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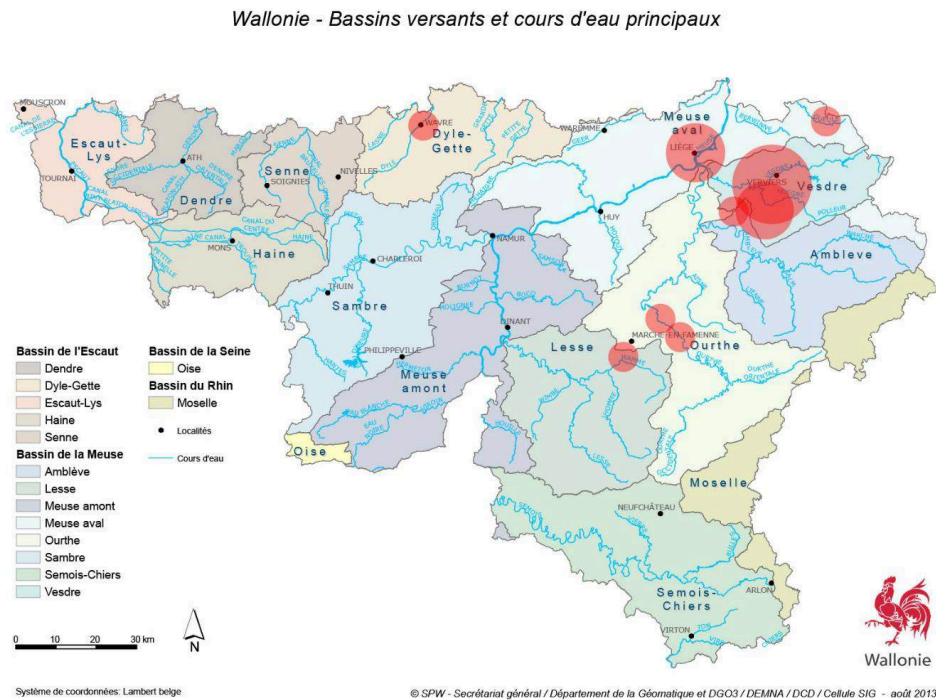
From Flood to Recovery: Coordinating Crisis Support for Churches in Need in Wallonia

Maura Moriaux

Introduction

- 1 The floods that struck Wallonia in the summer of 2021 were devastating in many respects. First and foremost, on a human level, 39 victims were recorded, and many individuals were compelled to leave their homes due to the rising waters. This natural disaster unfolded in the broader context of climate change, resulting in heavy rainfall and other unusual phenomena. Its consequences were exacerbated by various factors, including the progressive sealing of soils and overflowing rivers. Consequently, the material damage was substantial, with some regions being significantly more affected than others. Numerous towns and villages suffered, along with their religious heritage, which will be our focus here. Indeed, CIPAR (Centre Interdiocésain du Patrimoine et des Arts Religieux) documented a total of 31 parish churches that sustained damage to varying degrees, depending on their geographical location.
- 2 The most significant damage occurred in the province of Liège. However, as shown in the map below (fig. 1), the issue affected the entire Walloon region. The other provinces suffered less severe damage (appendix 1).

[Fig. 1]



The map highlights the zones where the affected churches were located.

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Liège Province:

Rivers that flooded in the region: Vesdre, Runoff, Ourthe, Hogne, Gölh

Affected municipalities: Aywaille, Chaudfontaine, Esneux, Flémalle-Haute, Kelmis, Liège, Limbourg, Pepinster, Trooz, Soumagne, Sprimont, Theux, Thimister, Verviers

Churches: 26

Namur Province:

Rivers that flooded in the region: Wamme

Affected municipality: Rochefort

Church: 1

Luxembourg Province:

Rivers that flooded in the region: Ourthe

Affected municipalities: Hotton, La Roche-en-Ardenne

Churches: 2

Walloon Brabant Province:

River that flooded in the region: Dyle

Affected municipality: Wavre

Churches: 2

- 3 The lack of emergency plans intensified all the challenges. Even if there had been a plan for each building, every stakeholder in the heritage sector would agree that the magnitude of the disaster could not have been foreseen.
- 4 To fully grasp the complexity of coordinating the crisis phase for religious heritage, it is essential to clearly outline the specific characteristics of parish churches, and the key managers tasked with their preservation.

CIPAR, Parish Churches, and Church Councils: Preliminary Concepts

- 5 Founded in 2017, CIPAR is a non-profit organisation established by the four French-speaking dioceses of Wallonia – Tournai, Namur, Liège, and the Archdiocese of Mechelen-Brussels – to coordinate efforts related to the conservation, protection, and promotion of parish churches. CIPAR also serves as a representative for diocesan heritage services, which act as the primary field contacts.
- 6 In this regard, the non-profit centre acts as a hub of expertise, ensuring the coordination of diocesan efforts to manage the heritage of Catholic places of worship across Wallonia. The centre's primary audience includes church councils, clergy, and local authorities.
- 7 Most parish churches are considered municipal properties. However, due to their dedication to worship, they are managed by church councils, referred to in French as *Fabriques d'église*.
- 8 These church councils, made up of five to nine volunteer parishioners, are public entities overseen by the municipalities and the bishops. Their role involves managing the temporal goods of worship. In other words, their mission is to maintain the buildings in their care, along with all the movable heritage contained within them. Consequently, the management, preservation, and protection of heritage assets form part of their responsibilities.¹ These individuals may not necessarily have training in heritage conservation or art history. Furthermore, many church fabrics, primarily composed of elderly volunteers, face challenges in recruiting new members. Indeed, it is not uncommon for the church fabric council to be incomplete or to consist of members who are no longer capable of effectively managing heritage buildings, which exacerbates the difficulties in managing and conserving parish churches. These introductory points clearly illustrate the complexity of managing public worship buildings, in which many stakeholders are involved.

Gradually Providing Information and Formulating a Methodology During the Emergency Phase

Challenges

- 9 From the outset, the context of the summer 2021 intervention seemed significantly different from CIPAR's usual on-site visits. Typically, on-site appointments are arranged on a case-by-case basis, depending on the needs and issues faced by the members of the church fabric council. However, the flooding created a situation where numerous heritage buildings were simultaneously at risk. It is also important to note that 2021 marked CIPAR's third year of existence, suggesting that the young organisation was not yet well-known to all municipalities and church councils. Consequently, most did not instinctively reach out to the appropriate diocesan authorities. As a result, CIPAR had to essentially 'fish for information' in order to take concrete action.
- 10 As no preexisting methodology was available for the emergency phase, it became essential to improvise and respond swiftly with the limited resources available. To ensure efficient action, a phased procedure was implemented.

Developing a Practical Methodology

- 11 The first phase, crucial for considering any on-site intervention, involved identifying the affected buildings and gathering comprehensive information about them, including their location, the members of the church fabric council, and the height to which the water had risen. While data collection was actively underway during the first week following the floods, it continued steadily throughout the emergency phase, which lasted from mid-July to September.
- 12 Information arrived gradually. The 14th, 15th, and 16th of July were intense days devoted to monitoring news through media and social networks. Occasionally, photographs of damaged churches surfaced online, aiding the investigation (for example, Notre-Dame des Récollets Church and Saint-Remacle Church in Verviers). While significant, such photographs were rare: fewer than five churches were identified in this manner in the days following the disaster.
- 13 A preliminary list of the municipalities affected by the flooding was created, serving as a reference for identifying potentially impacted places of worship. To avoid omissions, even theoretically damaged churches were incorporated into this list. Following this, all volunteers overseeing the churches on this list were identified to collect their contact details.
- 14 A phase of outreach followed: church council members, priests, and other parish leaders were contacted individually to collect information about potential damage. This complex and crucial step removed buildings that had not sustained damage from the hypothetical list. It also enabled a focus on the locations and managers that would require assistance in the coming hours and days.
- 15 Subsequently, it became essential to consolidate all the information into a summary report, which was initially shared with CIPAR and various diocesan heritage services. A

checklist of questions was used to create a fact sheet for each place of worship, complementing the report:

- Who is the owner of the building and its contents?
- Who is the contact person?
- Is the building insured? If it is, who is the insurer? Who manages this aspect - the municipality or the church council?
- Is there contents insurance available?
- Are there any heritage assets inside the damaged building?
- Is the building fully or partially listed and protected by AWaP,² or is it located within a listed and protected site? Does the church own movable property recognised as exceptional treasures of Wallonia by the FWB?³

- 16 Some questions were easily answered, while others remained unanswered. This was due to a lack of on-site visibility and the knowledge of the church council members.
- 17 By the end of this investigation, every damaged building had a file that was mostly complete. The file included administrative details, contact persons, the insurance company's identification, and a concise description of the damage caused by the floods.
- 18 Contacting managers was not always straightforward, as some municipalities lacked electricity or faced telecommunication issues. Furthermore, access conditions were complicated due to the state of the roads, which hindered efforts to reach the flooded towns and villages. It is important to note that the psychological impact of the flood damage was considerable; several church council members and municipalities responsible for these buildings were personally affected. It is understandable that managing the churches was not always their top priority. While this is quite reasonable, it added an additional difficulty: diplomacy and patience were necessary to obtain information regarding the condition of the churches.
- 19 Additionally, it is important to note that the events occurred during the summer, when many stakeholders, including fabric members and heritage professionals, were on holiday. As a result, resources were limited for organising on-site appointments, conducting preservation operations, or even contacting these individuals.

The Crisis Committee: Exchanges, Updates, and Concrete On-Site Actions

- 20 Over these three intensive days of research and outreach, CIPAR was invited to join the crisis committee coordinated by KIK-IRPA (Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage). This initiative fostered swift collaboration among heritage owners, caretakers, and professionals in the field of cultural heritage.
- 21 Belgian Blue Shield, a key committee member, organised a call for volunteers with specific profiles, such as conservator-restorers and art historians, to assist institutions, associations, and heritage caretakers. By the end of July, as CIPAR coordinated on-site appointments to assess the damage, Blue Shield selected suitable volunteers from its list to accompany CIPAR on-site.
- 22 Due to the absence of updated inventories, the surveys conducted by KIK-IRPA and the initial phone contacts with local stakeholders provided a preliminary overview of the movable assets preserved on-site and those facing the greatest risk. This data was

combined with the information gathered by CIPAR during the outreach phase, allowing the Centre to assess the types of movable heritage most affected and to request a specialised profile via Blue Shield for necessary intervention.

- 23 The initial on-site visits were scheduled for the first week of August. They involved various participants: a CIPAR representative, a Belgian Blue Shield volunteer, members of the fabric church council, and, depending on the case, either an AWaP agent or another expert, such as an architect. By the second week of August 2024, a more detailed assessment of the most affected churches was prepared, outlining the emergencies and planning specific preservation measures.
- 24 The complexity of managing these damaged churches can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, the significant number of stakeholders involved includes the church council, which operates under both the religious oversight of their diocesan bishop and the civil supervision of the municipality, acting as the exclusive manager. However, the municipality typically owns the building, meaning that insurance may be handled by either party.⁴ Furthermore, if the property is listed, AWaP is also involved. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure effective communication among the various stakeholders and provide clear coordination whenever joint on-site appointments are necessary. The second equally important factor was the absence of updated and illustrated inventories. Although this is a legal requirement for church council members, most lacked a current and comprehensive record of their movable heritage furniture, making it difficult to identify the items involved (and thus potentially affected). In fact, the Church of Saint-Remacle council in Verviers was the only exception, possessing a nearly complete and up-to-date inventory, which facilitated proper preparation.

Offering Tailored Emergency Advice for Each Situation

Methodology

- 25 As previously mentioned, the extent of the damage varied depending on the location and configuration of the religious buildings. To better inform the members of the church council, the initial visit aimed to assess the damage, establish condition reports, document the interventions with photographs, and compile a brief inventory in the most severe cases.
- 26 While CIPAR continued to coordinate contacts with managers, schedule appointments, conduct photographic reports, and compile written accounts, Blue Shield volunteers contributed by providing more detailed condition assessments and maintenance recommendations. Following these visits, all data collected in the field were compiled into an illustrated report, which included a pre-established identity sheet for the building, a general health assessment, and more in-depth condition reports for invaluable movable heritage items. At the conclusion of the crisis, the Centre received support from the Liège Diocese Heritage Service to continue coordinating work specifically for churches in the province of Liège.

Report Regarding Material Damage

- 27 In terms of deterioration, the type of movable heritage most affected was undoubtedly liturgical textiles. Indeed, servile garments, altar cloths, linens, banners, and vestments

of statues, often stored in sacristy cupboards and in large quantities, were inherently fragile. Furthermore, they were contaminated not only by water but also by mud and hydrocarbons. These factors led to colour transfer as well as the oxidation of fibres and metallic threads. As these visits occurred two to three weeks after the disaster, another form of damage impacted all hygroscopic materials: mould. Developing within 48 hours of flooding, these microorganisms spread across nearly all hygroscopic surfaces. Consequently, the working environment became unhealthy, necessitating the use of FFP3 masks, disposable gloves, and high-temperature washable clothing. For some items, the level of degradation was so severe that preservation was nearly impossible.

- 28 In addition to these observations, CIPAR revisited a reflection that had begun independently of the July floods, concerning the assessment of movable property based on pre-established objective criteria. Initially, this assessment methodology was utilised to evaluate movable heritage and is particularly employed to enhance storage conditions in sacristies and other storage areas, or to determine whether items should be placed in storage. This methodology was adapted in the current case to objectively ascertain what could be saved and what could not.⁵ In light of these findings, decisions had to be made to identify which items should be preserved and prioritised for treatment.
- 29 In some cases, the condition of the buildings was so poor that safeguarding valuable movable furniture became unfeasible due to health hazards and insufficient security. Proper ventilation was crucial for allowing the building to dry, typically achieved by opening windows, which increased the risk of theft.
- 30 The following examples will illustrate the range of issues encountered.

First Case: Chanxhe – A Rural Church Located Adjacent to a Watercourse

- 31 Problem identification: significant increase in water levels, limited human resources, and the building's location on a listed AWaP site.
- 32 The Chanxhe church is located on the banks of the Ourthe River. Its riverside position, along with the force of the water, significantly impacted the structure, causing the fuel tank to overturn within the building. Unfortunately, the sacristy's mostly modern furnishings, constructed from plywood, were beyond salvaging. The water level rose to nearly two metres high (fig. 2–3).

[Fig. 2–3]



Chanxhe, Church of the Saint Nom de Jésus, exterior view showing the water level reached, and inside view. View taken on 20 August 2021.

© CIPAR (Vinciane Groessens and Maura Moriaux).

- 33 Although the building's site is listed by AWaP, the church itself is not. The members of the fabric church council who were also affected by the disaster, attempted to evacuate some valuable movable property, such as the garments of a clothed Madonna and silverware. In the post-disaster phase, the Liège Diocese Heritage Service conducted regular inspections of the painted panels.

Second Case: Fraipont – A Sanctuary Area Within a Church Housing Heritage Furniture

- 34 Problem identification: limited human resources, disorganised management, evacuation of artworks, and challenges regarding storage and transportation.
- 35 Trooz was one of the municipalities most severely impacted by the floods, which inflicted considerable damage on homes, places of worship, and municipal buildings. Owing to the municipality's inadequate refuge areas, the churches of Fraipont, La Brouck, and Prayon were requisitioned to serve as toy markets and centres for food and clothing distribution, as well as storage and distribution zones for cleaning furniture.
- 36 Among these, the Church of Saint-Denis in Fraipont undeniably harbours the most significant heritage. It features a 17th-century painting, polychrome wooden sculptures from the 15th to the 18th centuries, a 19th-century *Madonna and Child*, and 18th-century furniture.

- 37 Due to the church's challenging condition and the lack of local human resources, a 'shock operation' was carried out through a collaborative effort involving CIPAR, KIK-IRPA, Blue Shield Belgium, and the Liège Cathedral Treasury.
- 38 It was undoubtedly the most spectacular intervention of all. Numerous conservation professionals were involved, each contributing to and managing the initial rescue steps according to their specialisation (fig. 4). While wooden furniture specialists wrapped and secured polychrome sculptures for transport, painting conservators protected and packaged the canvas. Leather specialists sanitised books and archival documents. Other professionals handled textiles or prepared transport pallets for the move. Logistics were overseen by KIK-IRPA, which transported the artworks to a secure location at the Treasury.

[Fig. 4]



Church of Saint-Gilles in Fraipont. Moving a 16th-century sculpture of *Ecce Homo* by a team of conservators of furniture and sculptures. View taken on 24 September 2021.

© CIPAR (Maura Moriaux).

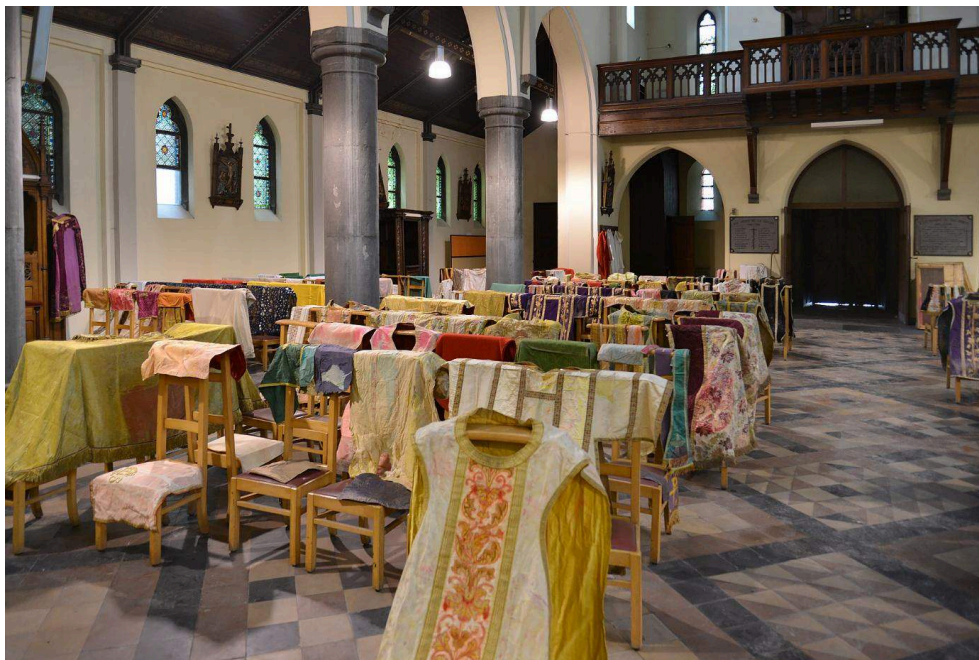
Third Case: Chapel of Saint-Lambert in Verviers – Textiles in Temporary Emergency Storage

- 39 Problem identification: A multitude of stakeholders and managers exist, together with insufficient inventory, difficulties in determining ownership of liturgical garments, differing degrees of damage, and a limited quantity of high-quality 18th-century pieces.
- 40 The chapel, listed by AWaP, was severely impacted by the floods, with water forcefully striking the main entrance and inundating the entire building. Although it was managed by the Saint-Remacle Fabrique of Verviers, it was regularly utilised by a Latin

community that celebrated Roman rites there. For several years, services were conducted by a celebrant wearing pre-conciliar liturgical vestments. Many of the textiles stored in the sacristy had been gathered by the community, including several 18th-century pieces, while others belonged to the church council.

- 41 During the disaster, the Saint-Remacle Fabrique played a proactive and significant role. Thanks to the swift removal of damaged garments to an unaffected church, many textiles were preserved. This remarkable initiative was carried out by volunteers dedicated to protecting their heritage. They emptied drawers filled with chasubles and transported them to the Church of Saint-Jean-Baptiste in Hodimont for drying. However, after the drawers were cleared, all the garments belonging to both the community and the church fabric council became mixed together. Without an inventory to determine ownership, an emergency catalogue had to be created to assist in the reassembly of the ornaments and to date the various pieces for the commencement of an evaluation process.

[Fig. 5]



Church of Saint-Jean-Baptiste in Hodimont, textiles from the Chapel of Saint-Lambert brought to Hodimont by the Saint-Remacle Fabrique of Verviers. View taken on August 24, 2021.

© CIPAR (Maura Moriaux).

Fourth Case: Church of Saint-Nicolas in La Roche-en-Ardenne – An Impressively Impacted Church, Yet With Minimal Material Loss

- 42 Problem identification: a building situated near a watercourse but largely unaffected, accompanied by swift local mobilisation to facilitate cleaning efforts.
- 43 Nestled in the historic heart of the city, the church is just a few metres from the Ourthe River. Although its location seemed crucial, the elevated position of the building meant that it suffered minimal material damage. While the cellars and the staircase leading to the naves experienced flooding, the structure remained largely

unscathed. This was also due to the swift actions of the parish and church council, who promptly undertook thorough cleaning as soon as the waters receded.

[Fig. 6]



La-Roche-en-Ardenne, Church of Saint-Nicolas, view of the church taken on July 16, 2021.

© H. Dijkman-De Quaasteniet.

Lessons To Be Learned?

- 44 The floods of summer 2021 underscore the vital need for transparency and coordinated action, especially when multiple stakeholders are involved, as is the case with public places of worship. This strategy improves efficiency through a clear delineation of tasks and by defining each individual's role. Appointing a single "liaison-coordinator" to facilitate on-the-ground contact is equally crucial. Their primary responsibility would be to avert potential confusion in both data collection and the organisation of on-site rescue operations. This individual could also be charged with filtering and relaying information to other relevant parties.

Final Reflections

- 45 This type of crisis also underscores the importance of conducting heritage inventories, which are a legal obligation for church councils. These inventories must document the dimensions, exact location, state of conservation, type of object, and a brief description of each movable item. Each inventory form should include high-quality photographs.⁶ It is essential to emphasise that, by definition, the inventory should align as closely as possible with reality; therefore, regular updates are crucial. This ensures more efficient

and higher-quality monitoring. Indeed, such an inventory facilitates the identification of heritage located in damaged or potentially damaged areas from a distance, as well as better preparation for on-site interventions, prioritising actions based on the assessed material damage and heritage value.

- 46 It is essential to emphasise that a current inventory is an indispensable requirement for these equally significant reports:
- As a precautionary measure: an emergency plan should prioritise the evacuation of movable assets needing prior attention.
 - During the crisis: centralising data will ensure the traceability of items evacuated and stored in various locations.
 - During and after the crisis: a heritage assessment report and evaluation of items negatively affected by flooding.
- 47 The episode of flooding also contributed to enhancing the understanding of heritage conservation in the context of a disaster. As unfortunate as it was, this experience provided fertile ground for learning in various ways. Indeed, implementing emergency actions based on typology is vital for addressing what is known as ‘direct’ damage (e.g., broken furniture) and the indirect alterations that occur in the aftermath of the catastrophe (e.g., the growth of mould). Communicating clear responses through educational tools would be an excellent way to raise awareness and train heritage managers. Practical simulation sessions could also prove beneficial. Such an awareness campaign should be accompanied by reminders of the limits of intervention by untrained individuals and the existence of competent heritage bodies responsible for supporting and directly intervening with valuable heritage items.
- 48 Finally, each disaster systematically emphasises the importance - and indeed the indispensable nature - of prevention. A preventive security project that entails risk analysis and the formulation of an emergency plan based on an updated inventory is essential.

Development of Novel Perspectives to Ensure Enhanced Protection of Religious Heritage

Awareness and Concrete Actions Following the Crisis

- 49 Since the floods, CIPAR has proactively expanded its safety mission, particularly concerning disaster prevention. This initiative was formalised in 2023 with the recruitment of a new team member, enabling more structured support for managers in developing risk analyses and emergency plans. It is crucial to note that emergency plans have become mandatory for holders of listed movable property designated as a “Treasure,” as stated in the decree on the protection of movable property from 17 March 2022, which took effect on 1 January 2023.⁷ Awareness campaigns, including training sessions, information meetings, and practical tools (technical sheets, brochures, etc.), are part of CIPAR’s new services to better assist managers in considering church security issues.
- 50 The summer 2021 floods received extensive media coverage due to the unprecedented scale of the disaster. Contributing to this were the numerous links and collaborations with heritage institutions, through which CIPAR gained visibility and became a key

player in the management and conservation of Walloon parish churches. Consequently, the non-profit organisation joined Blue Shield Belgium in 2022, facilitating contacts and enabling projects such as an evacuation drill for heritage within the context of a parish church. Partnerships also emerged with KIK-IRPA as part of the CHrisis project.⁸ During the floods, the Centre worked closely with the preventive conservation and sustainability units to organise on-site operations and explore new approaches to heritage preservation in the context of climate change. Furthermore, CIPAR and the textile conservation unit have collaborated on methodologies for identifying and characterising valuable textile items, as well as evaluating and optimising sacristy renovations, including in a post-disaster context. Another project is also under consideration with the Laboratory for Monuments and Monumental Decorations, focusing on monitoring monuments while drying.

- 51 At the diocesan level, the Liège Diocese lacked sufficient human resources in 2021 to establish a Diocesan Heritage Service for managing and monitoring files related to damaged parish churches. Once the crisis phase ended, the diocese took action by hiring qualified personnel, who have since provided support to church councils and municipalities in a post-disaster context. In addition to these files, the service is responsible for the daily oversight of all heritage-related matters concerning religious real estate and movable property, in close collaboration with CIPAR.

Improved Preparation for Stakeholders Involved in Historical Heritage

- 52 This article reflects an unprecedented experience that may potentially occur again due to climate change. Consequently, raising awareness and taking action promotes the learning of valuable lessons, enabling a more effective response to future crises.
- 53 When discussing parish churches, it is essential to emphasise that they represent a unique form of heritage. Indeed, they fall under public heritage and involve numerous stakeholders. Moreover, churches primarily serve as places of worship and should not be viewed solely as historical monuments by the heritage sector. Additionally, most are still managed by volunteers (church boards) who currently face various challenges, such as a lack of heritage training, ageing boards, and difficulties in recruiting new members. Therefore, diplomacy, kindness, and patience are crucial.
- 54 That said, heritage professionals play a vital role in identifying urgent evacuation and the need for immediate treatment. Establishing a crisis committee with clearly defined roles for each institution is essential for ensuring smooth communication and saving time within the committee. Appointing a coordinator as the central point of contact for managers is a pivotal measure. This coordinator would also guarantee the transmission and centralisation of information within the crisis committee.
- 55 In terms of prevention, supporting managers and developing inventories and emergency plans are crucial, as they would aid in preserving more heritage assets.
- 56 In conclusion, all the stakeholders mentioned in this article are working towards a common cause: the protection and preservation of historical heritage. This guiding principle must also be the priority for every participant involved in heritage management. The unprecedented crisis of 2021 highlighted another crucial aspect: the importance of transparent, healthy, and collaborative efforts. Indeed, working in

emergency situations involves complex management and coordination, necessitating consideration of the human aspect and the specificities of the groups we are collaborating with, such as parish churches, which are predominantly managed by volunteers. All this is in the name of preserving the material traces of humanity!

I would like to express my thanks to my CIPAR colleagues, the diocesan heritage services, the collaborators from KIK-IRPA, and the Belgian Blue Shield. Special thanks go to Kathleen Ribbens, Françoise Collanges, Anne-Sophie Hanse, Hadewey De Quaasteniet, and Jean-René Thonnart for their professionalism and humanity.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix 1:

Liège Province:

Church and location	Municipality	River that has flooded in the region
Church of Sainte-Thérèse, Nonceveux	Aywaille	Amblève
Church of Saint-Jean-l'Évangéliste, Beaufays	Chaufontaine	Vesdre
Church of Saint-François-Xavier, Chaufontaine	Chaufontaine	Vesdre
Church of Notre-Dame, Vaux-sous-Chèvremont	Chaufontaine	Vesdre
Church of Saint-Léger, Tilff	Esneux	Ourthe
Church of Saint-Nicolas, Souxhon	Flémalle-Haute	Runoff
Chapel of Sainte-Anne, Méry	Esneux	Ourthe
Chapel of Saint-Roch, Neu-Moresnet	Kelmis	Göhl
Church of Saint-Pierre, Chênée	Liège	Ourthe
Church of Saint-Remy, Angleur	Liège	Ourthe
Church of Sainte-Bernadette, Angleur	Liège	Ourthe
Church of the Sacred Heart, Kinkempois	Liège	Ourthe
Church of Saint-Etienne, Wandre	Liège	/ Runoff
Church of Saint-Roch, Bilstain	Limbourg	Vesdre
Church of the Visitation, Dolhain	Limbourg	Vesdre
Church of Saint-Antoine, Pepinster	Pepinster	Vesdre
Church of Sainte-Thérèse, La Brouck	Trooz	Vesdre
Church of Saint-Laurent, Prayon	Trooz	Vesdre
Church of Saint-Gilles, Fraipont	Trooz	Vesdre
Church of Saint-Lambert, Soumagne-Bas	Soumagne	/ Runoff
Church of the Saint Nom de Jésus, Chanxhe	Sprimont	Ourthe

Chapel of Saint-Nicolas, Marché	Theux	Hogne
Church of Saint-Antoine, Thimister	Thimister	/ Runoff
Church of Saint-Remacle, Verviers	Verviers	Vesdre
Church of Notre-Dame des Récollets, Verviers	Verviers	Vesdre
Chapel of Saint-Lambert, Verviers	Verviers	Vesdre

Namur Province:

Church and location	Municipality	River that has flooded in the region
Church of Sainte-Marguerite, Jemelle	Rocheftort	Wamme

Luxembourg Province:

Church and location	Municipality	River that has flooded in the region
Church of Saint-Nicolas, La Roche	La Roche-en-Ardenne	Ourthe
Church of Notre-Dame de l'Assomption, Hotton	Hotton	Ourthe

Walloon Brabant Province:

Church and location	Municipality	River that has flooded in the region
Church of Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Wavre	Wavre	Dyle
Church of Notre-Dame, Basse-Wavre	Wavre	Dyle

NOTES

1. WALLEX 1809.

2. AWaP (Agence wallonne du Patrimoine) is a public regional organisation in Wallonia. It is responsible for the protection and promotion of listed real estate in the Walloon Region. Additionally, the Agency provides training in heritage professions. Its missions include excavation, protection, restoration, training, and raising awareness.

3. FWB (Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles) is an institution serving the French-speaking population of Brussels and Wallonia. Its responsibilities include Education, Culture, Sports, Youth Assistance, Scientific Research, and the Maisons de Justice (Houses of Justice). The so-called *Patrimoine*

Culturel section is responsible for classifying works of art recognised as exceptional, designating assets of exceptional interest (BIP), and providing grants for the conservation and restoration of both categories of works (<https://www.federation-wallonie-bruxelles.be>).

4. WALLEX 1809.

5. Movable heritage assigned to worship is inalienable, meaning it cannot be discarded, given away, or sold without prior episcopal authorisation (Ordonnance épiscopale 2016). CIPAR has developed a specific methodology: *sélection, désaffectation, destination : dossier d'accompagnement employé dans le cadre d'une évaluation patrimoniale*.

6. CIPAR coordinates this process by providing a structured methodology, training, and practical tools such as brochures and forms. Additionally, the Centre is responsible for reviewing and validating each inventory of Walloon parish churches.

7. Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles 2023.

8. See De Bruyn and Olbrechts, *From Lessons Learned to Integrated Crisis Management: The Impact of the July 2021 Floods on Belgium's Cultural Heritage*, in this issue.

ABSTRACTS

Established in 2017, CIPAR (Centre Interdiocésain du Patrimoine et des Arts Religieux) is a non-profit organisation founded by the four French-speaking dioceses of Wallonia to coordinate efforts in the conservation, protection, and promotion of parish churches. CIPAR also serves as the representative body for diocesan heritage services, acting as the primary contact point. In this capacity, the organisation functions as a centre of expertise and ensures the implementation of a cohesive heritage management policy for Catholic places of worship throughout the Walloon region. The primary audience targeted by the Centre includes church councils, clergy, and local authorities.

The article highlights the coordination efforts in response to the devastating floods of summer 2021, which affected 31 parish churches. It outlines the key challenges in managing these buildings: the involvement of numerous stakeholders due to their public nature, inadequate prior preservation, initial communication hurdles, and difficulties in assessing the damage. Additionally, it proposes a unified methodology for swifter recovery, emphasising centralised information management and seamless collaboration between heritage organisations and local entities.

Actif depuis 2017, le CIPAR (Centre Interdiocésain du Patrimoine et des Arts Religieux) est une asbl créée par les quatre diocèses francophones de Belgique, dans le but de coordonner leurs efforts en matière de conservation, de protection et de valorisation du patrimoine mobilier religieux des églises paroissiales. Le CIPAR fait également office de coupole représentative des services diocésains du patrimoine, qui sont les premiers points de contact avec le terrain. En ce sens, l'asbl agit comme un centre d'expertise et elle assure l'application d'une politique patrimoine commune pour tous les édifices religieux de Wallonie qui relèvent du culte catholique. Les interlocuteurs principaux pour le CIPAR sont les fabriques d'église, le clergé et les communes.

L'article a pour objectif de mettre en lumière la coordination mise en place à la suite des inondations dévastatrices de l'été 2021, qui a touché 31 églises paroissiales. L'accent y est mis sur les défis rencontrés dans la gestion de cette crise : l'implication de nombreux acteurs étant donné

que le patrimoine abordé relève du domaine public, les difficultés de communication et d'identification de l'étendue des dégâts. De plus, l'article présente la méthodologie développée pour assurer la relève, la gestion, la centralisation et la diffusion des informations entre les instances patrimoniales et les instances locales concernés.

CIPAR (Centre Interdiocésain du Patrimoine et des Arts Religieux) is een vzw, actief sinds 2017, die werd opgericht door de vier Franstalige bisdommen van Wallonië met als doel de inspanningen te coördineren op het gebied van behoud en beheer, bescherming en valorisatie van parochiekerken. CIPAR is ook vertegenwoordiger van de diocesane erfgoeddiensten die fungeren als eerste aanspreekpunten in het veld. In die zin neemt de vzw de rol op van expertisecentrum en zorgt ze voor de uitvoering van een samenhangend erfgoedbeheerbeleid voor katholieke kerken in de hele Waalse regio. De belangrijkste doelgroepen van het Centrum zijn kerkfabrieken, geestelijken en lokale overheden.

Het artikel belicht de coördinatie-inspanningen naar aanleiding van de verwoestende overstromingen die tijdens de zomer van 2021 ruim 31 parochiekerken troffen. Het schetst de voornaamste uitdagingen in het beheer van die gebouwen: de betrokkenheid van talrijke actoren vanwege het publieke karakter van parochiekerken, aanvankelijke communicatieproblemen en moeilijkheden bij het identificeren van de schade. Daarnaast wordt een uniforme methodologie voorgesteld om het beheer te verbeteren en het herstel te bespoedigen, met nadruk op gecentraliseerd informatiemanagement en vlotte samenwerking tussen erfgoedorganisaties en lokale instanties.

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Trefwoorden CIPAR, overstromingen, parochiekerken, coördinatie, klimaatverandering

Mots-clés: CIPAR, inondations, églises paroissiales, coordination, changement climatique

Keywords: CIPAR, floods, parish churches, coordination, climate change

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