

Heritage Attributes in Transition

Adaptive reuse and public responses in religious buildings

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Background & aim

Religious buildings are increasingly reused as religiosity declines worldwide. We examined which heritage attributes changed during the adaptive reuse of buildings, how these changes were associated with each reuse type, and how the public responded to them.

Corrected version of **The Decline of Religion, 2007-2019**  
(Change in mean score on importance of God scale in "Giving Up on God")

Average Change in Religiosity as measured on one to ten scale using earliest and latest available surveys

Global decline in religiosity, 2007–2019 (Inglehart et al., 2021).

2

Data & method

A total of 131 cases worldwide were coded using the Veldpaus (2015) attribute framework, a change-operation scheme and the typology of adaptive reuse for religious buildings proposed by Velthuis and Spennemann (2007). Manual coding of 40 cases informed LLM-assisted coding of the remaining 91.

131

global cases

985

attribute changes

3

reuse types

2

What changes & how

A. Attribute totals

B. Attribute × change-operation matrix

Attribute totals (left) and how each attribute is changed (right) (by author).

Attribute change by reuse type

Across all reuse types, interventions were concentrated on building element and use, while other heritage attributes changed less frequently.

Reuse type × attribute across eight change operations (by author).

3

Responses to change

Changes focused on building elements and use, mainly through addition or replacement, and received mostly neutral or positive responses. Churches were primarily converted to community or commercial uses, with similarly neutral or positive reactions.

Attribute → change operation → public sentiment (by author).

Before-use category → After-use category → public sentiment (by author).