

**ON  
CONSERVATION  
AND REACTIVATION  
OF RELIGIOUS  
BUILT HERITAGE  
IN RURAL AREAS.**



SQUARE : OFFICE FOR RESEARCH AND  
REDESIGN.

Brussels 2018 © Marcus van der Meulen

# On Conservation and Reactivation of Religious Built Heritage in Rural Areas.

By *Marcus van der Meulen*

## Abstract

Modernization comes with urbanization resulting in a decreasing population in rural areas. Changes in religious practices and secularization leave many houses of worship in the countryside abandoned. The implications of modernization for rural communities have been largely unnoticed. Religious heritage has several meanings exceeding the material significance of a building. A place of worship can be regarded a container of common memories. Conventional conservation approaches are failing to identify true significance and fail to reconnect local heritage to the community. The traditional materialistic approach needs to shift towards a people-related process safeguarding the spirit of these rural places of worship. New concepts are explored to reactivate former houses of worship as communal space, regaining utilization for contemporary society. The redesign to stage the adaptation of religious heritage involves architectural intervention. This can be regarded the addition of new meanings reflecting our time.

Keywords : conservation, religious heritage, adaptive reuse, built heritage

## Introduction

Modernization and urbanization are transforming communities across the globe. Urbanization and secularization have profound implications for communities in rural areas in many parts of the world. In the past decades the implications of urbanization for urban areas have been studied. The transformation of the countryside is equally profound. Depopulation of the countryside and changes in religious practices result in decreasing numbers of believers to maintain their houses of worship. As the villages and small towns continue to diminish and religion losing its original function, the houses of worship are being abandoned. Temples in China and churches in Estonia have become redundant,

shrines in Japan and monasteries in Belgium will be abandoned in the decades or even years ahead. Retaining the original function as a conservation approach, the Living religious Heritage concept, proves to be unfeasible in many countries. Conservation, however, of these abandoned historic buildings becomes increasingly urgent. Conventional ideas are in danger of creating defunct monuments and not offering solutions to pressing problems. New valuations are needed to understand the importance of rural religious heritage, but also new understandings to establish new relations between the building and the local community.



*Figure 1 Village in Chinese countryside*

#### Demographics and redundancy

According to United Nations [UN,2014] nearly a third of the total global population lived in urban areas in 1950. This grew to over half of the total populace in 2014 and urbanization is expected to continue in the decades ahead. Europe and North America are amongst the most urbanized regions in the world. In countries like Belgium, Japan and the Netherlands over 90% of the population dwells in urban areas. A further decline of the rural population is expected, especially in India and China, as urbanization will continue. For China a decline of 50% of the rural population is expected [UN,2014]. These demographic changes highly influence the conservation of religious heritage in rural areas. Problems with maintaining the houses of worship in the rural areas of Japan or the Netherlands are warnings of what can be expected for countries that are now rapidly urbanizing [UN, 2014]. As a result of the rapid urbanization of Bhutan, the safeguarding of many historic monasteries and local shrines in the rural areas of this Himalayan country is endangered [Tashi, 2016]. A second development is the decrease in religious affiliation. Atheism is increasing in North America and Europe, China has one of the highest percentages of atheists in the world. Europe and East Asia are amongst the least religious regions in the world, with high percentages of

non-religious people in Japan, Estonia or Belgium [Pew Research Center, 2017]. As religious communities are evaporating it becomes increasingly difficult to support the local houses of worship in these countries. Already in central and eastern Europe the countryside is dotted with abandoned churches, with ruins across Czech Republic and Estonia, but also in parts of China, Vietnam and other countries in East Asia. In Japan, priests in small towns villages find it increasingly hard to retain their shrines and thousands of temples are expected to close within the coming years [Guardian, 2017; Ukai, 2015]. Due to expected increase of urbanization and continued secularization, the problem of redundant houses of worship in rural areas is particularly exigent in East Asia and Europe.

In the past decades the understanding of religious heritage as a distinct issue within the conservation of heritage has been growing. Several national conferences have taken place. ICCROM organized the Living Religious Heritage conference in 2003 and more recently the Buddhist Heritage conference in Korea focused on heritage from one singular religion. In Europe, FRH [Note 01] was founded to express the significance of religious heritage conservation and address the challenges that come with it. Religious buildings often form a major part of a country's built legacy. Historic places of worship differ from other built heritage in its function as sacred places. Wijesuriya distinguishes religious heritage from other heritage [ICCROM, 2003] stressing a difference in values. In a religious community the values are already recognized, he argues. Stovel argues [ICCROM, 2003] the care of religious heritage is primarily the responsibility of the religious community for whom it has significance. The rapid changes in society that are transforming the identity of the countryside across the globe, however, oppose a singular view. A historic house of worship is part of communal heritage, regardless of affiliation. Identifying believers as unique stakeholders is disregarding the multiple layers of meaning historic buildings such as houses of worship often have. The multiple layers will be discussed in more detail below. Religious communities in Europe and East Asia have diminished and continue to shrink. Living Religious Heritage may be applicable to some historic places of worship, it has proven its value in preserving Stupas in Sri Lanka for example, this conservation concept fails to address the urgent and growing realities of those houses of worship in areas without vivid and numerous religious communities. When religious communities evaporate so these values expressed by religious communities evaporate. Alienation resulting in an abandoning and disrepair becomes a reality. The many ruinous churches in the Czech Republic or the abandoned temples in Viet Nam are illustrative of this. A community that has lost a

connection to its house of worship is losing interest to support the heritage. The biggest threat to the survival of religious heritage becomes alienation [ Van der Meulen, 2017a]. For communities, a house of worship functions as a connection to collective memory [ Cohen and Jaeger, 1998 ; Van der Meulen, 2017]. These memories exceed religious connotations. Although the secularization of Europe is a reality and the people affiliated to religious de continues to decline, a recent poll [FRH, 2014] revealed that nearly 80% of the population in the EU values religious built heritage as essential for community life, and wanting them to promote to a secular audience.



*Figure 2 Abandoned church in Karelia, Russian Federation.*

#### Conservation

The origin of the conservation of monuments is often situated in early nineteenth century Europe. In the aftermath of the French Revolution many religious buildings were abandoned, abbeys and monasteries closed, churches sold and some historic gothic cathedrals were pulled down. Initiatives to safeguard historic buildings were undertaken in some cities such as Ghent in modern-day Belgium, where a report was drafted to explore potentials of new purposes for redundant religious buildings [Bruneel et al, 2005]. This had resulted in the reprogramming of some monasteries to new people-centered functions such as a library, a school or a museum. Reactivation came with a redesign to adapt the building to its new function. An interesting example is the redesign of Baudelo Abbey Church to house the university library. Architectural interventions have in part altered the appearance of the building, especially the church interior. Today these added layers of meaning have contributed to the value and importance of this heritage site as part of the accumulation of historical and associated meanings. The concept of reprogramming redundant buildings rose together with the notion of heritage protection, as conservation without a people-

centered utilization was not considered. Today, the traditional conservation ideology would object to these practices. The material preservation of religious buildings increasingly includes not only the built manifestations but also fittings and fixtures. During the FRH Movable Religious Heritage conference in 2013, arguments were made to preserve churches as cultural “time capsules”. Such an approach towards conservation prevents all usages other than scientific and reduces religious buildings to study objects in a museum-like environment. Continuous use of religious heritage only rarely comes without renewal and adaptations to changes in liturgy and demography [ Wijesuriya, 2017a]. The freezing in time and space concept would become an arbitrary decision. Wijesuriya and others are opposing the conventional conservation ideas and argue for a believers-centered approach resulting in Living Religious Heritage [ ICCROM,2003].



*Figure 3 Myorenji Temple in Nagasaki, Japan. Modernisation changes attitudes towards traditional religious practices. In Japan, temples struggle to survive.*

The Charter of Venice formulates guidelines [ICOMOS,1964] determining what in recent years has become known as the conventional conservation ideology. One of the earliest village churches in the Netherland that became redundant due to modernization, Leegkerk near Groningen, was restored to contemporary conservation ideas in the 1970s. The scientific restoration erased parts of the more recent heritage relating to the local community and brought the church interior back to an idealized pre-Reformation situation. As a tourist attraction this approach disappointed and the expected visitors remained absent. The relation between the building and the visitor acts as a motivator and is an important factor in the tourist experience of a heritage site [Poria et al, 2009]. In recent years a people-centered redesign of the church in Leegkerk as a cultural centre has resulted in a rejuvenation of the heritage [Van der Meulen, 2017a]. The appeal of common religious buildings in rural areas is often limited. A conservation strategy centered around the material manifestations of such buildings can

safeguard the building itself, it fails to interest visitors or even a local community. The conventional conservation ideology is in danger of creating defunct monuments, even obstructing buildings being used by the local community. Renovation of some living Buddhist monasteries in countries such as Bhutan or Nepal faces difficulties due to conflicting ideas between users, the monks, and conservation professionals [ Chapagain, 2017]. Rather than safeguarding the material manifestations the spirit of place should be protected.



*Figure 4. Pihlta, Estonia. Religious buildings in countries that are predominantly atheist are losing their relevance in society. Renewing heritage values are part of creating awareness.*

#### Forming a meaning

In the past decades new ideas to valorize heritage have been developed. The well-known Burra Charter mentions aesthetic values, historic, scientific and social values [Australia ICOMOS, 1979]. The more recent English Heritage guidelines identify historical and aesthetic values, next to communal, including social, spiritual and symbolic values, and evidential value, divided in natural and cultural components [English Heritage, 2008]. As mentioned above, religious heritage can be regarded different from other heritage due to differences in values. As a consequence, a specific valorization of religious heritage seems in place. In 2013 the Sustainable

Management of Historic Rural Churches report was published in Tallinn, Estonia [Conservation Centre Kanut, 2013]. In this publication, perhaps the first to tackle the specific subject of historic houses of worship in rural areas, the importance of identifying, measuring and articulating what makes a place or an object is stressed. The report stresses the meaning of these buildings as physical reminders of what people are and where they came from. Estonia, as mentioned above, is one of the least religious countries in the world and as a consequence a religion related understanding of these places of worship had to be considered deficient. Several potential values are mentioned in the report. Cultural significance embodied in and represented by the place, architectural but also associational values, by which associations of the building and a person or event are understood. Also mentioned are recreational and economic values. Development as real estate is seen as a potential that may effectively protect a site, provided the new use is compatible with other cultural values embodied with the heritage. As most significant value, however, the inheritance factor is stressed, precious and irreplaceable, with the understanding conservation is a responsibility towards both past and future generations .

The recognition of multiple values of historic buildings is an important evolution arguing for a wider conservation approach. The true meaning of religious heritage should be sought in the accumulation of values. For Daming temple, Yangzhou, Jiangsu Province, China, the genuine value lies in its multiple meanings [ Xiaoxia and Qingtong, 2017]. The same can be said of Baudelo Abbey in Ghent, Belgium [ Van der Meulen, 2017b]. Associational values, such as links to historical events, happenings or personalities, can be instrumental parts of this accumulation. The built heritage thus becomes a container of historical and social meanings forming a physical reminder of our cultural inheritance.

#### Contemporary interventions

The Burra Charter contains a plea for minimal intervention, calling for a cautious approach towards change, saying “ do as much as necessary to care for the place and to make it useable, but otherwise change as little as possible so that its cultural significance is retained” [Australia ICOMOS, 1999]. The 2008 publication of guidelines for the conservation of monasteries in the Netherlands, however, stresses constant adapting to changing realities is part of the lifecycle of religious buildings [Hendrickx, 2008]. Similar is the understanding of the constant adaptation of Buddhist heritage to changes in demographics and liturgy [Wijesuriya, 2017]. This implies the appeal to minimize

interventions freezing religious heritage in time and space is against the spirit of these religious buildings. Chapagain argues the spiritual materiality should be safeguarded, not necessarily the material fabric, and calls for a contextual conservation approach [Chapagain, 2017]. A methodology related to the site identifying relations between the religious built heritage and the local community, means a shift from the overemphasis on the conservation of the material fabric towards a people-centered preservation approach. This has implications for the adaptability of redundant houses of worship. In developing new strategies for the conservation of religious built heritage in rural areas, it is important to establish valorization and take a people-centered contextual approach. The significance of cultural heritage is comprehensive and exceeds the value of the material appearance. It provides regions with an identity and contributes to the quality of life, but it also can be part of the regeneration of heritage and communities as formulated in the key findings of the Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe report [CHCFE, 2015]. The Hangzhou Declaration [UNESCO, 2013] expresses the importance of people-centered and place-based approach for development programmes. The need to value, safeguard and transmit culture is stressed. Heritage can be part of innovative and sustainable concepts and this includes historic houses of worship. The report of the CHA-ICCROM Asian Buddhist Heritage conference [ICCROM, 2017] recommends utilization of Buddhist heritage sites for religious, pilgrimage and other appropriate economic uses. Xiaoxia and Qingtong argue a balance should be pursued between conservation and utilization [Xiaoxia and Qingtong, 2017]. A new function of Buddhist [religious] architecture can destroy the spirit of place. Using the heritage wisely and effectively, however, the building can regain a function in contemporary society and rejuvenate it.

Redundant houses of worship need to be adapted to changing realities in order to be preserved. Adaptive

reuse can be used as a tool for the conservation of religious buildings (Cantacuzino, 1975 ; Cramer, 2007; Bell , 2012). A balance between conservation, both material and spiritual, and continued functionality to the community results in a re-programming of these buildings. This ensures a contribution of the built heritage to contemporary society. Identifying the needs of the local community can be part of the solution. Rejuvenating the building contributes to the regeneration of the local community. Rejuvenation of the historic building and community by providing a new function related to the spirit of the building is gaining popularity. People-related reactivation focusses on local community, the renovation of houses of worship as a tool to regenerate both heritage

and society. In early nineteenth century Ghent, Belgium, a re-programming of historic monasteries was advised and implemented. This has preserved these buildings and passed them to our generation. The architectural interventions and the new functions have added new layers of meaning. The redesign of historic buildings for adaptive reuse can result in addition of value (Dubois, 2003, Van der Meulen, 2017a). The accumulation of all meanings has become the true value of these monuments, with the physical manifestations as a container.



*Figure 5 The former Cistercian church in Ghent, redesigned as a library in the early nineteenth century. This use has contributed to modern day heritage values of this building.*



*Figure 6 Klein Wetsinge, the Netherlands. Plain Calvinist church has regained a relevant place in society and has become a motivator for rural regeneration.*

Xiaoxia and Qingtong argue Buddhist heritage has the responsibility of contributing to the development and progress of modern society [Xiaoxia and Qingtong, 2017]. This can positively be extended to all religious built heritage. For rural development, built heritage can be a motivator. Two recent redesigns, one in China and one in the Netherlands, are interesting examples. In Klein Wetsinge, Groningen Province, the Netherlands, the local village church was recently redesigned as a community living room. To secure funds for maintenance, the attraction of visitors such as tourists was intended. A plain parochial house of worship, the church was adapted and enhanced by opening up parts of the building that were previously inaccessible. The appeal of this type of Calvinist Temple is restricted and the building has little architectural value. Significance for the local community was found in other, contextual values. This people-centered reactivation as a communal space is intended to rejuvenate the village. A cabin offering views of the countryside, a visual connection to place, was added in an attempt to attract visitors with the potential of generating funds. The architectural interventions were done in a phenomenological approach revealing qualities of the building [Van der Meulen, 2017a]. In Ruicheng,

Shanxi Province, China, a redundant temple was recently renovated [Divisare, 2016]. A modernizing local society no longer had a need for the Five Dragons Temple, with the vanishing of a rain praying culture. This resulted in the decline of the ancient temple as the centre of community life. The plan to revitalize the context of this former place of worship is simultaneously an attempt to create awareness of the significance through education and the creation of communal space. Five Dragons Temple is a stimulating project of contemporary development of religious heritage. The contemporary architectural additions enhance the spirit of place, revealing the importance of the original Taoist temple and reestablishing connections between the ancient temple and contemporary society.

#### Discussion

The rapid urbanization and modernization continues to transform the world. Implications for heritage conservation in cities has been studied extensively. In 2011 UNESCO adopted recommendations on the Historic Urban Landscape [UNESCO,2011] followed by the HUL Guidebook in 2015. The transition of the countryside, on the other side, has been largely overlooked. The expected decline of the population and decline in religious affiliation results in the abandoning of rural houses of worship. The local house of worship in rural areas can be considered the prime container of communal memory transcending religious values. Conservation of these heritage buildings that are now in danger of becoming dilapidated needs to be addressed. As the UN reports regarding demographics illustrate, the question is mounting especially in Europe and East Asia. In Europe, FRH was founded some years ago addressing the specific question of religious heritage preservation, with special attention for the houses of worship in rural areas. Establishing a similar organization in Asia addressing the specific problems surrounding the conservation of religious heritage may be considered. Opening up the these places of worship is an initial problem. In Japan, part of the problem comes from a tradition to hide treasures [Ogino, 2016] and temples can be detached in space, and time, from daily life. This is alienating people from religious heritage. Living Religious Heritage is valuable yet the limitations in secular states should be recognized. Preservation starts with marking why the local house of worship has importance. In the past decades the valorization of heritage has expanded and this has vital implications for the recognition of importance especially regarding houses of worship in rural areas. Material values can be limited where people-related values may add to an accumulated significance for the local community. A re-valorization is needed to establish the importance of local religious heritage buildings. Reconnecting to the original utilization as a

communal place of gathering, thus safeguarding the spiritual manifestation of the building, redundant houses of worship can be reactivated as a public space. Five Dragons Temple in Ruicheng, China, and Klein Wetsinge village church in the Netherlands are interesting examples. The redesign of redundant houses of worship can rejuvenate both community and heritage avoiding alienation and subsequent dilapidation. Reactivation of historic buildings can contribute to the development and progress of modern societies in rural areas, the redesigned house of worship contributes to the rejuvenation of the community. Heritage and rural tourism is growing and can be part of rejuvenating places of worship. The combination of both communal space and rural tourism, such as in Ruicheng and Klein Wetsinge, is of a recent date. Rural tourism is gaining popularity in Europe and in China, one of the fastest growing sectors is heritage tourism [Bonn et al, 2007]. The arrival of tourists may result in a rejuvenation of both the town and the building, generating funds. In Myanmar, the arrival of a tourist industry is changing the appearance of the heritage buildings and the site [Lwin, 2017]. Visitors are wearing and tearing the stave churches in Norway [FRH,2017]. Further research into the effects and desirability of this combination in villages and towns is needed. Redesigning houses of worship for their new programmes involves architectural interventions. These interventions should enhance the spirit of the site and relate to the community, Five Dragons Temple in Ruicheng, China, is a good example of this. As historical examples of reactivated heritage buildings illustrate, the adaptations become new layers of meaning adding to the accumulated value of the heritage.

## Conclusion

The transformation of the countryside due to modernization has been widely unnoticed. Houses of worship in rural areas of Europe and East Asia are increasingly difficult to preserve. Some may retain their original function as Living Religious Heritage concepts can secure conservation for these buildings. Other historic places of worship are losing or have already lost the purpose they were built for. A Copernican revolution is needed to preserve the religious built heritage in these rural areas. A re-valorization to establish the true meaning of local houses of worship is wanted. Regarding the historic houses of worship in rural areas, the material values are often limited, yet they have importance as containers of accumulated meanings including associational, historical and cultural memories. This accumulation of connotations can be regarded the true meaning of religious built heritage. This inheritance makes the present generation custodians with the noble task of passing the past towards to the future.

Generations have contributed and added new layers of meaning, a recurrent in religious heritage. Rather than creating a time capsule, conservation of heritage should be part of, and contribute to local communities. The conventional plea for minimal intervention is preventing a reconnection of the heritage with modernizing society. Adapting religious buildings for contemporary utilization stands in a tradition of adjusting these buildings to changes in demography or liturgy, or even changes in function. Conservation can become a tool to revitalize both heritage and community. A people-centered reactivation of abandoned religious buildings as communal space, in the spirit of place, rejuvenates building and community. Redesign involves the adapting of the material manifestations of the heritage. The architectural interventions benefit utilization of the heritage to society and become a new layer of meaning adding in the future values of the building.



*Figure 7 Five Dragons Temple in Ruicheng, China. New use of disused religious buildings can become tools for rural development. (image courtesy Yang Chaoying)*

## Note 01 :

Future for Religious Heritage (FRH) brings together those who work to protect religious heritage across Europe. FRH is a non-profit, non-religious organisation founded in 2008 and based in Brussels. As the only European Network for Historic Places of Worship, FRH is a leading voice for the active and engaged cultural life of all Europeans. FRH has members in 38 countries, including NGOs, charities, government, religious and university departments. Since 2017 FRH is one of the 28 European networks supported through the Creative Europe Networks programme.

## References :

- Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, The Burra Charter, 1979
- Bell, David N., Charles Caspers, Maarten Delbeke, Lindsay Jones, Terryl N Kinder, Lucie K Morisset, Luc Noppen, et al. *Loci Sacri: Understanding Sacred Places*. Edited by Thomas Coomans and Herman De Dijn and Jan De Maeyer and Rajesh Heynickx and Bart Verschaffel. Leuven: University press, 2012.



- Bonn, M.A., S.M. Joseph-Mathews, M. Dai, M.S. Hayes, and J. Cave [2007] Heritage/Cultural attraction Atmospherics : creating the Right Environment for the Heritage/Cultural Visitor, Journal of travel Research, 45 [3], pp 345-54.
- Bruneel, Bartel, Bert Bothuyne, and Bart Verschaffel. *De Transformaties Van De Baudelo-Site Tussen 1792 En 1830: Een Onderzoek Aan De Hand Van Vier Representatieve Situaties*. Diss. burgerlijk ingenieur architect 2005.
- Cantacuzino, Sherban, *New uses for old buildings*, London 1975
- Cultural Heritage counts for Europe (CHCFE) , The CHCFE Report, 2015  
[http://blogs.enactc.org/culturalheritagecountsforeurope/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/CHCFE\\_FULL-REPORT\\_v2.pdf](http://blogs.enactc.org/culturalheritagecountsforeurope/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/CHCFE_FULL-REPORT_v2.pdf)
- Chapagain, Neel Kamal, Perception and management of heritage in the Buddhist context : observations in Nepal, in : Asian Buddhist Heritage : Conserving the Sacred, ICCROM, 2017, pp 53-63
- Cohen, Diana and Jaeger, Robert ; Sacred Places at Risk : New Evidence On How Endangered Older Churches and Synagogues Serve Communities, Partners for Sacred Places, 1998.
- Cramer, Johannes, S Breitling, *Architektur im Bestand: Planung, Entwurf, Ausführung*, Basel, 2007
- Divisare,Urbanus : Five Dragons Temple, 2016  
<https://divisare.com/projects/330402-urbanus-chaoying-yang-five-dragon-temple> Accessed on 11.12.2017
- Dubois, Marc, *Wat aanvangen met Gewijde Gebouwen ?*, Kunsttijdschrift Vlaanderen 52, 2003
- English Heritage, Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment, 2008
- FRH, Secular Europe Backs Religious Heritage, Survey Report with Key Results, 2014 <http://www.frh-europe.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/2014-06-Secular-Europe-backs-religious-heritage-report.pdf>
- FRH [Future for Religious Heritage ], Norway : tourists are wearing and tearing the stave churches, 2017  
<http://www.frh-europe.org/norway-tourists-wearing-and-tearing-the-stave-churches/> Accessed on 11.12.2017
- Guter,Y. and J.Feldman [2006] Holy Land Pilgrimage as a site of Inter-Religious Encounter, Studia Hebraica, 6 : pp 87-93.
- Hendrickx, Sjef. *Kloosters als religieus erfgoed. Bouwstenen voor een te voeren beleid*. Utrecht, 2008.
- ICCROM, Conservation of Living Heritage, 2003
- ICCROM, Asian Buddhist Heritage : Conserving the Sacred, 2017  
[http://beta.iccrom.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/asianbuddhist\\_web.pdf](http://beta.iccrom.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/asianbuddhist_web.pdf)
- ICOMOS, International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (The Venice Charter 1964), 1965
- Lwin, Nyein, Buddhist heritage conservation and management in Myanmar ( with special reference to the Buddhist Centre of Bagan) , in : Asian Buddhist Heritage : Conserving the Sacred, ICCROM, 2017, pp 119-129
- Ogino, Masahiro ; Considering undercurrents in Japanese cultural heritage management : the logic of actualization and the preservation of the present. In: Matsuda, A and Mengoni, L E, Reconsidering Cultural Heritage in East Asia, pp 15-29. 2016
- Pew Research Center, Religion and Public Life, The Changing Global Religious Landscape, 2017 :  
<http://www.pewforum.org/2017/04/05/the-changing-global-religious-landscape/> accessed on 21.11.2017
- Poria, Yaniv, Biran, Avital and Reichel, Arie ; [2009] Visitor's Preferences for Interpretation at Heritage Sites, in : Journal of Travel Research, 48, pp 92-105.
- Tashi, Tschering, 2016 ; <http://thebhutanese.bt/rural-communities-struggle-to-protect-their-religious-heritage/> accessed on 21.11.2017
- Ukai, Hidenori ; Vanishing Temples : the Loss of Regional Areas and Religion, 2015 <http://fpci.jp/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Vanishing-Temples-Efforts-by-Priests-as-Population-Declines.pdf>
- UNESCO, Proposals concerning the Desirability of a Standard-setting Instrument on Historic Urban Landscapes, General Conference, 2011  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002110/211094e.pdf>
- UNESCO, The Hangzhou Declaration, Placing Culture at the Heart of Sustainable Development Policies, 2013  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002212/221238m.pdf>
- United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2014), World Urbanization Prospects :The 2104 Revision, 2014.

Van der Meulen, Marcus ; Interior Conversions : redesigning the village church for adaptive reuse, in : Il Futuro degli Edifici di Culto Paesaggi, Bartolomei, Luigi et al, Bologna, 2017, pp 321-335

Van der Meulen, Marcus ; Klein Wetsinge : when design meets tourism , FRH, 2016  
[https://issuu.com/marcusboaz/docs/article\\_church\\_klein\\_wetsinge](https://issuu.com/marcusboaz/docs/article_church_klein_wetsinge) accessed on 11.12.2017

Van der Meulen, Marcus ; Baudelo Abbey or a Gothic Revival in Ghent. FRH, 2017 : <http://www.frh-europe.org/baudelo-abbey-or-a-gothic-revival-in-ghent-belgium/> accessed on 11.12.2017

Wijesuriya, Gamini ; in : Asian Buddhist Heritage, ICCROM, 2017

Wijesuriya, Gamini ; Towards the De-secularization of Heritage, 2017 : in : Built Heritage, 2017

Xiaoxia, xx, and Qingtong, :The Conservation and management of Chinese Buddhist heritage and the case of Daming Temple, in ; Asian Buddhist Heritage, ICCROM, 2017, pp 129-136

Worthing, Derek et al, Guidelines for Sustainable management of Churches, Conservation Centre Kanut in Tallinn, Estonia. 2013.