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Climate change related urban transformation and the role of cultural heritage
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How does Cultural Heritage Foster Climate Action? Examples of Histo-Culture-based Urban Resilience from Around the World

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Abstract

Climate variability and change have been ongoing. Urban areas with historical and cultural significance are vulnerable to the increasing effects of climate change, both physically (such as building materials durability) and socially (such as loss of inhabitants, internal displacement, tourism, and worsening economic conditions for disadvantaged populations). However, people and cities have proven to be resilient over time, even in the face of global challenges.

Combatting climate change impacts on heritage and people requires consideration of social, cultural, environmental, and economic factors. This chapter focuses on the unique challenges posed by the presence of Cultural Heritage in an urban setting and explores design actions that balance preservation with innovation. By examining the physical and structural features of historical cities, their public spaces, and sociocultural connotations, the chapter aims to highlight how communities on the frontlines of the climate crisis use them as an expression of intrinsic resilience.

Through case studies from different climatic zones, the chapter explores the rediscovery and re-evaluation of 'histo-cultural forms' of climate change adaptation. It outlines techniques and solutions -from traditional and Indigenous knowledge to tangible structural features- that are being used to cope with heat islands, storms, floods, etc. and are congenial to heritage sites, in sustaining local culture and knowledge and know-how while demonstrating renewal and adaptability.

Keywords: climate-proof planning, adaptation, communities, historic-based solutions

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