

## **The contested nature of heritage and the dilemmas of building cultural citizenship: the case of Italy**

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**Abstract** This chapter considers the contested nature of cultural heritage and public memory in the context of two earthquake-hit cities, L'Aquila and Naples. It reflects upon how the underlying differences that are constitutive of the politics of heritage and memory become exposed in the event of a disaster and how disparate understandings and uses of heritage at the same time call into question the grandiloquent posturing of public intellectuals who view the architectural patrimony of Italy's historic centres as a cornerstone to cultivating a national cultural citizenship. Drawing on Spivak's idea of strategic essentialism, it is argued that if cultural heritage is to be effectively mobilized to counter undesirable reconstruction programmes or to resist the threat of speculation and evictions in historic centres, attention needs to be continually paid to its conceptual limits and internal differences otherwise heritage risks becoming the basis for an exclusionary and remonstrative vision of citizenship.

**Summary** 1. Enlightened liberals versus neoliberal realists. – 2. Heritage discourse in the face of disaster. – 3. L'Aquila: retaking a 'city of art'. – 4. Irrational memory and heretical heritage in post-earthquake Naples. – 5. Conclusion.

**Keywords** Contested heritage. Cultural citizenship. Strategic essentialism.

### **1 Enlightened liberals versus neoliberal realists**

Is our historic and artistic heritage supposed to create culture and citizenship (as stated in the Italian Constitution) or to produce money? Is it a common good or a market good? (Montanari 2013, front cover blurb).

What will be the fate of our historic centres? Are they the tiresome leftovers of a past that needs to be cancelled or a precious source of energies and memories? Are they the site for cultivating citizenship or the ball and chain dragging down 'modernity'? (Settis 2013, p. 539)

In the above quotes, the two prominent Italian art historians Tomaso Montanari and Salvatore Settis delineate what they see as key choices at stake for the future of cultural heritage in Italy. The questions they pose are essentially rhetorical because as heritage is perceived to be an incontro-

vertibly 'good thing' it should, of course, be aligned with the production of other good things such as 'culture', 'citizenship' and 'memories' and not with 'money', 'market' or 'modernity' (which here is taken to mean a threat to the historic fabric of cities). For Montanari and Settis, cultural heritage is much more than an aesthetic concern: it plays a vital role in the functioning and enrichment of civic life in Italy and thus requires public tutelage and investment. Their principal adversaries are seen to be those in government and the private sector who instead underscore the monetary value of Italy's cultural patrimony and pursue creative ways for unleashing its economic potential.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, not all tangible heritage is made up of 'good things'. There also exists the 'dark heritage' of, inter alia, concentration camps, battlefields and sites of massacres that have recently found themselves the focus of scholarly interest and a burgeoning tourist industry (see Stone 2013). Many celebrated monuments in Italy's historic centres are also the by-products of some very ugly and reactionary pasts. While Montanari and Settis might not necessarily disagree with this point, it tends nevertheless to be lost beneath an 'organicist' view of pre-modern urbanization that was purportedly guided by an overriding aesthetic and civic sensibility (see Settis 2002, pp. 28-29). The problem, however, is not that the two art historians – or their sworn enemies for that matter – might gloss over the fact that Italy's civic history is dotted with atrocities and despotism, rather that the present day significance of this past is endowed with intrinsic positive value, be it for cultivating citizenship or for making money.

I choose to begin with Montanari and Settis because I think they articulate some common presumptions within 'critical' debates about urban heritage in Italy. Montanari and Settis have played an influential role in shaping oppositional discourses to the marketization of heritage governance: the two have been at the forefront of campaigns against its privatization (Settis 2002; Montanari 2013), both have championed the provisions of the Italian Constitution in defending the nation's natural and cultural patrimony (Leone et al. 2013) and both have attempted to articulate heritage in terms of commons (Settis 2012; Montanari 2014). Their ostensibly militant approach has received resounding endorsement across the Italian Left as well as among civic and social movements.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the ideologi-

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1 For a classic example of this position, see the writings of Giuliano Urbani, former Culture Minister of the Second Berlusconi government (Urbani 2002). For a recent article calling for greater involvement of the private sector in the management of architectural monuments in Naples' historic centre, written in this case from the perspective of a member of the centre-left Democratic Party, see De Gregorio 2014.

2 The views of Settis and Montanari, for example, are regularly published or supported in the pages of the communist newspaper *il Manifesto* and the anti-political establishment daily *il Fatto Quotidiano*.

cal premises underpinning their vision of heritage – for example that it «constitutes the indispensable backbone of civil society and civic identity» (Settis 2002, p. 20) or that its collective fruition and public ownership can help «fully develop humanity» (Montanari 2014, p. 32) – have rarely been directly challenged.<sup>3</sup> At most, the theme of heritage has simply been ignored in favour of more pressing political concerns. This essay instead wants to grapple head on with the taken-for-granted correlations customarily made between the built heritage of Italian cities (which since the 1960s has been encapsulated in the idea of ‘*centro storico*’)<sup>4</sup> and claims about collective identity and active citizenship. The choices presented by Montanari and Settis in their opening quotes arguably set up a contrived dichotomy between, on the one hand, ‘enlightened liberals’ such as themselves committed to public engagement and nation building and, on the other, ‘neoliberal realists’ who laud the cultural industry as a stimulus for economic growth. As anthropologist Berardino Palumbo points out, the two positions actually share much in common: «both participate in a totally uncritical way in the ‘official’ discourse on cultural heritage, adopting metaphors, rhetorical techniques and poetics that are typical of the discursive arrangements [...] through which contemporary nation states aim to define a collective level of identification» (2003, p. 373). Moreover, such a dichotomy works to vacate heritage of all those mundane and clamorous disputes over use and meaning that contribute to its experience in everyday reality. Rejecting the conventional supposition that heritage is an indubitably ‘good thing’ is not to deny the virtuousness of certain battles fought out in its name; rather it is to insist that, like any socially-defined phenomenon, heritage needs to be understood as a dynamic and incomplete process that is perpetually shaped by power relations.

## 2 Heritage discourse in the face of disaster

This essay focuses on the historic centres of L’Aquila and Naples in the wake of the destruction and disruption wrought by two separate earthquakes. Both historic centres became the sites of intense conflict over the social, cultural and political significance of the urban built environment. In the case of L’Aquila, at the epicentre of the 2009 earthquake, a discourse about the loss of heritage and identity rapidly emerged as a vehicle for mobilizing opposition to the Berlusconi Government’s reconstruction program-

<sup>3</sup> A key exception is anthropologist Berardino Palumbo’s incisive critique of Salvatore Settis’ 2002 treatise on heritage *Italia S.p.A.* (Palumbo 2003, pp. 367-82).

<sup>4</sup> For a critical overview of the history of the idea of the Italian *centro storico*, see Dines 2012, pp. 29-32.

me that prioritized the construction of new satellite settlements over the restoration of the evacuated city centre. In the case of Naples, hit by an earthquake in 1980, heritage was less of an immediate public concern, in part due to the lesser scale of damage; nevertheless during the following decade the proposal of wholesale demolition in the historic centre's low-income popular neighbourhoods would be successfully blocked by a media campaign coordinated by the city's so-called 'enlightened bourgeoisie'.

While a heritage discourse about the historic centre in Naples represented an embryonic and narrow interest during the 1980s, by the time L'Aquila was struck by an earthquake in 2009 cultural heritage had become a consolidated topic of media and political debate. The Abruzzo capital has in fact been assumed by numerous public figures, especially Montanari and Settis, as a symbol of the plight of the nation's cultural heritage. Settis has declared L'Aquila to be Italy's true capital of art «because in no other place is the link between the material ruins of an exquisite historic centre and the moral and social ruins of our society so painfully clear» (2013, p. 539). In May 2013 Montanari convened a meeting of art historians in L'Aquila to protest the tardy restoration of the city's historic centre. In his address to the assembled audience, he declared that «L'Aquila is not a local problem but an Italian tragedy [...] The centre of L'Aquila is a single monument of absolute cultural value that belongs to the Nation and from now on the Nation must be at the service of L'Aquila».<sup>5</sup> Claims about the civic function of heritage intensified in L'Aquila. As a source of collective identity it was declared by both Settis and Montanari to be crucial to rebuilding a sense of community and citizenship. At the same time, however, it was seen to be facing extinction. The former inhabitants of the historic centre (sometimes identified simply as «Aquilani») had been «deported» by an «enemy» national government to apartments in isolated blocks that were veritable «non-towns [...] without a bar, a newspaper kiosk, a square, a school, a church or meeting place» (Settis 2013, p. 542). Depleted of its population, a restored historic centre risked turning into a simulacrum of its former self: a heritage theme park akin to a «twenty-first century Pompeii» (Montanari 2013, p. 72) for the benefit of paying sightseers. In his presentation to the one hundred art historians gathered in L'Aquila in 2013, Montanari exclaimed «we must tell today's Italians that their cities are beautiful not to simply please tourists but to give form to their political and civil life»; words that were greeted with a resounding applause.

Significantly, certain rallying calls in L'Aquila after 2009 about safeguarding local identity or opposing the 'deportation' of residents held very different implications in Naples after 1980. During the aftermath of

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5 A video of Tomaso Montanari's speech in L'Aquila can be viewed at <http://laquila5magio.wordpress.com/2013/05/07/236/> (2014-06-02).

the earthquake, many considered large swathes of Naples' old city to be eminently expendable. Moreover, the fraught relationship between authoritative notions of monumentality and the socio-cultural practices of the popular classes who dominated the city's historic centre has always made the construction of a political project around a common sense of heritage in Naples a particularly complicated and arduous task. However, as I want to argue, this does not mean that one can presume that there existed consensus over the meaning of heritage in L'Aquila, either before or after the 2009 earthquake. Montanari's assertion, made during his 2013 speech, that the post-earthquake reconstruction of L'Aquila should have taken its cue from the city's thirteenth-century founders who created piazzas, fountains and churches before building houses in order to lay the foundations for a civic culture, overlooks the fact that for most former residents the city's historic centre was first and foremost 'a home' and that the claims to more intimate attachments to place – especially among ex-tenants and *fuori sede* students who were less likely to ever return – had become sidelined.

The following theoretical reflections build on a series of ethnographic insights: in the first case, they draw on encounters and observations made during a visit to L'Aquila in 2010 and, in the second case, they are based on extensive oral history research conducted in the historic centre of Naples between 2002 and 2003 as a long-term resident of the city.<sup>6</sup> Given the different degrees of personal acquaintance with the two cases, my aim is not to proffer explanations about the myriad ways in which heritage is understood and experienced in the two cities<sup>7</sup> but rather to compare and contemplate the discernible disparity between heritage discourses and everyday meanings of the *centro storico*.

### 3 L'Aquila: retaking a 'city of art'

The first time I visited L'Aquila was on Sunday 28 February 2010 on the day of the 'Wheelbarrow Revolt', a self-organized initiative by local people to highlight the fact that, almost a year after the earthquake, piles of untouched rubble were still amassed in the sealed-off areas of the historic centre. I was told by two accompanying friends – one local, the other

6 The 'Memory and Place in the Twentieth-Century Italian City' project was based at University College London and ran from 2001 and 2005. The project website can be accessed at: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/place-and-memory/> (2015-09-15). For the study of Naples, a total of 42 testimonies were collected in individual and group interviews. For a more detailed discussion of this research, see Dines 2013b.

7 For a more detailed analysis of the politics of cultural heritage in Naples over the last two decades, see Dines 2012, 2013a.

formerly employed in L'Aquila – that a tacit agreement had been reached with the authorities to allow a small group into Piazza Palazzo, less than 100 metres inside the public exclusion zone, in order to create a human chain that would then symbolically remove some of the detritus. I had been following the reconstruction of L'Aquila closely, in part because my research in Naples had stimulated an ongoing interest in the social and political impact of earthquakes. The initial discomfort that I felt as an outsider walking into the destroyed city was alleviated the moment the three of us found ourselves among the cluster of people assembled in the central Piazza Duomo, many of whom had started to reanimate the few reopened streets of the historic centre during the previous weeks.

My research on Naples had sought to unearth the prosaic aspects of the earthquake that had been consigned to oblivion, deemed irrelevant or simply excluded from public memories of the event. Like any natural disaster, the 1980 earthquake was an extraordinary occasion that had simultaneously exposed and interrupted people's complex ties with their homes and neighbourhoods. At the same time it provided an archive for an array of dramatic stories, grotesque yarns and irreverent anecdotes that had been recited and reworked over the years. Such an approach would have been out of place in L'Aquila. Even if the earthquake of 6 April 2009 had immediately produced divergent memories, the disaster was still too recent and raw for an intervention of oral history intent on upsetting any semblance of narrative order. However, this first visit to L'Aquila would convince me that the various ruptures in accounts about post-earthquake Naples could help place into perspective the problems of constructing a shared collective memory of a disaster, which the 'Wheelbarrow Revolt' would unexpectedly raise.

At around midday that Sunday, we decided to leave the piazza and head towards the nearby Quattro Cantoni, the crossroads designated as the point of entry into the 'Red Zone'. A mix of people had already begun to gather: women and men, young and old, toddlers in pushchairs and the odd adult nervously monitoring the crowd as if to make sure that everything was running to plan. On the corner between Corso Vittorio Emanuele and Corso Principe Umberto a wire fence marked the edge of the restriction zone. This otherwise flimsy line of defence was rendered imposing by the presence of a small contingent of military personnel. As it swelled, the crowd began to press forward seeking to breach an entry. In no time a section of the fence was trampled to the ground and one by one people calmly ventured into the forbidden city. In contradiction to what was later reported by press agencies, there were no particular tensions with the armed forces. The soldiers were somewhat relaxed: they neither spoke nor displayed any intention to intervene.

At the same time, heated voices rose from within the crowd. A tall male in his twenties with dyed red hair who I had already identified as one of the organizers was loudly scolding a middle-aged woman who, with camera

at hand, was eager to capture the event for posterity. «Madam! Why are you taking photos?! These photos should have been taken a year ago. I teach at the academy in L'Aquila and I tell you that this is Italy's third city of art!!! Look at the state of the monuments. You can't take photos now». As he reprimanded the woman, people were now passing through the gap in the fence in droves, presumably many more than the number agreed with the authorities. A number of rebukes could be heard: «don't enter!!», «don't do anything dramatic!!» and then, as if surrendering to the reality of the situation, «please enter in an orderly manner!». Another altercation erupted between a teenager who wanted at all costs to enter into the Red Zone and a woman in her fifties who rebuked him: «Look - she said - I'm from the historic centre like yourself but your attitude is completely wrong! This is **our** historic centre so we must all act civilly».

In the end, the 'Wheelbarrow Day', which involved over 6,000 participants, was considered a great success. Many underlined its strong political and symbolic value. Besides contributing to the removal of rubble, it represented a collective response to the nonexistent reconstruction of the centre and to the restrictions imposed on public gatherings across the city. Part of this success can probably be credited to the nonchalance of many in defiance of attempts to choreograph the outcome of the protest.

Certainly one needs to be careful not to extrapolate from the fragments of conversation reported above or to pass judgement on what were ultimately brief moments, especially given that this was my first visit to post-earthquake L'Aquila. Nevertheless, with these due caveats heeded, what is interesting about the reproaches against those wishing to infiltrate the Red Zone or against those simply snapping photographs is not that they reveal divergent points of view (inevitable in any moment of collective action) but that they invoke the idea of the historic centre as a site of cultural heritage. Precisely at the moment when the Aquilani were retaking the heart of their city that had been devastated by the earthquake and subsequently abandoned by government authorities, the historic centre was experienced as a space of distinction: not between 'indigenous' Aquilani and outsiders or between property owners and former tenants, but between those who viewed themselves as the legitimate interpreters of the cultural heritage and civic identity that the historic centre was seen to convey and those who did not. It is not important whether or not L'Aquila can rightfully be claimed to be 'Italy's third city of art': by pronouncing these words the organizer sought to establish the issues at stake and ultimately who gets to define them.

If anything, the verbal exchanges at the Quattro Cannoni should encourage us to interrogate the role that ideas about the historic centre can play in the construction of a collective narrative of the earthquake. The import attributed by intellectuals and local residents alike to the unifying dimension of the historic centre of L'Aquila as an urban symbol, a fulcrum of public life or simply the home for many people was undoubtedly

fundamental to building opposition to the government's reconstruction programme. The question that needs to be posed, however, is to what extent the definition of the historic centre *as cultural heritage* is able or willing to acknowledge and embrace those messy combination of claims, attachments and desires that are embedded in any one place and which most likely have little to do with the fact that L'Aquila is a 'city of art'? Moreover, what added significance might this discourse acquire in the event of a catastrophe such as an earthquake? Might not those more intimate and perhaps unrefined attachments be censured as indecorous and inappropriate or simply be muffled because they refer to a city that no longer exists? How far might a heritage discourse incite a particular vision of what it means to be 'Aquilano', to be part of a 'community', to possess or lay claim to a specific 'identity'? For decades critical debates about 'community' and 'identity' (see Cohen 1985; Young 1990; Hall and Du Gay 1996; Waterton and Smith 2010) have underlined how the urge for a mutual sense of belonging can work to exclude those considered as different and that this 'Other' is always already among 'Us'. It would seem that such debates hold little currency for public intellectuals such as Salvatore Settis, for whom local identity remains rooted in clear-cut territorial differences and incarnated in the stones that make up Italy's historic centres (Settis 2013, p. 541).

A useful analytical tool for prising open the ramifications of claims about a common heritage in the name of an agonistic citizenship is the notion of 'strategic essentialism', famously introduced by the postcolonial theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1987). Strategic essentialism refers to the political tactic employed by members of a minority group who temporarily act in the public arena on the basis of a shared identity in order to struggle against oppression and injustice. Although ideas such as 'Indian' or 'women' rest upon a forced sense of homogeneity, claims made in their name have been effective in obtaining precise political or social objectives. Through this interpretative key, it could be argued that both the people of L'Aquila and the city's historic centre found themselves catapulted into a position of subalternity after 6 April 2009, not so much as a result of the earthquake but due to the way in which both were treated by central government. In other words, the idea of the historic centre as the source of a common identity functioned *tactically* as a means to mobilize against the government's reconstruction programme and to expose its insidious promises.

According to Spivak, however, for a strategically essentialist position to be effective in the long term and to avoid turning into another instrument of oppressive power, it needs to continually recognize its conceptual limits and call into question internal differences. When a simplified and unequivocal representation of a group or place ceases to be a political expedient and its internal dynamics are glossed over, this crystallizes into a fixed



category that risks legislating the meaning of a given reality. Amidst the plurality of subjects who infiltrated the Red Zone on 28 February 2010, the obeisance to the 'city of art' and 'civil behaviour' can be interpreted as a roll call that moves in the opposite direction to the disorderly crowd. It chimes with both the enlightened liberal and neoliberal realist discourses that presuppose a causal link between the tangible heritage of the historic centre and a circumscribable sense of collective identity. Berardino Palumbo convincingly defines such a formula as «patrimonial common sense» (2006, p. 372). Even those cultural critics who have assumed radical positions against privatization or building speculation tend, argues Palumbo, «to ignore, or worse, remove the internal, intimate dimension of the meanings and everyday routine social practices in favour of safeguarding ideal, abstract and normative-institutional entities» (pp. 376-77). Ironically, while many of Italy's public intellectuals, media pundits and politicians are quick to reel off aphorisms about an increasingly complex society (especially when required to justify the rollback of collective social gains), dominant discourses about cultural heritage and identity instead tend to be anchored to descriptions of a simplified social reality based on selective representations of the past.

#### **4 Irrational memory and heretical heritage in post-earthquake Naples**

The fact that a historic centre *after* a disaster can become the focus of internal conflicts over memory and heritage is effectively demonstrated in the autobiographical testimonies of the earthquake in the popular neighbourhoods of Naples. Before proceeding, some contextual information is required. Besides the difference in scale between the two cities (Naples' historic centre has a population forty times that of L'Aquila), the consequences of the 1980 earthquake on Naples were far less severe. Naples was located eighty kilometres from the epicentre of the tremor while L'Aquila sat on top of it. Compared to the 277 victims in Abruzzo's capital, there were roughly seventy victims in Naples most of whom perished in the collapse of a single building in the industrial suburb of Poggioreale. Nevertheless, there are a number of important analogies between the two tremors. As in L'Aquila, it was Naples' historic centre that suffered the most disruption. Many areas of the centre were evacuated and isolated from the rest of the city by brick walls that were erected across streets and by giant cages of scaffolding that propped up tenement blocks. Commentators spoke of a 'cold' earthquake that accelerated pre-existing static, social and economic problems (see Compagna 1981). For example, during the decade before the earthquake up to 250 families in the historic centre were

annually issued with eviction orders as a direct result of the perilous state of the area's housing stock (see Belli 1986, p. 79). With the tremor almost 10,000 buildings, mainly in the poorest neighbourhoods of the historic centre, were declared uninhabitable and more than 100,000 residents had to abandon their homes (p. 63). Many thousands would never return.

The earthquake reignited social conflict in Naples, which during the previous decade had been an almost constant feature of urban life across Italy. Residents of the central popular neighbourhoods were involved in the occupation of public buildings and empty private homes and, with many having lost their jobs in the informal economy, swelled the ranks of the organized unemployed movement. In the meantime, the official post-earthquake reconstruction of Naples focused on the creation of new housing and social infrastructure in the city's periphery and surrounding towns. The project, coordinated by the communist-run local administration, was premised on the need to alleviate the high population density in the historic centre and to socially and physically integrate marginalized areas on the edge of the city. Besides emergency repairs to the worst hit buildings, the dilapidated historic centre was for the most part excluded from reconstruction.

Like any natural disaster, the 1980 earthquake was an extraordinary occasion that had simultaneously exposed and interrupted people's complex ties with their homes and neighbourhoods. At the same time the earthquake produced an archive of dramatic stories, grotesque yarns and irreverent anecdotes that were recited and reworked over the years. Memories about the tremor were determined by individual circumstances which, in turn, were influenced by variables such as social class, gender and, above all, different attachments to place. Even the perception of the event as a 'disaster' was sometimes called into question. Indeed, the most interesting aspect to emerge from the oral history research was the way in which certain memories interfered with the smooth, linear structures of public histories of the event.

This was very much the case with the use of the term 'deportation' that over the last three decades term has often been the object of ferocious public controversy. Today its mere mention in public can still provoke anger and disdain, such as among many of the same planners who have railed against the transfer of L'Aquila residents to Berlusconi's 'new towns'. However, it was also a word that featured frequently during the interviews in Naples. The common feeling was that the exodus of city-centre residents was not the inevitable outcome of a natural disaster but the upshot of a general design that was carried out beyond the control of the local population. The decision to use the highly loaded word 'deportation' purposely aimed to illustrate the way in which many people experienced displacement following the earthquake and to allude to the deep social divisions that this process exposed. It not only implied the loss of a home but

also the passing of an irreplaceable social and cultural habitus. Families rehoused in high-rise blocks found themselves cut off from the bustling life of the city-centre popular neighbourhoods. On occasions recollections were ambivalently caught between the objective discomfort represented by a family's original cramped 'basso' (the classic one-room dwelling in Naples' historic centre) and the modern, spacious new apartment in the suburbs. However, the objective improvement in housing conditions remained bound to an experience of estrangement.

In contrast, for those who managed the post-earthquake reconstruction – first and foremost the left-wing administration that governed Naples between 1975 and 1983 – 'deportation' was, and still is, not only a false but also an unspeakable argument. It is summarily associated with the Red Brigades who, active in Naples after the earthquake, made explicit use of the term in their leaflets in order to, according to the then mayor Maurizio Valenzi, «exploit the concerns of the families tied to the so-called slum economy» (Wanderlingh 1988, p. 43). While it is true that members of the armed struggle adopted the word in the hope of whipping up wider support, it was certainly not sprung upon a naïve and ignorant population. On the contrary, the term had already been popularized before the earthquake in opposition to evictions in the historic centre.

It was not just its use on the part of terrorist organizations that rendered 'deportation' unutterable: the word touched a raw nerve in the way it disavowed the achievements of the communist-sponsored periphery plan and made it indistinguishable from the slipshod structures and widespread corruption that would mark the later phases of reconstruction (see De Lucia 2010, pp. 52-55, 59). In other words, the controversy over 'deportation' points to a discrepancy between an idea of reconstruction measured according to the rational indices of town planning and a sense of uprootedness from social networks that pays scant regard to people-per-room ratios. In the «enlightened-progressive»<sup>8</sup> accounts of the 1980 earthquake, the former prevails as 'scientific' memory while the latter is incommensurable, inappreciable and contradictory. What is suggested, in other words, is that the charge of 'deportation' not only arouses the memory of political violence but is also ultimately irrational.

The limited reconstruction of the historic centre of Naples after the earthquake soon made it attractive to an insatiable building industry buoyed by the growing flow of public money towards the earthquake zones. The most notable case was the 'Reign of the Possible', an ambitious project launched in 1986 and supported by national and local politicians that proposed the demolition and redesign of entire historic neighbourhoods.

8 The adjective «enlightened-progressive» was coined by Attilio Belli to describe the reconstruction vision that inspired the authors of the periphery plan (Belli 1986, p. 63).

According to its supporters, the project would have solved Naples' chronic problems by providing the historic centre with new housing, services, economic activities that would draw back the middle classes without expelling the area's existing residents.

The unintended consequence of this overblown and unrealistic project was to trigger the city's first-ever historic centre protection campaign coordinated by a vociferous and media-savvy coterie of cultural associations, intellectuals and architects. The alliance mobilized in the name of the whole city to save Naples from the bulldozers and to defend its unique ancient heritage that had been further impaired by the earthquake. The campaign's strategy of raising national and international interest in the affair played a decisive role in eventually blocking the Reign of the Possible. This success would be celebrated by many local commentators as one of the few glimmers of hope in an otherwise dark period of the city's history (see Barbagallo 1997). The campaign indicated the presence of a combative civil society that would later contribute to the urban regeneration of the 1990s - the so-called 'Neapolitan Renaissance' - that revolved around the idea of the historic centre as a site of cultural heritage and civic pride (see Dines 2012).

The Reign of the Possible affair has always been publicly recounted from the antithetical positions of an elite group of heritage campaigners and a consortium of building contractors. Right from the start, the historic centre residents themselves were either absent from discussion or merely instrumental to the ambitions of the respective sides. Yet, neither conservation nor redevelopment was necessarily in tune with the everyday issues of collective consumption or local place attachments inside the popular neighbourhoods.

Those residents interviewed who had been involved after the earthquake in anti-eviction struggles or in the occupation of schools remembered the slogan '167 in the historic centre!' (the number refers to the 1962 law that provides for social housing in Italy). In the memories of one interviewee who before 1980 resided in a *basso* in the Spanish Quarters, one of the poorest and most stigmatised neighbourhoods of central Naples, the earthquake represented the first stage in his personal path of politicization:

We demanded a stop to the deportation of residents and the 167 in the historic centre. [ND: *You mean the 167 law, in other words the plan was for new buildings?*] Yes, the 167. We called it block-by-block demolition [...] You remove 100 families then you demolish the whole block and instead of just rehousing 100 families you put 200 families into the new buildings, so you manage to have loads more homes than you have now [ND: *What about the idea of restoring historic buildings?*] That was not part of our idea. OK a historic building, an example of good architecture like the odd historic church, yes they should remain. But many buildings

don't have any meaning [*ND: Even if they're old?*] Even if they are old – like the building where I used to live: there's nothing historical about it. It's just a building built by the Spanish as a garrison for soldiers [*note: like most other buildings in the neighbourhood*]. It doesn't have a great architectural history: it's a normal building. (Ciro Coppola (pseudonym), interviewed 30 November 2002).

'167 in the historic centre!' was an intentionally provocative slogan that responded to a precise need and desire: to remain in the city centre. None of the residents interviewed – both those who had been relocated to the suburbs and those who continued to live in the historic centre – expressed a preference for living in a historic building. The call for high-rise social housing in the historic centre needs to be interpreted as a way of resisting evictions and protecting social ties with the neighbourhood. Such a request was an anathema to both the heritage activists and the construction firms, just as it would no doubt have been two decades later in L'Aquila to both Salvatore Settis and Silvio Berlusconi. Indeed, unlike the disruptive encroachment of the word 'deportation' into debates about the reconstruction, '167 in the historic centre' has essentially been removed from the dominant public memory of the 1980 earthquake in Naples. Moreover, the slogan acquires significance only if one takes the effort to comprehend the seriousness and complexity of the underlying demands, otherwise it amounts to little more than a quirky curiosity.

## 5 Conclusion

The pronouncements of the former Spanish Quarters resident – the refusal to ascribe architectural worth to the seventeenth-century tenement block that was once his home and the desire to increase the population of an already crowded neighbourhood – illustrate what Michael Herzfeld has termed the «clash between the two ethical systems [of] housing and heritage» (Ben-Yehoyada 2012, p. 66). The issue here is not one of iconoclasm or a lack of sensitivity towards the city's rich history. It is about the social significance that is invested in housing vis-à-vis the power to decide which edifices are valued, conserved, demolished or built. As such, the former resident points to an experience of the old city that exists in contraposition to both the 'enlightened liberal' and 'neoliberal realist' discourses about the historic built environment. This is the intangible heritage of social connections and networks that have accrued over time in a particular place. This type of heritage is inevitably embedded in the built and open spaces of the city but it does not necessarily insist upon their preservation or unalterableness. The struggle against 'deportation' in Naples during the 1980s can thus be understood as a form of heritage protection, just as can the more

recent deployment of the same term by Montanari and Settis in L'Aquila. However, in the latter case, the 'deportation' to satellite settlements is set up as the immoral antithesis to the restoration of L'Aquila's historic centre not simply because this will destroy the local community but because the peripheries of Italian cities are, according to the art historians, generally places «where there is no heritage» (Montanari 2014, p. 78-79). In Naples, on the contrary, 'deportation' was not automatically incompatible with the transfer of residents to new apartment blocks, but only on the condition that these were built in the historic centre. Accordingly, the slogan of the '167 in the centre' should be comprehended as endorsement for the fluid and contested process of 'heritage-in-the-making'. Indeed, if heritage is to be seen as a building block for an inclusive cultural citizenship, a truly democratic discourse about the architectural patrimony of cities has to acknowledge the right to philologically incorrect ways of inhabiting historic centres (see Palumbo 2003), however potentially 'destructive' these may be.

To affirm that a historic centre is socially and culturally differentiated is to state the obvious. And yet, if we are not careful to disentangle the contradictory threads that have woven together the collective mobilizations for the historic centre in post-earthquake L'Aquila with its simultaneous declaration as a monument of universal value, the symbolic and political role assigned to this place will end up smothering the existence of different and at times conflicting relationships with the city. The risk is that the historic centre is no longer experienced in strategic opposition to the pernicious reconstruction programme of the Berlusconi government (as this indeed was), but that it becomes an expedient to bolster other mechanisms and processes that, in the meantime, enter into play, such as homilies about good citizenship behaviour, the regulation of public decorum and, in the long term, gentrification.

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