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Conclusion

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Conclusion: Roles Governments Play in Shaping the Symbolic Landscape

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Heritage Practices, Cultural Contestation and the Shaping of the Cultural Landscape

In this volume, a variety of cases of cultural contestation has been discussed, ranging from the construction of a new national museum to all-out war, and from an attempt at changing a nation's favorite festivity to ethnic cleansing. What all these cases show is that heritage is part and parcel of a society's symbolic landscape. Heritage practices not only give meaning to it, but also construct and re-construct it at the same time. Identity is deeply intertwined with the symbolic landscape, as are the feelings of belonging and exclusion that are expressed by it. Therefore, the effects of the shaping and re-shapingv the symbolic landscape can be severe: When communities do not feel represented by it, emotions run high and cultural contestation can occur.

As the contributors to this volume show, governments play various roles in heritage practices. They articulate and reproduce existing historical

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315

narratives and heritage discourses in public policies and authorize these. Examples are the conservation plans for cultural landscapes drawn up by the Canadian government or the nomination of a painful historical site as UNESCO World Heritage by Japan. Governments, thus, shape and re-shape the symbolic landscape in different social, cultural, and political-administrative contexts. In the introduction to his volume, we put forward the idea that governments often play a role in cultural contestation and introduced a categorization of roles. Yet, perhaps it is rather the various roles governments have in the shaping of the symbolic landscape that are of importance, than what they do during cultural contestation.

Shaping and Re-shaping the Symbolic Landscape by Authoring and Authorization

Authoring and Authorization for Domestic Purposes

The volume starts with six chapters exploring the ways in which governments are involved in processes leading to cultural contestation. For domestic purposes of identity formation, and the legitimization of their rule, governments use historical narratives—sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly—excluding minority communities along the way.

A prime example of the way national governments 'instrumentalize' heritage to strengthen nation-building is China. Maags discusses how contestation is a direct effect of the way the party-state, or central government, uses intangible cultural heritage for nation-building. Due to the bureaucratic organization and the ICH policy design, these attempts give rise to administrative contestation. Central government favors heritage because of its 'fit' with the envisioned national identity. Yet, at the same time lower-level governmental actors articulate their own counter-narratives, trying to shape or re-shape the symbolic landscape at their respective level and in doing so act as authorizer and author too.

Logan discusses the way the governments and military of Myanmar, dominated by ethnic Burmese, shape the symbolic landscape by favoring Burmese heritage over that of ethnic minorities. The teaching of the Shan language and literature under the cover of a training course in Buddhism, for example, is illustrative of how Shan heritage is threatened by a lack of governmental authorization. The absence of the Rohingyas'

cultural practices in Myanmar's symbolic landscape is expressed by government's wish not to use their chosen name, but instead to refer to them as the 'Muslim community.'

In Bangladesh, by and large, a situation comparable to Myanmar can be sketched. As Hashem writes, Bengalese central government explicitly favors Bengalese-Muslim cultural and religious practices, instead of appreciating Bangladesh's cultural richness, effectively asking minority groups to give up their identity.

Ikiz Kaya and Calhan, focusing on Izmir, show the historical and present-day role of central governments in the ever-changing shaping of the Turkish symbolic landscape. Illustrative of government's role is the erasure of physical markings pointing to the (past) presence of religious minority communities in the city of Izmir.

Tisdel demonstrates how the Cuban socialist government reproduced existing historical narratives in its cultural policy which excluded Afro-Cuban religions and their practitioners from the country's symbolic landscape. Since the 1990s, state-owned museums tell the visitor a story of Cuban-Religion and its heritage as an inclusive part of the nation's identity while at the same time neglecting the history of its marginalization. This has led to the construction of counter-narratives, by individuals like Fredesvinde Rosell. One easily gets the impression that in authoritarian states like Cuba cultural contestation does not occur. Yet, as Tisdel shows, when one compares the state's official narratives, with individually articulated counter-narratives, cultural contestation does emerge.

That the practice of meaning-giving to landscapes works socially exclusive too is shown by Valadares. While constructing the national park services in Canada, government attributed different cultural and social values to these landscapes, effectively transforming natural landscapes into cultural landscapes. The values attributed to them are intertwined with the processes of identity formation of the colonists and their descendants. The narratives about these national parks are constructed and re-constructed, but still lay bare the core of American and Canadian national identity, in which there is no place for indigenous communities.

Authoring and Authorization in an International Context

In the contributions in the second part of this volume, the effects of governmental heritage practices on a country's international relations are

examined. Governments use heritage to strengthen their national identities, which sometimes leads to diplomatic conflicts with neighboring countries.

Taking Famagusta as a case, Jaramillo shows how heritage is intertwined with political ideologies in various ways. In itself, cultural expressions such as buildings and cityscapes are a physical effect of politics, as is the present-day meaning attributed to these. Heritage as a concept, moreover, is highly politicized as well. At the global level, under the umbrella of UNESCO, member states pursue their respective interests and ideas. At the local level, communities do the same. As Jaramillo argues, the multi-layered political dimension of heritage makes it difficult to deal with heritage issues in territories which are under dispute. In fact, it is exactly the multi-faceted politics of heritage that give rise to cultural contestation between the states laying claim on these domains, and their heritage.

Van Heese presents the most extreme result of cultural contestation during the war over Nagorno-Karabakh. She describes how the governments involved took up arms to destroy the symbolic landscape of the opposing party, as erasing the cultural expressions of the enemy, means putting an end to his claims on the territory.

Narratives underlying cultural contestation, with a history of violence, suppression and pain at their core, occur in many of the chapters of this volume. This also goes for the diplomatic conflict between South Korea and Japan, described by Trifu. The cultural contestation between the two states is caused by the different meanings attributed to the *Gunkanjima* industrial site. For Japan, it symbolizes the country's industrialization and its central place in the world. It is a heritage site that is part of the country's symbolic landscape, expressing the nation's identity. Central government was keen to underscore it by trying to get it listed as world heritage. For South Korea, it is a place which stands for forced labor during the Second World War. In itself, that does not need to be problematic, as the heritage status attributed to former concentration camps shows. The core of the contestation between the two nations is the absence of Korean suffering in the Japanese *Gunkanjima* narrative; Reconciliation between the two states is made difficult by the exclusion of the dark history of imperialism from Japan's symbolic landscape.

The diplomatic conflict between Greece and Macedonia is quite comparable, as this conflict too has competing claims on history, past suffering and feelings of not belonging at its root. Volchevska examines the way the Greek government laid claim to Ancient Macedonian history and

its symbols, thus ignoring the Macedonian identity, and past wrongdoings. At first, after the creation of Macedonia as an independent country, its government tried to open up the Greek narrative. When these attempts failed, trenches were dug. Macedonian government claimed the past Greece so desperately sought to protect from it, and started using the exact symbols Greece claimed for itself. This led to intense cultural contestation between the countries.

As these chapters show, governments play the role of authors in the shaping and re-shaping of the symbolic landscape and the role of authorizers when these already exist. By playing these roles, governments are deeply involved in the cultural contestation that might ensue.

Re-shaping the Symbolic Landscape by Mitigation

The third part of the book consists of chapters examining ways in which governments attempt to mitigate cultural contestation. These can be categorized as follows.

In the first place, governments can try to avoid cultural contestation by taking all involved stakeholders and their interests into account, and designing a participative form of decision-making. This, of course, has its limits, for it is often unclear who the stakeholders are. And, when these are defined, will all of them have an equal say in the decision-making process? Moreover, government actors are stakeholders themselves, with their own political ideologies, interests, and competences. Still, attempts are made to mitigate contestation in this manner, as Kryder-Reid and Zimmerman write. They also show the limits of this kind of mitigation. It seems that, if we want to take this approach seriously, government should take a step back as a stakeholder, and be open to formulating new (more) inclusive narratives.

In the second place, governments attempt to mitigate by constructing a more open narrative themselves. Governments of recently independent countries may be faced with the challenges of having to create a symbolic landscape that includes minorities. In such cases, governments sometimes try to avoid contestation, as they understand the threat it poses to a young country. An example of this is provided by the Estonian National Museum. Pawłusz discusses the main permanent exhibition 'Encounters' which can be seen as prime example of a governmental attempt to steer away from a socially exclusive narrative. It presents a more open narrative, including groups who can't claim a long history in the country, instead.

In the third place, governments attempt to mitigate cultural contestation by creating safe spaces for dialogue between the involved communities. The role governmental actors take in such instances is that of a 'compère' or impartial panel chair, bringing contesting groups together, and accommodating the debate. The goal of governments is to let the involved parties voice their feelings and fears, and help them understand those of the opposing parties, which hopefully results in sandpapering the sharp edges of the debate. Governments can do so passively, creating a safe space for debate after a community has asked it to do so. Wagenaar and Rodenberg give an example of this kind of mitigation by describing the attempts of Secretary of State Asscher to create a space for discussion between opponents and proponents of the figure of *Zwarte Piet.*

Lastly, governments play the role of mediator. As they do when they are merely 'compères', governments create safe spaces for dialogue, but they also engage in the discussion themselves. Under government direction, the involved parties together create a new inclusive narrative, to which every party can relate. Wagenaar and Rodenberg illustrate this with the role Amsterdam Mayor Eberhard van der Laan played during contestation. He directed the construction of the 'sooth Pete' narrative, thus re-shaping the symbolic landscape by altering the historical narrative to make it more inclusive.

Mitigation, as many of the authors implicitly or explicitly show, is often hard to attain. The verb 'to attempt' used above in the categorization should be stressed here. Mitigation can be attempted by governments with the best intentions. It often makes the symbolic landscape more inclusive, but just as often it results in new instances of cultural contestation.

Supra-National and Intergovernmental Attempts to Mitigate

One could argue that supra-national and intergovernmental actors, such as the UN and UNESCO, are likely candidates to take up the role as mitigator in cases of cultural contestation. There are international legal frameworks and juridical principles in place as well aimed at preserving heritage and safeguarding human rights. Some of the authors in this volume touch on this. From their work, it becomes clear that it is questionable whether international legal measures and regimes sort any effect in preventing or mitigating cultural contestation, or saving heritage from destruction. As illustrated by Van Heese, when cultural contestation is

intertwined with an armed conflict, laws safeguarding the opposing party's cultural rights tend to be disregarded. But even when the international conflict confines itself to a diplomatic conflict, mitigation by UNESCO is hard to attain, as becomes clear from the *Gunkujima* case.

As Ross (2007, 2009) noted already, when it comes to successful mitigation, the authority and legitimacy of government is often disputed. The fact that UNESCO is in itself highly politicized, and that international heritage protection regimes are an effect of decision-making at UNESCO, as Jaramillo argues, probably works against the organization too.

Although more research is needed, it is probably safe to say mitigation attempts should be aimed at the level at which the contestation is played out. Perhaps the common truth that all politics is local politics holds value for heritage practices too. Therefore, it might be at this level that chances for mitigation are highest.

Governmental Double-Roles

Understanding the roles governments play in the shaping and re-shaping of the symbolic landscape and the ensuing instances of cultural contestation is not as simple as the above might suggest. As Logan rightly asserts in his contribution, governments often play contradictory roles. Moreover, government seldom acts as a unitary actor. This volume explores cases in which it is exactly this fact that leads to cultural contestation. Maags captures this notion in her chapter, describing the Chinese party-state as 'multi-level governance,' which gives governmental actors the opportunity to pursue their own interests. In a multi-ethnic state, like China, local governments can defend the existing local symbolic landscape as authorizers. On the other hand, chances are that these actions will bring them in conflict with other levels of government, also acting as authorizers and authors of the public landscape.

The chapter by Kryder-Reid and Zimmerman implicitly sheds light on how governments take up contradictory roles as a result of administrative fragmentation. In organizing participative forms of decision-making, the government agency central in the process has to bring together the interests, ideas, values, and ideologies of the stakeholders, acting as a mediator. Yet, often, other government agencies are involved as stakeholders as well.

Administrative fragmentation, thus, is the reason government often plays a double role. In some instances, this might lead to bureaucratic

contestation. Yet, on the other hand, states with highly fragmented administrative systems also have possibilities for mitigation, as Wagenaar and Rodenberg demonstrate. In the 'multi-level governance' structure of the Netherlands, with dispersed authority and competence, the Amsterdam Mayor Van der Laan had room to react to local community's demands and act as mediator.

Tabula Rasa?

(Re-)shaping the symbolic landscape is not done from scratch. Newly independent countries may attempt to create an entirely new symbolic landscape, but they always need to deal with existing historical narratives as well, as the cases in this volume make clear. Moreover, their actions are also determined by social-cultural and political-administrative contexts. These affect the various roles governments play, or want to play.

Logan, for example, shows that after the British left their former colony, the new government of Myanmar had the opportunity to shape an inclusive symbolic landscape for the multi-ethnic state. Nonetheless, it mainly authorized the existing Burmese one, as existing social structures and dominant interests still had to be reckoned with. Hashem paints a comparable picture for Bangladesh, where the violent history of fighting for independence made it hard not to favor Bengalese-Muslim cultural expressions over those of others. In an altogether different way, the Netherlands struggles with the social and cultural effects of its shifting demography, as it becomes increasingly multi-cultural. The existing symbolic landscape expressing 'Dutchness' is challenged by 'new' groups, claiming a place for themselves. This changing sociocultural composition challenges the existing symbolic landscape and forces governments to act, although government seems unsure what role it has to play.

The way in which the administrative design affects the role of governments is illustrated by Maags. The administrative design takes the form of 'multi-level governance,' distributing authority and competences horizontally and vertically. In this highly fragmented administrative design, central government can formulate policies, which lower levels of government are obliged to implement, but at the same time, it will always be frustrated by other governmental actors pursuing their own interests. Even more complex, and as influential as the multi-level governance system in China, is the interplay between ethnicity and administrative design in Myanmar. The current government led by Prime

Minister Daw Aung San Suu Kyi grapples with the highly complex political structure and ethnic composition of the Union, and on top of that, the political influence of the Burmese dominated Tatmadaw, influencing the role of central government in heritage praxis. If the current government does intend to mitigate the ethnic cleansing and cultural genocide taking place, it has a hard time doing so due to existing administrative structures.

Ross, and Others

The goal of this volume was to bring together scholars stemming from different academic disciplines and have them shed light on the role government plays in instances of contestation surrounding heritage. To structure the argument and analysis of the volume, we chose to use the theory of Marc Howard Ross on cultural contestation as a red thread, because we believed it could be used by various academic disciplines to study contested heritage. It proved its worth, and, it turned out, can also easily be linked to other theories and concepts, such as the myth-symbol complex, multi-level governance, and the international politics of recognition. Looking at societal conflict surrounding contested heritage through the lens of cultural contestation demands taking the role of government into account. This, and the apparent ease with which Ross' ideas can be combined with theories stemming from a range of disciplines, illustrates the strengths of his work, and its usefulness in public administration science and heritage studies.

Directions for Further Research

Studies on the roles of governments in cultural contestation, we feel, should be focused at a deeper understanding of the roles governments play in the shaping and re-shaping of the symbolic landscape. For further research along this line, we offer a few directions.

In the first place, as this volume demonstrates, in many cases the symbolic landscape has a physical appearance too. Narratives give meaning to something, be it objects, cultural expressions, or a landscape. We feel that this observation can be taken a step further and be linked to the idea of the 'landscape biography' (see, for example, Kolen 2005; Roymans et al. 2009; Kolen et al. 2015). Adherents to this approach examine cultural (urban and rural) landscapes by looking at them both from a

historical and a present-day use perspective. They see government as one of the 'authors' of a landscape, together with natural disasters, climate change, daily human use, and the actions of the community involved. In this approach, questions of belongingness and 'sense of place' are part of the equation, which makes it a usable lens for studying the past roles of governments in the shaping and current re-shaping of the cultural landscape. Symbolic landscapes could be approached in a similar fashion.

A second line of inquiry could be the relation between governments and communities. Governments are key actors in the shaping and the re-shaping of the symbolic landscape. They do so together with communities in the societies they govern. Often, government takes a leading role in heritage practices. Yet, it does so in collaboration with communities and sometimes even takes their lead. In instances of cultural contestation, communities often ask governments to mitigate. Government then tries to bring community leaders together, offering them a safe space for debate to re-construct narratives and re-shape the symbolic landscape. Moreover, governments sometimes strive to avoid contestation by making cultural heritage policies inclusive from the start. The relationship between governmental actors and communities in the shaping and re-shaping of the symbolic landscape deserves more attention than it currently receives. Looking closer at it would bring the study of government to the heart of heritage studies, and the study of heritage practices to the heart of public administration science and political science. The 'community approach' advocated in Critical Heritage Studies should be linked to this idea. The call for bottom-up approaches in heritage praxis can't be achieved without an active role of governments, and that role should therefore be central in the study of heritage practices.

Conclusion

To conclude, this volume has shown that governments play a major role in the continuing process of shaping and re-shaping of a society's symbolic landscape. The categorization presented in the first chapter was helpful in getting a grip on these roles. What has also become clear is that governments do not act as unitary actors, but play different and often conflicting roles. We should thus speak of 'the roles of governments', instead of 'the role of government.' We have also seen that what is important is not so much the role governments play in instances of cultural contestation, but rather the way they shape the symbolic

landscape. As this volume demonstrated, governments always have a part in this, by articulating historical narratives and heritage discourses through policies. The various and conflicting roles governments play in instances of cultural contestation are an effect of their actions in shaping and re-shaping the symbolic landscape.

Understanding the roles government plays during cultural contestation should thus be understood in terms of their conflicting roles as 'authorizers', 'authors', and 'mitigators' in the shaping and the re-shaping of the symbolic landscape. As Ross pointed out in his foreword to this volume, in a globalizing world we will encounter an increasing number of cases of cultural contestation, ranging from the international to the local level. In heritage praxis, governments need to be more self-conscious about their role in the shaping and re-shaping of the symbolic landscape, the effects thereof on feelings of not belonging, and the ever-present danger of cultural contestation. After all, Ross' call to take seriously the emotions of participants in these kinds of conflicts begins with a self-conscious government.

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