LESSONS FROM HERITAGE AND INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE FOR ZERO EMISSIONS, RESILIENT BUILDING PRACTICE

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This session aims at reflecting upon lessons on our heritage in its broader sense: to look at our built environment`s ethnological, scientific and social significance, beyond the strict notion of cultural heritage as the monuments, buildings, and sites with historic, artistic and symbolic values.

Looking at heritage in a broader sense, as a system of resilience of our settlements, cities, cultural landscapes and vernacular architecture, we will find keys for climate action.

Proposed actions, both in governance and in building practice, should be guided by the best available knowledge. This means disciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledge, as well as bringing to the table traditional and Indigenous knowledge. This kind of knowledge is often forgotten or overlooked, but might give us the key for a more resilient and sustainable development, one that is human-centric and responsive to local conditions because traditional and Indigenous knowledge results from an optimised and temporised harvesting of collective know-how.

Traditional communities and site-specific solutions will offer valuable knowledge on adaptation and mitigation in times of climate crisis.

What policy has the capacity to inspire individual communities and organisations to take action and generate practices that are inclusive of climate action in the basic exercise of urbanisation or social organisation? And which may involve a new holistic vision for heritage sites ?

I want to refer to a couple of cases of settlements and cultural landscapes which bring to the forefront how we can change the dynamics of communities and decision-makers to become active agents of climate action:

On resilience in traditional knowledge: It is interesting to see how the Hani people of Yunnan's Ailao Mountains have harnessed the qualities of the ecosystems they inhabit to sustain their livelihoods over generations, and how "they exert their limited labor tools to the extreme, carve the mountain into terraces, and create settlements and buildings integrated with nature, relying on their enhanced collective cohesion and extraordinary individual tolerance".

The other case of reference, focusing on policy and vision for collective action, i the Pan-African Great Green Wall Initiative was launched in 2007 by the African Union, with the aim of creating an 8,000km wide tree barrier stretching from Senegal to Djibouti by 2030, in order to halt the southward spread of the Sahara Desert. The GGWI is, above all, a very integrative call for action: to use creativity to mobilise communities on a continental scale.

In the context of the GGWI tree-planting programme in Ethiopia, the process of reforestation without planting trees has been an incredible lesson. A much less costly and resource-efficient way to regenerate our forests and decrease carbon levels is to help nature do its job. Examples of this include removing barriers to natural regeneration, redesigning the terrain in dried-up areas to promote water retention and

adopting strategies of reforestation with minimum human resources, like nucleation (also known as “tree islands”), which involves planting only a very small number of trees that attract birds and other seed dispersers, who spread seeds around the tree islands to gradually turn these tree islands into intact forests.

There is knowledge in our natural and built heritage. And in times of climate crisis, we have the responsibility to take that into our equation of solutions to develop, to plan and building our cities and territories.

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On behalf of the UIA

Speakers in this Panel:

• Speaker 1: Traditional Materials to Drive Capacity-Building - Education and upskilling of actors across the building value chain (investors, developers, designers, builders, insurers and users) , to build the capacity to use timber and biobased longside traditional materials (Lydie Didier - Asterre, France or Rowland Keable, UK)

• Speaker 2: Traditional Knowledge to Inform Resilient, Low-Carbon Building Practices (Yasmeen Lari Or Tualagi Nokise (AAPi DESIGN)

• Speaker 3: Beyond the Building – Lessons from Heritage cities for sustainable, resilient urban planning (Dr. Greg Munro, Director, Cities Alliance)