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Bridging temporal, spatial, and disciplinary gaps

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Creative practices are at the heart of human history. Humans have responded creatively to a broad range of challenges—environmental, political, economic, social, religious, cultural—by shaping our tangible physical environment and our intangible cultural practices. Our present buildings, cities, and landscapes as well as our local cultures, socio-cultural behaviours, and lifestyles are the outcome of creative practices of many centuries. The structures of the past, their practices, and representations are part of our heritage. They condition how we live today and how we plan for tomorrow. To move forward, we must understand the how and why, the who and where, of past creative practices that have created our contemporary environment.

The results of some creative practices of the past, including a range of physical structures as well as skills, have received heritage status. Out of the larger fabric of our built environment, they are the target of our increased political, economic, societal, or touristic attention. The process of selecting buildings and practices to preserve in itself is contested. Initially, antiquarians investigated historical structures; then political leaders, scholars, and eventually citizens have identified these structures as meaningful for a national, local, or common heritage and have chosen to award them status as recognized monuments and preserve them.

The criteria for selection of these monuments evolves over time and in line with international, national, and local preferences and discussions. Choices of whether to preserve palaces or workers', housing reflect political and societal preferences, as do decisions to preserve or demolish,

reuse or rethink heritage.[1] The Palace of Versailles and the pyramids in Egypt are examples of our long-standing focus on structures of power; only more recently have we complemented them by preserving workers' housing for example, modernist housing estates in Berlin or production facilities like the Tomioka silk mill in Japan. Over time, these discourses on the past have come to live their own lives, creating themes and branding. They are effectively establishing behaviours that in turn are reinforced by the form and function of our built environment, shaping once again our discourses. This process results into a continuous cycle, or what I call a feedback loop.[2]

The Pyramid and the Palace also exemplify another dynamic in preservation: for most of their history, heritage agencies concentrated on the representational characteristics of objects (especially buildings). Expanding on concepts of nature conservation areas and industrial heritage sites, the historic urban landscape approach (HUL)[3] has started to work to increase the "sustainability of planning and design interventions by taking into account the existing built environment, intangible heritage, cultural diversity, socio-economic and environmental factors along with local community values." This means that, along with the built environment, entire landscapes and engineering interventions are now getting attention as heritage, including for example the New Dutch Waterline, a national defence project comprising water-based infrastructure that could have flooded low-lying areas to turn Holland into an island safe from attackers.[4] A number of historic urban landscapes have been recently added to the UNESCO world heritage site, such as the underground management system at the Tarnowskie Góry Lead-Silver-Zinc Mine or the Rjukan-Notodden industrial Heritage Site, which includes hydro-electric power plants, transmission lines, transport systems, and even workers' housing.

Beyond preserving buildings, structures, or landscapes, we need to widen our focus even further to formulate guidelines for future interventions. We have more opportunity than ever to carefully assess the impact of creative practices of the past, to understand what role narratives have played in the construction of our current identity (and thinking) and to build an important foundation for future creative practices. Writing the history of creative practices and heritage debates, and extrapolating policy and design proposals for the future, will help us to rethink current practices

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1. Pamela Karimi and Nasser Rabbat, "The Demise and Afterlife of Artifacts," *Aggregate*, December 12, (2018), http://we-aggregate.org/media/files/6b89395fe1ba7d6b271f4eafa5f83217.pdf

2. On the concept of the feedback loop see also: Carola Hein, "Oil Spaces: The Global Petroleumscape in the Rotterdam/the Hague Area," *Journal of Urban History* (2018): 1–43.

3. UNESCO, "New Life for Historic Cities: The Historic Urban Landscape Approach Explained," (Paris: UNESCO, 2013). https://whc.unesco.org/uploads/activities/documents/activity-727-1.pdf

4. Carola Hein, ed., *Adaptive Strategies for Water Heritage* (Dordrecht: Springer, forthcoming/2018).

in multiple ways and to bridge existing spatial, temporal, and disciplinary gaps. Even when we still focus on European practices, we can reframe and explore them in the context of global production, discussing colonial and post-colonial practices, acknowledging the imposition of foreign practices and the destruction of local ones. Scholars such as Benedict Anderson, Bo Stråth, and others have taught us,[5] we are dealing both with imagined communities and (national) constructions and need more complex theoretical, methodological, and historical approaches to understand the creative practices of the past, present and future.

Over millennia, humans have creatively engaged with the same challenges that we are facing again today. In difficult conditions, they have provided people with clean water to drink or to use in agriculture and farming. They organized sewage and waste disposal; they engaged with climatic challenges and provided locally-adapted types of energy for production or transportation; they responded to migration by building new urban districts; and they developed extensive infrastructure to gain access to raw materials and new technologies to improve life quality (and also, as we do, to make war). Their creative solutions can be both an inspiration and a challenge for future developments.

Studying the achievements and failures of historic creative practices will allow us to assess their complex implications and provide us with tools to design the creative practices of the future. In particular, this work can guide our development and application of new technologies, including remote sensing, neutron tomography, 3D printing, advanced materials, artificial intelligence, or robots. Rather than creating disconnected innovations geared at sustainable practices, we need to create systemic change.

At a time of rapid technological, economic, societal, and environmental change, we face enormous challenges in many overlapping domains: cities, landscapes, cultural heritage, and local practices. New materials, new technologies, new lifestyles reshape how we research, repair, reuse, and redesign our world heritage sites, our vernacular built environment, our cities, and our ways of living. The old contains resources for dealing with the new. Our particular challenges include sea level rise, migration, and new energy systems. We need to re-create circular economies—circles of consumption and production transforming any by-products of manufacturing or other types of waste into raw materials for further manufacturing—, to overcome an energy-intensive lifestyle based on global production, to guarantee water safety, and to respond to the challenges that result from the technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution[6] interconnecting physical, digital, and biological worlds.

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5. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983); Bo Stråth, ed., *Myth and Memory in the Construction of Community. Historical Patterns in Europe and Beyond*, (Brussels: P.I.E-Peter Lang, 2000).

6. Klaus Schwab, *The Fourth Industrial Revolution* (New York: Crown Business, 2017).

Heritage structures can be agents in making our society more sustainable. Creative approaches to cultural heritage, including new technologies, can help achieve socio-cultural and environmental sustainability, a core element of the Paris Agreement goals and a key feature in other current scientific research agendas, including the European Commission's Horizon 2020 programming. Cultural heritage can mitigate past developments in the face of current challenges and become a catalyst for future developments. UNESCO's recommendations on best practices and other international standards, notably the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), position culture and creative practice as a key aspect of realizing broader sustainable development goals.[7]

This journal will be *an interdisciplinary platform* that bundles research and interventions on creative practices in academia, society, and industry. We invite innovative theoretical or methodological approaches to tangible and intangible creative practices, notably in Europe, but also in combination with a close study of cases from around the world. We call for papers that position technological innovation ethically. We are eager to receive proposals engaging with renovating, reusing, and rethinking creative practices, including those on "creative cities", analysing the past and providing guidance for future policy making. What is the role of "hidden designers" like legal practices, policy making, or land ownership? We encourage papers that explore how policy makers, industrialists, or academics construct creative practices. We are looking for studies on the role of narratives and storytelling, reflecting on the societal role of museums in communicating science and technology, or examining the role of digital humanities approaches and their capacity to facilitate involvement of the general public in choices regarding heritage futures. We invite scholars to think about the heritage challenges of the future: how will we preserve plastic products originally designed to be thrown away? How will we write the history of our petroleum addiction into our future cultural practice?

In short, we have designed this journal as a *platform for critical reflection* on creative practices and cultural heritage, reconnecting the study of the past with the practice of the future, bridging spatial, temporal and disciplinary gaps, and asking scholars, practitioners, and decision-makers to investigate creative practices and their role in constructing the past, present, and future.

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