

## The Production of Heritage

Michela Pace<sup>1</sup>, Alan Chandler<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Università IUAV di Venezia, mpace@iuv.it*

<sup>2</sup>*UEL University of East London, a.chandler@uel.ac.uk*

**Abstract:** Urban regeneration is one of the operations through which global cities are tackling the increasing need of housing. Since 2008 redevelopment concentrated on selected urban districts, the reliance on private sector funding favouring 'luxury' developments and a systematic change in property patterns. The most interesting dynamic within this new field of urban exclusivity is the linkage of culture and history to the regeneration process. *Heritage* is a dominant new rhetoric employed in the marketing of these operations, the use of which engages and usurps political and administrative authorities able to facilitate urban development. The inclusion of the *Heritage* agenda concerns the restitution of urban legacies, becoming a selective concept which supports exclusive occupation, opening issues of accessibility and spatial democracy. The recurrence and extension of this phenomenon requires us to reflect on political and economic deviations that the promotion of urban legacy generates, both in terms of its spatial consequences but also in the cultural redefinition of who inherits the city. London and Shanghai are observed as case studies of what is now a global phenomenon, and reveal how the 'production of *Heritage*' becomes a regeneration driver supporting the market economy.

**Keywords:** heritage; regeneration; neoliberalism; visual rhetoric

### Introduction

Heritage is an inheritance that both constrains and increasingly enables development. It is simultaneously a reason for the conservation of some parts of the city and for the demolition of some others, a symbolic asset to be returned to the collectivity and an economic value to be privatized, an image of local identity and an opportunity to tap into the global rhetoric of national representation.

It is argued that the expanding allusion to heritage has an active role in enhancing the economic value of the interventions through culture. The observation of communication strategies and promotional images allows us to understand how the simplification of meaning utilized in advertising development translates into the simplification of inhabitation and our relationship with historic environments and buildings. It is also argued that the 'imaginification' of architecture that passes through the rhetoric of heritage, has practical qualities and spatial consequences which affect the way we can inhabit the city. In particular, a shift towards a form of romantic consumption turns architecture into feelings, creating places that prioritises visual experience instead of practicality. Despite the declaration of a strong character, these spaces, and the images that define and represent them are tensionless, stripped of any form of social conflict or reflection and mediated by a socio-political process.

Two tier cities are taken as case studies to reflect the global diffusion of the trend: London and Shanghai. London has a central role in the network of financial interests linked to real estate, and it has, at present,



one of the fiercest and most aggressive housing markets in the world. Its intermediate (and uncertain) position between Europe and the rest of the world allows some leading trends to be particularly influential. The focus on heritage is linked to the priorities of neoliberal policies which exploit anything bearing a trace of uniqueness and identity in order to optimize value and transform spaces and buildings into a product. Shanghai is used to show how, despite a different background, real estate communication strategies align in these antipodal cities. Shanghai is the financial centre of China, as London is for Europe, and represents a preferential partner for the UK in terms of investments. Its forefront role in the process of urban renovation and its everlasting attitude of rebuilding itself as a global centre render this city an interesting outpost of 'red neoliberalism'. The regeneration of heritage, in this context, is very much part of the modernizing effort of the city, and many redevelopment schemes involve buildings with historic significance. The method used to study the rhetoric of regeneration in London and Shanghai, includes both an analytical approach based on images observation and on field research based on space analysis interviews. The first method revealed how communication strategies are used to select and promote spatial features through images. The second one unraveled the physical consequences of a highly symbolic and monetary approach with consequences on the accessibility and practicability of the city. In particular, the observed case studies suggested how heritage is promoted as an element defining both emotional responses and economic possibilities, and how the projects favoured episodes of exclusion and expulsion in the name of cultural restitution.

### **Heritage as a regeneration driver**

The projects for the city have always been symptomatic of current political and social trends. The rhetoric that guided them has changed, involving for example aims of expansion, the research of a new spatial order and social tendencies (Secchi, 2005). It is argued that references to the past have always been part of the modernizing effort of city building, and that they have now become key regeneration drivers linked to financial operations (Figure 1). With nation states desperately active in promoting viable products for the global market, heritage has grown increasingly linked to branding. The market, eager to differentiate the product in order to sell exclusivity, commodified anything bearing a trace of identity. In this way heritage became a vehicle for economic appreciation. This trend can be observed at the global level: many cities all around the globe, while facing problems of population growth and land scarcity, are busy extracting as much value as possible from on-site resources (Sassen, 2017). Historic legacy is considered one of them, and is increasingly privatized as exclusive good, or bought as everlasting investment. Two effects accompany this tendency. Firstly, the conception of heritage enlarges from the one being referred only to old building to include entire neighbourhoods, modern edifices and cultural practices. Secondly, the restoration of these areas always entails a strong inclination to privatization, where mixed-used projects tends to be exclusive and to kick off gentrification processes. The value of heritage, in the end, becomes inevitability linked to the economic value that these operations involve; and to the extractive activity typical of neoliberal modes of space promotion and production.



Figure 1. Hoarding advertising heritage as a key aspect of the development, Shanghai 2016. Source: picture by the authors.

What needs to be clear is that heritage in itself is not a thing. Rather, «heritage is about the process by which people use the past – a ‘discursive construction’ with material consequences» (Harvey, 2008: 19, Smith, 2006). This means that heritage is a selective concept which does not necessarily involve history, as history would entail a more careful observation of the facts and their implications. Heritage can be easily isolated and rearranged to inform a bespoke narrative. At heart, it refers to «the ways in which very selected past materials and artifacts, natural landscapes, mythologies, memories and traditions become cultural, political and economic resources for the present» (Graham and Howard, 2008: 2). Present concerns, therefore, are the temporal dimension of heritage. Its construction is closely linked to the notion of ‘memory’ which, differently from history, seeks an uncritical relationship with the past (Nora, 1989). If portions of the past can be extracted from a wider narrative and attributed special value, it is easy to understand why certain materials have been selected rather than others. Economic convenience and social privilege are some of the reasons that guide the shaping of material and cultural significance, and its circulation.

Observing these mechanisms reveals how the process of selection has been made, and who is the final beneficiary of a certain interpretation of heritage. As stated by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), «we should look at those mechanisms that, deliberately or unconsciously, collaborate in their production. On the one side the marketing strategies that make them readable, the rules that guide planning, and the languages used to convey and distribute an idea of city. On the other side the mechanisms that make these strategies possible, and therefore the market, with its enabling power and its branding attitude». What is at stake is not only the concept of past and the power of history, but also our ability to imagine alternative futures.

### **London and Shanghai – two tear cities promoting heritage**

Europe and China, in particular, are observed as preferential places where the rhetoric linked to heritage has evolved bounded to special political and economic meanings.

London is the preferential case study because of its fierce real estate market, and its role as an international node of financial flows attracting foreign investments. Here, historic buildings are being increasingly appropriated by wealthy groups, and used to mask financial operations with the pretext of urban restitution. This is supported by the making of bespoke narratives that build on the legitimizing presence of history. If we assume that heritage is ‘made’ and not inherited (Graham and Howard 2008),

and that memory «works by reinvesting places with new accretion of significance» (Kearns and Philo, 1993), we understand the pivotal importance in observing cultural narratives.

Aware that the centrality of the European continent is fading, (Indovina, 2015) we interrogate similar mechanisms in other parts of the world. For this reason, China, and Shanghai in particular, have been included in the study. The reasons involve the rising importance of Shanghai as a tier city, the growing attention that matters of heritage and national promotion are acquiring for the Chinese government, and the privileged relationship existing in financial and political terms between UK and China. Moreover, the scale and the speed of regeneration projects in Shanghai, together with a simplified system of rights, make China an interesting place to look at not only as a major overseas investor, but as active realm of practice. Especially after the recent statements of Xi Jinping at the Communist Party in November 2016, it is necessary to interrogate what China is uploading on the global stage of real estate strategies. This can be considered as one of the forefront markets where the process of nation building on the stage of the global economy is more competitive.

Clearly, we need to remember that London and Shanghai are representative of distinctive political and economic systems, which also evolved through intertwined but different paths. The rhetoric used in the two systems are therefore representative of local and national specificities and simultaneously of global tendencies, coming from the need to compete on the world stage of leading economies. The parallels between the two cities concern the mechanisms underlying communication strategies, but also the contents of city marketing. Above all, notions of heritage and memory recur as elements able to drive the success of the regeneration projects, and to assure a high symbolic and monetary value to real estate products.

### **Battersea power station – London**

The project for Battersea Power station, part of the Opportunity Area (OA) of Vauxhall, Nine Elms and Battersea in London, concerns the rehabilitation of the famous grade II\* listed power station erected in 1933 in Wandsworth and dismissed in the 1980s (Figure 2). It is advertised as having c. 4.000 new homes, 7 hectares of new public space, 3.174 parking spaces, 8.340 bicycle spaces, 2 medical centres, 2.000 capacity venue, c. 30.000 sqm of community, cultural and leisure space 450 m of direct river frontage 150 shops, boutiques and kiosk, 40 cafés and restaurants, exclusive hotels. Its position, on the west corner of the OA, offers a magnificent gate of access to the project, a square at the end of the Thames Path and a great occasion to glorify the historic building that, more than others, drives the symbolic evolution of the area. Well-known architectural firms were called to deliver portions of it: Ian Simpson Architects are responsible for the apartments, offices and shops called Circus West on the railway-side; Norman Foster and Frank Gehry are inputting the scheme with some mixed-use buildings, called Battersea Roof Gardens and Prospect Place; BIG is designing the Malaysian square at the end of Electric Boulevard; and Wilkinson Eyre is taking care of £1bn refurbishment of the power station, with the rooftop gardens being designed by landscaper Andy Sturgeon. The power station itself will be turned into a shopping center, with three floors of retail (as envisaged by developer David Roche 30 years before), a floor of leisure, a 2000 capacity arena and offices to be partially occupied by the Mac creative quarter. Cafés, bars and restaurant will be placed around the corners of the turbine hall and two additional glassed volumes with 245 apartments will be built on the roof between the chimneys and above the boiler house. Some of these apartments were sold off-plan for almost £4m, and one studio flat was sold in 2014 for £1.5m, which is how much David Roche paid the entire building and the land in 1984 (Watts, 2016: 217).



Figure 2. Battersea power station under reconstruction seen from an adjacent neighborhood, London 2016. Source: picture by the authors.

When it was featured in 2013's Open House London, the architectural festival opening close doors to public viewings, more than 40.000 people queued for hours to have the chance to have a look inside the power station (Watts, 2016). Commonly defined as one of the symbols of English industrial genius, and excellent example of industrial *art deco*, the design of Battersea is inevitably linked to Sir Gill Albert Scott, the architect that authored the red kiosk, or phone box, in turn inspired to traditional architecture. Since the 1980s a number of projects confronted with this legacy, proving how the regeneration of the built environment needs to be observed alongside the regeneration of political, economic and social ambitions which support it. Every time, a renewed context created the opportunities, and then dismantled them. Its functions evolved, different subjects took part in the discussion, national and international interests were involved. The cultural industry, among the others, started to appropriate the building. Pink Floyd, for the launch of the album *Animal* in 1977, hang the famous pig Algie between the chimneys. Beyond the political meanings, this was the first cultural operations –later followed by many others - that contributed to increase its symbolic and representative value of the power station in the eyes of citizens and investors alike. It's not by chance that the Malaysian company currently leading the regeneration project cared about conserving the appearance of the symbolic chimneys, recognizing their 'value' in so much that some renders depict them from the same perspective that was once of the Pink Floyd album cover. However, the anxious aspect given by the contrasting tones and dark shadows (in line with the contents of the album), are replaced by a more pacified version of the landscape, suggesting harmonious and communal feelings.

Other characteristics from the past are recalled with insistence within the project's advertisement. They are presented as proof of originality, showing a mixture of enduring qualities linked to heritage references, and pioneering entrepreneurial experiences representing a «new chapter» for the city. By highlighting the continuity with the past, the promise of reward is almost granted, as suggested by the mentioning of successful moments in history that brought London to prosper. At the same time, the fascination for built and cultural heritage permeates the descriptions. Interiors showing exposed bricks, steel furniture and industrial style windows are countless. By evoking 'Englishness' through the use of symbolic references, the innovative spirit that animated the construction in the 1930s is recalled, and a bridge is immediately built towards the innovative intents that moves the project today. «This was no ordinary Power Station, no ordinary design (...) Sir Giles Gilbert Scott's design of Battersea Power Station turned this immense structure into a thing of beauty» (LIVE brochure). The preciousity of these interiors where «glamour meets industry» is explained by the fact that «an iconic British building deserves the best of British design – the interiors will have an industrial yet luxurious feel» (LIVE brochure). The power station's industrial past become, in this sense, a design bonus. The iconic status



of the power station seems to emanate on the rest of the buildings, transferring its deposited value onto branded buildings in desperate search of looking contemporary. «Battersea Power Station is London's quintessential industrial landmark, built to last on a heroic scale. Its rawness and atmosphere are its authenticity and must drive aesthetic decisions throughout the design process, inside and out, from the word go. Lose this and you lose The Power Station» states point 7 (“Industrial Magic”) of the Battersea Manifesto (The Placebook).

Besides than at a formal level, the continuity with the past is evoked also at a functional level: Battersea power station, once a symbol of technological innovation, will host the new Apple headquarter, a campus able to host 1.400 employees. The ameliorative quality of the project is evident: the polluting image of the power station, that fueled the dissents at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is being replaced by the ‘white apple’, symbol of the cleaner and most efficient design on the market in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Moreover, Apple is in a way, the quintessential incarnation of the contemporary creative industry. Popular, ‘different’, polished and global. Started from the garage of a creative, it now occupies one of the biggest symbol of power in one of the richest capitals on earth. In the Battersea Manifesto, these new ‘respectable dwellers’ are presented as «the most valuable firm in the world by market capitalization» who, according to adverts, «will help create a thriving new community on your doorstep» (Powerhouse Magazine 6). This given proof of success accompanies the call for young creatives and independent shops. Images of workers from the 1940's, working inside the turbines of the power station become inspirational models of professionalism and invention. New «local heroes» are now the ones managing the coffee shops, the flower shop, or working as cooks on site. The image of the employee has been polished and substituted by the self-manager in search of creative opportunities. Indeed, the marketing of open possibilities ask for more attentive analysis: the range of opportunities are being addressed and selected to inform a specific image of city, as so have been the people who can access them.

### **Suhe Creek – Shanghai**

A similar operation can be noticed in the Suhe Creek redevelopment – Shanghai, where the new plan aims to recover meaningful parts of the city. The Suhe Creek, a large urban complex set east of Henan Road and North Tiantong Road, along the banks of the Suzhou River, is fated to become one of the most discussed projects in Shanghai in the years to come. Led by state-owned Chinese developer Oversea Chinese Town Enterprises (OCT) and spread along the Suzhou Creek, the project rises on the site once occupied by old *lilong* houses, which have been promptly removed in recent years to make space to the regeneration.

The redevelopment includes 243 apartments on 27 floors, a luxury resort and a 48-storey tower branded by Bulgari, surrounded by lush, Italian-style gardens and overlooking the Bund. Adjacent to the hotel, sits the historic Chamber of Commerce Shanghai Building, a Neoclassical Renaissance building built in 1916 and restored in its former glories by the Italian architectural firm Antonio Citterio Patricia Viel. The same firm signed the luxurious Bulgari complex, while the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Ewo Packing Factory warehouse was restored by the Italian Kokaistudio – one of the pioneering architectural practices on heritage matters in Shanghai, and author of the lavish Bund18 refurbishment (2004). The urban project is overseen by world-class architectural design team Foster+Partners. The centrality of the creek which gives name to the regeneration project, has both symbolic and practical implications. The site, once home to the first settlements of the city, is now made available to new inhabitants who, it is implied, are moved by the same pioneering ambition of the old ones, this time carrying Bulgari watches instead of fisherman nets. Indeed, Bulgari is betting on brick as a luxury item: «“I like to think at the Bulgari Hotels collection as a necklace and today we added a sixth gem to it, in particular a precious ruby that is the stone that most represents the vibe of Shanghai [...] » stated Jean-Christophe Babin, CEO of Bulgari (CPPluxury, 2018).

The presence of heritage occupies a good part of the Suhe Creek marketing strategy. In particular, traditional concepts derived from Confucianism are exploited to render the project acceptable, and demonstrate how the manipulation of heritage not only involves material features but also cultural ones.



One of the most referenced concepts in the construction of livable spaces in China is “harmony”. The revival of harmony in recent political discourse can be traced to the speech made at the fourth plenary session of the Sixteenth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in September 2004 by former President Hu Jintao. The subject of the speech was “building a harmonious socialist society”. Confucianism defined harmony as a framework for organising life and maintaining balance at different levels (Wang *et al.*, 2015). At the same time, it has become aesthetic and political doctrine, and this ancient concept can be observed in images used to represent new urban redevelopments. Here, harmony is found in tensionless representations where people meet naturally and conflicts are erased. This is realized, first of all, by excluding elements that don’t match the standard of the advertisement. The promotional video of Suhe Creek by Bulgari is a vivid luxury dream, where the empty hotel is crossed by a combination of rendering and filming cameras highlighting the preciousness of the environment. When diversity is recalled, this is done through the use of history, in this way distancing diversity as something belonging to the past. However, in Confucianism, it is “difference” not blandness that is the «precondition and cornerstone of harmony» (Wang *et al.*, 2015). Harmony presupposes the acknowledgment of difference as a creative tension generated through the interaction of different elements. The energy which sustains harmony is relational; it welcomes strain, conflict, and negotiation (Li, 2008). The images used to promote new developments translate these commitments into detached, homogeneous landscapes where conflict is absent. Harmony is twisted and flattened onto advertisement hoardings to recall an idea of order and beauty able to redress an increasingly unbalanced and unfair landscape (Yu, 2008). The centrality of heritage is clear, as it underpins the visual and ideological rhetoric of the redevelopment project becoming the joint between popular restitution and exclusive appropriation. The Suhe Creek project offers a good example of this. As you enter the marketing suite, a four-meter-long map from the beginning of the century supports your understanding of historical changes in the local area’ urban fabric. There is a short video titled “An historical celebration of Suzhou River”, explaining its role as a water route fundamental to the development of the local built and social environment. The video celebrates the renovation of the area as an act of final restitution. After the first video is a second one. This time for Bulgari. The video claims history as a continuous source of inspiration: a classical statue breaks into pieces and is covered in gold, while a Colosseum transforms into a ring. “Classic is Revolutionary” concludes the movie, not only providing the perfect synthesis of oppositions as a slogan, but also re-establishing a popular term (revolution) as part of a luxury creative genesis. The advertisement includes oppositional elements to the system rather than removing them, and makes the final message even more effective. It links simultaneously to classic style and revolutionary changes, to the past and the future of the city, to shared accessibility and privileged ownership, to preservation and demolition, all justified by the overreaching metaphor of heritage, charged in aesthetic resonance. Heritage is once again at the centre of a revolution, a driver of placemaking able to produce urban and social regeneration alike. On a much more immediate level, the concepts of past, inspiration, and nostalgia through which the Italian brand is made recognisable are successfully used to market the regeneration project and to inform the Chinese notion of harmony. Heritage becomes the language through which “harmony” is established – cleaning, ordering, reinventing a part of the city. This is proved by the advantaged position offered to the new inhabitants who will be able to enjoy «stunning views of the iconic Bund, Pudong financial district and the dramatic curvature of Huangpu River and Suhe Creek» (bdrconsulting, 2018). If in the past the poor fishermen had to immerse their bodies into the water, now the rich new inhabitants elevate up in the sky, where everything can be looked at, and a dinner is a matter of ordering rather than hunting. Harmony ends to be immersive and embraces the environment from a privileged point of view.

In the end, marketing materials show a new notion of ‘harmony’ – visual, instantaneous, natural, tensionless as opposed to experiential, conflictual, reflective and mediated by the economic and social process (Li, 2008; Wang *at al.*, 2015). However, the relationship between what is included in the representations and what is tolerated in the reality, often hide an implicit reference to a given social homogeneity. As Marin (1983) states, the harmonisation of opposites allows to reposition the subjects within a new framework: the authenticity of the pre-existing fabric is advertised together with a pioneering sense of romance and fiction (Klingmann, 2007) in order to create new identities and new urban communities.



## The territorial function of heritage

In both cases it can be observed that the references to notions of heritage culture have a ‘territorial’ function: they become the channel through which to communicate, implicitly and explicitly, narrative of inclusion or exclusion. Surely within societies, «various groups insert symbols into the cultural landscape which resonate with their sense of heritage and identity, and which simultaneously incite remembering and mark territory» (McDowell, 2008: 48). In the globalized era, heritage continues to be a tool of selection and claim, but its meaning is more and more related to the financial appropriation of places. The processes of exclusion, expulsion and gentrification that often accompany the processes of regeneration demonstrate how heritage is being appropriated both materially and ideologically by wealthy groups. However, the ambiguity of its rehabilitation, the creation of open private spaces around it, and its familiar aspect, helps securing «the acceptance and even the affection of peoples who might otherwise rebel to it» (Philo and Kearns, 1993: 22-23). The case of Battersea is representative. While the building is ‘given back’ to the city with apartments sold at 19.000€/sqm, the icon of the same building has been included inside the British passport transforming one of the most exclusive operations of the last decades in a democratic symbol of national identity.

The simultaneous creation of a regulatory apparatus to support the regeneration operations feeds the selection. Among the examples, it seems interesting to dwell on the debate concerning the affordable housing in the UK, which imposes strong restrictions on accessibility to the home when London needs around 50,000 new homes per year to meet the housing needs of the population. In 2014, under Boris Johnson, the former Mayor of London, ‘council’ or social housing has been replaced by a new and more ambiguous product: the ‘affordable’ houses. A property defined ‘affordable’ can be sold up to 80% of the market value, unlike the previous council houses that allowed a rent equal to (approximately) 50% of the market value, a threshold that allowed many families to pay rent without being dependent on the so-called housing benefits. To answer the shortage of houses, the current Mayor Sadiq Khan had proposed that 50% of new homes built in London fall within these criteria. However, little after the 2016 elections, the limit was lowered to 35%. The Battersea Power Station masterplan that was approved in 2010, it provided 518 affordable units in three different locations. In 2015, some of these were pushed to their limits of the regeneration area with the excuse that this would speed up the delivery of the project and therefore the sale of the other units. In fact, the least expensive houses were removed. In 2017 Wandsworth Council allowed the entrepreneurs to reduce the number of affordable housing to 386 units (Byers, 2018) giving proof of how the projects of expulsion and gentrification that inevitably seem to cause an aggressive market, need a regulatory apparatus capable of actively supporting it. It is curious to notice how the present scheme recalls another one that was put forward in 1983. The plan proposed a mix of luxury flats, retail, a hotel and a marina. At that time, in the hyper capitalistic 1984, the luxury flats that now dominate regeneration were considered socially unacceptable, and the scheme was rejected as being “substantially outside the brief” because it was giving nothing back to the community.

Similarly, the restitution that granted by the Suhe Creek development is in fact exclusive. It is clear that after the erasure of the old *shikumen* houses, the place will not be returned to its original inhabitants. At the same time, a “harmonious” understanding of the relationships among subjects is applied: the ones competing over land consumption; the ones who structure and the ones who finance these redevelopments, and the ones who simply inhabit them. Obviously, this is not more than a fiction, where the shaping of livable spaces is dragged along by an economic system which selects object and styles as inherited capital from the past, but also selects people as one of the materials to be renewed (Rogers and Darcy, 2014). «One has to go deep into the course of history, understanding the past, this knowledge as a foundation for the future», says a quotation signed Nicola Bvlgari on the billboards. It shows a western woman wearing diamond earrings while posing inside an elegant interior. Other renders, flashy and glittering show the site from the top. The combination of images, swinging between black and white sophistication (Figure 3) and ostentatious shininess represents a diversified communication strategy able to talk to different publics. On the other side of the road, in front of the attractive woman, lays the site of popular *lilong* houses, now demolished to make space to Bvlgari.





Figure 3. Hoardings around the construction site of Suhe Creek, Shanghai 2017. It shows a western woman making up in a living room. Source: picture by the authors.

## Conclusions

It is noted that the increasingly frequent allusion to heritage plays an active role in the promotion of value economic of urban regeneration operations. In the era of globalization, the growing need for preserving and promoting "identity", "culture" or "originality" is perhaps the last trick to add value to the landscape of the flattened real estate of global regeneration. The production of narratives related to heritage material and immaterial, it supports the recovery of local and national territoriality, and the value of the same territory is attributed. However, there are risks. Memory as representation risks collapsing the tension between past and present in an eternal present, and to use history as proof of certification and value (Huyssen, 2003). The heritage is restored and protected, assigned to those who can take care of it, and rebranded as an eternal symbol of culture. In this sense, the regeneration projects that call themselves "timeless", "Definitive" and "everlasting", do not contradict the concept of history so much, but testify to the intentions of capital. Thanks to the sense of legitimacy that underlies it, heritage helps protect long-term investments, and for this reason its value becomes more than symbolic: the conservation and promotion practice that concerns it ends to be a practice of safeguarding and promoting its economic value. Accept that the heritage is a highly political process means recognizing its flexible nature in relation to power and in relation to specific material and temporal contexts.

The identification of visual narratives linked to heritage rhetoric as a field of observation, and to economic discipline as a necessary context of confrontation, might contribute to fostering a cross-disciplinary attitude in the field of contemporary urbanism, and to promote specific directions of research. This can establish a set of scientific practices related to the analysis of visual narratives for contemporary urban development. This should consider the plurality of languages and representation as a resource beyond the ones put in place by leading powers. Deconstructing the codes and recognizing the mechanisms that support urban marketing can lead to elaborate strategies of resistance and appropriation. This not only concerns the language as a fundamental tool of democracy, but also its effects on place as the result of specific narratives. Working on alternative images might contribute to build different scenarios of social re-appropriation of both places and the historical narratives building them.

## References

- Byers, D., 2018, What's going on in the Nine Elms regeneration project. The Times, 2 March.
- Brdconsulting, 2018, Bulgari Hotel Shanghai now officially open. Date of access: 20/11/2017.  
<http://www.brdconsulting.it/it/sedi/91-contenuti-in-italiano/news/store-in-out-blog/8721-bulgari-hotel-shanghai-now-officially-open>
- CPPluxury, 2018, Bulgari Hotel Shanghai now officially open. Date of access: 20/11/2018.  
<https://cpp-luxury.com/bulgari-hotel-shanghai-now-officiallyopen/>
- Graham, B.J. and Howards, P. (eds.), 2008, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (Franham: Ashgate Publishing).
- Harvey, D.C., 2008, The History of Heritage. In: *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* edited by Graham B.J., Howards P. (Franham: Ashgate Publishing), pp. 19-36.
- Hobsbawm, E. J., Ranger, T., 1983, *L'invenzione della tradizione*. Translated by Enrico Basaglia, (Torino, IT: Einaudi, 1987).
- Huyssen, A., 2003, *Present Pasts. Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (CA: Stanford University Press).
- Indovina, F., Becchi, A., Bianchetti, C., and Ceccarelli, P., (eds.), 2015, *La città del XXI Secolo. Ragionando con Bernardo Secchi*. (Milano, IT: FrancoAngeli).
- Kearns, G. and Philo, C., (eds.), 1993, *Selling places. The city as cultural capital, past and present*. (Oxford: Pergamon Press).
- Klingmann, A., 2007, *Brandscapes* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press).
- Li, C., 2008, The Philosophy of Harmony in Classical Confucianism. *Philosophy Compass*, (3), pp. 423-435.
- LIVE brochure, Battersea Power Station, Date of access: 20/11/2017.  
[https://batterseapowerstation.co.uk/pdfs/live\\_brochure\\_feb\\_2017.pdf](https://batterseapowerstation.co.uk/pdfs/live_brochure_feb_2017.pdf)
- McDowell, S., 2008, Heritage, Memory and Identity. In: *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* edited by Graham B.J., Howards P. (Franham: Ashgate Publishing), pp. 37-54.
- Nora, P., 1989, Between Memory and History: les Lieux de Memoire. *Representations, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory*, 26 (New York: Spring-Verlag), pp. 7-24.
- Powerhouse, Battersea Power Station Magazine, issue 06, Autumn 2017. (London, UK: Battersea Power Station).
- Rogers, D. and Darcy, M., 2014, Global city aspirations, graduated citizenship and public housing: analysing the consumer citizenships of neoliberalism. *Urban, Planning and Transport Research*, 2(1), 72-88.
- Sassen, S., 2017, Predatory Formations Dressed in Wall Street Suits and Algorithmic Math, *Science, Technology & Society*, 22:1, 1-15.
- Secchi, B., 2005, *La città del ventesimo secolo* (Bari, IT: Laterza).
- Smith, L., 2006, *Uses of Heritage* (London, UK: Routledge).
- The Placebook, Date of access: 20/11/2017.  
[https://www.jtp.co.uk/cms/pdfs/The-Placebook\\_Battersea-Power-Station.pdf](https://www.jtp.co.uk/cms/pdfs/The-Placebook_Battersea-Power-Station.pdf)
- Wang, X., Juffermans, K., and Du, C., 2015, Harmony as Language Policy in China: An Internet Perspective. *Language Policy*, 15(3), pp. 299-321.
- Watts, P., 2016, *Up in smoke: the failed projects of Battersea power station*. (London, UK: Paradise Road).