**Working Title**

Contestation over the Production of Space and Cultural Heritage in Historical World Heritage Cities Within the Conflicted Ethnonational Political Context of a Settler Society.

**Introduction**

The proposed study aims to examine transformational official national and urban spatial planning and development policies within settler societies, following the adoption by these societies of neoliberal economic and global standards and values. The research will focus on the transformation of such policies within UNESCO-designated world heritage historical cities in settler societies.

The study will use detailed case studies in order to identify and understand points of conflict within cities that have been designated by UNESCO's World Heritage Committee as world heritage sites for their outstanding value for all humanity. By adopting neoliberal economic and global standards and values of cultural heritage conservation and tourism, these cities may experience a shift from state ownership and management of assets towards privatisation; and from a neglect of cultural assets towards conservation of cultural heritage and the development of cultural tourism.

The study will explore whether such policy shifts are able to adapt to the existing ethnonational structure, or

 conversely whether spatial control fractures as a result of economic liberalisation and the globalisation of cultural heritage and cultural tourism.

Accordingly, two main research questions will be posed:

1. Does the shift from national ownership towards privatisation adapt to accommodate the pre-existing ethnonational structure in an UNESCO world heritage city or does spatial control fracture as a result of the policy shift?
2. Does the shift from neglect of cultural assets toward conserving cultural heritage and developing cultural tourism, adapt to accommodate the pre-existing ethnonational structure in the city, or does spatial control fracture as a result of the shift in policy?

My primary approach will make use of the spatial control model in settler societies (Yiftachel and Ghanem 2004, 647-676). According to this model, land, planning and development policies are shaped by the "project" of the state, which expands the ethnonational control of the majority over multi-ethnic territory.

Analogously, cultural heritage production will be treated as a necessary equivalent to spatial control. Policies and practices of cultural heritage are inherently political and constitute an arena for contestation (Silverman 2011, 22). A significant motif in many heritage studies is the social structure of space and the necessary parallel of the contestation of space (*ibid*, 24).

The academic significance of the proposed research lies in its potential contribution to providing a greater understanding of the mutual effects and repercussions of radically different and conflicting processes within a city. In particular, these processes include a desire to maintain control over a city's space and heritage production by ethnization , isolating and blocking the rights of minority ethnonational groups, while simultaneously adopting neoliberal values and standards which are—at least ostensibly--blind to ethnicity and nationality. saying that, I intend to challenge neoliberal theories about the neutrality of privatisation and of the cultural heritage production. , .

By examining and interrogating the uniqueness of processes within world heritage historical cities and their relationships to the structural forces shaping these cities, I aim to shed fresh light onto the effect these forces have on social-political relations between various ethnonational groups inhabiting such cities.

To date, there has been little scholarship examining the complex dual realities in world heritage historical cities within settler societies. This study will therefore contribute to existing knowledge and scholarship by bridging gaps in the literature on contested spaces, in particular on the social-political aspects of spatial planning and development policies within settler societies, and on contested cultural heritage production. Through the case studies, the proposed study will contribute to broader questions concerning these phenomena, and to more specific problems relating to the cities examined.

Finally, the research is also significant for its potential contribution to useful knowledge and its practical impact on assessing the activities of spatial and development planning authorities as well as national cultural heritage bodies at a national level. Whereas at the transnational leval it will examine the role of UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage Committee as a transnational agency, , The study will also examine the rights, impact and roles of local residents in planning for the future of their city.

**Literature Review**

The territorial-spatial control system, i.e. land policy and planning and development policy, is one of the central stones settler societies are based on (Yiftachel & Ganem 2004, 765-766). While such policies are couched in the discourse of modernity, progress and democracy, the reality is that of dispossession and exclusion (*ibid*.). At an urban level, planning, land and development policies--despite their presentation as technocratic or neutral, professional and rational—are convenient tools by which dominant ethnic and social groups work to maintain their dominance within the city (Yiftachel & Yacobi 2003, 680).

Control over land is often combined with an urgent need to nurture official historical narratives that lend legitimacy to the regime's claims of its right to exist. Official cultural heritage, as embodying the collective national memory, is granted considerable importance by the state, and also by urban authorities. Multi-ethnic countries face particular challenges in determining and managing their cultural heritage (Silverman 2011, 25). There is an inherent assumption among state archaeologists and legislators that the past is a national asset whose interests precede the particular rights of groups that are generally called ethnic groups (*ibid*, 29). Conservation itself can be a means of suppressing the cultural identity of certain groups through constant public and formal rhetoric about cultural continuity, authentic heritage and the characterisation of the poor as "traditional" and "living in the past" e.g. China's proclamation of Tibet as a world heritage site (*ibid*).

In settler societies, similar questions arise about the relationships between space and memory, in particular with regard to erasing the "native" presence and creating a new historical consciousness. Critics of settler, and in particular colonial, societies have condemned them as "predators" or "plunderers" since they seek to erase "indigenous" memories, or at least to portray them as inferior in order to justify an occupation, takeover or settlement by foreigners (Harrison & Hughes, 2009, 269). Modernisation and capitalism can be related to colonial and national projects where the sense of cultural superiority of settler groups over indigenous groups serves as an ideological justification for planning and forgetting in space (Fenster & Yaacobi 2011,13).

**Methodology**

To address the research questions, I will use a qualitative research method and an instrumental case studies method. An instrumental case study is a common way to conduct qualitative research (Gerring 2004, 343) and will help shed light on the broad phenomena (Stake 2000, 435-438). For this purpose, the old city of Acre in northern Israel and another world heritage city with similar characteristics to old Acre will be chosen for comparison.

The data will be collected and analysed using two main research tools:

1. **Qualitative content analysis** (Shkedi 2003, 203): The study will analyse relevant official plans and documents of national and municipal bodies, including documents obtained under the "right to know" Act via applications submitted to relevant municipal and governmental bodies; with regard to old Acre these bodies include the municipality, the Amidar the national housing company, the Israel Land Administration (ILA) the owners of public housing, the Israeli Antiquities Authority (IAA) and the Acre Development Company. Similar plans, documents and official bodies will be addresses concerning the second case study. Correspondingly official transnational documents will be analyzed such as world cultural heritage and cultural tourism conventions, charters, and decisions with focus on world heritage historical cities. Planning and development documentation is essential to the research questions therefore the content and implementation of these documents will be fully examined.

**Semi-structured in-depth interviews**: The study will conduct and analyze interviews with key community figures including: social activists in formal and informal organisations, business owners and tourism entrepreneurs from within the community. As well as with official policymakers and policy implementers in the city. The interviews are designated to reveal the interviewees' ideas regarding the various processes studied, in particular privatisation, conservation of cultural heritage and development of cultural heritage tourism. A semi-structured in-depth interview is chosen as a research tool since the goal is to achieve an inextricable understanding of the feelings and attitudes involved in or arising from a particular political or social context (Gubrium & others 2012, 17-20).

**References**

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