

## Stralsund and Wismar (Germany)

No 1067

### Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	Historic Centres of Stralsund and Wismar
<i>Location</i>	Land of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
<i>State Party</i>	Germany
<i>Date</i>	28 December 2000

### Justification by State Party

The Historic Centres of Stralsund and Wismar conform with cultural criteria ii and iv of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*. As economically powerful and politically influential members of the Wendish region of the Hanseatic League, the two cities played an important role in the European exchange of cultural achievements, technical knowledge, and world views which took place on the basis of the varied commercial links in the whole of the Baltic and North Sea region. In the field of architecture, the spread of styles such as the type of the *Dielenhaus* and that of building methods and materials such as limestone from Gotland should be mentioned here.

With regard to Gothic religious architecture, the exchange of values can be demonstrated with northern Europe. The group of six monumental brick churches in Stralsund and Wismar gives a unique overview of Gothic church construction in the Hanseatic cities of the southern Baltic region. The monumental Gothic cathedrals of the Wendish cities show evidence of a significant combination of different cultural influences, such as Italian brick building techniques and the cathedral pattern from northern France. They convey the development of this church form from the early St Nicholas's church in Stralsund to St George's in Wismar, symbolizing the rapid rise, the economic and political apex, and the gradual decline of the Hanseatic League. "Wendish religious architecture" exercised an important influence, not only on the surroundings but also on the rest of the Baltic region and Scandinavia, and the Stralsund town hall influenced many town hall buildings in the southern Baltic region. The Peace of Stralsund (1370) was a historical event of European importance, and the subsequent leading political role of Stralsund in the heyday of the League was reflected in a building boom from 1330 to 1380, giving rise to an independent architectural language identified as *Sundische Gotik*.

Under Swedish rule Stralsund and Wismar were turned into fortified towns of European rank in the 17th and 18th centuries, playing a decisive role in the military superpower system of Sweden. The Swedish art of fortification achieved a standard here which became a model for other fortifications in northern Europe. The Royal Swedish Tribunal was set up as the supreme court in Wismar in 1653 and Stralsund was the political capital of Swedish Pomerania from 1720. Cultural links in the fields of science, art, and architecture developed between the two towns and the mother country. Even today, mutual influences can be traced in the townscapes of Stralsund and Wismar compared with Swedish towns. **Criterion ii**

With their unaltered medieval ground plans, the characteristic division into lots, inherited from the Middle Ages, and the rich stock of Gothic brick architecture, Stralsund and Wismar are outstanding examples of Hanseatic sea trading towns from the heyday of the League of Towns, representing differing trade structures. Of outstanding importance in Wismar is the preserved medieval harbour basin, which shows the former situation in many Hanseatic cities. The *Grube* represents the last surviving artificial medieval waterway in northern Germany. Unique in Stralsund is the island location, unchanged since the 13th century, between the Strelasund and the ponds on the land side, which were dammed soon after the town was founded. As a result of its topographic position, Stralsund has an unmistakable silhouette, known from artistic representations. The large amount of Gothic brick architecture, including impressive parish churches, the Stralsund town hall, and other medieval buildings, is of great architectural significance to the whole of northern Europe. The numerous medieval merchant houses, the so-called *Kemläden*, demonstrate the typical development of these buildings. Wismar with its nearly intact, original roadside development is a town centre of rare completeness.

Having been under the Lübeck Law for some 600 years and having escaped reconstruction after World War II, the towns have retained their historic fabric. The medieval partition into lots remained a reference for centuries, and within this basic framework the evolution of the various epochs can easily be traced. The Baroque houses of wealthy citizens are dominant, as are the large administrative and service buildings from the 17th and 18th centuries, when the towns were under Swedish rule after the Thirty Years' War. The subsoil is archaeologically of outstanding importance. Because of favourable conditions, it retains documentary evidence of rare integrity regarding the legacy of the Hanseatic era and later epochs. Systematic excavations have provided new evidence about the settlement, relevant to the whole of northern Germany, including the recent sensational wreck finds in the harbour entrances, which have greatly contributed to research in Hanseatic shipbuilding and goods traffic. **Criterion iv**

### Category of property

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *group of buildings*.

## History and Description

### History

The historic towns of Wismar and Stralsund are situated in north-eastern Germany on the Baltic Sea coast. The cities were founded as part of the German colonization of the Slav territories in the late 12th or early 13th centuries. Both cities emerged as important trading places in the 14th century as part of the Hanseatic League. After the Thirty Years' War the towns came under Swedish rule from the 17th to the early 19th centuries. Under the subsequent changing political situations there was a period of stagnation, but from the second half of the 19th century a gradual economic improvement began. The historic centres survived the World War II bombardments and were part of the German Democratic Republic until German unification.

#### - Foundation

Both Wismar and Stralsund were founded in places that were known to be good anchorages. Wismar emerged at the beginning of the 13th century, 5km from Mecklenburg, an old centre of the Slav Obodrites. It was close to a Wendish fishing village on the seacoast, along an old trade route, the *Via Regia*. In the early 13th century it developed rapidly owing to its favourable location and excellent harbour. The position of Stralsund, further to the east of Wismar, was also chosen for the potential of its harbour, and it gained additional merit from the off-shore island of Strela (later Dänholm). Wismar is first mentioned in 1229 and Stralsund in 1234, already well established in a period when the towns were probably granted corporation statutes. These statutes, known as the Lübeck Law, were aimed at towns in the Baltic region and covered all necessary legal instruments, including common law, commercial law, market law, and building law. Having obtained corporation statutes, both towns also built defence systems, which completed by the end of the 13th or early 14th centuries.

#### - The Hanseatic period

The Hanseatic League emerged in the 13th century, first as an association of north German merchants who resided in foreign countries. From the end of the 13th century, this association developed into the Hanseatic League of Towns. It soon assumed leadership in the region of the North Sea and the Baltic. In its heyday the League extended to some 200 towns. Centred on Lübeck, the League was organized in four sections: Wendish, Westphalian, Saxon, and Prussian. The most important of these was the Wendish section, which included Wismar and Stralsund. From the 1470s, the power of the Hansa started diminishing, when sea traffic was shifted from the Baltic to the Atlantic with the growing importance of the Netherlands and England. Wismar and Stralsund joined the League in 1293, together with Lübeck, Rostock, and Greifswald.

By the 13th century Wismar and Stralsund had developed commercial activities, involving intermediate trade in cloth from Flanders, wool from England, metal goods from Westphalia, wood, tar, ash, honey, furs, and wax from Latvia and the Rus, salt, at first from Lüneburg, then from the bay of Bourgneuf, wine from the Rhine, France, Spain, and Portugal, and fish from Norway and Schonen. The production of beer became particularly important, especially in Wismar. Beer was a leading product that was used not only as a drink but also as a basic ingredient in food and even in medicine.

At the beginning of the 14th century, conflicts between Wismar and Mecklenburg gave rise to a war between the coalition of north German princes and the Danish King and the emerging towns of Lübeck, Wismar, Rostock, Stralsund, and Greifswald, which were striving for independence. While Wismar suffered a defeat, Stralsund emerged as a leader in 1316, becoming the most powerful city in Pomerania and the capital of the entire region. From here started the heyday of the Hanseatic League, resulting in important building activities, especially from 1330 to 1380. This building boom brought forth the so-called *Sundische Gotik*, a particular form of brick architecture and an expression of the economic growth and increasing political power of Stralsund. The treaty of the Peace of Stralsund, on 24 March 1370, resulted from the negotiation between the Cologne Federation (1367), consisting of the Hanseatic and Dutch towns, on the one side and the Imperial Council of the Kingdom of Denmark on the other. This treaty further strengthened the power of Hansa as a significant actor at the European level.

#### - The Swedish period

From the late 15th century, with the diminishing power of the Hansa, the commercial and political importance of Wismar and Stralsund was considerably weakened. As a result of the Thirty Years' War (1618–48), both towns came under Swedish rule, later playing a decisive role as administrative centres in the Swedish power system. As the supreme court for all the German possessions of the Kingdom of Sweden, the Royal Swedish Tribunal was set up in the princely court (*Fürstenhof*) of Wismar. Under Swedish rule the fortifications of the towns were rebuilt reflecting the new requirements in warfare. Owing to the lack of hinterland, commercial activities were limited, although there was a brief flourishing from 1651 due to exemption from customs duties. With the defeat of the Swedes in the Nordic War of 1700–21, Wismar was occupied by Danish, Prussian, and Hanoverian troops and all its defensive structures were demolished. Wismar remained under Swedish rule after the peace treaty of 1720 but had already lost its importance. Stralsund, however, became the political capital of Swedish Western Pomerania. A number of Baroque gabled houses, as well as a series of factories, survive from this period.

#### - The 19th and 20th centuries

The Swedish era ended in both cities at the beginning of the 19th century and the political situation changed. Wismar initially returned to the Duchy of Mecklenburg, but its position remained ambiguous and it still retained a Swedish link until 1903. After the Congress of Vienna in 1815, Stralsund became part of Prussia, but there was little improvement in the economy. In 1848 Wismar acquired a railway link, which led to the building of a new harbour and improved development but left the medieval part untouched. Stralsund had a railway in 1863, which allowed industrial development to begin, and it also became the chief port of the Prussian navy. From the early 19th to the early 20th centuries the populations of the two cities doubled (Stralsund from 15,000 to 32,000 and Wismar from 10,000 to 19,000). Towards the end of World War II the towns suffered air raids but the historic centres remained largely intact. From 1945 both towns were part of the Soviet zone, from which the German Democratic Republic emerged. This period saw important economic development, the establishment of small

industrial companies, the construction of shipyards, and the expansion of the seaport activities.

#### *Description*

The two towns, Wismar and Stralsund, demonstrate features that are often similar, though there are also differences that make them complementary. The sizes of the nominated areas are very similar: 80ha in Wismar and 88ha in Stralsund. The buffer zone of Wismar is 108ha and that of Stralsund 340ha.

The town of *Wismar* was originally surrounded by moats, but these were filled on the landward side. The medieval port on the north side has been largely preserved. The so-called *Grube* is today testimony of the old man-made canal that used to link the harbour area in the north with ponds in the south-east. It also forms a picturesque reference in today's townscape with the occasional vaulted structures stretching over it. The old town is nearly circular in overall form and is now surrounded by urban development which began in the second half of the 19th century. The streets of the old town follow a somewhat irregular grid pattern, retaining their medieval form. The main east-west street is the Lübsche Strasse, tracing the ancient trade route of the *Via Regia*, which passes through the central market place with the town hall. The overall form and the silhouette of the town have retained their historic aspect.

The town of *Stralsund* was built on an island slightly oval in shape and so it is still surrounded by water. The overall form and silhouette of the town have been particularly well preserved for this reason. The modern development on the west side therefore remains at a distance, leaving the vistas to the old town intact. The two focal points in the town are the old market in the north and the new market in the south. The old market is delimited by the rather exceptional ensemble of the Church of St Nicholas and the town hall.

Both towns were subject to the Lübeck Building Code, which regulated the size and form of each lot. One of the aims of the Code was to maintain a regular street width. The lots were larger in the first building phase of the town, when construction was in timber, but they were divided into smaller parts in the second phase at the end of the 13th century when the building material changed to brick. This size was then maintained for centuries. Whenever new construction took place on a lot the new building had to be the same as before, fitted between the old firewalls. The difference was mainly in the architecture of the street elevation. As a result, the street pattern of the towns was also maintained intact. The old town of Wismar is particularly well preserved in this regard.

Stralsund and Wismar differed somewhat in their economic structures. The former was oriented towards the long-distance and intermediate trade of the Hanseatic League, requiring more warehouse space, whereas the latter laid emphasis on production and so housed large numbers of craftsmen and agriculturalists. As a result the houses of Stralsund are larger than those of Wismar, where the total number of gabled houses is more numerous. The lots were generally occupied by the main building on the street side with a service structure at the rear. A typical merchant house was the so-called *Dielenhaus* (lobby house) characteristic of the Hansa towns. The building combined living, working, trading, and representation under the same roof and had an elaborate gable elevation facing the street. The living rooms of the family were usually placed in the so-called *Kemladen*,

a two-storey structure at the back of the house. The more humble houses of the craftsmen were generally two storeys high and not very deep. A requirement was to obtain sufficient light to guarantee working conditions. The houses also could also have small gardens at the rear. Whilst these building types continued over the centuries there were variations, and the street elevations reflect the different periods. A number of medieval buildings still remain; others have been rebuilt giving a variety that ranges from Renaissance to Baroque and Neo-Classical.

The characteristic building material in this region was fired brick, which gave the opportunity to develop a particular type of "Gothic Brick" which is typical in the countries of the North Sea and the Baltic. On the main elevations the bricks could be moulded in different decorative forms, even permitting some very elaborate architecture. In its economic position as a leader in the Hanseatic League in its heyday, Stralsund led the way in developing a particular form of construction, an independent architectural language identified as *Sundische Gotik*.

Wismar and Stralsund together contain six major parish churches, which form a representative cross-section of sacred architecture in Wendish Hanseatic cities. The earliest of these is St Nicholas in Stralsund (1270–1380), built in parallel with the Church of St Mary in Lübeck, with mutual influences during the construction period. These two churches are the earliest examples of the introduction of the cathedral pattern of northern France into the brick architecture of the Baltic region. The churches had important influence in the region: eg Wismar, Malmö, Riga, and Copenhagen. The other major churches in Stralsund are St Jacob (1310–60, with a tower built c 1400–20) and St Mary (1380–1480). In Wismar the churches include St Mary (1340–1450; only the tower remains after destruction during World War II), St Nicholas (1370–1490), and St George (1400–1600). This last building was severely damaged in World War II and has been undergoing a major reconstruction programme since 1990. The six churches thus cover over two centuries of church building.

Both Wismar and Stralsund contain a number of monastic ensembles and hospitals. In Stralsund the Dominican Monastery of St Catherine was founded in 1251, and it is today the largest of its type in the Baltic coastal region. It has a long Gothic hall church, built c 1261–1317. The complex is now used as a museum of cultural history. The Franciscan Monastery of St John was founded in 1254 and later enlarged; the church was destroyed in a fire in 1624. The Heilgeist Hospital is first mentioned in 1256; it was moved to its present location at the beginning of the 14th century. After damage in wars in 1628 and 1715 it was rebuilt. In Wismar the Heiligen-Geist Hospital was founded in 1249 on the north side of the Lübsche Strasse. The complex of hospital church and the residential part has been preserved in its medieval form, though the other buildings surrounding it are from the 19th century.

The 14th century Town Hall of Stralsund is located in front of the west facade of St Nicholas Church and forms a unique synthesis of great variety. The Town Hall with its outstanding decorated brick elevation facing the old market is the most eloquent example of the so-called *Sundische Gothik*, ie the Gothic of the region of Sund. The building has also some important Baroque additions, such as the two-

storied colonnade in the courtyard built in the late 17th century.

Building activities continued throughout the Renaissance and the later Swedish period and several civic constructions were added. These reflect the architectural forms of the Renaissance, Baroque, and Neo-Classicism, which give their flavour to the townscape, but they respect the medieval rhythm established on the basis of the Lübeck Building Code. The sumptuous Wismar *Fürstenhof* is an example of these buildings. The new Town Hall of Wismar was built in the Classicist style in 1817–19, integrating parts of the earlier medieval Town Hall. The subsoil of the two towns has preserved an important record of the historic layers of construction, partly being revealed in recent excavations.

## Management and Protection

### *Legal status*

The properties in Wismar and Stralsund are mostly owned by public corporations (50% of the secular buildings) or by individuals. Some properties belong to the churches, to foundations, or to the Region (*Land*) of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

The historic town of Stralsund was protected as conservation area (“large-scale monument”) in 1962, and similar protection was accorded to Wismar. At the present time the towns are protected as conservation areas under the monument protection laws (*Denkmalschutzgesetz*) of the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Region. Both cities maintain a list of individual buildings and monuments, which are afforded special protection.

A number of legally binding local standards and regulations control the maintenance and care of the buildings, the environment, and trees and plants. In addition there are guidelines which are not legally binding but which encourage consistency and appropriate solutions in building practice.

### *Management*

The management of the protection of historic buildings in Germany falls under the regional governments, in this case under the jurisdiction of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and the responsible superintendence offices. Both towns also have their local preservation directives, which are to a high standard in principle. The nominated areas and the relative buffer zones are considered adequate.

Both Wismar and Stralsund have adopted management plans (2000) for the historic areas, including standards for the historic areas as a whole and individual historic buildings, the care and design of private areas in the city in accordance with its character, and guidelines for the qualification of living conditions and the management of appropriate cultural and social functions. These are integrated with other plans relating to building regulations, land development, and tourism.

There are currently several large-scale projects being carried out, and the personnel dedicated to the restoration and maintenance of historic structures is relatively limited. Much of the responsibility therefore remains with private owners.

Unfortunately, there are no restrictions on car traffic, which has rapidly grown in recent years. In the case of Wismar, whilst the main traffic is outside, there is heavy traffic passing through the old city centre. In Stralsund a new parking lot is currently under construction in connection with the city centre.

Financial resources were scarce at the time of the East German government but they are now being increased under the new management system. There are special funds for the conservation of historic structures in the eastern part of Germany, and Stralsund was also selected as one of five model towns in Germany in 1990, thus receiving additional funding. There are also possibilities for tax relief for private owners, and there are funding possibilities resulting from a grant programme. Nevertheless, financial resources remain a problem due to the important tasks still ahead.

## Conservation and Authenticity

### *Conservation history*

As a whole, both Wismar and Stralsund have retained their historic fabric fairly well intact, being some of the best preserved Hansa towns. In the 19th and 20th centuries new construction took place outside the historic areas. At the same time, the medieval harbours have also been retained. This does not mean that there have not been some problems. Both towns were bombed during World War II, though the damage was relatively limited compared with that in other towns.

In Stralsund about 15% of the historic buildings were destroyed. This included various churches and monastic complexes, such as St John’s Monastery and St Jacob’s Church. The damage in Wismar was less, but also about 10–15%, and the churches of St Mary and St George in particular were severely hit. In the post-war period both cities were subject to special restoration programmes, involving the Polish PKZ. St George’s Church was consolidated in the 1950s and is currently under reconstruction, whilst the remains of St Mary’s Church were demolished in 1960. Even though the towns were protected and several main monuments restored, there were not enough funds to rehabilitate and maintain the historic building stock, which suffered from neglect and deterioration. Some buildings were demolished due to their poor condition.

In 1989 it was planned to renovate fourteen building blocks out of the total of 66, which would have meant serious loss of historic material. Fortunately, this initiative was stopped and, from 1990 in particular, the towns have been subject to active conservation and rehabilitation work, including also the construction of new buildings fitted to the historic context. In Stralsund, 345 historic buildings have been rehabilitated, and 157 are on the waiting list; 68 new buildings have been built and 13 are under construction. There are still some gaps in the town which are planned to be integrated, preserving the remains of old structures and without attempting reconstruction. In Wismar the historic fabric has been better preserved and about 748 buildings have been restored so far; 50 new buildings have been erected. It is estimated that there will be a need to continue such work at least over the next twenty years.

### *Authenticity and integrity*

The two historic cities have retained an impressive amount of original medieval blocks of Hanseatic warehouses and residential buildings, the *Dielenhaus* and *Kemladen*. Even though several buildings have suffered from past neglect and are in need of urgent care, the towns present today an exceptionally rich architectural heritage, including the huge brick cathedrals, monasteries, and hospitals, not to speak of the numerous residential and commercial buildings dating from the Middle Ages to the 17th and 18th centuries, many without modern additions. The fortifications were demolished at the beginning of the 19th century and only small parts of them remain today.

The visual integrity of both towns has been well maintained owing to their positions, especially in the case of Stralsund. In fact, modern construction and industrial buildings have been located in the suburban areas, outside the historic towns. It is thus possible to appreciate the silhouette of the historic townscapes without major changes.

There are, however, some problems. In Wismar the old harbour is surrounded by two industrial zones, of which one used to be a military base and is now being dismantled. The area close to the medieval basin on the west is the site of construction for high-technology industries. A new building has recently been built in a position where it to some extent masks the silhouette of the old town from the sea. Attention must be given to such initiatives as they could have an impact on the historic skyline in the future.

No licence is required for architects preparing projects for historic buildings. Special attention should be given to the methods of consolidation and reinforcement, as well as to the solution of details, such as old staircases and windows, so as not to lose the historic fabric in on-going improvement work.

Overall it can be concluded that the historic towns of Wismar and Stralsund have retained their historic fabric, representing evolution over several centuries. They are the best surviving out of more than a hundred that formerly existed in Germany. Their historical integrity and the silhouettes of the townscapes have been maintained relatively well. The towns contain an exceptionally large number of authentic historic structures representing the evolution from the Hanseatic period to the Swedish era.

### **Evaluation**

#### *Action by ICOMOS*

An ICOMOS evaluation mission visited the towns of Wismar and Stralsund in August 2001. ICOMOS also consulted its International Scientific Committee on Historic Towns and Villages.

#### *Qualities*

Founded in the 13th century, Wismar and Stralsund represent different but complementary trading structures as leading centres of the Wendish section of the Hanseatic League of Towns from the 13th to the 15th centuries. Wismar has preserved its medieval harbour basin, and the *Grube* is the last surviving medieval canal structure in northern Germany. The island location of Stralsund has remained unchanged since the 13th century. As a result of

its topographic position, Stralsund has an unmistakable silhouette, well known from artistic representations.

The main role of Wismar and Stralsund coincided with the heyday of the Hansa in the Wendish section of the League in the 14th century. Stralsund became the leading centre of the League, especially after the Peace of Stralsund (1370), developing a new architectural language known as *Sundische Gotik* which became widely diffused in the southern Baltic region. The development of the style is documented in a series of major brick churches in both towns, showing evidence of integrating cultural influences from the brick building techniques of Italy and the cathedral architecture of northern France. The Town Hall of Stralsund is the most elaborate example of this Brick Gothic. The medieval building codes remained in force over six centuries, helping to retain the street pattern and the division of building lots intact until the present day. The typology of houses of the bourgeoisie, merchants, and craftsmen, such as the *Dielenhaus* and the *Kemläden* structures, was developed in the 14th century and became a characteristic feature of many Hanseatic towns. In the 17th and the 18th centuries the towns became major administrative and defence centres within the Swedish kingdom, contributing to the development of military art and integrating another layer of cultural influences.

#### *Comparative analysis*

A comparative analysis of all Hanseatic sites, routes, and monuments was conducted by the Council of Europe in 1991. The State Party has provided an in-depth comparison of Wismar and Stralsund with the key towns in the region, considering the significance, type of construction, and functions, as well as their condition. This study is an integration to the history of the Hanseatic League, published earlier.

The Hanseatic League linked some 200 towns in its realm. Of these about eighty were members of the League, while the others had various degrees of association, with in the functions of what were known as “Kontors” and “Factories,” which had the role of providing services. In Germany alone there were over 100 towns associated with the league. Of these Stralsund and Wismar are certainly the best surviving examples in Germany, even when compared with Lübeck, which is already on the List. The value of Wismar and Stralsund, however, is not only related to the Hanseatic period; they also had important administrative and military functions in the Swedish period, and should be seen as significant historic towns which have well preserved their historic fabric of outstanding significance. They had a major influence in the region on the development of particular construction techniques and building types, of which outstanding examples have survived.

The most relevant towns for comparison on the World Heritage List include the Historic Centre of Cracow (1978; ii, iii, iv), Bryggen (in Bergen: 1979; iii), the Hanseatic City of Lübeck (1987; iv), Historic Monuments of Novgorod and Surroundings (1992; ii, iv, vi), the Historic Centre of Vilnius (1994; ii, iv), the Hanseatic Town of Visby (1995; iv, v), the Medieval Town of Torun (1997; ii, iv), the Historic Centre of Riga (1997; ii, iv, v), and the Historic Centre (Old Town) of Tallinn (1997; ii, iv). All these towns were associated with the Hanseatic League.

The closest relation of Wismar and Stralsund is with Lübeck, which is also part of the Wendish section of the Hansa. There are however, several differences. Lübeck's importance was especially as the cradle of the Hanseatic League in the 13th century, while the importance of Wismar and Stralsund coincides with the heyday of the Hansa in the 14th century. Other differences are in the fields of economics and trade, as well as in the state of preservation. Wismar and Stralsund have retained the integrity of the historic urban areas much better. When compared with other Hansa towns in the same region, neighbouring Rostock and Greifswald have lost most of their historic character owing to insensitive reconstruction programmes after the war.

The town of Visby is related to the prehistory of the Hansa. In fact, Visby developed from the 12th century, becoming the centre of the Baltic trade in the 13th century, but then losing its supremacy to Lübeck with the birth of the Hanseatic League. In its architecture Visby represents a different character, both in materials and in typology. The urban structure and economic character of Tallinn, though from a similar period, differ considerably from those of Wismar and Stralsund. In the case of Riga, Vilnius, and the other cities mentioned above, emphasis in the nomination is on different issues, and the towns therefore stand for different meanings.

From this comparison it emerges that Stralsund and Wismar, together with Lübeck, represent aspects that are complementary to the understanding of the historic towns that were at the root of the medieval and later trading systems in central and northern Europe. They are the best surviving examples of Hansa towns in Germany, representing the construction in the Wendish region and having also exercised had a strong influence elsewhere.

#### *ICOMOS recommendations for future action*

While recognizing the efforts already made by the State Party for the conservation and rehabilitation of the historic towns of Stralsund and Wismar, ICOMOS recommends that special attention be given to regulation of the design of modern details and the appropriate use of materials and technology in the rehabilitation of historic structures. Such regulation is particularly relevant in the design of new buildings or additions within the historic core area and in its surroundings. The height and design of such constructions should respect the traditional skyline and character of the historic town. This also relates to the eventual development of former military areas, railway yards, and industrial zones.

#### **Brief description**

The medieval towns of Wismar and Stralsund, on the Baltic coast of northern Germany, were major trading centres of the Hanseatic League in the 14th and 15th centuries, becoming Swedish administrative and defensive centres for the German territories in the 17th and 18th centuries. They contributed to the development of the characteristic building types and techniques of the Brick Gothic in the Baltic region, exemplified in several important brick cathedrals, the Town Hall of Stralsund, and in the series of houses for residential, commercial, and crafts use, representing evolution over several centuries.

#### **Statement of significance**

Founded in the 13th century, Wismar and Stralsund represent different but complementary trading structures as leading centres of the Wendish section of the Hanseatic League from the 13th to the 15th centuries. Wismar has preserved its medieval harbour basin, and the island location of Stralsund has remained unchanged with its unmistakable silhouette since the 13th century. Here, there developed a new architectural language known as *Sundische Gotik* which was widely diffused in the southern Baltic region and documented in a series of major brick churches that show evidence of cultural influences from Italy and France. The typology of houses of the bourgeoisie, merchants, and craftsmen, such as the *Dielenhaus* and the *Kemliden*, were developed in the 14th century and became a characteristic feature of many Hanseatic towns. In the 17th and the 18th centuries the towns became major administrative and defence centres within the Swedish kingdom, contributing to the development of military art and integrating another layer of cultural influences.

#### **Recommendation**

That the properties be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria ii and iv*:

*Criterion ii* Wismar and Stralsund, leading centres of the Wendish section of the Hanseatic League from the 13th to 15th centuries and major administrative and defence centres in the Swedish kingdom in the 17th and 18th centuries, contributed to the development and diffusion of brick construction techniques and building types, characteristic features of Hanseatic towns in the Baltic region, as well as the development of defence systems in the Swedish period.

*Criterion iv* Stralsund and Wismar have crucial importance in the development of the building techniques and urban form that became typical of the Hanseatic trading towns, well documented in the major parish churches, the town hall of Stralsund, and the commercial building types, such as the *Dielenhaus*.

ICOMOS further recommends that consideration be given to the possibility of inscribing the historic towns of Stralsund and Wismar as a serial nomination together with Lübeck. All three towns were leading centres in the Wendish region of the Hanseatic League in northern Germany, representing complementary aspects in terms of trading, production of goods, and the typology of constructions.

ICOMOS, January 2002