ICOMOS
Deutsches Nationalkomitee

Dresden Declaration on Flood Protection for Historic Sites

Adopted at the International Conference "Flood Protection for Historic Sites. Integrating Heritage Conservation and Flood Control Concepts", Dresden, 13-14 June 2014

Whereas

- most urban areas and many historic sites evolved along waterways or coastlines and are therefore especially flood-prone,
- flood events by all accounts will occur more frequently and costs of flood damage are expected to substantially increase
- and therefore a significant loss of cultural resources, character and economic vitality of cities has to be expected,

we therefore proclaim:

Increased efforts to reduce the threats of flooding are needed in order to preserve river cities and landscapes with their special qualities as valuable environments for future generations.

Flood mitigation projects have to ascertain and take into consideration the special values and vulnerabilities of historic sites from the beginning. Protective measures must not compromise or destroy the very assets that they are intended to protect. The quality of public space and its architectural and natural elements, the strong relationship between the built environment and nature (and water in particular), attractiveness for inhabitants and visitors based on the historic and aesthetic richness of towns and landscapes and the built cultural heritage – in short, the so-called "soft factors" that lend a place its identity and character – have long turned into hard arguments in the competition among cities. Listed historic monuments, which may not be compensated for by substitution or replacement, have to be given particular consideration.

Flood protection must be understood and practiced as an integral part of a comprehensive spatial planning process, with special consideration given to the individual conditions and qualities of historic sites. This includes public discussion of goals at an early stage, development and evaluation of realistic alternatives as well as the utilization of synergies between urban and flood protection planning.

In order to keep flood-prone historic settlements and sites competitive and to protect their quality of life the conference participants recommend the following

Action Programme for Flood Protection of Historic Sites:

1. It is recommended that communities identify historic sites that are subject to flooding. Their cultural values as well as the damage to be expected should be comprehensibly analyzed and documented and measures appropriate for their protection should be defined.
2. Based on the above evaluation, integrated development concepts for the protection of historic cities and cultural heritage sites against flooding should be prepared under public participation at an early stage and in close cooperation with different interest groups and stakeholders.
3. The relevant standards and regulations should be applied to historic towns with circumspection and flexibility. In the course of weighing values from case to case, deviations from standards and with that a certain remaining risk should be accepted. The organizational measures for flood protection and the responsibilities of communities, owners and users are to be included in the overall assessment.
4. Concepts of the Action Programme shall combine cultural, ecologic, spatial, structural and social aspects of flood risk management, forming an integral part of urban land use and development planning.
5. An interdisciplinary team of independent experts who are not involved in the local planning process should be consulted for advice in planning and evaluating projects.

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