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Dynamics of Heritagization in Urban Regeneration: East-West Dichotomy

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ABSTRACT

Heritagization, the process of assigning heritage value to places, objects, or traditions, has become increasingly entwined with urban regeneration initiatives. However, its theoretical grounding remains underdeveloped, particularly regarding its diverse expressions across Eastern and Western contexts. This study examines the dynamics of heritagization as both a cultural and socio-political process within urban regeneration, drawing on the framework of Critical Heritage Studies. Using a descriptive qualitative methodology and global case-based literature review, the research dissects how heritage is strategically reinterpreted to fulfil contemporary socio-economic and political goals. Findings reveal a clear East–West dichotomy: while Western practices often commodify heritage for branding and tourism, Eastern cases reflect heritage as a tool for identity reconstruction, post-colonial resilience, and state-led gentrification.. The study argues that heritagization should be understood not as a Western-centric imposition but as a globally variable process shaped by local agency, historical context, and development agendas. To support this claim, the paper presents comparative process diagrams delineating regional differences. Ultimately, this research contributes to a more nuanced, decolonised understanding of heritagization in the heritage discourse.

Highlights:	Contribution to the field statement:
- Offers a systematic categorization of heritagization research by case study, region and socio-economic outcomes, arranged chronologically by year. - Examines the origins of the heritagization process. - Analyses the dynamics of heritagization across diverse geographical regions. - Identifies recurring dynamics of heritagization influencing urban regeneration in both Eastern and Western contexts. - Provides process diagrams illustrating the East-West dichotomy of heritagization. - Challenges the notion that heritagization is primarily a Western phenomenon.	This study contributes to Critical Heritage Studies (CHS) by uncovering the recurring dynamics of heritagization that underly urban regeneration initiatives across both Eastern and Western contexts. It advances CHS scholarly understanding by framing heritage as a socio-political construct shaped through the interplay of national policies, socio-economic dimensions and institutionalized frameworks. Furthermore, the study provides process diagrams that conceptualize the East-West dichotomy in heritagization. By mapping the "of," "to," and "for" dimensions of heritagization, the process diagram critically highlights how socio-political agendas influence and direct heritagization processes beyond the conventional focus on heritage preservation.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

Heritagization describes the transformation of objects, activities or places into something deemed worth preserving as heritage, contrasting it with items seen as expendable or exchangeable. This idea is rooted in Roman law, as discussed by Sucharitkul (1987) in the context of international law's treatment of the "common heritage of mankind" (Davallon, 2019). Heritagization also involves the designation, affirmation or reaffirmation of cultural heritage through the attribution of specific values, effectively framing heritage as an ongoing process (Sjöholm, 2016). Walsh (1992) expressed concerns about this phenomenon, noting that it often reduces authentic heritage places to mere tourist spaces. This transformation is achieved through the selective incorporation of various historical images, which can lead to the deterioration or even mortification of the authentic heritage. In Walsh's view, heritagization also encompasses how dominant groups appropriate and reinterpret the past for socio-economic gain beneath the veil of the "heritage industry" (Preucel, 1993). Expanding on Walsh's perspectives, Harrison (2012) characterized heritagization as the transformation of utilitarian objects and spaces into artifacts designed for presentation and showcase, thereby integrating them into established heritage discourses.

Regarding the theoretical dimensions of heritagization and its relation to scale, Harvey (2015) examined how concepts of scale, territory, and boundaries influence the creation of heritage. He emphasized the importance of understanding the interplay between local communities and heritage-making processes, noting that these dynamics significantly affect heritage production and practice. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1999) critiqued the impact of heritagization on local populations, arguing that it often transforms community members from proprietors of heritage sites into performers or cultural ambassadors. The process of heritagization is inherently selective, prompting critical inquiries into the socio-economic factors that shape and influence it. This selective nature needs critical exploration of how particular cultural objects are deliberately recognized as heritage, while others are excluded or disregarded (Mai Le, 2021).

Heritagization in this vein creates a separation between the everyday world and the realm of heritage objects, whether tangible or intangible. This separation can evoke a sense of continuity with the past or highlight a stark difference. It generates knowledge about the object and its origins, reflecting the present society's socio-economic values and helping to contextualize the significance of designating it as heritage (Davallon, 2019). Due to this, Kock (2023) indicates that the process of heritagization is often critiqued for diminishing the significance, as heritage is reinterpreted through a historically romanticized and secular lens.

1.2 Problem Statement and Research Gap

In cultural heritage discourse, literature previously addressed two primary themes. The first examines how globalization and urbanization influence cultures, traditionally linked to sovereign nation-states, particularly regarding the spread of Western practices in heritage conservation and management (Harrison 2013; Labadi and Long 2010; Meskell 2015). The second theme explores the politics and ethics of intercultural postcolonial encounters, which globalization has intensified, prompting critical assessments of Westernized heritage practices among Indigenous and minority communities (Biehl *et al.* 2015). Winter (2014) stresses that there is a lack of comprehensive theorization of the emerging issues at a global scale within cultural heritage studies (Colomer,2017). Davallon (2019) extends on this by stating that the concept of "heritage" today is characterized by a degree of instability, as it encompasses conflicting realities. As a result, the effort to define the term precisely has shifted towards studying "heritagization," which refers to the process by which an object or a practice acquires the symbolic status of heritage. All these issues are intrinsically tied to the creation of heritage and bring attention to the foundational process of heritagization. This foundational process also involves the appropriation, construction, socio-economic influences societal representation of heritage (Margry 2011: 335, Milošević, 2017). This brings forward the novel idea of a "heritage

regime," which marks a significant shift from traditional interpretations of heritage towards the dynamic nature of heritagization (Gravari-Barbas,2022). In this view, heritagization has emerged as a central mechanism within cultural heritage discourse and often marks the unconscious starting point for any discussion related to heritage (Kajda, 2019).

1.3 Objectives and Hypotheses

Critical heritage[1] scholars have examined the heritagization process, emphasizing how heritage discourse initially employed by transnational organizations like UNESCO is subsequently adopted and modified at national, regional, and sub-regional levels to legitimize the selection, preservation and regeneration of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. However, the term "heritagization" has increasingly become synonymous with urban regeneration, which involves the selective reinterpretation of the past to fulfil contemporary objectives (Zhu & Maags,2020; Mascaro, 2024). Existing research has repeatedly emphasized the insufficient conceptualization and vague comprehension of heritagization as a complex and evolving process within the framework of urban regeneration (Sjoholm, 2016; AlShaikh, 2017, Xue, *et al.,* 2019, Mai Le, 2021, Mascaro, 2024, Hanif & Riza, 2024). Despite its potential to frame heritage as a dynamic process instead of a static one, heritagization has faced criticism for lacking a robust theoretical foundation and for being predominantly associated with the Western world. This study, therefore, examines the dynamics of heritagization in the context of urban regeneration, with particular emphasis on how it shapes urban regeneration initiatives beyond the mere preservation of heritage. Its objectives are

    I.   To explore the origin of the heritagization process.
    II.   To investigate the dynamics of heritagization in different geographical contexts.
    III.   To draw a closer link between heritagization practices in the Eastern and Western parts of the globe.
    IV.   To debunk the belief that heritagization is dominantly a Westernized practice.

1.4 Significance and Structure of the Paper

The findings of this research will contribute to the growing yet limited literature on heritagization, which principally attends to World Heritage Sites witnessing transformations to cater to heritage tourism or the post-transformation experience of the local community. Furthermore, findings will draw a closer link between the heritage discourse of the Eastern side and the Western side of the world. The research is also anticipated to strengthen the ongoing discourse of Critical Heritage Studies (CHS) that advocates for adopting a more dynamic approach to heritage as highlighted by (Harvey, 2001; Hall, 2002; Muñoz Viñas, 2005; Smith, 2006; Di Giovine' 2009, Gravari-Barbas & Graburn, 2012, Harrison, 2013; McDonald, 2013, Harvey 2015; Colomer,2017; Gravari-Barbas, 2022; Boussaa & Madandola, 2024, Kasem *et al*, 2024).

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[1] Critical Heritage Studies is an interdisciplinary field that examines the cultural, social, and political aspects of heritage. It challenges traditional understandings of heritage by questioning power relations, socio-economic influences, historical narratives, and the role of marginalized communities in heritage making and management. This approach emphasizes critical interpretation, redefinition, and engagement with heritage in the present, rather than simply preserving it as a remnant from the past.
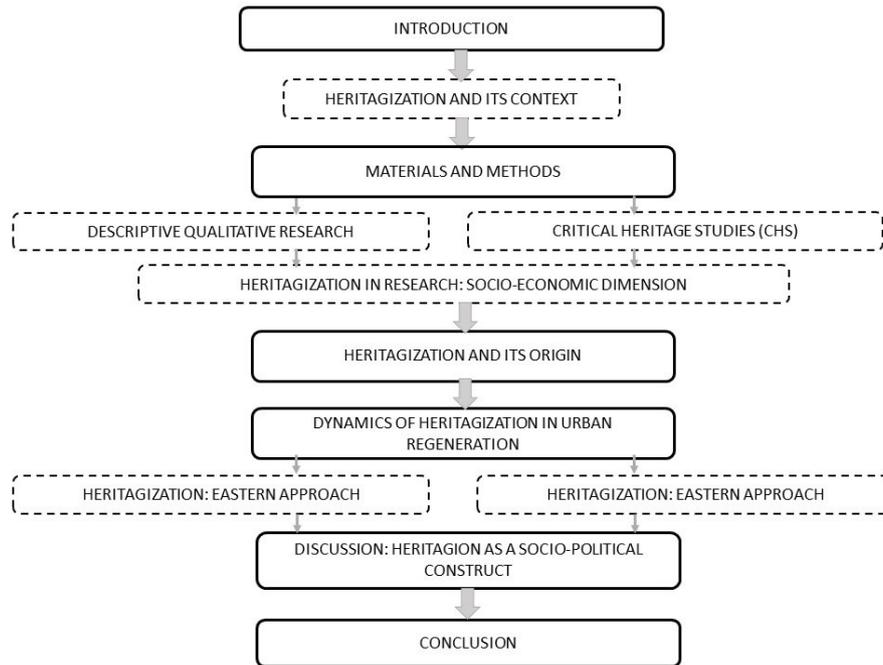
Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Study.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Study Design and Setting

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design underpinned by the theoretical perspectives of Critical Heritage Studies. The theory of Critical Heritage Studies (CHS) has garnered significant attention as it represents an evolving field of research. This theoretical perspective is supported by a growing body of scholarship that aims to transcend the conventional emphasis of heritage studies on technical aspects such as management and practice, shifting instead toward an exploration of cultural heritage as a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing socio-political, socio-cultural, and socio-economic dimensions.

2.2 Data Collection

Data was primarily gathered from the academic literature review of the term heritagization in the context of urban regeneration. The literature review encompassed a diverse array of scholarly sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, conference proceedings, as well as postgraduate theses at both the Master's and doctoral levels. This comprehensive selection of literature aimed to capture the breadth and depth of existing research pertinent to the study's focus. These studies were done in different geographical contexts and each reveals the process of heritagization adopted according to different dynamics. However, what was common between all these studies is the quest to select, preserve and display the heritage so it may acquire a symbolic status.

2.3 Data Analysis

The descriptive qualitative research design was structured into five analytical phases to systematically facilitate the identification and interpretation of the underlying dynamics of heritagization within the context of urban regeneration (Fig.2). This methodological approach enabled a comprehensive examination of the complex and multidimensional processes involved in heritagization, encompassing differing regions, specific case studies and socio-economic dimensions (Table.1). These phases facilitated the identification of emergent and relational dynamics that are fundamental to the phenomenon under investigation.
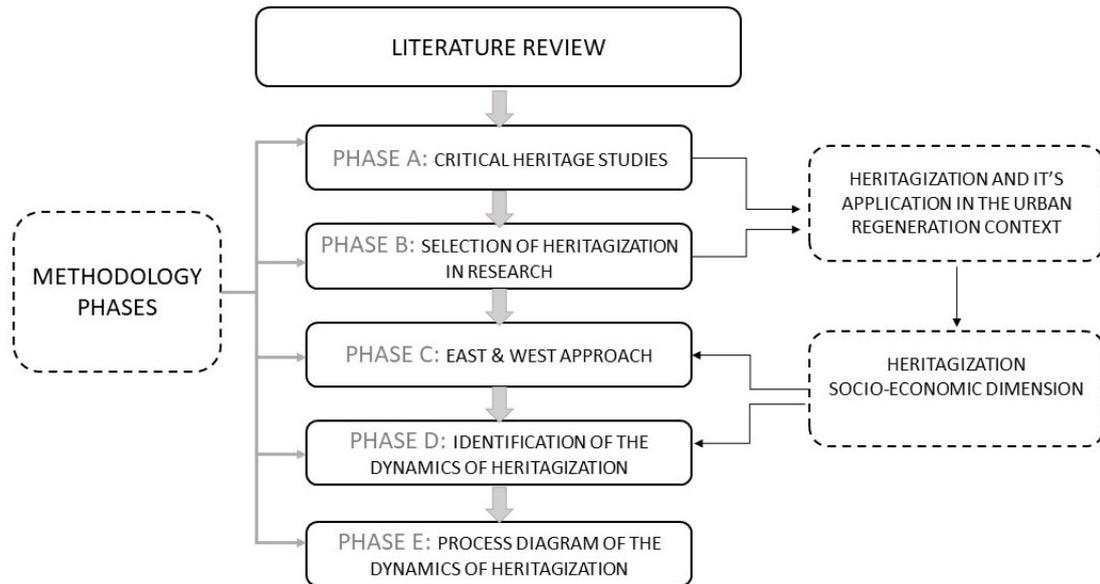
Figure 2. Methodology Phases.

Table 1: Chronological overview of heritagization literature, categorised by case study, region, and socio-economic dimension.

Work (title – citation)	Case study	Region	Socio-economic dimension
Grote Markt Groningen: The Re-Heritagization of the Public Realm (Ashworth, 2008)	Grote Markt, Groningen (NL)	Europe	Boosts city-centre commerce via heritage tourism.
The 'Heritagization' of Konso Cultural Landscape (Assoma, 2010)	Konso cultural landscape	Africa	Channels local economic optimism by creating opportunities for cultural tourism and global community networking.
Folk Architecture Heritagization in Rural Portugal (Silva, 2011)	Castelo Rodrigo	Europe	Preserves vernacular architecture, highlighting the top-down approach.
Memorising a Controversial Politician: The "Heritagization" of a Materialised Vox Populi (Margry, 2011)	Grass-roots memorials	Europe	Shape's civic identity while affecting the local cultural economy.
"Heritage-scape" or "Heritage-scapes"? (Gillot *et al.,* 2014)	Conceptual	Europe	Introduce heritage as a tool for cultural commodification, tourism development, and community livelihood enhancement within globalized markets.
Re-telling, Re-cognition, Re-stitution: Sikh Heritagization in Canada (Ashley, 2014)	Abbotsford Gurdwara	N. America	Supports diaspora cohesion and multi-cultural identity.
Heritagisation of the 'Ottoman/Turkish House' in the 1970s (Türeli, 2014)	Istanbul	Eur./Asia	Spurs conservation-led urban renewal that counters urbanization, tourism, local actors and international organizations
Heritagisation, Re-Heritagization, De-Heritagization… Kiruna, Sweden (Sjöholm, 2016)	Kiruna	Europe	Signify the importance of built heritage, its relevance in the community, and challenges in mining-town relocation.
Urban Revitalisation through Heritagization (Picard & Leite, 2016)	Various	Global	Leverages heritage for inclusive urban revitalization
Described, Inscribed, Written Off (Salemink, 2016)	Rural Vietnam	Asia	Highlights tensions between heritage conservation, local livelihoods, and the need for fair compensation in land-use.
Heritagization of Disaster Ruins… (Mentec & Zhang, 2017)	Beichuan & Wenchuan	E. Asia	Channels post-disaster recovery via heritage tourism.
The Value of Authenticity in Heritagization (AlShaikh, 2017)	Dubai Historic District	Gulf	Dissect the multiple layers of heritagization that underlie the reconstruction of heritage and its impact on the local community
Concrete Memories and Sensory Pasts (Low, 2017)	Singapore	Asia	Cultivates Sensory-based heritage to promote cultural tourism and place identity.
Historicising the Present: Brussels Attacks… (Milošević, 2017)	Brussels	Europe	Spurs' memorial tourism and security economies.

Heritagization & Institutionalisation of Taekkyeon (Park *et al.,* 2018)	Korea	Asia	Commercializes martial-arts heritage through an institutionalized approach.
Impact of Cultural Heritage on Tourists (Nilsson, 2018)	RO, PL, SE	Europe	Re-positioning of tourists' "authentic" experiences to support political impact and favorable narratives.
Heritagization of Post-industrial Redevelopment… Amsterdam (Kamp, 2019)	Amsterdam	Europe	Converts post-industrial heritage for social inclusion and economic recognition through cultural rights.
Touristification of Saint-Ouen Flea Market (Gravari-Barbas & Jacquot, 2019)	Paris	Europe	Formalises Tourism-led redevelopment and highlights tensions between economic investment, gentrification, and heritage preservation.
Simulacra Heritagization: Minyuan Stadium (Yue *et al.,* 2019)	Tianjin	Asia	State-led heritage simulations for cultural commodification and economic development.
The Game of Heritagization (Davallon, 2019)	Parks & museums	Europe	Analyses governance of shaping the selective process of heritagization.
Heritage – Public & Expert Discourse… (Kajda, 2019)	Poland	Europe	Mediates stakeholder priorities by influencing resource allocation, community recognition, and cultural tourism initiatives.
Dark Tourism & Sites of Suffering (Becker, 2019)	Rwanda	Africa	Generates genocide memorials through dark tourism while raising ethical concerns about commodifying historical trauma.
Restoring the Glory of Serampore (Wolff, 2020)	Kolkata	Asia	Links colonial heritage to urban regeneration initiatives.
The City is a Journey (Møller-Olsen, 2020)	Taipei	Asia	Cultivates cultural memory and literary preservation to stimulate heritage tourism.
Walking in Historic Neighbourhoods of Beijing (Svensson, 2020)	Beijing	Asia	Enhances pedestrian economy in crafting heritage trails.
Tales of Heritagization (Mai Le, 2021)	Vietnam	Asia	Reframes local communities ' participation, challenging the top-down approach.
Beyond "Imagined" Nostalgia: Gunsan (Lee, 2021)	Gunsan	Asia	Uses colonial fabric to diversify heritage tourism and cultivate productive nostalgia.
Heritagising Asian Cities (Salemink, 2021)	Multiple	Asia	Reveals how vernacular heritage shapes local livelihoods through everyday practices and nostalgic attachments.
Tenements in New York & Riads in Marrakesh (Gravari-Barbas, 2022)	NYC & Marrakesh	N. Am./Afr ica	Highlights migrant mobilities fuelling heritage economies.
Heritagization of Religious Sites (Thouki, 2022)	Various	Global	Generates economic value through tourism while diminishing their spiritual and religious significance.
Loss in Translation: Catholic Monasteries (Kock, 2023)	NL monasteries	Europe	Strengthen local economic opportunities through cultural tourism while also redefining the site's social value.
Heritagization of Religious Festivals… Sri Lanka (Indika, 2023)	Sri Lanka	Asia	Stimulates local enterprise via festival tourism and social cohesion.
Heritagization of Cooch Behar Town (Das *et al.,* 2024)	Cooch Behar	Asia	Leveraging historic assets to boost heritage tourism, create employment, and encourage the inclusive development of an old town.
Discourses of Heritagization in East-Central Europe (Eitler & Ament-Kovács, 2024)	Region-wide	Europe	Shapes local economies through the negotiation of cultural value by diverse social actors.
Reclaiming the Lost Cultural Identity via Heritagization (Hanif, 2024)	Gulf States	Gulf	Revives cultural identity, balancing the post-oil modernization and heritage preservation.
Heritagization of Historic Sites: Transformation of Al Diriyah from a Ruin to a Branded Cultural Capital (Hanif & Riza, 2024)	Riyadh	Gulf	Converts ruins into branded cultural capital for heritage tourism and global competitiveness.
Heritagization as an Authoritarian Urban Practice in China (Mascaro, 2024)	Lijiang	Asia	Legitimises state-led redevelopment via heritage-making, questioning forced/voluntary gentrification.
International & National Heritagization of Religion in Asia (Khetrapal, 2024)	Region-wide	Asia	Shapes cultural diplomacy through the reconstruction of religious values and practices for international recognition.
Heritagization of the Colonial Period in Dalian (Xiao, 2025)	Dalian	Asia	Reveals how cultural politics intersect with economic commodification for tourism and urban development.

3. Heritagization and Its Origin

Poria (2010) connects the term "heritagization" from Anglo-Saxon studies to the concept of "patrimonialisation," both referring to processes that utilize heritage as a historical resource to achieve specific social objectives. Originating in Francophone scholarship, "patrimonialisation" describes the transformation of places, individuals, practices, and artifacts into heritage assets that are preserved, exhibited, and safeguarded—a notion developed in the early 1990s by geographers, historians, and anthropologists (Babelon & Chastel, 1994; Davallon, 2002; Jeudy, 1994; Poulot, 1998; Gillot *et al.,* 2013). Scholars have linked patrimonialisation to the evolving interpretation of the past, highlighting its basis in a linear, Western-centric conception of time associated with European modernity. This perspective raises challenges when applying the concept to non-Western contexts, as the globalization of patrimonialisation processes can be viewed as extensions of imperialism or neo-colonialism. Researchers emphasize that patrimonialisation is not a monolithic process; it involves multiple actors, including scholars, government institutions, public officials, and civil society members, who collectively engage in the negotiation and formation of heritage (Rautenberg, 2003; Tornatore, 2006; Gillot *et al.*, 2013).

Sánchez-Carretero (2013) notes that "heritagization" originates in French and European discourses, particularly under the term "patrimonialisation" and is relatively uncommon in English-language contexts, where it is often used in either a derogatory or a critical context. He derives this from Walsh's (1992: 4) interpretation of framing heritagization as the transformation of authentic places into places aimed at catering to heritage tourism. The term Heritagization, thus evolved from patrimonialisation, also refers to the process of designating certain past practices or objects as culturally valuable. This process is shaped by the perspectives and intentions of those involved, as well as the audiences they address. By viewing heritage as a dynamic process rather than a fixed category of material culture, discussions move away from debates over what qualifies as heritage and instead emphasize the mechanisms and motivations behind assigning value to elements that are on the spectrum of being considered as heritage (Ashley, 2014; Hanif, 2024).

Stuart Hall's (2005) critique of "The Heritage"—as a concept historically tied heritagization to white English cultural dominance and illustrates how what is often seen as universal is, in fact, one of many possible English heritagization narratives. Furthermore, Becker (2019) highlights that since the 1990s, the phenomenon of "heritagization" has gained momentum, characterized by a notable increase in memorials worldwide. This trend stems largely from efforts to commemorate pivotal historical events, such as the two World Wars and the Holocaust, particularly in Western nations, Eastern Europe, the United States, Australia, and Asia, especially China and Japan. Additionally, the dissolution of the Soviet Union has played a significant role in shaping this shift toward heritage-making practices. Consequently, heritagization has emerged as a process that drives the intensive creation of cultural territories that extend well beyond the confines of any single nation (Gillot *et al.*, 2013).

Nonetheless, it was not till the late 20th century that 'Heritagization' emerged as a commonly used term in the framework of urban regeneration. Heritagization in this context became the process of selective reinterpretation of the past to fulfill contemporary objectives (Zhu & Maags,2020; Mascaro, 2024). Khetrapal (2024) highlights that at the national scale, the dynamics of heritagization-driven urban regeneration also facilitate the revitalization and reinterpretation of intangible traditions and socio-economic practices. Meanwhile, on the international stage, heritagization contributes to the construction of national identity by displaying cultural heritage globally.

4. Results

4.1 Dynamics of Heritagization in the Context of Urban Regeneration

While substantial research has focused on top-down, often corporate-led approaches that reshape cities into hubs for cultural heritage consumption, it is only in recent years that scholars have begun to explore how urban regeneration engages with heritagization through practices that extend beyond mere commodification (Picard & Leite, 2016). Within the context of consumption, heritagization has evolved into a branding strategy that positions cultural heritage as a marketable asset, encompassing both tangible and intangible symbolic elements of the city's heritage—such as monuments, architecture, infrastructure, traditions, and stereotypes associated with residents' socio-economic and socio-cultural aspects (Hague & Jenkins, 2004). The commodification of cultural heritage through branding presents a fundamentally debatable aspect of the heritagization process. This approach also highlights the prospective scope of showcasing cultural heritage on a global scale, aiming to create a lasting and immersive heritage display (Hanif & Riza, 2024).

The process of heritagization is shaped by the diverse historical contexts and interpretations, as well as the perspectives of various stakeholders toward heritage. This term refers to the act of creating cultural significance around places, objects, and events, emphasizing their societal value (Murzyn-Kupisz, 2012). It also involves the appropriation of elements that may initially appear insignificant, such as deteriorating modern buildings and redefining them as meaningful to specific groups (Walsh, 1992). In this vein, the process of urban regeneration also introduces innovative approaches for restoring, reinterpreting, or reconstructing heritage by assigning new functions (Gravari-Barbas *et al.,* 2025). Heritagization, therefore, represents a dynamic process of (re)interpreting heritage, which can either gain broad public recognition or remain significant only to smaller, more specialized groups (Kajda, 2019).

This quest for recognition that underlies heritagization often manifests as a state-driven or political initiative wherein national mandates guide urban regeneration to shape the national vision or development agendas. This leads to not just the transformation of heritage but also the displacement of residents who attribute value to heritage (Arcilla,2025). Although this phenomenon is observed globally and heritage is often viewed as a governance tool, there remains a need to understand how heritagization functions as a form of gentrification. In this context, the persistent socio-economic hierarchy between areas designated for development and those already developed not only drives gentrification but also favours the interests of dominant mainstream groups (Dang, 2021). Employing a practice perspective, as discussed by Glasius (2018), can provide deeper insights into state-society relations within an authoritarian context, revealing how power dynamics are exercised and contested in the process of gentrification that results from heritagization-driven urban regeneration. Consequently, Heritagization, understood as a socially constructed aspect of gentrification, has increasingly gained prominence in urban regeneration discourse. This growing scrutiny has illuminated the socio-economic disparities and inequities that arise as a result of the heritagization process (Mascaro, 2024).

However, the initial purpose of urban regeneration remains to counter socio-economic challenges and mobilize both tangible and intangible aspects of heritage (Moufid *et al.* 2025). The objective extends beyond the mere restoration of depleted heritage structures, emphasizing the improvement of living conditions for residents occupying historic districts (Boussaa *et al.*, 2023). Urban regeneration in this context plays a crucial role in promoting socio-economic potential and enhancing the aesthetic representation of heritage (Suwaidi & Boussaa, 2024). Yue *et al. (*2019) elaborate that the concept of heritage often reaches its explanatory limits when analysing the transformations of urban spaces in such a contemporary context, particularly under the influence of heritagization.

In this vein, Jean Baudrillard's notion of the simulacrum (1981) offers a more nuanced understanding. Baudrillard describes simulacra as representations that lack an original/ reference point, emerging from a culture dominated by mass reproduction and media saturation. These simulacra are not mere imitations; they are autonomous constructs that disrupt the traditional

relationship between original and copy. Heritagization through the concept of simulacra serves as a compelling example of an urban regeneration initiative that provides an aesthetic image of heritage (Hadjri & Boussaa, 2007). The aesthetic representation of heritage, however, is often altered to such an extent that it results in significant cycles of heritagization (Hanif,2024). As a result, reversing the process of heritagization proves to be difficult, especially when urban regeneration is embraced by the local population (AlShaikh, 2024).

Gravari-Barbas (2018, 2019) highlights that urban regeneration in this context is often driven by cultural tourism and amplifies and disseminates representations of heritage. These stereotypical images, in turn, shape the creation of themed destinations. Over time, such environments often detach from their authentic reference and evolve into the commodified version of heritage. Boussaa (2021) highlights that cultural tourism becomes a catalyst for altering the representation of heritage under urban regeneration initiatives. Xue (2022) links this to placemaking, highlighting how urban regeneration tends to focus on developing tourist-oriented destinations. According to Wise and Jimura (2020), such urban regeneration in turn impacts the socio-economic implications, community engagement, and the influence of investments and developments on human interactions with heritage. Heritagization in the context of urban regeneration, hence, becomes an intricate process of creating, redefining, and reconstructing heritage within a society. This dynamic phenomenon is shaped by a variety of internal and external influences unique to the socio-economic context (Mazzetto & Vanini, 2023). It serves as a mechanism to reclaim elements of the past, aligning them with contemporary objectives to sustain the legacy of a current political system (Nilsson 2018: 37; Indika, 2023).

Das *et al.* (2024) highlight that to analyse the dynamics of the heritagization process, consultations must be conducted with key stakeholders, including responsible authorities, academics, and activists. These discussions aimed to assess the current state and trajectory of the process can identify emerging opportunities, and examine any associated challenges or shortcomings. In this vein, Khetrapal (2024) insists that it is reasonable to contend that non-Western nations might introduce new standards of heritagization, thereby highlighting a form of competitive heritagization. Dissecting the East-West dichotomy[2] can help understand the emerging competition and could serve as a strategic tool not only for advancing the understanding of heritagization but also the Critical Heritage Studies (Fig.3). By examining heritagization as a cultural process of valuation utilized by different cities of different countries in the context of Eastern and Western dichotomy, we can gain a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics involved in these processes. Its valuation also provides a sustained socio-economic framework for examining the development trajectory (Obeng-Odoom, 2024). Instead of viewing heritagization merely as an act of designating the heritage, it could be understood as a communicative urban regeneration practice, encompassing multiple socio-economic objectives and subjectivities in the creation of heritage.

Figure 3. Map illustrating the Geographical East-West Divide. Countries shaded in yellow are categorized as Western (developed countries), whereas those in red are classified as Eastern (developing countries).

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[2] East-West dichotomy is a term that denote a method of grouping countries based on their defining characteristics with regard to socio-economic development and political influence. The term also delineates the Brandt Line, a conceptual division distinguishing between "developed" and "developing" nations, also known as the Global North-Global South divide (Drawn differently). Notably, the divide suggests a consistent geographical pattern in the classification of global economic development.

4.2 Heritagization: Eastern Approach

In the East, particularly South Asian context, Wolff (2020) explores how the process of heritagization shapes the perspectives, experiences, and practices of local Bengali residents and officials regarding Danish colonial heritage in Serampore, a town close to Kolkata, India. Based on her involvement in conservation efforts, Wolff highlights the residents' deep sense of ownership and attachment to these Danish colonial structures. Nonetheless, the distinction between "us" and "them" fluctuates depending on spatial, temporal, and socio-economic dynamics, with different local groups perceiving entities such as British colonials, Kolkata cosmopolitans, and Delhi authorities as representing the "heritage of others." Similarly, Svensson (2021) investigates walking as a practice that accelerates the process of heritagization in a hutong district in Beijing, China. Focusing on the Nanluoguxiang area in central Beijing, Svensson examines its rapid urbanization driven by touristification, commodification, and gentrification, which underpin the heritagization process (Salemink, 2021).

Møller-Olsen (2021) investigates heritagization through literary analysis, focusing on themes of nostalgia, selective memory, and mnemonic erasure within the framework of urban regeneration in Taipei. The novella portrays people's increasing detachment from the past, shaped by forgetting, loss, and the material erasure of historical elements. Møller-Olsen translates this narrative as a nostalgic attempt to reconstruct a lost city, ultimately crafting a fictional urban landscape through fragments of the heritagization process. Similarly, Low (2017) examines how heritage in Singapore is experienced through sensory perceptions and memory-embodied interactions. Other than the conservation of the built heritage, selected routes are also designated as heritage trails as part of urban regeneration efforts. Through heritagization, these buildings and trails acquire symbolic meaning, shaping how heritage is curated and presented to both residents and tourists (Hanif,2024).

Lee (2021) examines how South Korea's approach to its Japanese colonial legacy in Gunsan diverges from the common practice of heritagization in many formerly colonized Asian nations, which often seeks to evoke positive nostalgic sentiments. Instead of relying on personal recollections or straightforward romanticization, Gunsan's heritage-making has unintentionally fostered a sense of "imagined nostalgia." This nostalgia does not stem from an authentic portrayal of colonial-era Gunsan but rather from a reconstructed version of the past. For visitors unfamiliar with the city's colonial history, Gunsan offers access to a reimagined past that appears exotic. The city's economy faced a considerable downturn following the unsuccessful Saemangeum Seawall Project, a land reclamation effort aimed at urban renewal (Yi & Ryu, 2015). In response to economic decline and demographic shrinkage, the Gunsan Municipal Government sought to reposition the city as a contemporary urban hub through the colonial heritagization process. Gunsan restored its colonial-era buildings, repurposing vacant spaces into guesthouses and cafes designed in the Japanese colonial style, while also promoting its gastro-tourism initiatives (Song *et al.*, 2019). Under the slogan "Time travel back to the 1930s," Gunsan witnessed a remarkable surge in tourism, with visitor numbers increasing from 220,000 in 2013 to 1 million in 2016, solidifying its status as a successful urban regeneration initiative in South Korea (Lee, 2021). In Gunsan, heritagization was deeply intertwined with nostalgia, understood as a "longing for what is absent in a transformed present." This phenomenon has the dual function of reinforcing ties to the past while simultaneously prompting a critical examination of the intentions behind its use (Cronberg, 2009; Angé & Berliner, 2022; Thouki, 2022).

Mascaro (2024) classifies the process of heritagization as an authoritative urban practice in China. She asserts that the transformation of Lijiang from a rural village into a cultural destination catering to the middle class has gradually displaced its original inhabitants to accommodate new residents. Hence, she highlights that heritagization in China is eventually inclined towards the process of gentrification, which can often come as voluntarily by the residents as a result of touristification. Unlike the overt forced displacement associated with urban regeneration discussed by Lees *et al.* (2016), this shift in Lijiang represents a more subtle form of displacement that nevertheless diminishes the voices of the local community. Mascaro (2024) highlights how heritagization acts as

a practice-based approach to authoritarian urbanism and reveals how heritage preservation is commodified not merely to showcase heritage but also as a strategic tool for state-led gentrification. This process involves transforming historic districts into commodified spaces that cater to socio-economic needs and marketing interests, thereby marginalizing original residents and suppressing dissent.

Following the catastrophic 2008 Wenchuan earthquake in China, a state-led heritagization initiative was implemented in Beichuan and Wenchuan Counties, areas predominantly inhabited by the Qiang ethnic minority. These efforts involved preserving certain devastated landscapes as earthquake relic sites and transforming the former Beichuan County seat into a heritage site for memorialization, economic development, and patriotic education. However, this approach generated emotional tensions among the local community, still coping with the tragic event and trauma that followed. Additionally, Qiang cultural traditions were rapidly selected and designated as national and international intangible cultural heritage, while reconstructed Qiang villages were repurposed as heritage tourism destinations. The intersection of promoting Qiang intangible cultural heritage and designating disaster ruins as heritage sites highlights both the implemented projects and the lived experiences of local communities. Despite these initiatives, Beichuan County's economic recovery—largely dependent on disaster heritagization—did not appear to contribute to long-term socio-economic benefits or socio-psychological healing (Mentec & Zhang, 2017).

Xiao (2025) explores the process of heritagization in China further by highlighting that Dalian stands out among China's modern cities for its prominent legacy of Russian and Japanese colonial rule, lasting over half a century. This unique context has shaped the city's heritagization, revealing two distinct approaches to colonial heritage: a "nationalist" perspective that frames heritage within cultural politics, and a commercially driven orientation tied to economic development. These contrasting approaches highlight the complex interplay between cultural identity, economic priorities, and heritage preservation in post-colonial societies, offering valuable insights into how colonial legacies are negotiated and integrated into the heritagization practices. Mai Le Quyen (2021) examines the process of heritagization in Vietnam, emphasizing how heritage is constructed through intricate interactions among global, national, and local stakeholders. She emphasizes the pivotal role of communities in this evolving transnational phenomenon, which unfolds through three interrelated stages and two mutually developed dimensions. Drawing on Di Giovine's (2009) theoretical framework, these stages—segregation, idealization, and valorization—illustrate the transformation of cultural assets into recognized heritage. Segregation entails the detachment of specific cultural elements from their original context, elevating them to an international platform where they are redefined according to global heritage criteria. Idealization represents the national government's endeavour to integrate these newly ascribed values into the country's historical and cultural narratives, thereby granting heritage an enhanced status. Lastly, valorisation reintroduces the World Heritage designation into the broader social fabric, striving to gain legitimacy and endorsement from both local communities and international visitors.

In a similar vein, Indika (2023) highlights that the concept of heritagization within Sri Lanka's heritage discourse has been relatively underexplored, particularly in the broader South Asian context. In the 21st century, there has been a notable intensification of Buddhist festivals across the island, leading to an oversaturation and normalization of such events, which he terms as "festivalization". Some of these festivals appear to be strategically utilized to imbue religious sites with new heritage values, often drawing upon nostalgic elements from the dominant heritage narratives of the country. A prominent example is the recently introduced Kañcuka Pūjā, which has rapidly gained popularity due to its distinctive ability to build community cohesion and provide deeply immersive experiences cantered around sacred Buddhist symbols. This ritual exemplifies how contemporary events can be crafted to resonate with both spiritual significance and communal identity, thereby reinforcing the regeneration of Intangible cultural heritage. Moving towards Africa, Assoma (2010) analysed the heritagization process of the Konso Cultural Landscape in Ethiopia led by the government, which first included the inclusion of the site in its tentative list for

UNESCO World Heritage nomination in 1997 and then its inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2011. This journey entailed identifying, selecting, isolating, documenting, and constructing the landscape's heritage value. However, the process was marked by conflicts, contestations, socio-economic disparities and negotiations over legitimacy and authority among various stakeholders, including local communities, traditional leaders, and governmental entities. These dynamics reflected both optimism about the potential benefits of heritage recognition and scepticism regarding the implications for local autonomy and heritagization practices.

In the Gulf Region, Hanif (2024) explored how heritagization is playing a pivotal role in redefining the lost cultural identity of the Gulf States that suffered significant heritage loss due to post-oil modernization and rapid urbanization. The heritagization process has emerged as a strategic response to regenerate historic districts by preserving their cultural identities and also branding them within the context of contemporary urban development. Hanif & Riza (2024) extend this discussion by illustrating that the heritagization process in Al Diriyah, Riyadh in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, initially aimed at the preservation and regeneration of the historical site, extended beyond and rebranded the ruins as a revived cultural capital. This transformative process not only regenerates previously neglected heritage sites, turning them into thriving hubs for cultural tourism but also confirms the risks of over-commercialization and cultural commodification.

Correspondingly, AlShaikh (2024) investigates the process of heritagization in terms of evolving practices and representations of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in the United Arab Emirates, focusing on both official and grassroots safeguarding efforts. She analysed how state-led initiatives and community practices interact to preserve and present elements such as traditional crafts, performances, and socio-political customs as authorized heritage. She further highlights the tensions arising from the modernization of the nation-state, particularly in balancing authentic traditions with commodified heritage forms, and how these dynamics contribute to the construction of Emirati national identity. The dynamics here are influenced by international commitments of representing intangible heritage and how responsive the local community has been towards the universal understanding of heritage.

Figure 4 presents a process diagram illustrating the dynamics of heritagization within the context of urban regeneration in the Eastern part of the world.
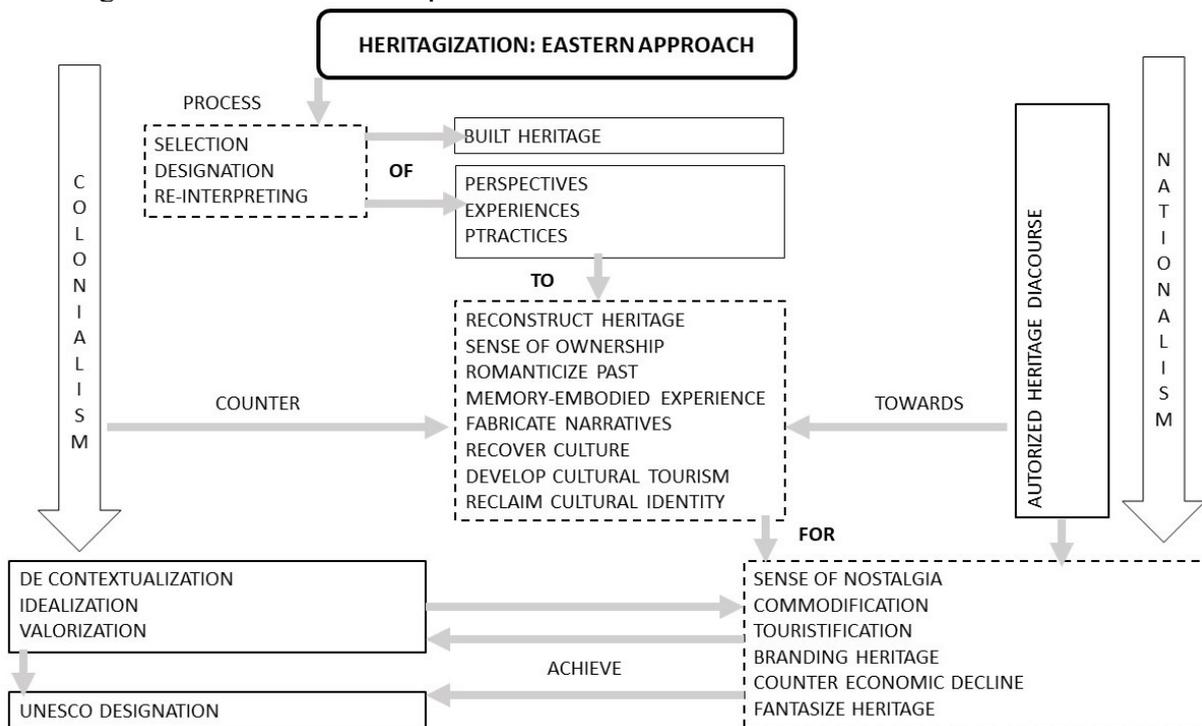

Figure 4. Process Diagram Illustrating the Dynamics of Heritagization in the Eastern Context.

4.3 Heritagization: Western Approach

In the West, heritagization initiatives have been implemented in various ways since their inception. During Poland's communist regime from 1945 to 1989, rather than eliminating cultural heritage, efforts were made to reshape it to align with communist ideology. Churches were permitted to function, provided they conformed to party directives. However, the regime's geopolitical shift westward led to a revisionist approach to history, culminating in the "1000 Years of History" project. This initiative sought to present Poland as an ancient nation with an uninterrupted historical narrative, requiring the selective omission, emphasis, and reinterpretation of historical events to facilitate heritagization (Zamoyski, 1993; Lukowski & Zawadski, 2001; Kirchanov, 2004). Kajda (2019) extends this discussion by stating that the establishment of local and national museums, the organization of cultural events, the publication of articles in books and newspapers, and the restoration and renovation of heritage have significantly influenced the perception of Polish history. These efforts have led to a revival of neglected heritage and past narratives. Furthermore, this revival has exceeded expectations, with sites linked to Jewish communities becoming some of the most notable and frequently visited tourist destinations in cities like Cracow and Łódż. In this context, the public often plays a significant role in shaping the societal perception of heritage and influencing its treatment, sometimes challenging decisions made by heritage experts, as seen with Soviet heritage in Poland or the Białowieża Forest. However, the actions of experts frequently prompt communities to engage with and preserve their heritage. Experts also encouraged the public to recognize the value of various places, objects, and narratives, as demonstrated in the cases of Jewish and German heritage. In these instances, heritagization is driven by researchers aiming to rediscover and rewrite Poland's neglected multicultural history. Inspired by expert initiatives, the public is able to develop a sense of collective identity and belonging (Ashley 2014: 40) to the cultural and natural environment of their homeland.

The historical village of Castelo Rodrigo in Portugal underwent a heritagization process shaped by both state-led initiatives and local residents, with the Portuguese government spearheading the effort. This top-down approach, funded by the European Union, was carried out between 1994 and 2006 to regenerate the villages' socio-economic and socio-cultural challenges through heritage tourism, aiming to harness heritage as an economic asset (Graham *et al.*, 2000). However, tensions emerged between the stakeholders and the local community due to differing viewpoints and intervention strategies within the regeneration proposal. The initiative sought to create a visually cohesive heritage tourism destination, eliminating architectural inconsistencies and modern interventions. The primary goal was to shield the village from modern influences while preserving its valued architectural heritage. As a result, heritagization efforts prioritized the conservation that inclined towards the aesthetic harmony of facades and roofs, alongside the removal of modern interventions. As a result, the natural progression of heritage was disrupted, as stakeholders prioritized a fixed and selective portrayal of historical elements over continuous architectural evolution (Silva, 2011).

In Canada, Matt James (2013) critically examines the heritagization initiatives promoted by Canadian Heritage, describing them as neoliberal strategies designed to regulate and discipline citizens and their diverse cultural identities. James contends that the nation-building and socio-cultural aspects of heritage function as hegemonic processes. Heritagization in this context becomes a process that transforms cultural differences and socio-economic disparities into a more acceptable yet powerless representation of diversity. Additionally, Bains interprets the retelling of history as a "recovered history" project, emphasizing the colonized biases that were previously marginalized and remained neither openly seen nor openly told within the Canadian heritage discourse (Bains, 2013: 174; Ashley, 2014). Ashley (2014) highlights that the ongoing heritagization of the first Sikh temple in Canada extends beyond traditional government heritage designation and protection, as well as local community efforts to retrieve and reaffirm their history. In this vein, heritagization has increasingly influenced immigrant-led heritage sites through an institutionalized approach. This reflects a broader issue in heritagization when leveraged by authoritarian stakeholders or national

governing bodies to fulfil socio-economic objectives aimed at "historicizing" and "culturalizing" contested spaces, effectively relegating them to the past while circumventing unresolved contemporary urban regeneration concerns.

Drawing on a similar idea, Eitler & Ament-Kovács (2024) stress that in the Eastern European context, heritage is perceived by a group of people based on what they collectively identify as significant. The establishment of a heritage canon is shaped by various factors, including the historical evolution of a region or country, the process by which it transitioned into a nation, the background and composition of the elite governing this transition, and the elements that frame the discourse surrounding the nation's interpretation of its past. Examining the European map reveals distinct types of heritage, each aligned with a timeline that holds particular significance for its respective society. Heritagization thus represents a multifaceted, ongoing process embedded within socio-economic disparities and socio-political inclinations.

Türeli (2014) examines the heritagization process in the European part of Istanbul, Türkiye, particularly within its historic districts. This process involved the formulation of expert strategies aimed at preserving Istanbul's vernacular architecture, consisting of Ottoman characteristics. Proposals by French planners in the 1930s and 1940s, including Henri Prost's proposed archaeology park, were ultimately unfulfilled due to diplomatic challenges and financial limitations. From the 1970s onward, international organizations like UNESCO and the European Council, alongside local experts, introduced heritage conservation projects focusing on areas such as Sultanahmet and Topkapı. These initiatives sought to restore historic districts to their nineteenth-century condition and commodify them for heritage tourism. While such government-led urban regeneration initiatives have frequently been criticized for contributing to gentrification and diminishing authenticity, the heritagization process also highlights the tension between heritage preservation and contemporary urban development. Influenced by international protocols and local demands, the heritagization process in this context also strives to balance past interpretations of heritage with socio-economic growth, though their outcomes have been met with both success and critique.

Van de Kamp (2019) examines the heritagization of post-industrial Amsterdam North, Netherlands, highlighting the process of ascribing cultural significance to former industrial sites. This transformation, driven by urban planners, policymakers, and other stakeholders, repositions neglected industrial spaces as urban heritage, incorporating both tangible and intangible aspects of the industrial past. While such an urban regeneration has the potential to strengthen community identity, it also risks deepening socio-economic inequalities. Specifically, the emphasis on particular social groups, such as the white working class, may marginalize the diverse immigrant communities within the area. The case of Amsterdam illustrates how heritagization can be strategically leveraged by different actors to serve distinct agendas, resulting in a complex dynamic of integration and omission within urban regeneration initiatives.

Sjöholm (2016) examines the process of heritagization in the West through the town of Kiruna, Sweden, highlighting the town's urban transformation and its implications for built heritage. The heritagization of Kiruna unfolded in multiple phases, beginning in the 1980s when significant portions of the central town were designated as cultural heritage. This initial phase involved attributing heritage value and meaning to previously unrecognized environments, leading to the formal recognition of historical buildings and spaces as heritage assets. During the urban planning process, re-heritagization primarily occurred through reaffirmation, reinforcing the town's existing heritage status rather than introducing reinterpretation or expanding heritage classifications through addition. Concurrently, de-heritagization emerged as a notable factor, particularly following a 2011 agreement between the local government and the mining company Luossavaara-Kiirunavaara Aktiebolag (LKAB). This agreement influenced decisions regarding financial support for relocating specific heritage buildings, thereby shaping the extent to which heritage elements were preserved, moved or altered. The roles and priorities of key stakeholders significantly influenced the outcomes of heritagization in Kiruna, reflecting broader socio-economic and cultural dynamics. The case of Kiruna exemplifies a distinct Western approach to heritagization, wherein built heritage undergoes

processes of selection, designation, reaffirmation, or de-selection in response to the relocation of the town.

Similarly, Ashworth (2008) examined the transformation of Groningen's central square, the Grote Market in the Netherlands, through the lens of re-heritagization. This concept refers to the process by which urban spaces are reinterpreted and reshaped to reflect contemporary heritage values, often involving the reintegration of historical elements into modern urban planning and urban regeneration plans. Ashworth's analysis situates the Grote Market within broader discussions of heritagization discourse, exploring how historical narratives and cultural heritage are leveraged to enhance public spaces and stimulate cultural tourism even after their initial designation as heritage. Figure 5 presents a process diagram illustrating the dynamics of heritagization within the context of urban regeneration in the Western part of the world.
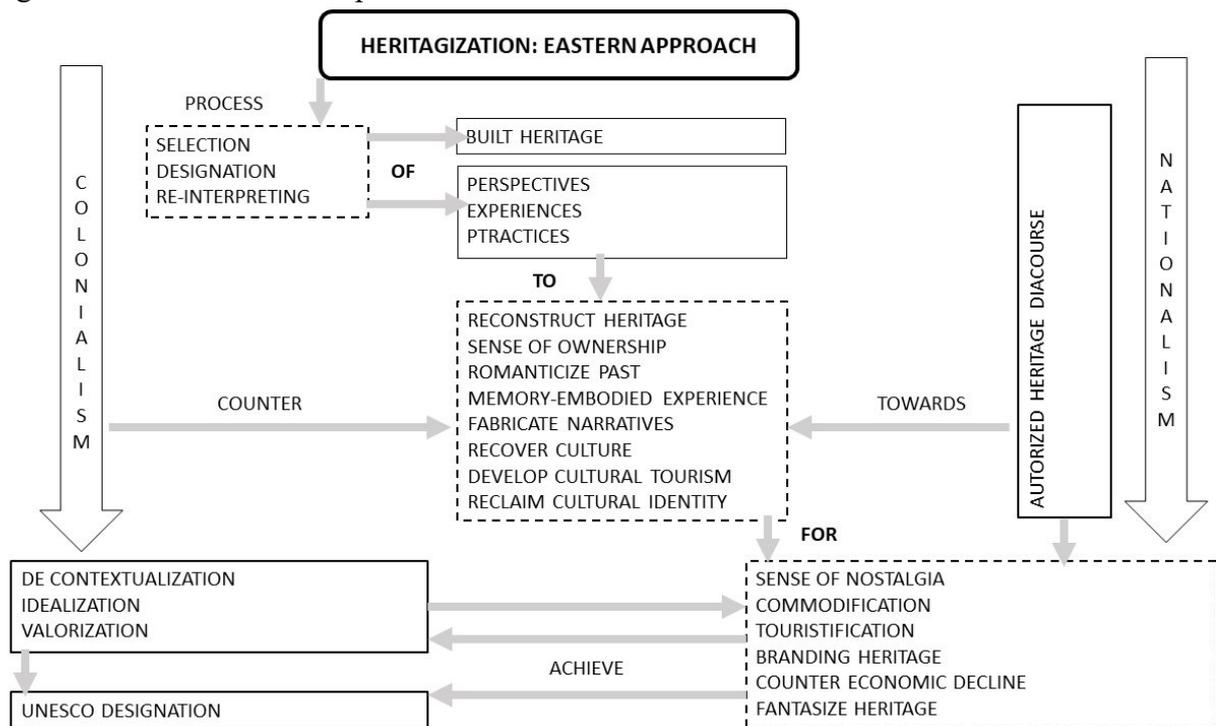

Figure 5. Process Diagram Illustrating the Dynamics of Heritagization in the Western Context.

5. Discussion

5.1 Heritagization as a Socio-Political Construct

In recent years, there has been a significant rise in research focusing on "the politics of heritagization." This approach encourages scholars to develop a more nuanced understanding of heritage politics and the politics of designation, which centre on the rights to govern status and authority within the heritagization process (Smith,2007; Bozoğlu *et al*, 2024). This adopts an institutionalist perspective, contrasting previous approaches to heritage(Park & Kang,2025). Davallon (2019) contends that viewing heritagization as an institutional or political act reveals the real dynamics behind granting or constructing heritage status to objects. This involves a societal interest in the object, acknowledgment of its specific traits, elimination of socio-economic disparities and the assignment of a status that elevates it above ordinary objects, revealing the dynamic nature of heritagization.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1995) previously conceptualized heritage as a form of cultural production in the present that derives meaning from the past. Within this framework, the process of heritagization emerges as a mechanism that amplifies various historical narratives to address contemporary needs, challenges, or contexts. As a socio-political construct, heritagization enables discourse and diverse viewpoints, as heritage is shaped by collective determinations regarding what qualifies as 'heritagizable.' This process entails deliberation, selection, contention, and negotiation. Thus,

heritagization functions as a politically motivated practice of value attribution, designating significance to locations, individuals, artifacts, traditions, histories, or concepts as inheritances from previous eras (Park *et al.*, 2018). This perspective emphasizes the interplay between historical processes that shape distinct socio-political formations and the evolving cultural narratives crafted to enhance heritage's significance. Such an approach acknowledges that heritage is not a static entity but a dynamic construct influenced by both national and international commitments (Gillot *et al.*, 2013).

5.2 Comparison with Previous Studies

AlShaikh (2024) highlights that as societies undergo globalization, urbanization and rapid modernization, the significance attributed to heritage evolves, reflecting contemporary socio-economic challenges. Consequently, perceptions of what constitutes heritage are subject to change, influenced by the current needs and interests of local communities. This dynamic nature of cultural heritage necessitates adaptive preservation strategies that align with present-day values. Implementing heritagization processes can thus serve as a modern heritage safeguarding approach, contributing to the construction and reinforcement of the identity of the nation's experiencing challenges related to cultural heritage (Masri *et al.,* 2025) (Fig.5).
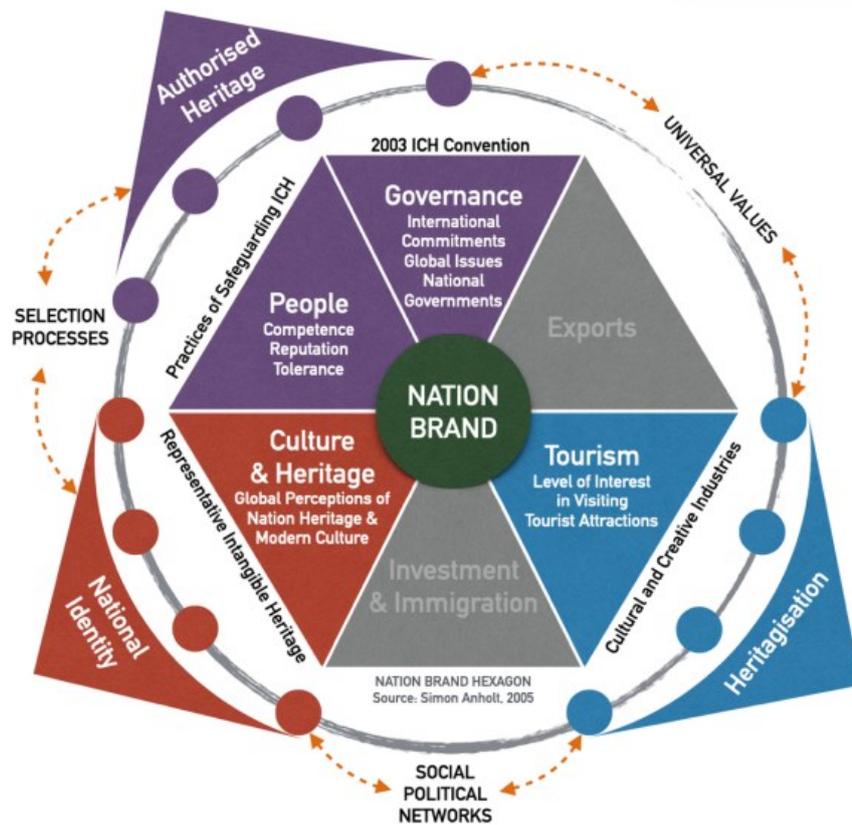

Figure 6. Heritagization as a socio-political construct linking authorized discourse, nation branding, and national identity.

Although AlShaikh's framework based on Anholt (2005) study focuses on the intangible cultural heritage, its application is appropriate in the context of urban regeneration where socio-economic revival through socio-political networks, universal values and most importantly selection processes upgrade the heritage and provide opportunities for the government as well as the local community aiming to reap the positive benefits of the heritagization process. It also reveals how national and international commitments play a pivotal role in steering the heritagization process beyond mere heritage preservation and more toward the celebration of cultural heritage, highlighting heritagization as a socio-political construct.

5.3 Implications and Future Directions

Recognizing heritagization as an inherently socio-political construct also requires understanding how its dynamics unfold differently across political and geographic contexts. State and non-state actors operating at the national or international level shape the heritagization process in ways that may be celebrated in one setting yet criticized in another. What might be viewed as a manipulation of heritage on the Western side of the globe can, under different political frameworks, produce meaningful urban regeneration in Eastern contexts. These dynamics can also operate vice versa. By mapping the "of," "to," and "for" dimensions of heritagization that dictate these dynamics, the analysis above acknowledges the role of political agendas in steering these heritagization processes beyond heritage preservation. Moreover, by understanding the dynamics through the process diagrams illustrated in the study (Figs. 4 & 5), heritagization-driven urban regeneration can opt for a bottom-up approach, thereby strengthening heritagization's theoretical foundations and ensuring its context-sensitive application.

For instance, in Western contexts, heritagization is strategically leveraged as a tool for socio-economic growth, focusing on rewriting history, incorporating immigrants' heritage, countering gentrification and commodification or branding of heritage. Conversely, in Eastern regions, the process is still evolving, with a primary focus on addressing socio-economic disparities and ensuring equitable access to heritage resources. The focus remains on invoking a sense of nostalgia, fantasizing the post-colonial heritage, countering economic decline and commodification, brandification and touristification of heritage for socio-economic gains. This contrast highlights the differing priorities in the heritagization process and the need to dissect the East-West dichotomy.

Thus, understanding heritagization as a socio-political construct also reveals that heritage status is conferred upon objects through a combination of societal valuation, recognition of their distinctive attributes, and the political processes that elevate them above everyday artifacts. This understanding will further assist Critical Heritage Studies to move beyond the East-West binary, emphasizing fluid cultural flows, multiple heritages, and the hybrid forms of heritage-making processes that emerge through global interconnections.

6. Conclusion

The primary aim of this paper was to scrutinise the dynamics of heritagization within urban regeneration and, in particular, to interrogate the oft-assumed East–West divide in heritage practice. By assembling and analysing a broad, chronologically ordered body of literature, we demonstrated that heritagization is not a monolithic Western export but a globally variable process shaped by local agency, historical circumstance and contemporary development agendas. This finding meets a key gap identified in Critical Heritage Studies, where sweeping generalisations about "Western hegemony" have tended to obscure the diverse rationales and trajectories of heritage-led regeneration elsewhere.

Our comparative reading revealed two dominant, though overlapping, regional tendencies. In many Western cases, heritage is mobilised chiefly as an economic commodity, branding districts for cultural tourism, attracting investment and supporting post-industrial place-making. Conversely, Eastern examples more frequently leverage heritage as an instrument of post-colonial identity reconstruction, state legitimation and socio-economic uplift. Crucially, both clusters show that the selection, elevation and display of heritage are invariably intertwined with questions of power: who authorizes the narrative, who reaps the economic return and who is displaced or silenced in the process. Heritagization, therefore, functions less as a cultural practice in conservation and more as a socio-political construct for negotiating collective memory, national identity and institutionalized narratives.

The analysis further illustrates that heritagization is rarely linear. Processes of re-heritagization, de-heritagization and even simulacral re-invention (as observed in Kiruna, Groningen, Dalian and Lijiang) show that heritage statuses can be revoked, re-scaled or entirely fabricated to match shifting policy goals or market appetites. Such plasticity carries opportunities for imaginative reuse

of the past, yet it also exposes heritage to cycles of gentrification, touristification and superficial aestheticisation. The study's process diagrams map these recurrent dynamics, offering a transferable tool for diagnosing how economic aspirations, ideological projects and preservation logics coalesce in different political economies.

While illuminating, the research is framed by two limitations. Firstly, it concentrates on heritagization within urban regeneration, leaving rural and natural-heritage contexts for future inquiry. Secondly, the broad categorical use of "East" and "West" elides finer-grained sub-regional variations—for instance, between South-East and North-East Asia, or between Mediterranean and Nordic Europe. Addressing these nuances will require targeted fieldwork and stakeholder interviews capable of capturing situated voices that desk-based literature reviews inevitably miss.

In sum, the paper positions heritagization as a dynamic, contested and profoundly socio-political practice that transcends the East-West binary. Recognising this complexity enables planners, policymakers and scholars to move beyond essentialized narratives towards more context-sensitive, inclusive and reflexive heritage strategies. Future research should refine the process diagrams through case-specific testing, explore intangible-heritage iterations of urban regeneration and examine how emergent risks—climate change, digital commodification and mass displacement—are re-shaping the process of heritagization in twenty-first-century cities.

Conflicts of Interest
The author(s) declare(s) no conflicts of interest.

Data availability statement
The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding authors.

Institutional Review Board Statement
Not applicable.

Credit author statement

S. H.: *Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – Original Draft, Formal Analysis* – Contributed to the conceptualisation and design of the study, developed the methodological framework, and drafted the initial manuscript. M. R.: *Writing – Review & Editing, Supervision* – Critically reviewed and refined the manuscript to enhance its intellectual rigour and provided the final structure.
All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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