

Heritage inside out: uses of the past to reclaim the city

Feras Hammami¹, Evren Uzer²

¹Researcher in Critical Heritage Studies

Department of Conservation, University of Gothenburg

feras.hammami@gu.se

²Assistant Professor of Urban Planning

School of Craft and Design, University of Gothenburg

Parsons The New School for Design, New York

uzere@newschool.edu

Cities worldwide have always been spaces of difference – individuals from all walks of life negotiate their everyday life in relation to the conduct of others, and organise in groups and engage in politics, virtually and materially, in urban public spaces (Merrifield 2013). Since mid-nineteenth century however nationalist movements have used these spaces to edify the public about a common heritage and future, and to produce collectively shared experiences and a national identity (Smith 2006). These ideological uses of the past have been reviewed in the emerging field of critical heritage studies and described as a process of ‘heritagisation’ (Harvey 2001) through which the past has been ‘re-invented’ (Hobsbawm 1983) and re-used. Smith (2006, 17: 299) sees this process as an “authorized heritage discourse” (AHD) associated with the “grand narratives of Western national and elite class experiences”. The process produced a new form of collective imaginary ‘common’ defining for nation-state cultures and other forms of ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson 1983), yet also expanding with time and gaining partial global reach through UNESCO’s World Heritage Convention (1972) and its designation of “outstanding universal values” to some artefacts, be they tangible or intangible (Hammami 2012). Potential heritage that falls outside the desired narrative of value may in the process be cleansed, destroyed, or neglected (Baillie 2013).

In principle, and increasingly in practice since the 1960s and the following the various forms of resistance to “the nationalisation of the ethnic” and the socio-political exclusion of sub-identities, new plural heritages of non-Western, non-national, non-

elite etc., have been added to those of 'universal' national and/or global value. Despite the growing representation of the marginalised sub- communities and cultures in space and heritage making, the critical questions of 'whose heritage' to conserve (Tunbridge 1984) how to 'share it' (Ashworth 2011), how it transcends everyday life (Pullan & Baillie 2013), and how it challenges people identity (Hammami 2012) have nonetheless remained unchallenged.

This study dwells on the argument that there are tensions between present policies and forms of management of a past treated as a given yet increasingly contested and seen as heterogeneous, and between the inevitable diverse interpretation of the past (Ashworth 2007) in relation to urban planning processes that either delete the past or dilute its contents and homogenize what remains. It also sees heritage and resistance as deeply entangled in everyday negotiation of identity and sense of place. Rather than defining resistance solely as an 'opposition to power or as people fighting back in defence of freedom, democracy and humanity (Pile & Keith 1997), resistance in this study is also seen as plural, malleable, evolving, productive, fluid and integrated into everyday social life, as well as, transforming societies and history (Vinthagen and Liljan 2007). In this sense, resistance is becoming part of everyday life affecting policy making, and heritage is becoming cultural practices through which the past becomes expressed and represented in built environment rather than narrowly regarded as "culture" or "physical built environment" (Cesari & Herzfeld 2015).

This study is part of a bigger research project that investigate the ways heritage and resistance, both as concepts and as empirical realities, are fundamentally interdependent and constitute multiple sites of conflict. The field research in the project includes case studies from Sweden, Palestine and Turkey. Focusing on the Swedish case, this study investigates the resistance movement that began sparking in the late 1960s against the implementation of large-scale urban renewal projects in the working class neighbourhood of Gårda, located in the centre of the city of Gothenburg. After long history of protests, the resistance movement recently succeeded in mobilizing a political interest in protecting the historic environment of Gårda. Methods of discourse analyses have been employed on texts, dialogues, actions and spatial practices to

uncover how the activists could express the historic values of Gårda and subvert the authorized heritage in policy discourses and documents. The analysis of resistance through heritage brought new insights to the current debates on the growing surge of social conflicts in public spaces and on the role of planning and heritage authorities in the face of these conflicts.

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