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Heritage, gentrification, participation: remaking urban landscapes in the name of culture and historic preservation

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In the pivotal scene of episode 9 of Spike Lee's acclaimed television series *She's Gotta Have It*, a town-hall meeting in the local preservation society's office brings together key characters to discuss the problems generated by the gentrification of their neighbourhood, the Brooklyn borough of Fort Green (Lee 2017). At the meeting, there is a clash between a group of older Black residents, including the protagonist, artist Nola Darling, and Bianca, the white, middle-class woman who is chairing the meeting. Bianca has just bought the nineteenth-century brownstone next door to Nola's house. Things get tense between the Black and white residents. An irritating, arrogant character, Bianca attacks Pablo, another Black artist and long-term neighbourhood resident, who is now homeless, for allegedly vandalising her street and scaring the new (richer, mostly white) residents. Bianca is obsessed with '[her] brownstone' and lambasts both the graffiti on its restored façade and the visual signs of poverty and displacement that she has indirectly contributed to. Bianca prizes historic authenticity in the form of buildings but not in the form of the culture of the people who have made her neighbourhood what it is. This is a classic scene of New York-style gentrification, of which these brownstones are a symbol.

This scene foregrounds the key themes of this special issue: the entanglement of historic preservation, heritagisation, and gentrification. Additionally it illustrates how historic neighbourhoods are aestheticised, the skyrocketing of their housing prices, the intersection of heritagisation with class and racial tensions, the articulation of heritagisation with forms of local governmentality based on participation and citizen involvement, and the role of artists and others of the creative class in these processes. To simplify the complex, variegated, and situated processes explored in this issue, we examine how heritagisation helps turn neglected and stigmatised historic city boroughs (traditionally inhabited by the often racialised working classes, ethnic minorities, and immigrants) into desirable places for white middle-class people. Heritagisation affords a new value to old buildings and pushes real estate prices up. In this way, it aids the recapitalisation of housing and urban land, which in turn forces poorer residents out in search of cheaper housing.

This special issue stems from the scholarly neglect and under-conceptualisation of the important role of heritage within gentrification processes, in both heritage and urban studies, and our conviction that such important nexus must be approached from a global, non-(Western) Eurocentric perspective (see Herzfeld 2009, 2010; Zhang 2013). Gentrification, along with closely related terms like 'neighbourhood revitalisation' and 'regeneration', is a key concept in urban studies. It primarily refers to a 'new [neoliberal] urbanism' (Smith 2002) that many scholars see as

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redefining cities worldwide. But gentrification has a much longer history. Ruth Glass's original formulation (1964), based on inner-city London, referred specifically to middle-class outsiders rehabilitating decaying historic buildings inhabited by low-income populations. A key recent text on 'planetary gentrification' (Lees, Shin, and López-Morales 2016), however, follows Clark's (2005, 258) expansive definition of gentrification as 'a process involving a change in the population of land-users such that the new users are of a higher socio-economic status than the previous users, together with an associated change in the built environment through a reinvestment in fixed capital' (see also Zukin 2010). If the original 'pioneer gentrifiers' in cities like London belonged to the cultural middle class and were looking for a left-liberal, cultured, cosmopolitan alternative to suburbanisation (see Ley 1996), gentrifiers especially since the 1990s include large-scale developers and governments (Smith 2002; Lees, Slater, and Wyly 2008).

Local and national governments have justified gentrification as a positive public policy through ideologies of mixed communities and social mixing (Bridge et al. 2012), as in the case of Amsterdam (Beeksmas and De Cesari, this issue). They have also promoted gentrification as tool of nation-state-building and city branding, as in the case of Skopje (Dimova, this issue). Overall, evidence points to gentrification having a negative impact on low-income residents in the form of physical and/or cultural displacement, segregation, and the erasure of local cultures (Florida 2017; Herzfeld 2006).

Are such forms of state-led gentrification producing new heritages or vice versa? As the focus of gentrification studies has been primarily Euro-American cities like London and New York, Anglo-Saxon experience is taken as the norm (Lees, Shin, and López-Morales 2016). But how do these processes play out differently in different places? This special issue explores neighbourhoods' heritagisation and culture-led regeneration in a variety of urban and rural settings: Bahia (Brazil), Shanghai (China), Nicosia (Cyprus), Beirut (Lebanon), Cairo (Egypt), Porto (Portugal), Santiago Millas (Spain), Skopje (Republic of Macedonia), and Amsterdam (The Netherlands). Authors examine how a plurality of different actors and forces mould space and social relations according to 'promiscuous entanglements of global and local logics' (Brenner, Peck, and Theodore 2010, 200). If indeed the transnational circulation of policy ideas, expertise, and development monies propels heritage-led gentrification, policy ideas and 'packages' are not applied everywhere in the same way. They get reshaped by local politico-institutional cultures and histories.

Today policymakers worldwide assume that heritage and culture are resources that can stimulate local socio-economic development especially via tourism and that the creative classes foster creative economies that are locally-tuned and sustainable over the long term (De Cesari *Forthcoming*). Policymakers also espouse that heritage can cure a multitude of social ills and produce 'good citizens' who are rooted, civilised, and respectful of the public good (Meskell 2012; Yúdice 2003). It is because of this assumption that heritage is good for development and curing social problems that heritage-led urban regeneration projects have proliferated from Porto to Cairo, from Bahia to Shanghai, and from Skopje to rural Spain. This is aided by the fact that international organisations such as UNESCO and the World Bank have championed this approach. Regenerated historic neighbourhoods are usually prime real estate values and destinations of global tourism, especially if designated as World Heritage sites (Collins, this issue). If heritage-led regeneration is increasingly remaking cities, its outcomes are not pre-determined: empirical evidence points not to development for all but rather to evictions, displacements, and growing racial and class inequalities (De Cesari and Herzfeld 2015; Herzfeld 2009, 2010; Florida 2017; Settis 2016; Zukin 2010).

Despite the fact that developers allied with local and national government have had the upper hand in many urban regeneration sites since at least the 1990s, the heritagisation of urban neighbourhoods is a much more complex process. Such heritagisation involves and produces a multitude of agents and materialities in shifting alliances: residents, developers, experts, planners, architects, all kinds of bureaucrats at different levels, tourists, local associations, pressure groups, lobbies, municipalities, housing corporations, infrastructure, and the houses themselves – the

traces of previous histories and materialities that often compete with one another, as in the case of Skopje (Dimova, this issue). The papers in this issue demonstrate how different actors mobilise the language of heritage and harness gentrification to their own agendas, as with Porto's alternative tours (Mota Santos, this issue) and Shanghai's working-class owners of *lilong* historic houses (Arkaraprasertkul, this issue). Analytical categories such as 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' do not capture the complex ways in which heritage generates new urban values nor do they capture how urban (re)valorisation by heritage works in both the Global South and the Global North (contrary to Lees, Shin, and López-Morales 2016, chapter 4).

Heritage triggers strong sentiments, including place attachment, nostalgia, and grief (Alonso González, 2017; Demetriou and Erdal Ilican, this issue), love, and rage. In some places, heritage even shapes how humans perceive the world and themselves (Collins, this issue). These days, there are more and more heritage-based initiatives, preservation societies and projects, and neighbourhood museums that preserve local cultural roots and reinforce (or produce) local attachments. Often these work as platforms where different local agendas get played out and negotiated, as in the case of Amsterdam (Beeksmas and De Cesari, this issue), Beirut (Puzon, this issue), and Cairo (Panetta, this issue). The effects of these initiatives are variegated, but heritage is one of a plurality of new sites through which the urban is governed.

This special issue was born out of two panels we organised at the 2012 European Association of Social Anthropology (EASA) meeting and at the 2015 International Society for Ethnology and Folklore (SIEF) congress. In the 2012 Paris workshop on 'The Making of Dangerous Spaces', we explored how 'affective topologies' intersect with class formation, urban governmentality, and spatial segregation, and how particular parts of a city come to be perceived as 'dangerous places'. In that workshop, we began to think about the relationship between heritage and urban space. While we focused on the mechanisms that bring together space, violence, and affect by making the 'users of space' (Lefebvre 1991) emotionally invested in perceptions of danger and unsafety, we also paid special attention to the materiality of space as expressed in infrastructure, architecture, street art, and the presence of material objects that both signal and reproduce urban boundaries and affective topologies.

At the 2015 SIEF meeting in Zagreb, we revisited the topic of the production of urban space by zooming in on the processes of heritage and gentrification. In a panel on 'Heritage and Gentrification: Remaking Urban Landscapes in the Name of Historic Preservation', we examined the relationship between heritagisation, shifting economies, and urban struggles in different cities around the globe. Based on our own research in the Middle East and Western and Southeastern Europe, we investigated the relationship between recent urban struggles around the Mediterranean and processes of heritagisation, gentrification, and broader urban politics. We examined the consequences of these interventions and urban changes for the involved actors, particularly those who can no longer afford to live in the newly restored quarters and those who come in – chiefly the state and private developers. Whether we were examining the 'creative class', private property developers, the state, or other actors who mobilise the language of cultural heritage to act upon urban spaces, we explained shifts in the relationship between urban gentrification and heritage through identifying the conditions that have brought history, culture, aesthetics, real estate values, and housing struggles into relation.

We were also intrigued by the ambivalence of gentrification. Jane Jacobs (1961) was not the only one to associate historic preservation with resistance. Caulfield's complex analysis of gentrification in Toronto, Canada, focuses on the inner city as an emancipatory space and gentrification as an emancipatory social practice, which he defines as 'efforts by human beings to resist institutionalised patterns of dominance and suppressed possibility' (1994, xiii). In a way similar to Ley, gentrification for Caulfield is a form of resistance for it creates a new kind of urban space of tolerance and possibility for both the space and its dwellers. These new possibilities arise from the specific use-values city dwellers find in old inner-city neighbourhoods. The key quality of the

‘emancipated gentrifier’ is her/his ability to exploit the emancipatory potential of the inner city and to create a ‘new culturally sophisticated urban class fraction, less conservative than the “old” middle class’ (Lees 2000, 396).

Neil Smith’s ‘revanchist city’ approach, launched in his 1996 book *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*, highlights instead the negative features of gentrification. By examining gentrification through specific revitalisation processes occurring in inner city neighbourhoods that had initially been viewed as emancipatory, he underscores the conflicts that gentrification brings to ‘new urban frontiers’ and explores the interconnections between urban policy, investment patterns, evictions, and homelessness (Smith 1996). Thus, what was initially seen as a positive and emancipatory gentrifying trend in major American and UK cities, associated with tolerance and inclusiveness, gradually began to be seen as a form of segregation and class-driven urban domination (see also Florida 2017).

Lees (2000) succinctly contrasts the concepts and metaphors that geographers of the 1970s and 1980s had associated with gentrification (‘urban rebirth’, ‘urban pioneers’), with new labels such as ‘urban guerillas’, ‘gentrification battles’, and ‘class war’. Another major shift in the scholarship on the topic has been a new interest in how these processes play out beyond the usual suspects (North American and Western European cities) without assuming a diffusionist model with gentrification originating in the ‘West’ and moving to the ‘East’ and ‘South’ (Lees, Shin, and López-Morales 2016).

We need to know more about these ‘other’ cities. For example, the end of communism brought the capitalisation of urban space and gentrification to many Eastern European cities. Paradigmatic is the story of Berlin after 1989 and the German reunification: the district of Prenzlauer Berg in former East Berlin for instance first became a squatter’s paradise, thanks to the many empty buildings, then turned into a hipster and expat hub as ‘the Brooklyn of Berlin’, marked by continuously rising rents (Lees 2000, 390). Since the European Union (EU) enlargement in 2007, many Central and Eastern European cities have been regenerated through the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) program, which designates one or more European cities as capitals of culture for one year at a time (Lähdesmäki 2014). Historic buildings and monuments in the region as a whole are increasingly being appropriated for political (i.e., nation-building) and economic (i.e., tourism) purposes while ownership lines get blurred as private investors collaborate with the state on state-owned property (Lee and Bideleux 2009, 30).

The articles in this special issue offer different perspectives on the entanglement of heritagisation and gentrification in a variety of locations. Collins’s article on the historic centre Pelourinho in the city of Salvador, the capital of the state of Bahia in Brazil, demonstrates how race, sexuality, and intimacy are embedded in the gentrification and heritagisation project in this predominantly Afro-Brazilian part of the city. The relations usually bundled as gentrification, Collins argues, require we rethink the notion of property, which in Pelourinho is a key moralising idiom through which people compose themselves and their worlds. Seen in this light, gentrification is much more than an exclusionary market relationship and capitalist process but rather represents a pathway to understanding how human perspectives on selves emerge along with property discourse and techniques for fostering property relations. Gentrification thus involves webs of racialised relations whose alterations impact people’s very perceptions of who they are.

Arkaraprasertkul’s article on the *lilong* houses in Shanghai portrays a different form of gentrification that departs from classic gentrification models whereby middle-class residents push the working class out of a neighbourhood. Arkaraprasertkul explores *lilong* owners’ savviness in capitalising on heritage as a source of income, how they use heritagisation as a defence against economic precariousness, and how they navigate the abrupt social changes wrought by the market-driven urban Chinese economy. Owned by working-class residents who understand the value system of the middle class, the *lilong* houses generate profits thanks to the ability of their

owners to 'sell' the old lilong buildings as historically important and ultimately middle-class heritage.

Demetriou and Erdal Ilcan's analysis of Nicosia addresses how the city has been affected by division due to the ethno-political conflict between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, and the gentrification efforts that have attended attempts to reunite the city. Demetriou and Erdal Ilcan compare two spaces of civic action that have involved reconstruction and rehabilitation in the capital's United Nations-controlled Buffer Zone: one by a peace and reconciliation initiative and another by the local variant of the global Occupy movement. As the article focuses on how conflict politics become imbricated in the politics of urban development, it also highlights the role of organic intellectuals in the making of war heritage and the transformation of post-conflict landscapes amid processes of gentrification. Thus, the authors consider a wide variety of marginalised actors within and beyond traditional civil society. They show that often these margins are actually at the centre of conceptual and material hegemonies, as the nationalist rhetoric spurs urban development through gentrification in the Buffer Zone of the divided city.

Puzon's article on Beirut reveals the complex link between the politics of heritage and temporality. Building on the claim that heritage is not a simple celebration of the past, Puzon extends her analysis to show that heritage in Beirut revolves around continuity and change, as well as mobilisations of the past and the future as resources to navigate current changes in the metropolis. Revolving around ideas of permanence and restoration, the temporal orientations in Beirut are used to legitimise or contest ongoing gentrification and socio-spatial transformations. Lebanon's capital thus becomes an arena for the struggle over urban patrimony and the recent proliferation of heritage organisations constitutes a response to a troubled past and an uncertain future.

Panetta examines the role of the Cairo Lab for Urban Studies, Training and Environmental Research (CLUSTER) in the reconstitution of the urban landscape in a Cairo neighbourhood, as the lab must work with both government authorities and private developers. Panetta shows that despite this, the organisation seeks to distinguish its activities from recent state- and private-sector-led revitalisation efforts that overlook the needs of local residents to advance neoliberal gentrification. Cairo has emerged as an object of renewed socio-spatial intervention – an unexpected canvas onto which various groups and individuals have painted their social and political aspirations for the country's future.

By focusing on a walking tour of the city of Porto called 'The Worst Tours', Mota Santos suggests that these tours do not align themselves with the hegemonic model of tourism focusing on the built heritage of the UNESCO designation and its historical discourse on the city. Instead, the architects who initiated the Worst Tours highlight the urban and social impacts of Portugal's economic downturn and the touristification of the city's economy – which then produce new relations between self, other, and world in moments of openness.

Alonso González' analysis of the village of Santiago Millas in the Maragatería region of rural Spain focuses on the neglected phenomenon of rural gentrification, namely the permanent establishment of urban dwellers in rural areas that is becoming a widespread trend across the world¹. The overlap between heritage and rural gentrification shows the enmeshment between new forms of local governmentality and the newcomers who move to rural areas and thus separate the socio-economic basis of local communities from their cultural representation. Moreover, these relations are reconstructed as a metacultural production in line with a globalising heritage discourse. In this sense, Alonso González argues that the gentrification of the rural is but another form of capitalist expansion, not only in terms of individualisation and an instrumentalist

¹Pablo Alonso González' article, the first of this special issue to be published online, appeared in hard copy in 2017 in volume 23(2). Throughout the process of putting this special issue together, however, this article was conceived as part of our project and is addressed in the introduction and the commentaries.

mentality but also in terms of what concerns the mediation of value in social relationships that often have racialised elements.

Dimova's article on Skopje and its elusive centres shows how the city's Old Bazaar is protected as cultural heritage of special importance, and yet the Bazaar constitutes a 'reluctant heritage' because locals have associated Ottoman-period architecture with Albanians, amidst ethno-political tensions between Albanians and Macedonians that have persisted since the socialist period. This heritage coexists in an uneasy tension with another 'undesirable heritage': the socialist modernist architecture erected after the 1963 earthquake. Dimova outlines these competing and conflicting forms of heritage and reflects on the process of resignification that often involves inscription into a new order, whether that be socialist, neoliberal, or ethno-religiously marked. The Macedonian government's Skopje 2014 project to remake the capital city discloses the relation of state power to heritage-making and gentrification by introducing a 'European' classic architectural style while destroying many of the city's green areas.

Amsterdam's Van Eesteren Museum and its urban conservation area protects the city's Western periphery modernist architecture and urban planning and understands itself as a participatory, neighbourhood museum built on volunteers. Examining its recent trajectory, Beeksma and De Cesari argue that the museum is a platform for mediating between diverse local interests and agendas in the context of a neighbourhood undergoing state-led gentrification. It also works as a laboratory for new modalities of affective, heritage-based citizenship and, ultimately, as a site of urban governmentality. The Van Eesteren and its form of participation and citizen involvement must be understood in the context of the broader neoliberal urban policies that are proliferating beyond the Netherlands and mobilise heritage for the sake of local government and the making of better citizens. The authors' findings emphasise the Janus-faced quality of heritage participation and the surprising fact that it can (unintentionally) produce a social cleavage between those who see themselves as locals with roots and those who don't.

Ultimately, this special issue explores the effects of the heritagisation-and-gentrification nexus and the consequences that it has for different actors involved in the process. We believe this is the beginning of an important conversation that can open up other theoretical and empirical avenues to explore how heritage aids capital's conquest of the city and the erosion of the welfare and developmental state, as well as the unintended, unexpected, and subversive articulations of these processes.

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Chiara De Cesari is associate professor in European Studies and Cultural Studies at the University of Amsterdam. She is the author of *Heritage and the Cultural Struggle for Palestine* (Stanford University Press, 2019), and co-editor of *Transnational Memories* (de Gruyter, 2014, with Ann Rigney). She has published widely in journals such as *American Anthropologist*, *Memory Studies*, *Museum Anthropology*, and the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. Her research focuses on memory, heritage, and cultural politics, and how they intersect with current transformations of the nation-state form; memories of colonialism and cultural racism in Europe; the transnational museum; Palestine/Israel. Her most recent project explores the globalization of contemporary art and forms of creative institutionalism and statecraft. Among several EU-funded projects, De Cesari is Amsterdam team leader in the Horizon2020 CoHERE project exploring whether and how people feel 'European'.

Rozita Dimova is an associate professor of Southeast European Studies in the Department of Languages and Cultures at Ghent University. She obtained her Ph.D in Anthropology at Stanford University in 2004. She is the author of *Ethno-Baroque: Materiality, Aesthetics, and Conflict in Modern-Day Macedonia* (2013, Berghahn Publishers), and of the forthcoming monograph *Border Porosities: Movements of People, Goods and Services in the Southern Balkans* (2019, Manchester University Press). Dimova is also a co-editor of the volume *The Political*

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