MULTICULTURAL HERITAGE AND THE NATION STATE: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE THEMATIC SECTION

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With the increasing importance of cultural heritage and its role in contemporary societies,[1] an increasing number of researchers and heritage experts are calling for an understanding of heritage that would more adequately reflect the complex and often contested social processes and engagements with the past and be more sensitive to the needs, visions, negotiations, and experiences of communities and individuals. These voices are part of an already well-articulated critique of the normativity, one-directionality and past-orientation of the mainstream heritage discourses and institutionalized practices in the Western World (Smith 2006).

Another important point in critically reassessing heritage concerns its naturalizing link to the nation state and national identity. Over the last decade, many disciplines have started to reconsider heritage issues and critically address the emergence of heritage discourse within the context of 19th-century nationalism, in which the primary form of identity associated with heritage was that of the nation (see Macdonald 2003; Graham, Ashworth, Tunbridge 2005).

The new approaches to cultural heritage have made strong claims about the localizing affects of the process of heritage making, whereby locality has become a central concept in terms of identity work (Chang et al. 1996; Escobar 2001; Berking 2003). These approaches point to the local appropriations and everyday performances of the canon of cultural heritage, simultaneously challenging its ideological, official and canonical nature. They question traditional interpretations of heritage practices and offer new understandings of the very concept of heritage (Hayden 1997). In particular, they criticize traditional and authorized conceptualizations of heritage which are mainly focused on nationalizing stories that simply do not reflect the cultural or social experiences of subaltern and less visible groups (Smith 2006: 36), such as women, minorities, workers, ethnic and other community groups.

In this thematic section the authors focus on various aspects of negotiation, (re)appropriation and (re)localization of heritage in Slovenian society, not least because these aspects are largely absent from "official" and institutional discussions of cultural heritage.[2] Focusing mainly on three Slovenian border areas characterized by multiculturality – Prekmurje, Bela Krajina and Primorska – this set of articles ques-

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1 In Europe, increased interest in cultural heritage is part of a broader trend: the European Parliament included cultural heritage among the priorities of the European Commission's Horizon 2020 programme; at the EU level, there is also the Joint Programming Initiative on Cultural Heritage and Global Change: A New Challenge for Europe (Cultural Heritage).

tions the often overemphasized and seemingly unproblematic link between cultural heritage and national identity, whereby heritage is believed to assist a society and its memory. The specific historical, social and cultural circumstances that prevailed in these regions, the variegated intertwined historical legacies, as well as the fluctuation of the population, frictions and continuous interaction with neighbouring cultures, make these regions an exceptionally good "laboratory" for the study of multicultural heritage. Multicultural heritage is understood as a category determined by *dynamic narratives, practices and symbolizations* that take place within diverse fields of activity of many protagonists and as the locus of incessant contestation and invention (Hobsbawm, Ranger 1983). Furthermore, it is seen as an ongoing process that involves many voices and protagonists who co-create its meaning (Parekh 2000: 152–153), rather than a fixed and selective structure that combines given and unchangeable content and interpretations. In other words, this section starts with an understanding of cultural heritage that is not a limited, self-sufficient and self-preserving structure, but a dynamic and hybrid one. Rather than seeing heritage as a preferred historical narrative about the past, the authors emphasise its processuality, everyday relevance and dynamics shaped by various subjects. Therefore, the authors focus on the roles of the actors of heritage negotiation and insist not so much on "artefacts and facts", but on a spectrum of affects and subjectivities (re)shaped in the process of engaging with practices and narratives that are negotiated as heritage.

Writing about the *Guča na Krasu* music festival, Ana Hofman highlights music heritage as immaterial, elusive, difficult to tie to a certain locality and easy to relocate, but simultaneously points to the capacity of music and sound to be "appropriated by a space influenced by local discourse and heritage discourses in a variety of assemblages". Her article discusses the ways the existing branding strategies of Balkan music on the world music market become affective tools of identification and affiliation, and brings a newly emergent global-local dynamics to the heritage management of the community living in the Italo-Slovene border area. In this space, with its own troubled histories, music, brought there through the flows of globalization and migration, is an important vehicle of complex, affective and multifaceted heritage negotiation, which in turn provides a means for the empowerment of the local community.

In her article on representation and negotiation of heritage among the Serbian Orthodox community in Bela Krajina, Tanja Petrović examines the ambiguities that heritage discourses strongly linked to national identity face in geographic areas strongly characterized by ethic and cultural diversity. The author traces the ways in which the community's practices and appropriations of heritage interact with dominant ethnographic, folkloristic and heritage discourses about this community. She highlights the discrepancy between the image of the Serbs of Bela Krajina as a homogenous and discrete community suggested by these discourses heavily informed by an ideology of authenticity and nostalgia, and the community's heritage experience which is characterized by "diversity, polyglossia, simultaneity and undulating between spaces, codes and belongings". The multicultural heritage practiced and experienced in this community not only provides its members with "tools" for making sense of the present (whereby the community by no means act as a harmonious whole), but is also substantially shaped by other communities and actors, by various layers of collective memory and different linguistic codes.

The historical approach to multicultural practices in the Prekmurje region taken by Oto Luthar provides us with an insight into the complex and multidirectional interactions between individual practices, habits and tastes on the one hand, and official policies of national homogenization on the other. Through the analysis of two volumes of a handwritten cookbook from Prekmurje dating from the turn of the last century, Luthar illustrates the socio-political processes in "the most multicultural part of Slovenia" that led to the shaping and reshaping of the grassroots and multicultural literary practices of its inhabitants (for these concepts, see Collins 1995; Blommaert 2004); in his view, Prekmurje, like other peripheral multicultural regions of Europe, managed to "postpone" the coming of modernity, with its centrality of national frames of identification and unifying cultural practices, as long as until the Second World War, and to preserve a "pre-modern cultural landscape of linguistic mobility and continuous metamorphosis".

The perspective of the individual, and the way she engages with the complex web of linguistic codes, cultural meanings and modes of identification, draws a connecting line between the pre-modern and the postmodern. This line connects the story of Marija Hujs, who wrote her cookbook in the late 19th and early 20th century not only in order to record recipes for her own use, but to preserve the knowledge from the past, tested and reflected through her own experience, for future generations of housewives, with countless, dispersed but intertwined stories of individuals who use digital technology "to co-create stories, databases, archives of their memories and the everyday to assert their identity claims and positions within wider socio-cultural coordinates", as Martin Pogačar writes in his article on multicultural digital heritage and its bottom-up negotiations in Slovenia. The official framings of digital cultural heritage, Pogačar argues, retain the normative and authenticating approach characteristic of the official (bureaucratic) conceptualization of cultural heritage in general terms, thus failing to recognize the dramatic changes in the ways we make and perceive heritage caused by digital media and their ubiquity and interactivity. As the author stresses, "the representability that might have worked in pre-digital national settings/state heritage discourses are largely inapplicable in the digital era as they dismiss massive amounts of social/cultural activities". The highly mobile, de-territorialized and temporally dispersed contents of digital cultural heritage make it largely a poor fit with nationally defined frames of heritage, and for the same reason, digital space provides a space for communities, practices, memories and narratives that do not fit into the desired grand narrative of the national collectivity. No less significantly, the decisively interactive nature of digital heritage necessarily shifts the focus from material objects, heritage sites and products ("stuff") to the ways people *engage* with the past, memories, stories, sounds and images in the process of heritage making. The centrality of engagement, affect and empowerment of the marginalized, on the other hand, urges those involved in heritage institutionalization not to ignore heritage practices that come "from below".

The four articles in the "Multicultural Heritage and the Nation State: Dynamics, Tensions and Negotiations" thematic section address diverse instances of heritage negotiation among different communities in Slovenia. As a whole, they all point to several important aspects which need to be taken into account when we think about cultural heritage. The phenomena described in these articles inevitably lead to the questioning of some concepts that underlie institutionalized heritage discourses – such as the materiality of heritage, its aesthetic value, authenticity, divisions such as tangible vs. intangible heritage, and practices such as classification and evaluation. They all observe cultural heritage as a means of negotiation, empowerment and a space of engagement and affective interaction. They highlight three important aspects of the contemporary that must not be overlooked in institutionalized heritage conceptualizations and policies, namely globalization, migration, and the impact of new media technologies on heritage making.

Through the concept of multicultural heritage, the articles in this thematic section position heritage negotiation outside the dominant concepts of heritage, which is usually closely related to national identity. Such an approach reveals several aspects that remain ignored in dominant, nation-state related concepts of heritage: globalization, interaction between different groups of migrants, between different communities, between different media employed in the process of heritage negotiation, etc. In addition, observing heritage as a dynamic and multi-actor process reveals new meanings and attachments that occur in the process of the relocation, re-claiming and re-framing of socio-culturally fixed meanings, values and practices.

With such a focus, we hope to open up a space for discussion which transcends the boundaries created by legitimizing heritage policies exclusively through discourses of expert knowledge, and take into consideration affect, engagement and the empowerment of people who participate in (re)shaping cultural heritage. To make cultural heritage a more inclusive concept and to shift the focus from objects of heritage to the people essentially interested in it are, we believe, necessary steps which are not only of professional importance, but also have much broader moral and political implications.

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