

## Heritage and Urban Resistance

### Exploring Identity Politics, Commons and Conflict

Cities worldwide have always been spaces of difference – individuals from all walks of life negotiate their everyday life in relation to the conduct of others, and organise in groups and engage in politics, virtually and materially, in urban public spaces. When these negotiations develop into social conflicts expressed in public debates and protests as well as riots and insurgencies in urban public spaces and social media, these conflicts are often explained in terms of unemployment, a democratic deficit, social marginalisation, gentrification and cultural difference.

“Heritage and Urban Resistance” explores various situational settings of conflict with a focus on the entanglement of heritage-resistance in everyday life in urban public spaces. We see heritage as battlefields and vehicles for conflicts and this can be explained in these examples: the recent protests against the re-construction of the Ottoman military barracks in Gezi Park which have given rise to various forms of conflicts against ostracism, and promoted new political dynamics over public representations in Turkey; the strategic destruction of hundreds of historic villages and urban neighbourhoods in Palestine in 1948 to ethnically cleanse the land from its non-Jewish citizens have sustained the Palestinian-Israeli struggles over land and history; and the social unrests in the suburbs of Gothenburg, Stockholm and Malmö are triggered by struggles over cultural identity, recognition and presence. Other examples can also be drawn from other parts of the world to demonstrate fundamental interdependencies between heritage and resistance. This is important to pinpoint here since research within resistance studies tend to give little attention to the involvement of the past in the eruption of conflicts. Heritage is also often narrowly regarded as culture or physical built environment. In this project resistance is seen as part of everyday life and understood in relation to identity politics and recognition.

“Heritage and Urban Resistance” aims to explore heritage-resistance interdependencies as expressed in various situational settings of conflict with the ambitions to activate an essentially new dialogue on how competing claims on heritage are connected with diverse forms of urban resistances, insurgencies, riots and protests. It will also generate other critical debates on the role of heritage authorities in the making of contemporary societies. The field research will be carried out in three cases: Gezi Park in Istanbul where urban riots erupted in June 2013 against the government’s plan to re-construct the Ottoman Military Barracks into a luxurious shopping mall and residences; Al-Qaryon Square in Nablus where revolts against the British Mandate and the Israeli Occupation have turned the square into a “public sphere” embedded in diverse forms of resistances; and Gamlestaden Square in Gothenburg where current massive development plans to re-construct the history of Nya Lödöse (1474-1624) as part of the present built environment of Gamlestaden have generated some tensions on “whose past” to emphasise. Our ethnographic fieldwork includes participatory observation, photographic documentation, interviews, workshops, meetings with several stakeholders.

The project will be carried out by two researchers from the University of Gothenburg: Feras Hammami (project leader), Department of Conservation, and Evren Uzer von Busch, School of Design and Crafts. The project is financed by the Swedish National Heritage Board (2015-2016).