

## **Contesting heritage: when does heritage become reimagined or contested?**

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When we speak of reimagining heritage, one of prominent aspects to consider is contesting heritage. Why does heritage become contested depends on the situation; it may be down to active exclusion or persecution of a minority of any kind (eg religious, sexual, ethnic...), to a sudden or gradual political, religious or ideological change in the area; to a disconnection between the deciding bodies and the wider public with the heritage and possibly groups it most affects, which causes underestimation of its actual importance; lack of funds can mean decisions will be made about which heritage “really” matters; and many more reasons.

Whatever the reason, the resulting fate of the heritage in question – and people directly and indirectly connected to it – can be bleak: whether it is physical heritage or other, loss of heritage can and does occur when it is contested, and once lost, it may be difficult to rescue it from its fate of decline. With technology, some ways of aiding restoration and showcasing lost heritage are becoming available to us, but time will have to tell how successful those techniques will be, and we should not be lulled into thinking them enough. It is therefore prudent to explore contesting in the scope of reimagining to create a broad picture of what it means in practice, and apply this knowledge when dealing with difficult heritage situations or questions on daily basis.