

Heritage, identity and refugees in the 21st century Europe

This paper is concerned with the concepts of identity, memory and heritage with regards to refugees/forced migrants and in the context of contemporary Europe. The starting point is the idea that any movements of people (including the forced one that refugees have to endure) have at their heart the encounter between new comers and local communities. These encounters translate into new stories, new materialities and visual discourses. In the longer term, these elements may contribute to the formation of new forms and practices of a shared heritage. However, amongst new comers, of refugees, the idea of cultural heritage is not straightforward and in order to be embedded into new shared cultural practices, it needs to be revalued and recreated through personal memories.

This paper aims to understand if and how displaced individuals, like refugees, embed the idea of heritage in their personal memories, through the act of remembering. I argue that cultural groups, including refugees, redefine and revalue their heritage (primarily in its intangible form) only once individual memories have triggered and embodied the act of remembering as a cultural practice.