

Chapter 6.

Symposium on cultural heritage and identity politics

11 October 2011

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Cultural Heritage and Identity Politics was the focus of the second Ibn Battuta symposium. The symposium addressed the various ways in which identity and the politics of identity and the production and signification of cultural heritage are entangled.

Roel During discussed identity politics in European heritage discourses. He started his presentation with the question: Dutch heritage, World heritage it seems so familiar to us, but what is European heritage? Can a windmill be both Dutch and European heritage? According to the Venice Charter governments have the obligation to take care of cultural heritage, the Faro convention focuses more on the value of cultural heritage for society. The Faro definition of cultural heritage claims its value as memory, identification and creativity. Cultural heritage and identity discourses coincide in the discussions on European citizenship, cross cultural understanding, economic specialization and tourism development. Roel During developed five models concerning the relation heritage and identity: (1) an Cartesian model suitable for regional branding; (2) a Narrative model suitable for achieving value consensus; (3) a Contextual model suitable for intercultural learning and stability; (4) an Onion model suitable for nesting identities; and (5) a Drifting model in which identities are constructed and reconstructed by internalising certain events. In the end also the issue of zero sum identity (more European identity necessarily implies less national identity and more regional identity implies less national identity) and the absence of a pluralist view on European society was addressed.

Itamar Even-Zohar, Professor Emeritus of Culture Research of Tel Aviv University spoke about the Identity dynamics between market and institutions. In his view identity work, is only partly overlapping with heritage work. According to him there is a decline of identity politics. Whereas in earlier days the making of identity was an indispensable in the making of a nation state (for example forming Italy out of many regions), nowadays many nation states are no longer dominant identity/image makers. Citizens accept power willingly because they already have the identity (for example being Italian). According to Mr. Even-Zohar heritage work is highly commodified and doesn't function for who it is designed. Heritage in his view is mostly a competition about 'who has the better goods' (in relation to tourism) than that is it about the signification for the life of people.

Then, Buitex Students Maaïke Andela and Ralph Tagelder shared their experiences concerning crossing borders. 'The Buitex' is a commission of the study association Genius Loci of the study Landscape architecture and Spatial Planning (Wageningen University). In the summer of 2010 they organised a trip with the main theme: 'Crossing borders'. The study area was the area around Dresden (Germany) and Wrocław (Poland). This region surprised the students with their turbulent history, great (landscape-)architecture, beautiful nature and most of all by the hidden stories between people and their landscape.

Ms. Rakefet Sela-Sheffy, Associate Professor at the Unit of Culture Research, Faculty of Humanities, Tel Aviv University, took us to the world of settlers, environmentalism and identity. Her main fields are identity and group-status, talk and self-representations, canon formation, cultural models, popular culture, cultural contacts, translation, pre-State and contemporary Israeli culture. She talked about a project concerning Israeli proto-environmentalism, grassroot processes and initiatives in Western Galilee in 1949-1965. The pilotstudy shows that the modern repertoire of nature loving attitudes and practices which were alien to the traditional communities served them as an exclusive resource for claiming status as locals (avant-garde). Moreover, the activists' had a sense of vacation which grew organically in the course of their lives.