

## **In Memoriam of Margareta Biörnstad 1928 – 2019**

We have the sad duty to inform about the death of Margareta Biörnstad, former President of ICOMOS Sweden and the first President of ICOMOS International Committee on Archaeological Heritage Management.

Margareta Biörnstad was President of ICOMOS Sweden 1987-1997 and President of ICAHM 1985-1990. ICOMOS Sweden was founded in 1966 and was until the end of the 1990s closely attached to the Swedish National Heritage Board. Margareta started at the Heritage Board as an archaeologist in 1951, was Deputy Director-General 1972-1987 and Director-General 1987-1993.

In those years, with Margareta as a central figure, the system of heritage conservation developed greatly in Sweden. In 1974 a bill on cultural policy established conservation of cultural environments as an important task, which enforced the role of conservation in physical planning. It was stated that the heritage encompassed the whole society and the history of everyone. The industrial heritage, the everyday heritage and social aspects were included. The legislation developed, area protection (Areas of National Interest) was introduced. The National Heritage Board was enforced and the regional heritage administration restructured with heritage inspectors and later on heritage departments at the County Administrative Boards.

In the early days ICOMOS focused mainly on the great monuments. Margareta was instrumental in bringing in the archaeology and strongly worked for a wider understanding of the heritage and the role of the heritage for development.

In 1985 ICOMOS International Committee on Archaeological Heritage Management was set up under the leadership of ICOMOS Sweden and in close cooperation with the other Nordic countries. The first President 1985-1990 was Margareta Biörnstad and the secretariat was hosted by the Swedish National Heritage Board. Intensive work started, with among other things annual committee meetings and a large symposium in Stockholm in 1988. And in 1990 the Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage was adopted.

Margareta was also a driving force for a more active ICOMOS work in Sweden. She was anxious to widen the membership and to also welcome younger members. A Newsletter was started, more activities, an Annual Seminar with speakers invited from abroad, and in 1972 the statutes were revised.

An important meeting was an international seminar on 'Information as an Instrument for Protection against War Damage to Cultural Heritage' in 1994 in Stockholm. A number of Swedish and international expert on the 1954 Hague Convention and development aid took part in this.

This led to the setting up of the foundation Cultural Heritage without Borders in 1995, where Margareta was one of the initiators and ICOMOS Sweden one of the founding bodies. The first chair was Margareta, until year 2000. The foundation is dedicated to rescuing and preserving tangible and intangible cultural heritage affected by conflict, neglect or human and natural disasters. Through practical work and training it wants to be an active force in reconciliation, peace building, human rights and social and economic development.

Even after Margareta had resigned as President of ICOMOS Sweden, she contributed much to our work. One example is a meeting resulting in The Stockholm Declaration – Declaration of ICOMOS marking the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1998.

Sweden has at one occasion hosted the meeting of ICOMOS Advisory Committee – in 1998, when Stockholm was the cultural capital of Europe. But the decision to invite for this was taken when Margareta was President. In fact this was a mini General Assembly, including the whole series of meetings – Bureau, Executive Committee and Advisory Committee – followed by a three-day conference on 'Historic Towns – a Heritage for the Future' and after that post-conference tours or alternatively the annual meeting of ICOMOS International Committee on Historic Towns and Villages or a DoCoMoMo conference.

Margareta was a strong personality. As daughter of a minister and with successful brothers who reached important positions in society, she with her brilliance, eloquence and natural authority became a self-evident leader. Margareta demanded high standards and efficiency, but was at the same time a warm, considerate and supportive person. Generations of Swedish heritage officers experienced that. To work with her was tremendously instructive, stimulating and rewarding. It was with great pride I, as the then Secretary-General of ICOMOS Sweden, participated with Margareta in Advisory Committee meetings and other meetings, feeling the respect and appreciation that met her and ICOMOS Sweden.

For ICOMOS Sweden

*Nils Ahlberg*  
President

