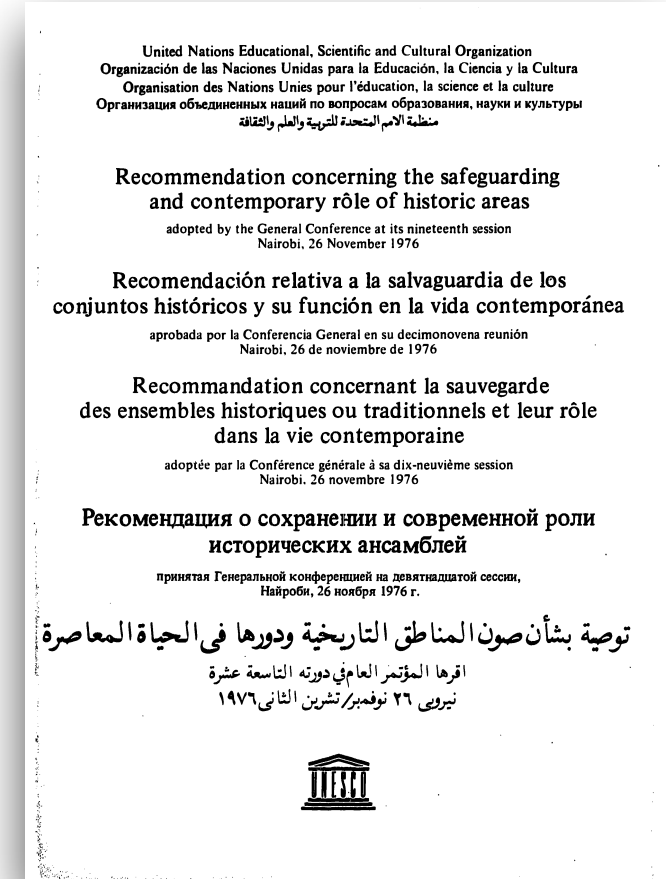
English Text

1975

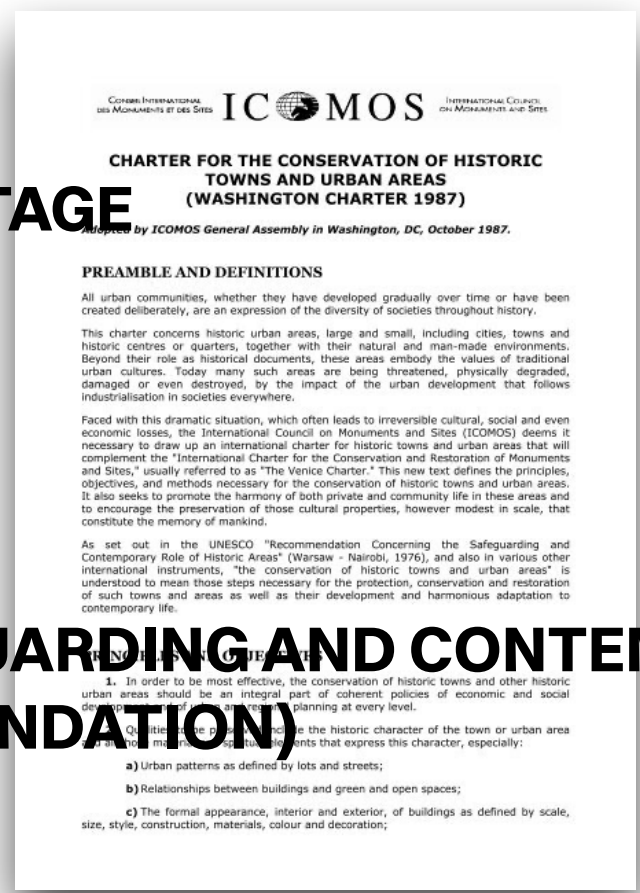
EUROPEAN CHARTER OF THE ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE



RECOMMENDATION CONCERNING THE SAFEGUARDING AND CONTEMPORARY ROLE OF HISTORIC AREAS (NAIROBI RECOMMENDATION)

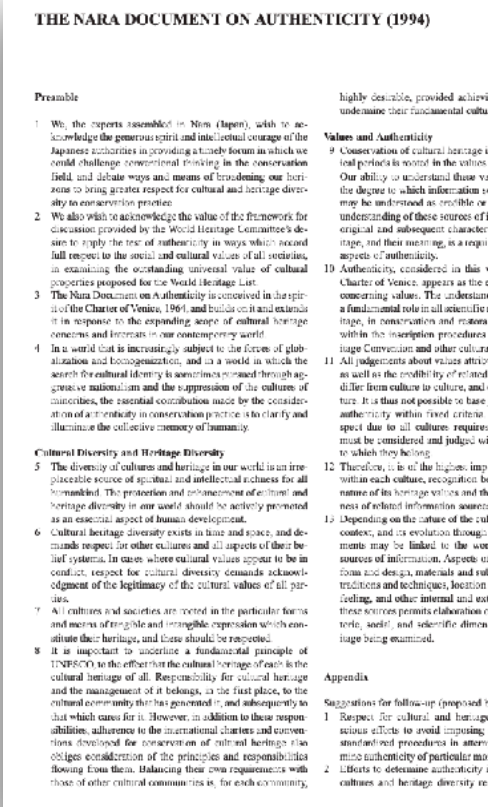


1985



WASHINGTON CHARTER

1990



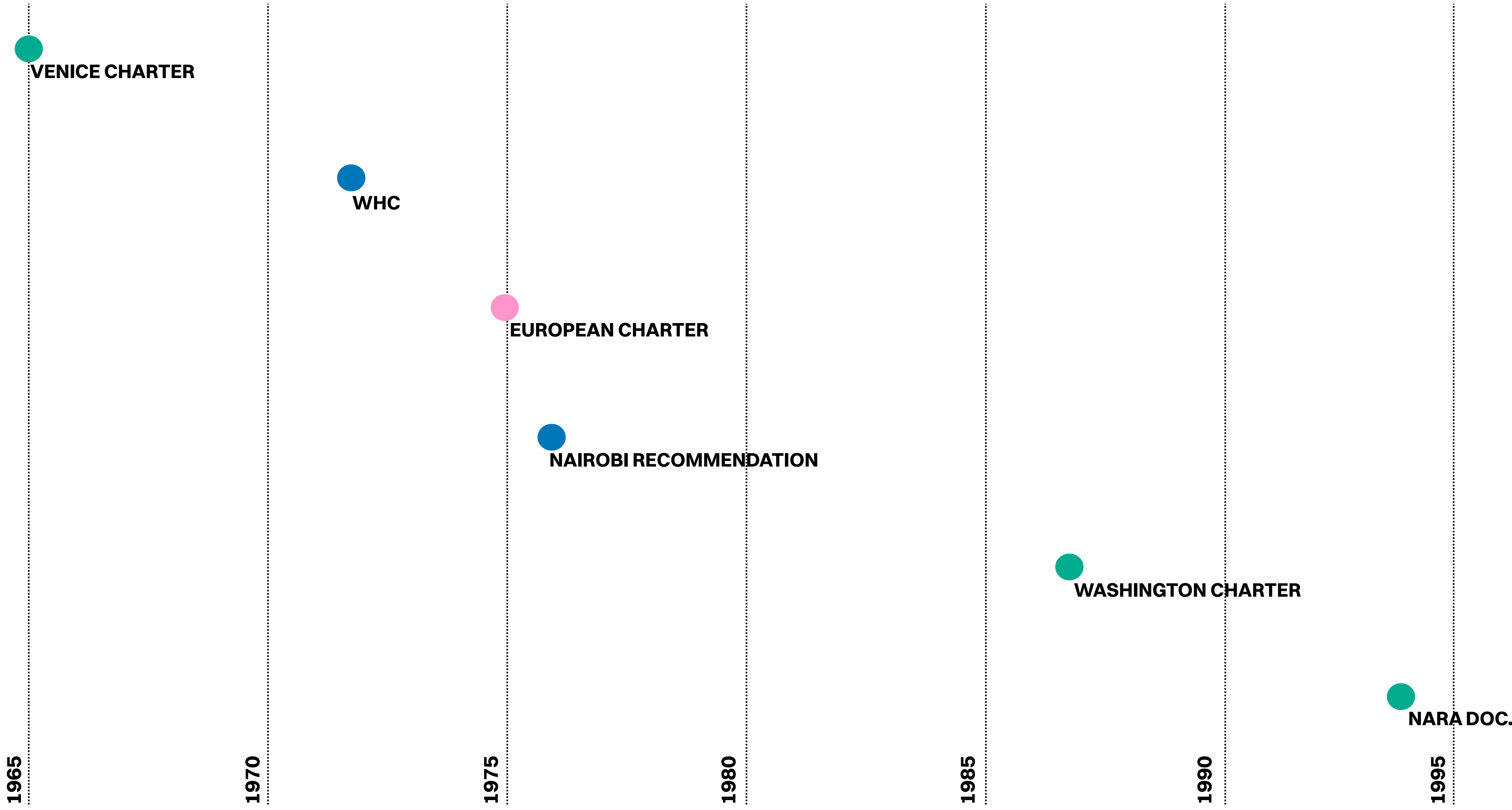
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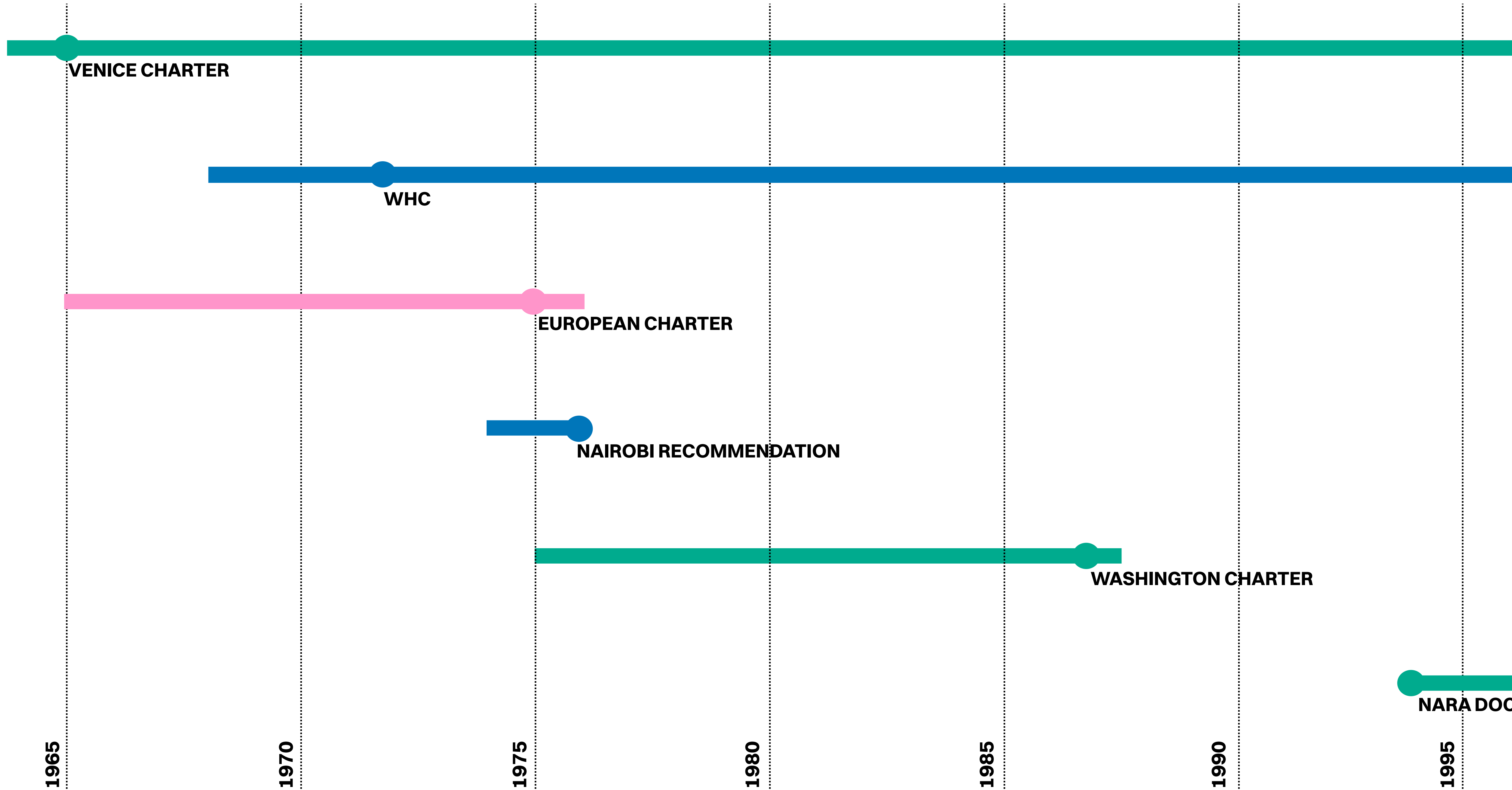
1995

Interconnected timeline
Network mapping

Interconnected timeline

Network mapping





1965

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VENICE CHARTER

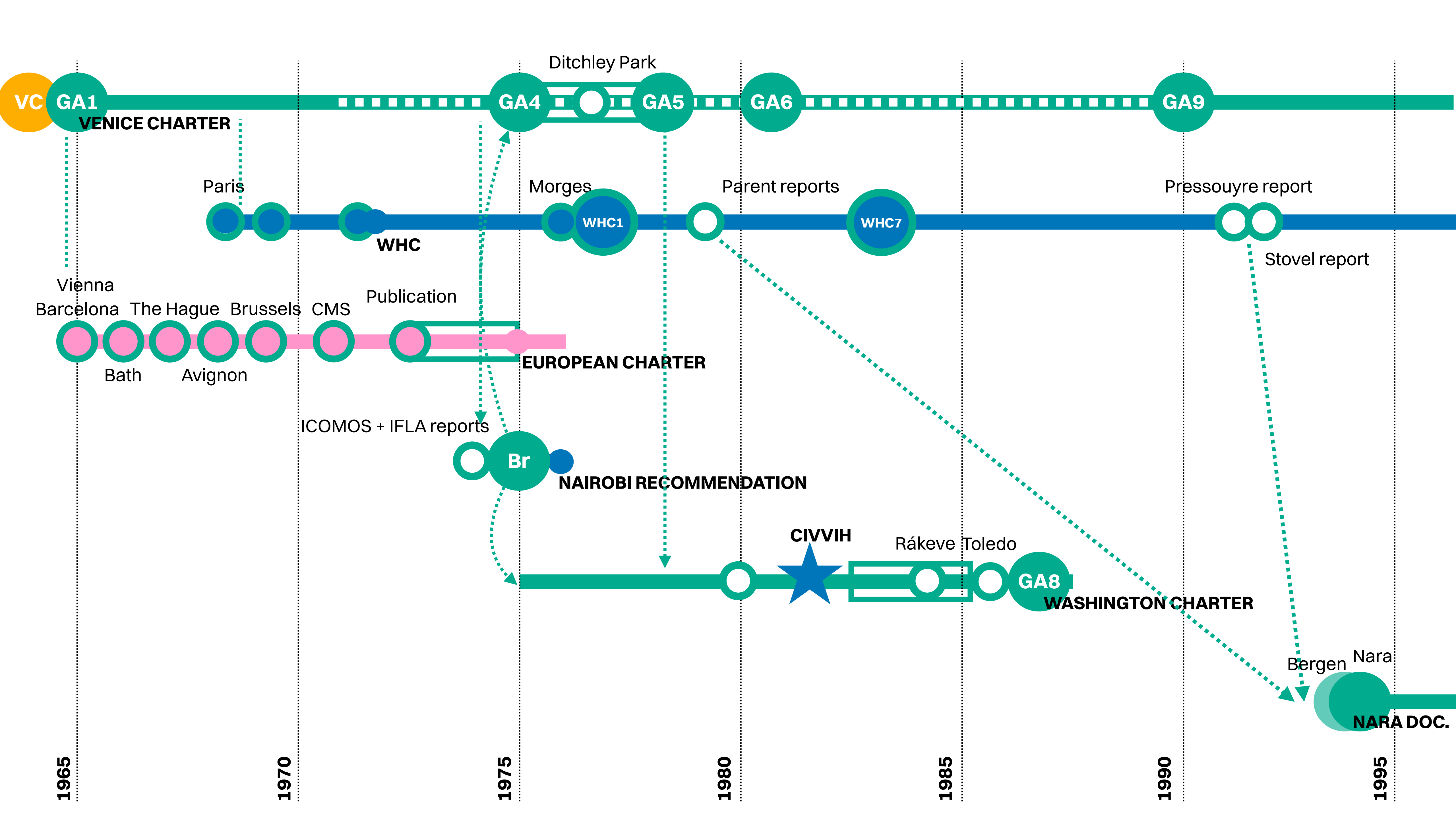
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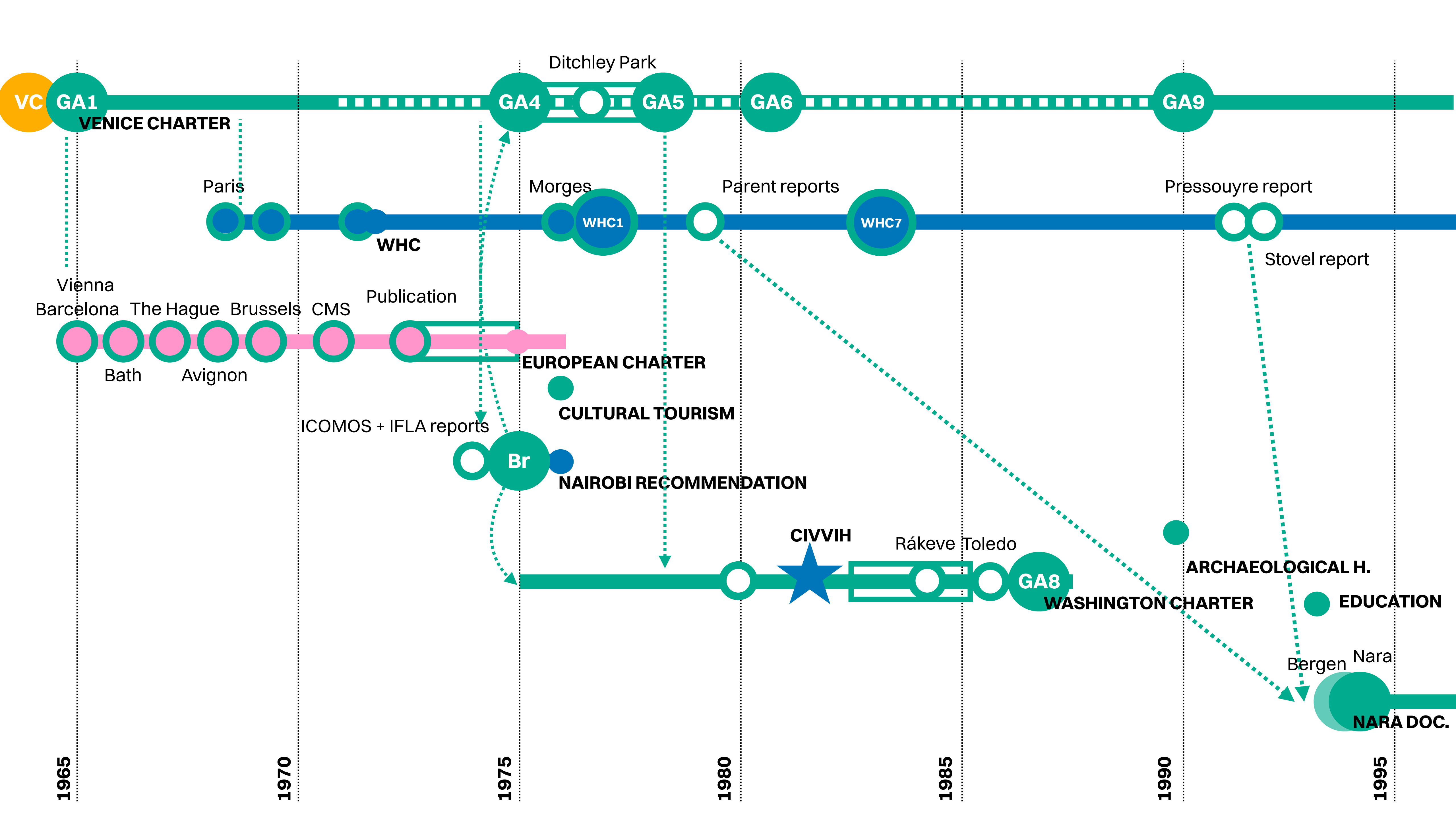
EUROPEAN CHARTER

NAIROBI RECOMMENDATION

WASHINGTON CHARTER

NARA DOC.





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GA1
VENICE CHARTER

GA4
GA5
GA6

GA9

Paris

WHC

Morges

WHC1

WHC7

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL H.

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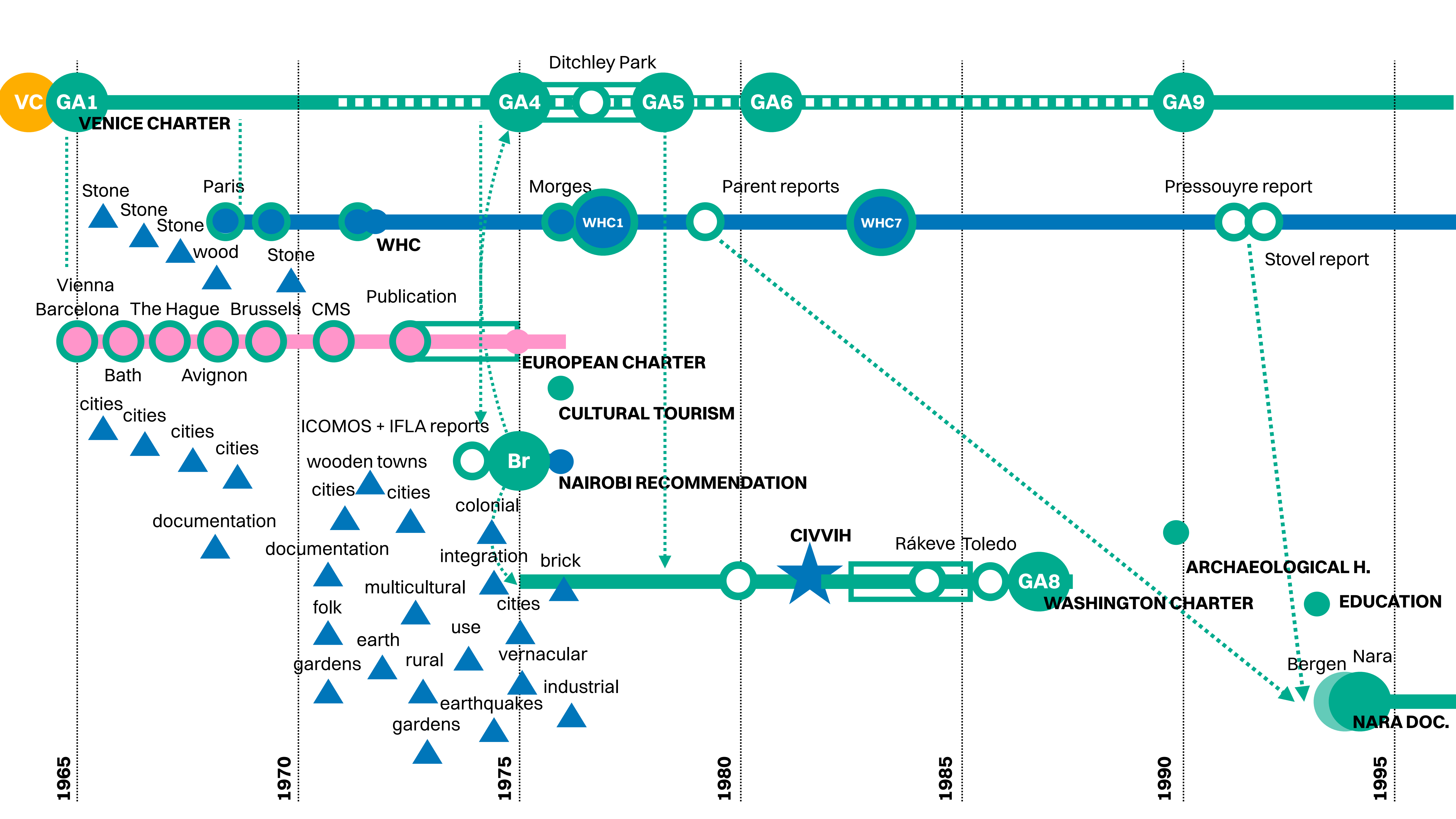
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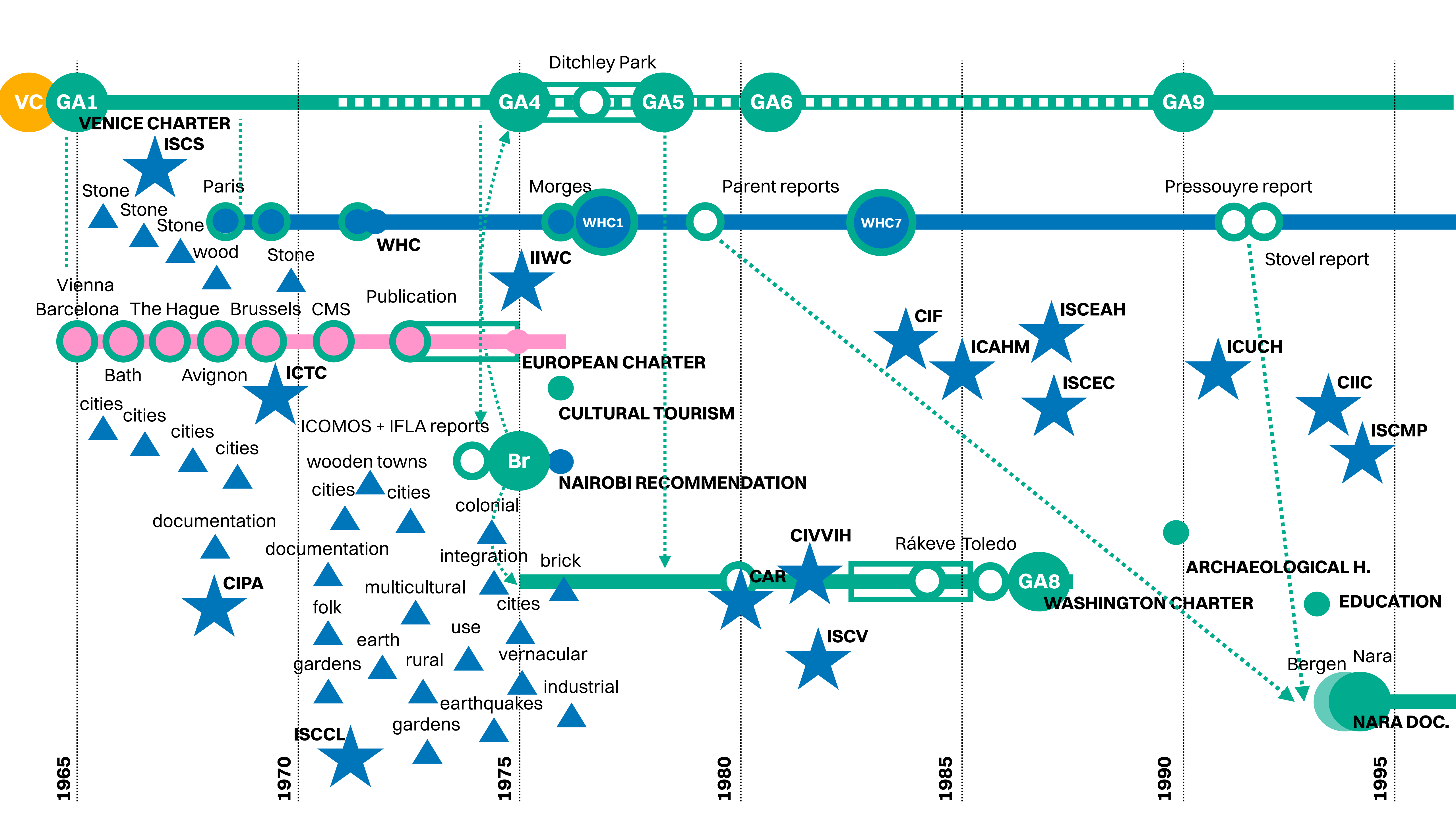
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Interconnected timeline

Network mapping

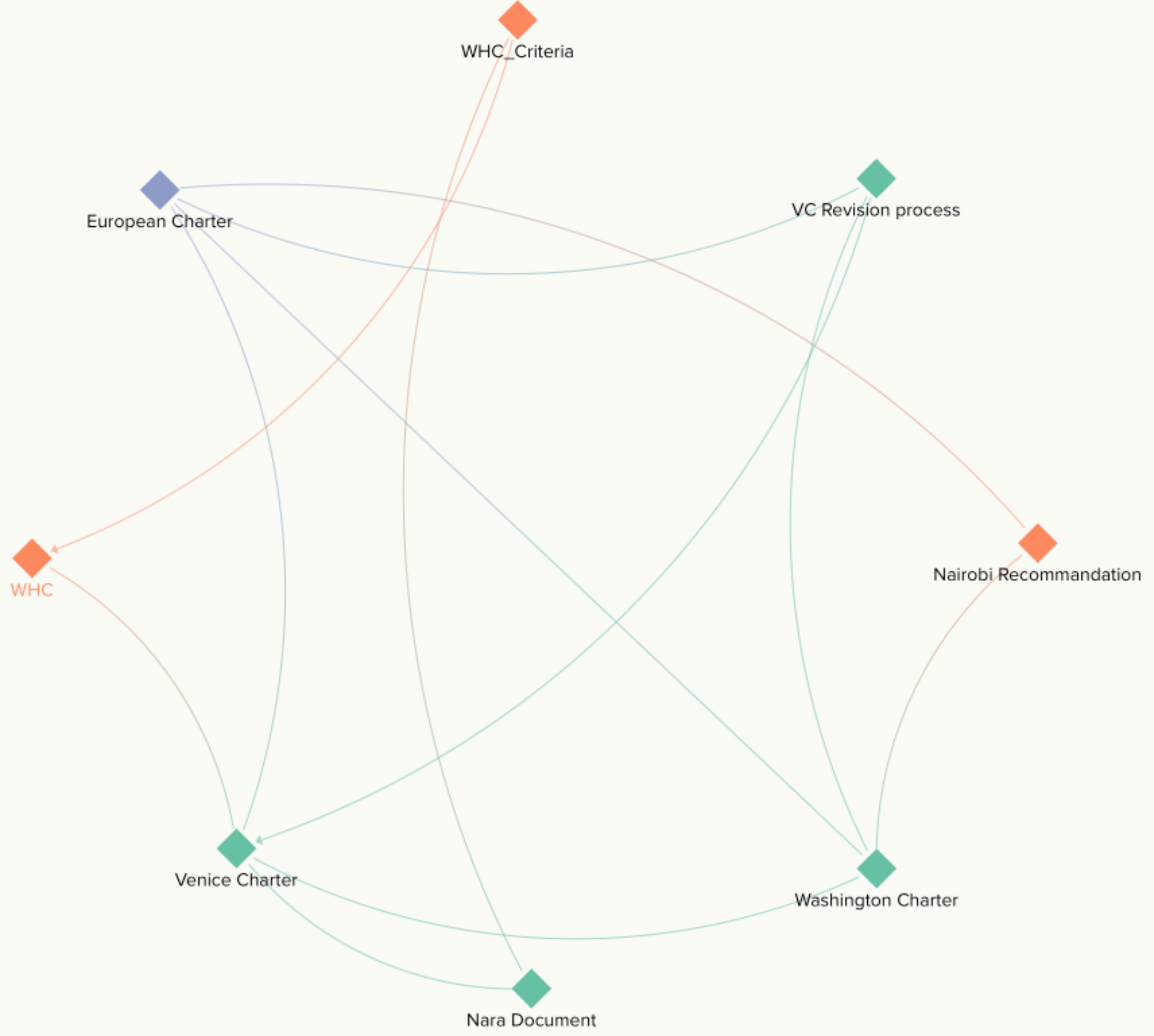
Documents

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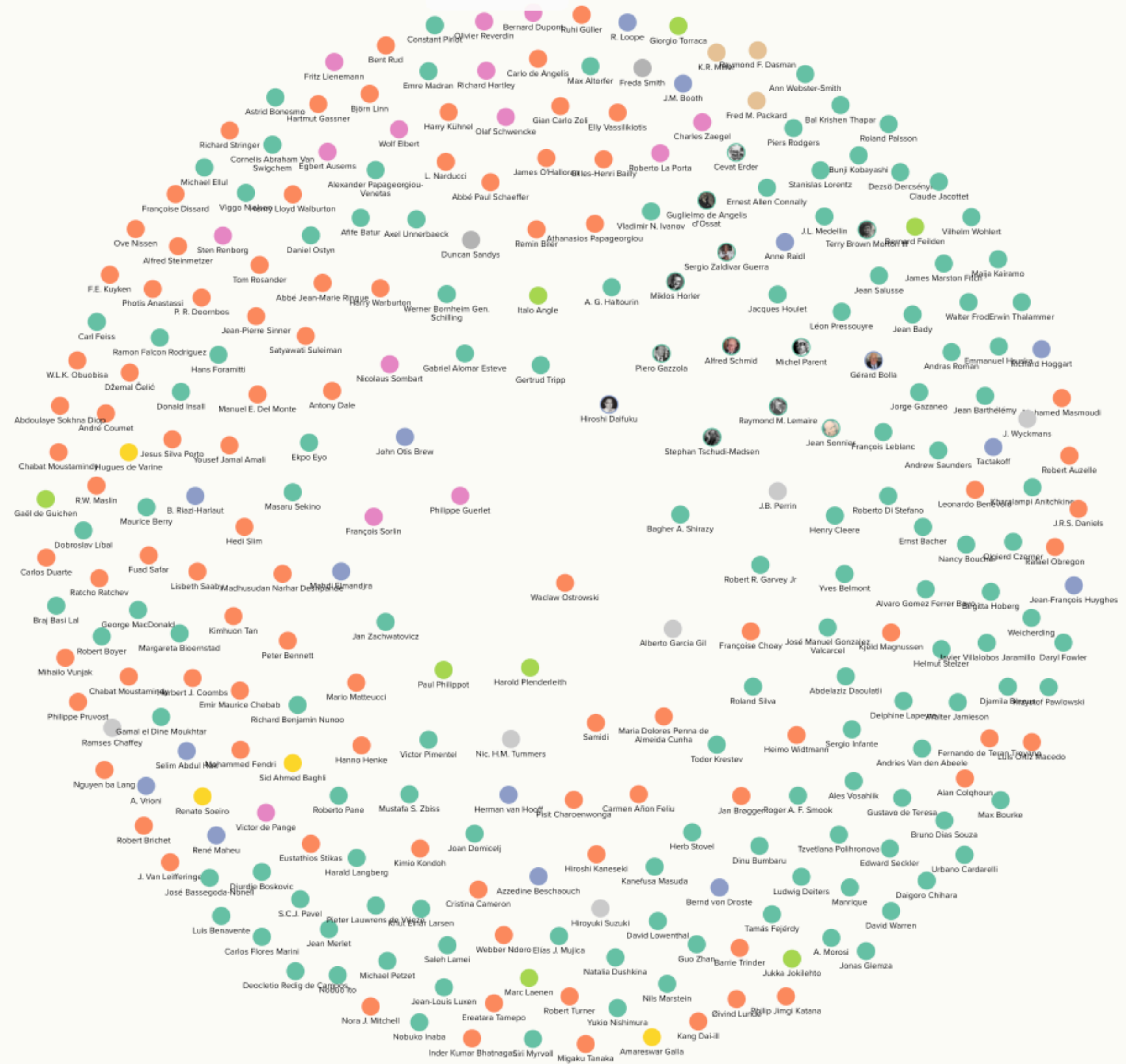


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Agents

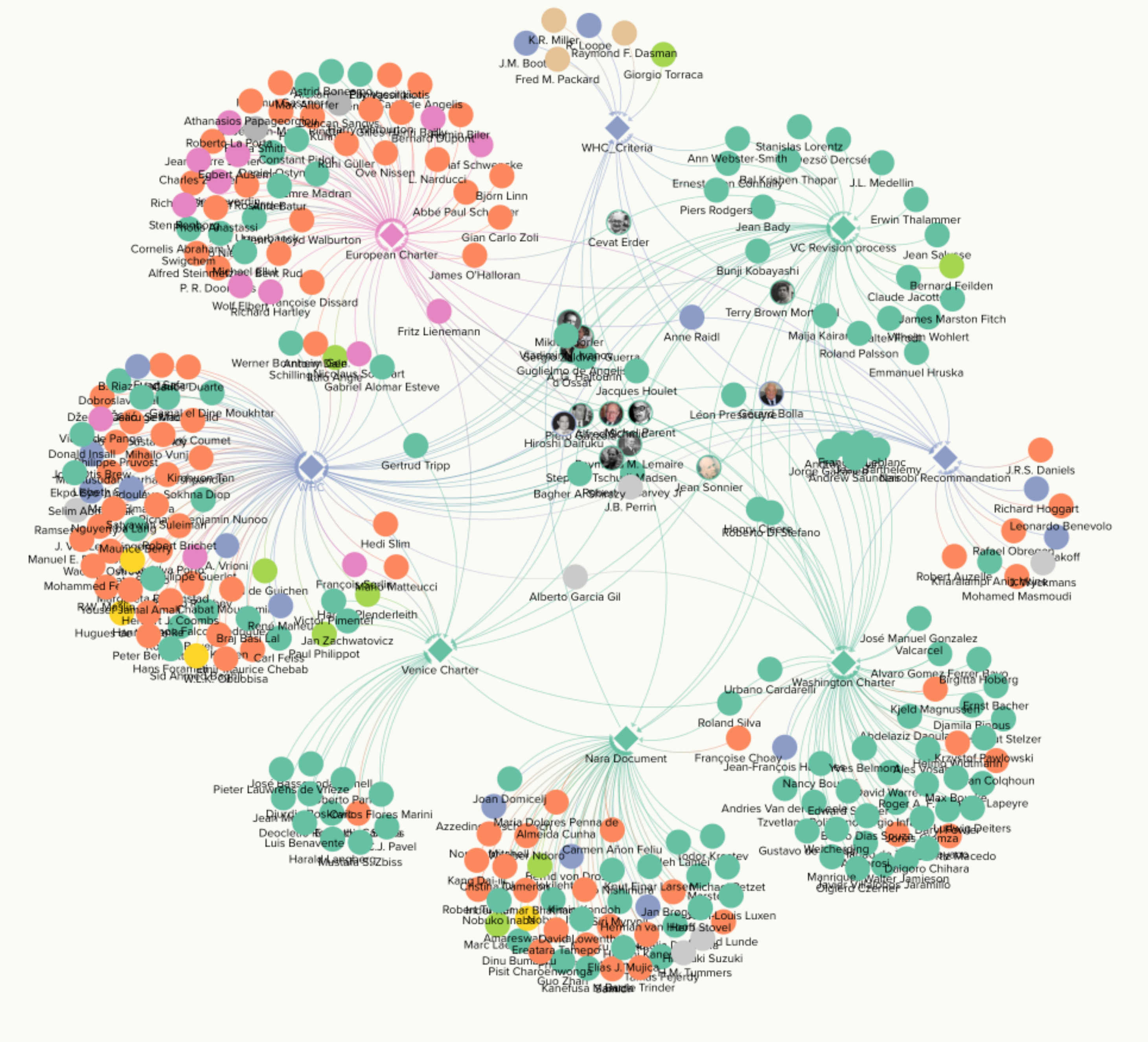


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Document Person

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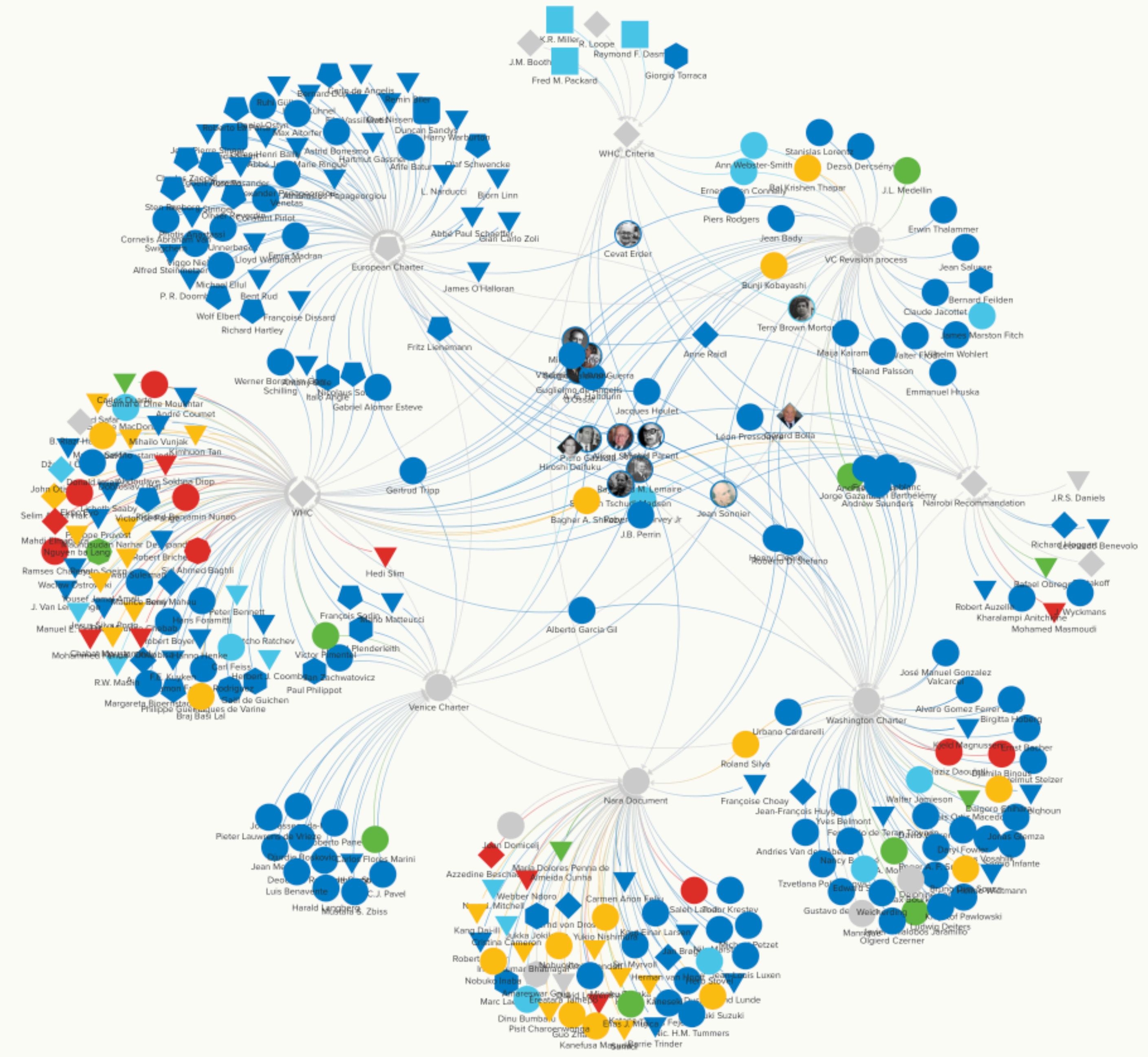


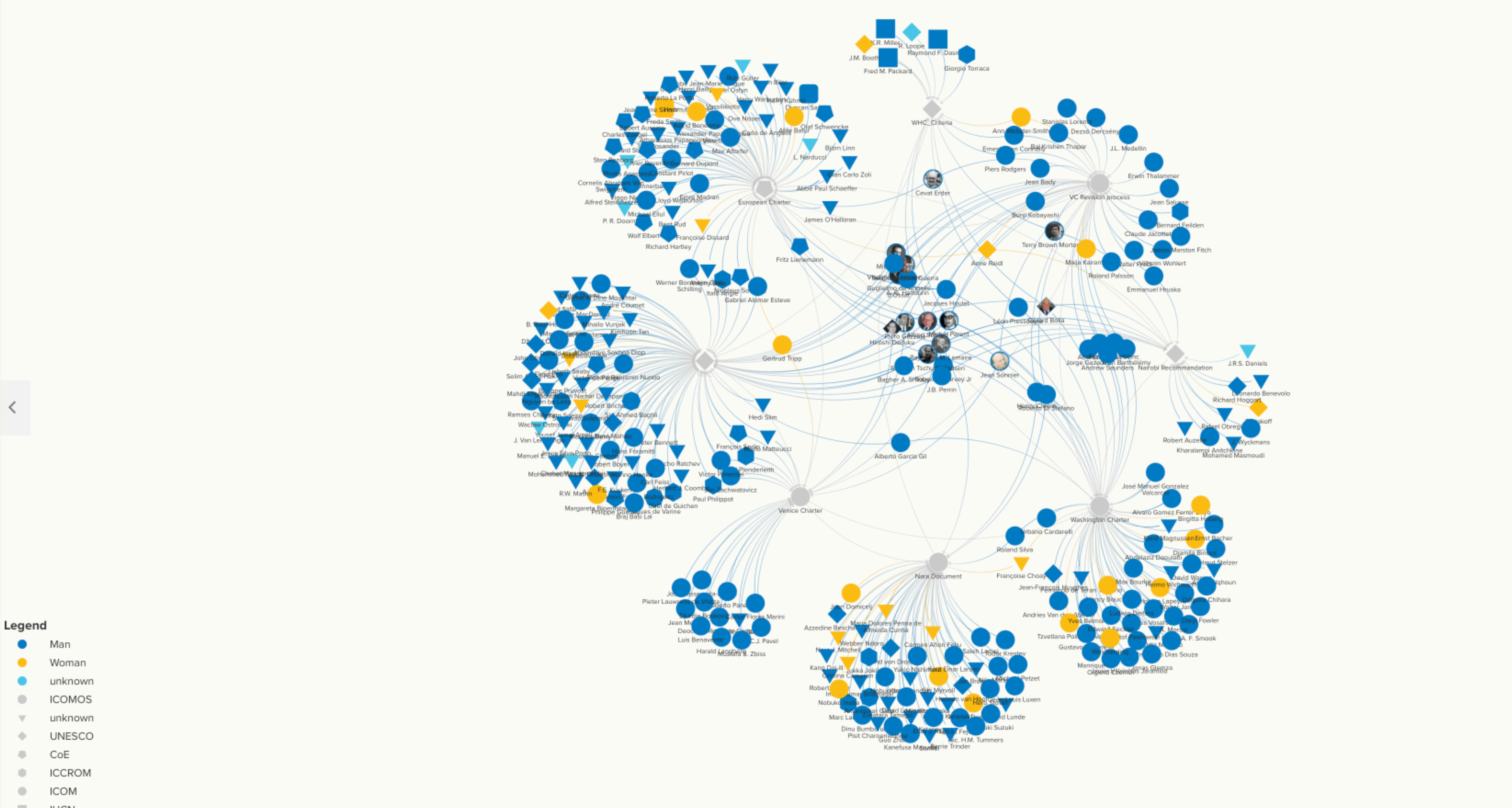
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- Legend**
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Document Person

Thank you very much!

(and please, help me!)

c.houbart@uliege.be

