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URBAN HERITAGE AT THE CITY OUTSKIRTS: DIALECTICS BETWEEN THE OFFICIAL AND THE UNOFFICIAL

Abstract:

Memory, cultural identity and urban heritage are concepts that are strongly linked.

The Charter of Krakow (1965) defines the architectural heritage as “the amount of humankind works in which a community is able to recognize a cultural or emotional, physical or intangible, historical or technical value”. Therefore, this notion of built heritage leads to a new view which comprises testimonies of culture, not only in terms of artistic expression but in terms of memory and daily life.

This modern view sets up a dynamic concept of “built heritage”: due to the fact that cultural values are changing over time throughout societies, the assimilation of architectural works into the collective memory is an endless process, with its changes and new additions.

So the democratization of the concept of heritage is a prior issue, otherwise we will face a rough division between the heritage which is listed and preserved by the official institutions, and the other which relies on local identity terms. This second one will be usually perceived as “the authentic and emotionally true heritage” by the citizens, meanwhile the “Official one” will not always match with this one. In this case, appears an “unofficial heritage” which is out of the official urban policies and is also endangered, because of the lack of specific preservation laws.

In the case of the suburbs of large cities, urban heritage takes an additional interest. In this case of study, we analyze the Madrilian neighbourhood of Carabanchel, which was a former town for centuries, before its forced annexation to Madrid in 1948, during General Franco’s Dictatorship. Now Carabanchel is a popular working class neighbourhood, where is still possible to detect a strong local identity.

Usually the outskirts are seen as dull and uninteresting places instead of the glorious city centers full of history and monuments. The importance of drawing attention to the buildings and sites that gather the collective memory of these peripheral areas of the outskirts plays a key role for urban planners, if we think in terms of ensuring local identity and social cohesion.

In the case of Carabanchel, its main urban landmark, the Jail (erected during the dictatorship), was demolished by the Government in 2008, among the protests and demonstrations of the local people, who claimed for a museum or a memorial center at that place. This building was not listed as “official heritage” and now residential towers are going to be built there.

So, the main hypothesis that motivates this research is to demonstrate the existence of an *identity urban heritage* that can be identified as such by the local community, as well as it does not always match with the official lists made by the City Councils. Additionally, we will find how the people are not always joined to the official listed heritage, appearing a worrying gap between them. For achieving this conclusion, surveys and mental maps drawn by the neighbours of Carabanchel will play a significant role in this research.