**Uses of the past: Contesting heritage in Xi’an**

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Recent development of Xi’an illustrates how local authorities are rebuilding an imagined ancient capital of China tied to the remote Tang dynasty, a mark of the glory of Chinese civilization. Based on instrumental uses of the past, the municipal government has implemented heritage plans to create an aesthetically beautiful and economically valuable destination for display and tourism consumption. This study contributes to an understanding of the contested nature of heritage in the rapidly shifting urban landscape of contemporary China. Rather than fully following the official script, participants in the heritage industry have different responses to the changing social and living environment in Xi’an. Despite the nation-state’s overwhelming involvement in people’s daily lives, I suggest that there is still a space where individuals may challenge the dominant narrative. While such challenges might not replace the existing official discourse, people adapt, negotiate and contest heritage practices to pursue their own interests.

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