

GLOBALIZING HERITAGE (Cluster 3)

- Operational Plan

The cluster will coordinate and support critical and interdisciplinary research activities and projects, with a cross-boundary character, that are situated within the overall field of the cluster. In order to achieve a lasting effect of the heritage initiative the outcome of the activities within the cluster is directed towards the production of a number of major research applications (particularly research programmes) in accordance with the themes of the clusters.

Organization

Three coordinators head the Globalizing Heritage cluster and it consists of five sub-clusters. Each sub-cluster will have one or two heads that oversee the development and activities of the sub-cluster, as well as the production of research applications that will be the outcome of each sub-cluster. Funding for carrying out activities is to be approved by the cluster coordinators. Seminars, workshops (and publications following from these) as well as guest researchers are examples of research activities that can contribute to major research applications. The creation of MA and PhD-courses are other options that contribute to a lasting effect of the heritage initiative.

Activities

The five sub-clusters are:

Recycling – Stuff in Motion

Heritage in Conflicts and Crises

Landscape, Place, Destination

World Heritage

Audio-Visual-Sensory Heritage

The sub-clusters focus different fields and issues that are situated within contemporary international critical heritage research as well as in ongoing research activities at the University of Gothenburg. It is important that the sub-clusters are inclusive but also that they have clear delimitations. The focus on major research applications should not be understood as being narrowly instrumental; rather it helps structure and organize the research activities within the sub-cluster.

Recycling – Stuff in Motion (sub-cluster 1)

Introduction

This sub-cluster centers on the circulation of heritage objects in a globalizing world. Re-cycling, re-use and re-design are all expanding cultural and socio-economic phenomena that testify to an increased importance of the mobility of things and the continuous reworking of old objects for new purposes and contexts, connecting people, things and places throughout the world. Researchers from the Department of Conservation, School of Global Studies, Centre for Consumer Science and School of Design and Crafts (HDK) will contribute to the sub-cluster.

Background

The current interest in recycling– the reusing of clothes, furniture, household goods or building material – captures a range of contemporary social dynamics in which material culture, heritage and globalization play a central role. Environmental awareness stimulates co-ownership and recycling of things;

capitalism's mode of accumulation through continuous shortening of turn-over times in the production apparatus commands a corresponding acceleration in consumption; aestheticization of the past contributes to the expansion of the market for re-use; and "flexible" and precarious labour markets stimulate entrepreneurship in the market niche of recycled goods where initial investment is low and creativity is an important asset.

We see a trend in which the ideal of 'newness' and novelty, dominant throughout much of modernity, is supplemented by an increased interest in old things: items are sought after and attractive precisely because they are not new, but have a past. Parallel to these changing contexts for used materiality the notion of owning is undergoing transformation. Rather than accumulating and collecting, many actors seek to minimize their ownership, not through consuming less, but through securing access to goods in new ways: selling, donating or returning before buying, borrowing, renting, or co-owning. From having been an unquestionable cornerstone of modern liberal democratic society, ownership has become problematic: costly and limiting; unwieldy for late modern subjects engaging in rapidly shifting projects or subject constructions. Avoiding the costs of ownership while striving for access to things leads to an intensification of relationships and networks between people and materialities at local, regional and global scales. This sub-cluster intends to explore such connections and addresses the social, economic and political implications of seeing things as having a "before" and an "after".

Heritage in Conflicts and Crises (sub-cluster 2)

Introduction

This sub-cluster focuses on the overall theme of the complex and contradictory role of heritage in various situations of social or natural upheaval. Heritage is central to political and social life and can be desirable, provocative or curative for individuals as well as collectives.

Background

While heritage is typically associated with positive values and a stable past, there is also a growing public interest in heritage in situations of crises, conflicts or war. Heritage can be a source or starting point for conflicts and confrontations on different scales, whether around clashing notions of the past; ownership of particular sites and artifacts or around issues of repatriation. During armed conflicts, heritage is often intentionally destroyed, targeted or looted as a form of symbolic warfare.

While heritage is thus used to exclude, dominate or intimidate, there are also examples of how it can be used as a resource for post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction efforts. In a similar manner, heritage is often damaged or destroyed during upheaval caused by natural processes and forces, whether sudden catastrophes, such as tsunamis, wildfires or hurricanes, or long term alterations, such as climate change. At the same time, heritage can be used as an important instrument to come to terms with loss, vulnerability and trauma caused by such events, and also as a resource for adaptation strategies, for example when local knowledge and traditions, in the form of intangible heritage, are used as tools in the establishment of sustainable practices and activities. This sub-cluster will provide a platform for exploring such phenomena from a range of theoretical and disciplinary perspectives. A promising theme is the intersection between political processes, memory and theories of affect.

Projects and initiatives

At a workshop on heritage and post-conflict healing, held at SGS in 2012, contacts were established between researchers from different disciplines at GU and university departments and museums from around Europe and Africa. Currently a publication is being prepared on this theme. Moreover, the sub-cluster will be further consolidated by the creation of a new course on the topic, to be given within the Ma-Programme in Global Studies. Collaboration around this topic will typically involve disciplines such

as Anthropology, Human Ecology, International Relations, Peace and Development Studies, Public Health, and Psychology.

Landscape, Place, Destination (sub-cluster 3)

Introduction

This sub-cluster approaches landscapes as an interface between culture and nature and as sites traversed by local, national, regional and global forces. Heritage is here regarded as a particular form of making social, economic and political claims about rights, access and use of landscapes. The sub-cluster has a relevance also to the two other clusters, Urban Heritage and Archives Revitalized, and will be a focus point for researchers from a number of disciplines and faculties at University of Gothenburg.

Background

In order to apply landscape as a sharp analytical tool, rather than an infinitely spacious concept, there is a need to critically examine the idea of “landscape complexity”. Landscapes are created and constantly transformed in processes that are simultaneously historical, social and ecological; and differing, human and non-human, perspectives will always be involved in the making and assessing of all kinds of landscapes, from city-centres to “wilderness”. Furthermore, landscapes are not only formed on the ground, but also in thoughts, dreams, representations and planning, and through interactions between mind and matter, nature and culture. Studying landscapes as archives or historical palimpsests is one of many established ways to approach the relationship between landscape and heritage, and this sub-cluster will examine which understandings of landscape such approaches rely on.

If landscape is understood as a process, rather than a prospect or a property, it becomes clear that conservation of landscapes is intrinsically difficult, if not impossible. The problematic relationship between conservation and change perhaps most clearly come to the fore within landscape management. A growing number of international instruments and conventions have been adopted to ensure sustainable planning, management and governance of landscapes and their values. In addition, numerous claims on landscapes and their heritage are today made from the sectors of tourism, place marketing and destination branding. However, heritage, environmental aspects and the market value of landscapes are typically the responsibility of different sectors and disciplines that do not always communicate with each other. This calls for further research, where landscape may be used as an analytical starting point to examine nature-culture relations in fruitful cross-disciplinary collaborations.

Projects and initiatives

Research on different aspects of the landscape/heritage interface is carried out within a range of disciplines at GU, including for example human geography, social anthropology, conservation, human ecology, consumer science, history, and archaeology. A cross-disciplinary group of scholars from different faculties at GU are currently working to prepare the *Permanent European Conference for the Study of the Rural Landscape* (PECSRL), which will be held in Gothenburg/Mariestad in September 2014. The work related to this conference is to be seen as part of the establishment and reinforcement of an interdisciplinary landscape research network at GU, which may well be widened to include additional scholarly perspectives.

World Heritage (sub-cluster 4)

Introduction

The sub-cluster has a broad approach towards issues and discussions connected to UNESCO's World Heritage Convention. The aim is to engage scholars from Historical Studies, School of Global Studies and the Department of Conservation in this sub-cluster.

Background

The conditions for a creation of a common and global cultural heritage are at different levels both complex and problematic and the very idea of a common global heritage, the World Heritage Convention and the subsequent listing of a number of World Heritage sites at UNESCO's World Heritage List has therefore been exposed to various forms of criticism. This critique has focused questions concerning; selection principles, representativeness, authenticity, socio-economic and ideological impact, the neglect of intangible heritage, and how public and local stakeholder involvement and use of cultural heritage can be achieved.

More specifically, questions about the *selection principles* and *representativeness* can highlight the fact that the number of world heritage sites that reflects humanity's dark side (dark heritage) is largely absent from the World Heritage List, and that there is a significant geographical imbalance, and a Eurocentric bias, of the World Heritages on the list.

Questions about *authenticity* and *socio-economic and ideological impact* can include issues such as national prestige and the commercialization of heritage within the framework of the tourism industry. Questions can also focus on how the selected sites are presented and staged as authentic remains from the past, hiding how they are influenced by present contexts and processes. In the increasingly globalized world an organization of diversity, within the framework of the World Heritage Convention, may also lead people to consider their traditions, their past, and their present existential identity in specific ways, perhaps making them easier to control and lead in certain directions.

The question concerning the *neglect of intangible heritage* can for instance focus the fact that although cultural heritage is not limited to material manifestations, it did take a long time to view and to accept intangible heritage as an important part of the common global cultural heritage.

Questions concerning the *public involvement and use of cultural heritage* can for instance highlight that the idea of a global heritage is a top-down project containing unequal power relations on a variety of levels. This at the same time as there are opposite and developing trends where bottom-up approaches, with a focus on local development, local stakeholders and local societies and their empowerment, are directed both towards World Heritage sites, as well as towards alternative sites of historical interest.

Audio-Visual-Sensory Heritage (sub-cluster 5)

Introduction

This sub-cluster addresses processes of memory and heritagization and their associated sensorial qualities, as they are explored through audio-visual media. Particularly in the context of a globalized, neo-liberal consumer society, the function and sensory implications of images have become increasingly contested arenas. The sub-cluster will facilitate collaborations with guest researchers and workshops with local and international participants, and aims to bring together researchers from HDK, the Department of Psychology, the Department of Cultural Sciences, IT, and the Valand Academy.

Background

The relationship between memory and the visual is far from straightforward. While it is common for recollection to be defined as the act of picturing images in one's mind, the research within this sub-cluster problematizes such assumptions. It instead starts with the fundamental paradox that while memory and heritage are intensely visual phenomena, they are impossible to visually depict or illustrate. Elements of the past may be conveyed through images, material objects, bodily movements and actions, but memories themselves can never be literally represented or made visible outside the realm of the imagination.

This sub-cluster encourages both the study of visual media and the use of visual media itself to analyze and interpret such elusive and complex processes of memory and heritage. If the eye is a conduit for the rest of the body, a camera's mechanical 'eye' can serve as an avenue for offering a sensory and tactile consciousness, not only of the external world, but also of the internal, visceral experiences of memory and the imagination.

What creative formal or narrative strategies might be used to address the poetics and the politics of memory in different social and cultural contexts? How might visual media be used in innovative, unconventional ways to understand experiences of recollection and the passage of time? Using audio-visual media to transcend its strictly visual functions, and operate in emotional, evocative, sensory realms allows it to be more than a mere illustrative or documentary instrument, furthering the possibility of introducing new kinds of knowledge practices into heritage and memory research.

Criteria for cluster activities

The cluster activities shall

- consolidate the common ground of the cluster;
- identify the main strands for the working research environment of the cluster;
- explore the main interest and synergies of the cluster researchers;
- further academic promotions;
- establish of long term financial security of the research field of the cluster