

Journeys to the human past: documenting megalithic monuments on Wikipedia

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What are megaliths?

Megaliths are monuments made of large erratic stones. There are tombs (Dolmens, passage graves), temples and single stones (Menhirs). Megalithic monuments were built all over the world by different peoples at different times. In northern and western Europe these monuments were erected during the neolithic and early bronze age (6th-3rd millennium BCE)

How many are there?

In northern Europe there were once up to 30.000 monuments but just a fraction was documented and less than 4000 still exist today:

- Germany: ~5800 documented (~1150 preserved)
- Denmark: ~6000 documented (2067 preserved)
- Sweden: 650 documented (489 preserved)
- Netherlands: 81 documented (55 preserved)
- Poland: ~200 documented (? preserved)
- Sum: ~12700 documented (~3800+ preserved)

There is probably the same amount in western Europe

How were they documented?

Megalithic monuments in northern Europe were documented by scholars since the early days of archaeology in the late 18th and early 19th century. Since the 1820ies there were many attempts to document all monuments in certain smaller regions and since the early 20th century there were attempts to document all monuments in whole countries. Until today only the scandinavian countries have created public databases for all monuments. For the other countries there are only printed documentations that are often multiple decades old. Besides that there are many private websites, that are mostly just photo collections of existing and easily accessible sites.

What can Wikipedians do?

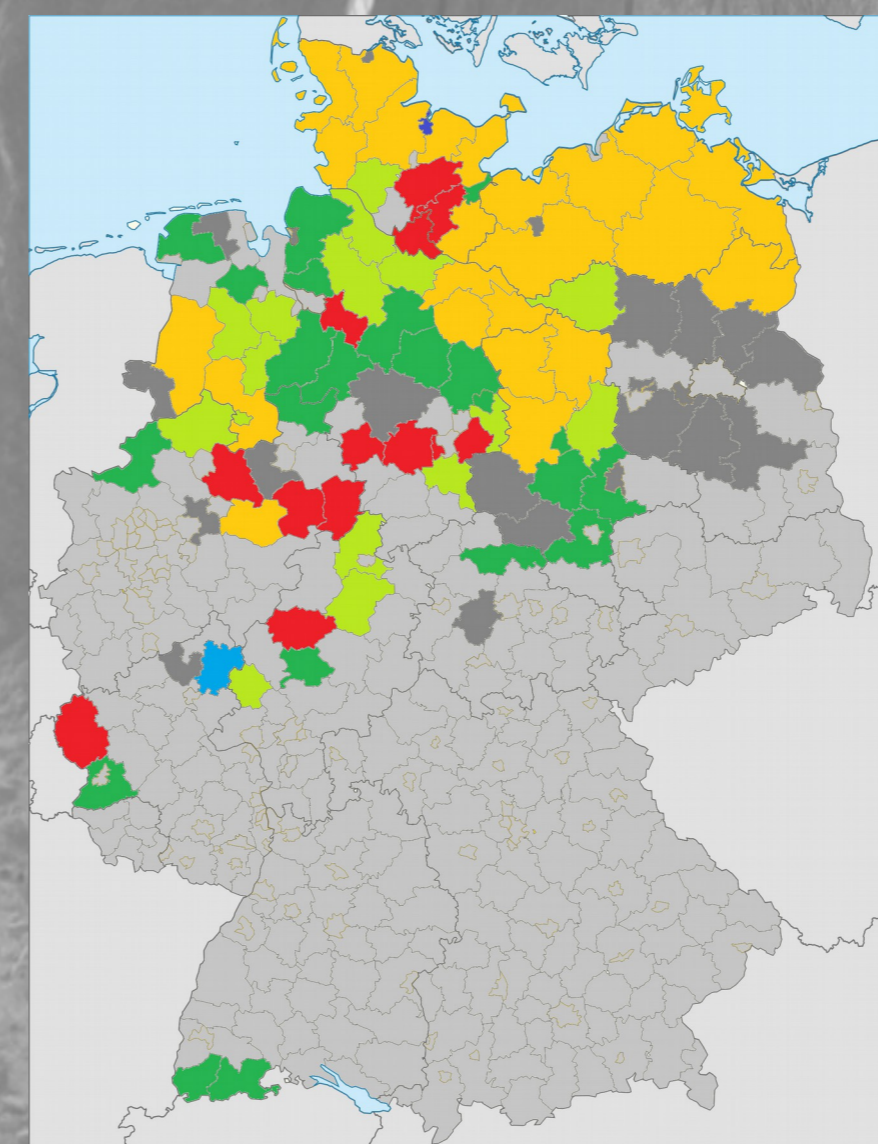
Wikipedia could be an ideal place to connect scientific accuracy and private enthusiasm. With an international community it is possible to collect all megalithic sites in Europe, to describe them, to provide all relevant bibliographical references and to take photos of all the sites.

What has been achieved so far?

In late 2009 we began at the german Wikipedia to compile lists for all megalithic sites in Germany and later for the neighbouring countries. The Lists for Germany, Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands are completed, the Lists for Denmark and Poland are not finished yet. Thanks to financial support by Wikimedia Deutschland since 2013 six excursions have taken place to systematically photograph sites in Germany. 115 megalithic tombs and several other sites have been visited so far.

For more information see:

https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProjekt_Megalithik



Photographs of megalithic tombs in Germany:

- Completed
- Almost completed (≤ 3 tombs without photo)
- Many tombs without photo
- No photographed tombs
- Only relocated tombs
- Only destroyed tombs known
- No tombs known

What are the future goals?

Complete Lists and articles for all sites in northern Europe
Translate them to other languages
Finish the photographic documentation
Expand our work to western Europe and beyond



Further reading

- Lars Bägerfeldt: *Megalithgravarna i Sverige. Typ, tid, rum och social miljö*. 2nd ed., Gamleby 1992, ISBN 91-86742-45-0.
- Jan Albert Bakker: *The Dutch Hunebedden. Megalithic Tombs of the Funnel Beaker Culture*. Ann Arbor 1992, ISBN 1-87962-102-9.
- Hans-Jürgen Beier: *Die megalithischen, submegalithischen und pseudomegalithischen Bauten sowie die Menhire zwischen Ostsee und Thüringer Wald*. (= Beiträge zur Ur- und Frühgeschichte Mitteleuropas. Vol. 1). Wilkau-Haßlau 1991, ISBN 978-3-930036-00-4.
- Karl W. Beinhauer et al. (Ed.): *Studien zur Megalithik. Forschungsstand und ethnoarchäologische Perspektiven* (= Beiträge zur Ur- und Frühgeschichte Mitteleuropas. Vol. 21). Weisbach 1999, ISBN 3-930036-36-3.
- Klaus Ebbesen: *Danmarks megalitgrave*. 2 vol., Copenhagen 2008/2011
- Albert Egges van Giffen: *De Hunebedden in Nederland*. 3 vol., Utrecht 1925.
- Eberhard Kirsch: *Funde des Mittelneolithikums im Land Brandenburg*. Potsdam 1993.
- Magdalena Midgley: *The Megaliths of Northern Europe*. London/New York 2008, ISBN 9781134264506.
- Ingeburg Nilius: *Das Neolithikum in Mecklenburg zur Zeit und unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Trichterbecherkultur*. Schwerin 1971.
- Jutta Roß: *Megalithgräber in Schleswig-Holstein. Untersuchungen zum Aufbau der Grabanlagen nach neueren Ausgrabungsbefunden*. Hamburg 1992, ISBN 3-86064-046-1.
- Seweryn Rzepecki: *The Roots of Megalithism in the TRB culture*. Łódź 2011, ISBN 978-83-933586-1-8.
- Waldtraut Schrickel: *Westeuropäische Elemente im neolithischen Grabbau Mitteldeutschlands und die Galeriegräber Westdeutschlands und ihre Inventare*. Bonn 1966, ISBN 978-3-7749-0575-7.
- Waldtraut Schrickel: *Katalog der mitteldeutschen Gräber mit westeuropäischen Elementen und der Galeriegräber Westdeutschlands*. Bonn 1966.
- Ewald Schuldt: *Die mecklenburgischen Megalithgräber. Untersuchungen zu ihrer Architektur und Funktion*. Berlin 1972.
- Ernst Sprockhoff: *Atlas der Megalithgräber Deutschlands*. 3 vol., Bonn 1966-75.
- Märta Strömberg: *Die Megalithgräber von Hagestad. Zur Problematik von Grabbauten und Grabriten* (= Acta Archaeologica Lundensia. Vol. 8). Bonn/Lund 1971.
- Christopher Tilley: *The Dolmens and Passage Graves of Sweden. An Introduction and Guide*. London 1999, ISBN 9780905853369.