

HERITAGE FOR THE FUTURE? TOWARDS AN OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF HERITAGE IN HAY MOHAMMADI, MOROCCO

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Introducing Hay Mohammadi

Hay Mohammadi is an industrial, popular quarter in the periphery of Casablanca, with a rich and unique, but somehow disregarded history. Despite its importance for the development of the city since its early industrialization, the quarter has always been marginalized. Its big working class population made it a much feared hotbed for resistance, where several uprisings against the ruler – be it the French colonizer or the royal regimes – have emerged. Consequently, the main strategy for the quarter has been severe oppression. Almost symbolically, it housed the (in) famous detention center of *Derb Moulay Chr'if*, where political activists from all over the country have been imprisoned and tortured during the Years of Lead. However, Hay Mohammadi is known for more than its dark histories. At Morocco's independence, the quarter was immortalized as the place where King Mohamed V declared himself 'king of slums'. Ever since, the local youth takes a certain pride in its origins, and a pioneering cultural vibe sprouted from the quarter in the '60s and '70s. Now still, its music – and theatre groups are well known all over Morocco. As an epicentre of Moroccan history at different instants, Hay Mohammadi obtained a particular status in the country's collective memory. Though often perceived as a problematic area, it is equally appraised as a part of national identity – a double imagery that is no less present within the quarter itself. Today, the area is plagued by severe problems with drugs, violence and poverty, leading to its deteriorating image. Yet for many inhabitants, the quarter remains intrinsically warm, with the spirit of previous generations as a source of pride and hope.

While all of this contributes to a unique kind of 'immaterial' legacy for the quarter, Hay Mohammadi also contains a very different kind of heritage: the built patrimony of a complex neighbourhood. Originally home to a massive *bidonville* or slum, the quarter became a testing field for the development of modernist workers' housing during the French occupation. As such, a particular landscape was generated of mainly apartment blocks and a few specific *cités*, social centres and cinemas – modern and European in appearance.

While this was the scene upon which the social and cultural history of the quarter was played out, today there seems to be little physical valorisation of these places, capable of attributing them a certain importance or meaning. Yet this attribution of value is an active process. Jennifer Jordan reminds us that whether a place becomes heritage is largely dependent from the presence of ‘memorial entrepreneurs’ – “people writing about these places, advocating on their behalf, and envisioning them as instructive and deeply authentic”¹ – and of whether their work will be picked by a broader audience. As Johan Lagae states: “cultural heritage is indeed always a ‘social construct’”² – and in the case of Hay Mohammadi, it is one still largely in need of being built up.

Current actors and strategies in Hay Mohammadi

Nevertheless, in today’s Hay Mohammadi, these ‘memorial entrepreneurs’ are anything but absent. Throughout the last few years, a couple of individuals and organisations began to actively engage in heritage matters in the quarter. However, if we take a closer look at their current strategies, they seemingly fall apart in two categories, each representing a distinctive approach.

The first one is best represented by Casamémoire; an institution occupied with the protection of the city’s modernist patrimony. After doing considerable work in Casablanca’s city centre, they recently ‘discovered’ Hay Mohammadi’s architectural heritage from that period. By integrating the quarter in their *journées du patrimoine* and by putting it on their architectural city maps, they seek to raise awareness about the importance of this built legacy. Through their efforts, some sites have acquired the status of protected patrimony, which opened the way (and the financial tap) for their maintenance. However, being new to the quarter and its specific character, the organization ends up without much consultation of the inhabitants, who are often stunned when they find their buildings to be on ‘tourist’ maps. Also, the lack of support from the quarter itself makes the implementation of concrete local projects especially difficult. Other projects coordinated top-down – the establishment of a museum in Derb Moulay Chr’if or the organisation of cultural events in the quarters’ ancient slaughterhouses – then seem to face the same difficulties.

In the quarter itself, initiatives described above are rather unknown. Yet here heritage is dealt with too, be it in a more locally embedded manner. Many inhabitants of ‘l’Hay’ are eager to tell its history in words – not surprising, as Moroccan culture is largely based on oral tradition. Recently, this storytelling has taken some more ‘established’ forms. The quarter saw the emergence of a few specialised ‘memorialists’, documenting its history in books, blogs, and through

¹ Jordan, Jennifer A. *Structures of Memory: Understanding Urban Change in Berlin and Beyond*. Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2006.

² Lagae, Johan. “From “Patrimoine partagé” to “whose heritage”? Critical reflections on colonial built heritage in the city of Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of the Congo.” *Afrika Focus*. Vol. 21. No. 1. 2008, pp. 11-30.

the spoken word. Drawing on these examples, the local NGO Initiatives Urbaines started to experiment with history as a way of educating and mobilising the quarter's youth. As such, they've used the local tradition of *halqa* – best to be understood as a popular and deeply locally rooted street performance – as an open platform for youngsters to express themselves.

Though in fact we see quite some initiatives concerned with heritage and history in Hay Mohammadi, we also trace a certain disruption in how external institutions and local inhabitants treat the matter. While the former are mainly concerned with space, the latter focus on stories. If then, a lot of sites have been re-appropriated and often unrecognizably transformed by the local users, their histories could still linger somewhere inside. Indeed, Hay Mohammadi's spaces have not lost their stories, they just don't explicitly tell them.

Towards a broader definition

This insight then leads to the main question of this paper. While some of the heritage initiatives in the quarter demonstrate a clear search for a new way of dealing with its specific heritage(s), an overarching and powerful strategy is still far off. However, we believe this situation can be read as an opportunity for the future rather than a problem. Unlike Europe, where an established culture of conservation and restoration predominates, the Moroccan context does not offer a pre-set solution. The case of Hay Mohammadi, with its rich colonial (European) patrimony drenched in local stories, offers an exciting testing field for a new understanding of what heritage is and how it could be dealt with.

If heritage in Hay Mohammadi is treated in a very fragmented way, this is not just due to a lack of communication and cooperation between the actors involved, but more fundamentally derives from their different viewpoints to what heritage is and should be. We therefore argue that this story might all together be read as a profound call for an innovatory strategy, one that firstly questions some existing pre-assumptions in defining heritage. As such, the purpose of this paper will be the shifting and broadening of heritage definitions now in use. In Hay Mohammadi, such a strategy could be put forward as a new and collectively carried project in a context where social problems overrule most forms of solidarity and – in this sense – as a potent leverage for the development of a whole quarter. Ultimately, we want to work towards a definition that is not only broader, but also 'operational' in providing a common ground for those concerned with heritage – in Hay Mohammadi and far beyond.

What heritage? Beyond the monument

As mentioned above, a fair bit of different actors is currently engaged with heritage and history in Hay Mohammadi. If Casamémoire comes to the forth as the most prominent one, we then must acknowledge how this not in the least derives from its particularly 'visible' approach. Focusing on a couple of selected buildings – mapping, documenting, and labelling them – the institution inscribes itself in

the urban space, literary *envisioning* the quarter's heritage potential. As such, they also show the clearest attempts for a definition of what heritage is and might be in Hay Mohammadi. Yet their understanding focuses almost exclusively on separated buildings and places as 'potential monuments', as valuable 'objects' to conserve. The danger then, is that sites will be cut off from their surroundings, losing their dynamical character and their once natural and logical connections with an ever-changing context. After all, as planned by the French urbanist Ecochard, the quarter was from the start intended as a "development that starts out as a rural formation and gradually becomes more urban in character."³ In this organic and dynamic fabric, the selection and classification of separated buildings becomes all the more problematic.

Let's then have a look at the *Nid d'Abeille* and the *Sémiramis*, two French modernist housing blocks that once acquired worldwide fame after their appearance on the cover of the journal *Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*. Today, the profound changes and adaptations by their inhabitants have rendered them almost unrecognizable. As such, they not only form a striking example of local dynamics but equally demonstrate the difficulties in dealing with this heritage. For if a valorisation of these buildings would be interpreted as a classification, and a possible restoration of the building blocks, what would be the reference point? Can one let out the inhabitants' changes or did they become an inherent part of their history, and thus of their heritage potential? Another example could be the re-appropriation of the old *abattoirs* at the edge of the quarter. Here, an ambitious project was carried out to transform an old abandoned structure in a flourishing *fabrique culturelle* – a promising perspective for the largely forgotten Hay Mohammadi. However, whilst the *abattoirs* might have given the quarter some renown in the city, their audience turns out to have little connection with the urban area outside⁴. Local memorialist Mohammed Sakib offers a strong critique: "the *Fabrique Culturelle* has no spirit. While it should express the popular mind, it became a scene imposed from above."⁵ Instead of constituting a fruitful leverage for the neighbourhood, the buildings turned out to be disrupted from the urban fabric they are part of.

Looking at Casamémoire's heritage map of Hay Mohammadi – a rather handy tool in understanding what is considered heritage today, and moreover the only one available – we then should remark how it covers only a very small part of the quarter's stories, histories and memories. From our conversations with inhabitants, we found that a 'mental' map of Hay Mohammadi – the places and spaces where people connect to these memories – would probably be much larger (if not covering the whole quarter). Here we recall a walk through the quarter accompanied by an inspiring inhabitant. Born and raised in 'Hay', and clearly proud to be an 'original',

³ Avermaete, Tom, Casciato Maristella. *Casablanca Chandigarh. A Report on Modernization*. Zürich: Park Books. 2014.

⁴ When we visited the *abattoirs*, a masterclass for youth was going on. When asked about Hay Mohammadi, people warned for its 'bad reputation', but knew little about it.

⁵ Interview Sakib, Mohammed. 16.10.2014. Translated from French: „La Fabrique Culturelle n'a pas d'esprit. Elle devrait exprimer les avis populaires, mais elle est devenue une programma imposé d'allieurs, d'en haut.”

Nabil shows us the streets where members of famous music bands grew up, areas that once where huge *bidonvilles* or sites of big *halqa* performances. When talking to the man, one can hardly question that – at least for Nabil – these spaces, as well as their stories are truly ‘heritage’. It is important to notice how he doesn’t speak about certain buildings or sites, but about places, streets, neighbourhoods and the stories that unfold upon them.

All together, the context of Hay Mohammadi then gives us the ammunition to express a first and crucial critique on a ‘classical’ definition on heritage. The examples given show the importance of losing the common focus on separated buildings, or – as noted by Corten in a recent guidebook on heritage and spatial planning – going “from an object-orientated procedure to a spatial approach”⁶. Indeed, these concerns are not at all new, but inscribed in a larger and today almost commonplace understanding of cities as complex entities of ensembles, trajectories and interactions, rather than a compilation of buildings. In his study on colonial patrimony in Lumumbashi, Johan Lagae explicitly links these conceptions of ‘urban ensembles’ to notions of heritage. “What is needed is not only a documenting of architecture through factual descriptions and visual material” he warns us, instead arguing for an approach “that allows for re-situating buildings in their changing urban and broader political-cultural contexts, while simultaneously linking them to the subsequent urban societies that occupied and experienced these spaces”⁷. One can question if such an approach for, say, the *abattoirs* could not have led to a more integrated project, offering opportunities for a much bigger area.

As such, we want to build further upon the arguments of Lagae and Corten. Though some places in the quarter might clearly have the potential to comprise a long and complex history in one space or building (for instance the old detention centre), others could rather function as ‘memory keepers’ in a much looser way. Here, also a whole neighbourhood or urban construction can bear meaning without becoming a candidate ‘monument’. How then, to understand those spaces and what can be their role? Lagae calls for “alternative ways of documenting the architecture and urban form” [...] “ways that seek to establish meaningful but sometimes complex relationships between built fabric, history and memory.”⁸ However, there is no ready-made answer on how to put this in practice. Corten refers to something similar, pushing his ‘urban structures’ into ‘urban landscapes’. What he means is the transition from a morphological structure to a scape or ‘substratum’. This way, connections should be readable between the present and the past, on different levels and not necessarily through objects or ‘materialities’. As a “combination of immaterial continuity and spatial change”⁹, they could bear historical value and strong dynamics. If their practical use is again little explained, they definitely offer an interesting exercise, bringing us at least one step further towards a broader definition.

⁶ Corten, Jean-Paul a.o. *Heritage as an Asset for Inner City Development. An Urban Managers’ Guidebook*. Rotterdam: Nai010. 2014.

⁷ Lagae, Johan. op. cit.

⁸ *ibidem*.

⁹ Corten, Jean-Paul a.o., op. cit.

Whose heritage? Implications of a (post)colonial history

In Hay Mohammadi, questions of ‘what’ heritage do not only regard the scale of the heritage considered. In a quarter built by the French coloniser and meant to house an indigenous population, they should also be asked in relation to ‘whose’ heritage. With the quarter still inhabited by an overly Moroccan, but ever growing and diversifying population, the issue is still valid and pressing. As the most visible heritage actor in Hay Mohammadi, Casamémoire and their strategies have a big influence on how these matters are dealt with. By paying (growing) attention to the quarter’s patrimony, the organisation at first sight escapes Lagae’s critique of repeating a colonial discourse by forgetting the immense production of the so-called *cités* in favour of the architecture of the former *ville européenne*¹⁰. However, it is their *method* of valorisation itself that still seems to hold some colonialist pre-assumptions. Firstly, on the maps they compose, all the buildings selected are there because of their French origins. But, while these colonial city planners indeed designed the grid on which most of the quarter grew, local history has equally produced narratives to refer to. Surprisingly enough, a building like the old detention centre is not to be found on the map. Though not explicitly linked to the colonial discourse, it nevertheless is a symbol of a major chapter in the quarters’ history.

Furthermore, the omnipresence of the French constructions was not as self-evident as it appears from the work of Casamémoire, and by extension from other contributions on Hay Mohammadi in some well-known volumes on Casablanca¹¹. Local memorialists and Casamémoire point out how residents often boycotted the new French buildings, by collectively refusing to move into the houses and hence showing that they ‘did not need the French’¹². When local inhabitants eventually relocated into these building blocks, they managed to transform them almost beyond recognition. Consequently, as symbols of the inhabitants’ own dynamism rather than of French ideals and design, the old modernist blocks are today very little considered ‘heritage’ by their dwellers.

Of what then consists the heritage of Hay Mohammadi? From Bernard Toulhier, we take up the idea that the colonial patrimony might no longer belong to those who built it, but to those who inhabit it.¹³ Or, it is up to the inhabitants what production should be valorised and transmitted to future generations. Not that French buildings cannot be considered heritage anymore, but they will be for reasons other than - or additional to- their colonial origins. Remarkably, local memorialists repeatedly mentioned the old *bidonville* – the one zone of the quarter not planned by the French- for its heritage value. Historian Najib Taki considers it “the real heart of the quarter, where it once originated and grew” and “an important *bidonville*,

¹⁰ Lagae, Johan. op. cit.

¹¹ Avermaete, Tom, Casciato, Maristella. op. cit. & Cohen, Jean-Louis; Eleb, Monique. *Casablanca: Colonial Myths and Architectural Ventures*. New York: The Monacelli Press. 2003.

¹² Interview Taki, Najib. 15.10.2014. Translated from French:

¹³ Toulhier, Bernard, Pabois, Marc (eds.). *L’architecture coloniale. L’expérience française*. Paris: Institut National du Patrimoine. 2005.

where king Mohamed V declared himself king of slums”¹⁴. As it faces destruction in a national slum sanitation program, it is clear that the formal characteristics of the area cannot provide us many arguments for conserving it as it is. However, if inhabitants put this particular area forward as heritage, they implicitly challenge monumentalising and conservation as the only possible heritage strategy in the quarter. In that sense, the *bidonville* shows the tension between a ‘European’ and a local discourse. For its users, the *bidonville* does not derive its importance from its spatiality as such, and is thus not a monument in the classical sense. Instead, it matters as an urban space with a unique experiential value and as a carrier of stories and memories – a layer of meaning that lies ‘over’ the spatiality of urban ensembles.

Where a strategy of monumentalising might (at least partly) be adequate in the Casablancon city centre, the peripheral Hay Mohammadi – in a constant process of adapting to its new needs, pushed by the conditions of a quickly growing, modernizing city- asks for a different approach, yet to be developed. Lagae hints in that direction, when he states “caution should be exercised when establishing the frame of reference used to define the selection criteria of what should be documented in the first place”¹⁵. Indeed, what inhabitants put forward as worth being valorised, plays at a whole other level than what European or multilateral organisations pick up. Lagae then points at the social sciences and more specifically at the work on urban memory as important inspirational sources. Referring to H  l  ne Lipstadt, he reminds us at “the need to address not only the tangible but also the intangible aspects of built form”¹⁶.

More specifically, we want to point at the nature of the interrelatedness of tangible and intangible, material and immaterial aspects. The local tradition of *halqa* forms a quite literal example. As an act of performance, it is immaterial but “needs a big space and becomes a fixed spot”¹⁷. The immaterial needs the space and in turn gives connotation to the place. As such, the main boulevard in Hay Mohammadi is remembered to be transformed every Sunday “into a space of cultural performance and expression [...]”¹⁸. Here, space is merely the background on which the stories are or have been played out. It is not bound to its physical characteristics, but proves itself able to take in urban change and processes. The same comes forth in a conversation with Jamal Nassiri, director of the old youth centre: “Oh yes, this is a very old centre. It is city heritage!”. When we state that this is exactly our interest, he rapidly clarifies that “this is not architectural patrimony. It’s cultural”¹⁹. He tells about the athletes, actors and musicians that grew up here and got their

¹⁴ Interview Taki, Najib. 15.10.2014. Translated from French: „Le vrai coeur du quartier, son origine et la place d’ou Hay Mohammadi est devenu grand” „Une bidonville tr  s connue, ou le Roi Mohamed V s’est declar   le roi des bidonville”.

¹⁵ Lagae, Johan. op. cit.

¹⁶ Lagae, Johan. op. cit.

¹⁷ Interview Sakib, Mohammed. 16.10.2014. Translated from French: „la tradition de halqa a besoin d’une grande espace et devient un endroit fixe.”

¹⁸ *The Casablanca Abattoir’s culture factory : story of a transformation*. Casablanca: Sirocco. 2014.

¹⁹ Interview Jamal. 14.10.2014. Translated from French: “Oui c’est tr  s ancien ce centre. C’est la patrimoine de la ville”. “Pas du patrimoine architecturale. C’est culturel!”

first music lessons. Remarkably then, this building –today quite demoded and underused- still proves to be able to figure as a spatial hinge for stories, persons and actions to be remembered.

Talking about heritage in Hay Mohammadi, we gradually move towards a definition where material and immaterial aspects are related in a specific way. The apparent opposition between material and immaterial divides current heritage actors in two ‘sides’ and thus obstructs an overarching strategy. Yet this opposition is indeed perceived. Space is interwoven with its stories, but at the same time maintains a certain degree of ‘looseness’ in terms of its formal characteristics. Approaching heritage in this sense is the opposite of freezing buildings in their current (architectural) state, where one supposes that only the exact same spatial context is able to absorb a certain meaning. In the context of Hay Mohammadi, many stories are circulating but many of them are not to be caught in one spatial counterpart. If this is mostly because space is inherently inscribed in a dynamic of constant change, how then to translate these memories spatially in such a context? According to us, the answer lies not just in considering its space as a dynamic given, but even more in doing so for its histories. Therefore, we will argue for one more step in our construct of a broader definition: the passage from stories to ‘operative memories’.

Operative heritage? The dynamics of memories

Classical examples of the translation of memory in spatial terms – placards, monuments, tombstones, etcetera – are situated mainly on the ‘object’-side of space and hence do not work on the scale of ‘urban ensembles’ as discussed above. Yet these approaches do not fundamentally differ from the classification and restoration of buildings. They too aim to define in an absolute way, be it not a certain form but a memory. Jennifer Jordan reminds us that a memory is remembered and retold as “an active process of sense-making through time”²⁰ – one that evolves along with the population of a given context. By denying the much needed dynamics of memory, heritage risks to lose its potential for the present. Especially in Hay Mohammadi, with all its social difficulties, processes of change should rather be adopted as a fruitful paradigm for memory. Ultimately, we want to re-interpret memories in such a way that their spatial translation can actually ‘serve’ the quarter, its inhabitants and local dynamics.

As a counterexample we study the Red Location Museum in Port Elisabeth, South Africa – an area recalling Hay Mohammadi in many aspects. The museum was built to commemorate the Township as a centre of resistance to apartheid. The architects sought to inscribe the building in its context, creating a “stunning interior [that] also invites reoccupation”²¹. Yet the community reacted disdainfully: “Why build a house for dead people when us the living do not have a roof over our heads?”²². Though the architects’ intent sure was innovative, the translation of

²⁰ Jordan, Jennifer A. op. cit.

²¹ Le Roux, Hannah. “Architecture from the frontline.” *Domus*. No. 7. 2008, pp. 44-50.

²² Unknown author. *PE residents force anti-apartheid museum to close*. <http://www.news24.com/>

memory by means of a museum proved not satisfying in this context. The ‘frozen’ memories of apartheid did not manage to generate a spatial production that fits the current and future state of the quarter. For Hay Mohammadi, that equally has to deal with a revolutionary legacy, this example provides some valid lessons. What is needed is not an exclusive focus on that legacy itself, but rather the facilitation of a collectively carried out project for the quarter and its future. If then, this project can be ‘revolutionary’, this must be understood as empowering and self-conscious rather than disrupting or subversive. Exploiting this argument, we can draw a parallel with the case of the ‘Congress of the People’ in South Africa. Here, a dusty piece of no-man’s land in the Soweto Township became the stage for a mass popular meeting set to launch the South Africa Freedom Charter in 1955. Today the site has been intensely redeveloped. Hannah Leroux writes how the result - paved, renamed, and with a cenotaph marking the document’s signature - “now conveys an image of monumentality and permanence that overwrites the ephemeral nature of the original event”²³. In short: the power of the event back then disappeared in the memorialization of today. From Jordan, we recall a division of heritage strategies in two extremes: “the total erasure or forgetting and the total memorialization or marking of historical sites”²⁴. While the examples given might seem more nuanced, they do indeed put a lot (if not too much) emphasis on the built project itself and on it being a literal, complete reference to the considered events. How then to escape this temptation of ‘over-memorializing’, whilst not slipping into a negation or even erasure of a site’s past? Here, a wonderful prospective is offered by memorialist Mohamed Sakib. His proposal for the installation of a *halqa* garden on the site where soon the last *bidonvilles* of Hay Mohammadi will be erased, tackles the perceived oppositions between spaces and stories, the colonial and the indigenous, the static and the dynamic, with a most elegant ease²⁵. Of course it considers only a part of the quarters heritage potential, but it clearly points out some crucial ‘extensions’ of our understanding of what precisely heritage is and could be. Remarkably, the focus is not on the remembered legacy of past *halqa*-spectacles in the quarter as such, but on the construction of a space that allows a similar social dynamic – be it literally as *halqa*, or as a re-interpretation of the concept. Spatially then, the project is not obliged to carry references to the *bidonville* that it replaces, but again is hoped to re-enact the social coherence and feeling of unity the place stood for. The project looks back, but equally projects into the future. History is remembered in an active way, by providing the quarter with a new and most welcome social space. While this dream is far from being realised, it embodies an inspiring model of what could be possible in Hay Mohammadi.

SouthAfrica/News/PE-residents-force-anti-apartheid-museum-to-close-20140731 (accessed 29.02.2015)

²³ Le Roux, Hannah, “The Congress as Architecture: modernism and politics in post-war Transvaal.” *Architecture South Africa*. No. 1. 2006, pp. 72-76.

²⁴ Jordan, Jennifer A. op. cit.

²⁵ Interview Sakib, Mohamed. 16.10.2014. Translated from French.

Conclusion

By considering the case of Hay Mohammadi we have attempted to develop a broader definition of what can be considered heritage and how it can be dealt with. First, we took the step from objects to urban ensembles, hence proposing a less itemized and more embedded way of selecting heritage. Second, by listening to local voices and considering their way(s) of treating questions of memorialisation we went beyond a purely spatial conception of heritage. We deconstructed the perceived opposition between material (spaces) and immaterial (stories) forms of heritage and instead described the specific entanglement between the two. Thereby we concluded that space does not act as an independent entity but as a carrier of stories. Finally, we pointed at the fact that neither the material – the spaces where memories are linked to – nor the memories themselves are static concepts. Only by taking their dynamic character into account, we can imagine a kind of heritage that would actually work in Hay Mohammadi – a context where change is an integral part of the spatial as well as the social construction of the quarter. As such, this study ultimately wants to reach out to all actors currently dealing with or interested in Hay Mohammadi's heritage. We hope it can form a stepping-stone for a common ground between all strategies and policymakers at stake, and that it might lead to some much needed, concrete actions in the future. However, we also hope it provides some more general insights, not in the least for other contexts where heritage is 'less evident'. Due to reasons of location – the peripheral and often underdeveloped outskirts of cities – or to particular histories – the difficulties of a colonial patrimony – a new and extended understanding of heritage seems much needed. Here, special attention should be given to local agencies, popular understandings of histories, and to more future and action-oriented approaches in general. When defined in an operative way, the unexpected potential of heritage becomes evident. In these little valorised contexts, it outgrows its own existence. Instead, it becomes a relevant spatial and social project for the future.