

## **The heritage machine: the neoliberal order and the individualisation of identity in Maragatería (Spain)**

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Since the inception of modernity, minority and majority identities have been constructed in a twofold process involving the parallel generation of representations of difference and the obliteration of alterity, that is, of other modes of existence. The exacerbation of the modern period in the supermodern era has furthered this process, adapting it to the new forms of neoliberal and post-political governmentality. This is paralleled by a shift from real to symbolic and metacultural forms of interaction that serve to negotiate identity and hegemony in the social sphere. Heritage has become a fundamental trope for the negotiation of identity, access to resources and power, as its production is not anymore bounded to the State but is rather ‘dispersed’ in society. This article explores the way cultural heritage has become a ‘machine’ for the production of dominant and individualised identities interacting in a deregulated market environment in Maragatería (Spain).

**Keywords:** cultural heritage; post-politics; neoliberalism; identity; individualisation; governmentality

### **Introduction**

This article explores the way cultural heritage has become a ‘machine’ for the production of dominant and individualised identities in tune with neoliberal and post-political forms of governmentality. It analyses how, since the inception of modernity, minority and majority identities have been constructed in a twofold process involving the parallel generation of representations of difference and the obliteration of alterity, that is, of other modes of existence. Ultimately, this article is concerned with how power differences (politics) relate to the powers of difference (ontology), accounting for the processes that produce specific ethnicities and the power relations that manufacture the alterity of certain groups (Holbraad 2009). It argues that in the supermodern period heritage is not any more bounded to the State and rather becomes ‘dispersed’ in the social sphere. Whereas postmodernity generally describes a break with modernity and the end of the faith in progress, supermodernity broadly refers to an increased faith in the ability of humanity to control, explain, understand and manipulate most aspects of human existence and a belief in the possibility of increased individual

freedom, choice and self-expression, in what Augé has defined as the ‘individualization of reference’ (2008, 29–31).

Accordingly, the ‘heritage machine’ functions as a new way of reconfiguring difference and organising society by promoting individualised identities interacting in a deregulated market environment beyond the ‘traditional’ community. This process entails a transition from real to symbolic struggles where majority and minority identities are constructed as metacultural relations and where reified representations of identity can be appropriated and used as cultural–symbolic capital. My understanding of the heritage machine derives from a Deleuzo–Guattarian conception of the social. For them, social assemblages are governed by provisionally dominant ‘abstract machines’ that determine the patterns and thresholds defining the tendencies of a determinate system (Bonta and Protevi 2004, 47).

The study conceives heritage in ontological rather than epistemological terms. Social actors do not only generate representations of other world views, but rather create their own forms of existence and the conditions of possibility for the existence of others in heritage terms. Furthermore, supermodern subjects can give heritage form to the cultural representations of difference of other social groups. Whereas during the modern period it was possible to talk about an ‘authorised heritage discourse’ (Smith 2006) imposed by a central agency (the State, scholars or experts), the dispersion of heritage agency leads to the generation of differences between specific ontological ‘worlds’ rather than epistemological ‘world views’ exclusively (Viveiros De Castro 2009). Therefore, what matters is not to ascertain ‘who is right’ or to criticise the actions of one group or another, but rather to perform a cartography that situates the actions of each social actor, whose interpretations derive ‘from disparate world-views and different experiences of reality, produced by immersion in separate cultural and spatial milieus often only loosely imbricated’ (Bonta and Protevi 2004, 41). By situating these interpretations, it is possible to set out the conditions of possibility for identity, manifested in visible symbols, interaction practices, discourses and images produced by management and governmental activities, legal rulings and media representations. As Fox and Ward put it, ‘Rather than seeking identity by trying to understand a person’s “experiences” or abstracted social contexts or dominant systems of thought, we can seek out their myriad relations or affects’ (2008, 1009).

I have performed this cartography in a peripheral, poor and depopulated region of north-west Spain called Maragatería (Figure 1). Here, I have been carrying out a ‘heritage ethnography’ (Andrews 2010) combining historical, material culture and ethnographic methods since 2007. This article is not a detailed ethnographic description of specific situations – although it will refer to some of them – but an account of the main conceptual findings in terms of heritage and identity of my long-standing research in Maragatería. First, I provide a brief account of the social construction of the *maragato* difference and the obliteration of their *alterity* as a distinct social group. Then, I show the multiplicity of practices related to the heritage machine as enacted in empirical practices.



Figure 1. Location of Maragatería in Spain.

### Modernity, internal colonialism and folklorisation

The inception of modernity involved an increased social interventionism geared at the rationalisation and transformation of the social order according to scientific criteria (Scott 1998). The Enlightenment provided the basis for the expansion of governmental strategies aimed at breaking traditional behaviours and beliefs and to the centralisation and modernisation of power (Foucault 2007). Modern institutions and social actors strived to differentiate traditional from modern societies, separating themselves culturally, spatially and temporally from the pre-industrial, pre-modern or traditional and attempting to modernise it. However, modernity is not linear but is made up of complex and contradictory processes working both with and against each other, so there are always multiple simultaneous modernities (Grossberg 2005). In terms of identity constructions, the modern thrust goes beyond the establishment of differences with and from 'the other', to foster a *constant difference from itself*, both temporally and spatially. That is, 'The modern constitutes not identity out of difference but difference out of identity. The modern never constitutes itself as an identity (different from others) but as a difference (always different from itself, across time and space). In this sense, the fundamental structures of modernity are always productions of difference' (Grossberg 1996, 93). These productions become metacultural notions embedded in knowledge–power dispositives, classificatory dualisms rooted in culturally specific notions of the self as discontinuous with the other (Kearney 1984, 68–72, 150–153). Furthermore, 'in explicitly or implicitly

turning “local” and “foreign” cultures into cultural representations, these meta-cultural discourses generate their own regimes of truth’ (Briones 2005, 15).

The process of the State modernisation and cultural enlightenment in Spain (eighteenth century onwards) involved the social construction of the difference of certain social and ethnic groups. The imposition of a central power from the urban centres triggered a process of homogenisation that expanded the reach of State powers with the aid of positivist sciences. This implied the attempt to recode cultural and social alterity under a new common framework by all sorts of intellectuals, bureaucrats and scientists. The structuration of a new collective shared experience and the construction of a majority homogeneous Spanish identity involved what Descola calls a process of ‘identification’. Identification is a process of classification based on identity and similarity that consigns different categories of beings to separate spheres of existence (2013, 233). In this process, a series of social groups in Spain were labelled as ‘different’ and referred to as the ‘damned peoples’, including the people of Maragatería – the *maragatos*.

The *maragatos* presented high mobility patterns linked to their dedication to long-distance muleteering, which gave them access to monetary resources in cash that the peasant communities with which they lived lacked. Their privileged status was protected through marital inbreeding strategies and the accumulation of rents and land, which was often sanctioned by the church. Owing to their particular culture, clothes, houses and material culture, a series of travellers, enlightened intellectuals and scientists wrote extensively about them and underscored their differential identity (Jovellanos [1782] 1981; Sarmiento 1787). Because of their dedication to trade, they were not regarded as ‘old Christians’, and thus not ‘authentic’ Spaniards, therefore being considered descendants of Jewish, Moorish, Carthaginians, Celts, pre-Roman aboriginals, Jews or Germanic peoples, that is, as different from ‘pure bred’ Spanish. Callahan (1972) has shown how this situation derived from the rise of conflicts related to issues of blood, honour and trade at the time of the Counter-Reformation in Spain, when trade and profit-seeking behaviours were associated with Judaism and Protestantism, and thus condemned by the Catholic Church.

For Deleuze, the integration of difference under a totality (either social or political: Spanishness or Spain) turns difference into an abstract quality, a representation (Ansell-Pearson 1997). Therefore, the modes of existence of *maragatos* split into two: an abstract representation of their difference and their immanent mode of existence as a form of alterity to the dominant Spanish identity. The gap between both modes of existence was widened by physical anthropologists, who sought – and keep seeking – the *maragato* difference in their skulls, blood, fingerprints or deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) (Aragón y Escacena 1902; Hors 1951; Larruga et al. 2001). Although research did not confirm their biological distinctiveness, the *maragatos* were, with other damned peoples, the preferred object of study of the American wave of sociocultural anthropologists interested in Spain (Freeman 1979) and of the emerging Spanish anthropology (Caro Baroja 2003).

Although the deconstruction of the *maragato* difference started after the 1970s, their presence in the cultural and popular imaginary as ‘others’ is still quite alive. This is the result of a large process of abstraction and folklorisation of their image during the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries. Precisely in this period, most ‘ethnic’ *maragatos* emigrated from Maragatería, and the region was depopulated and largely homogenised with other Spanish rural areas. This fact, however, did not put an end to the cultural representation of the *maragato* difference. When American social anthropologists disembarked in Spain, they continued studying them, establishing straightforward links between territory and culture – as the Franco regime did (Brandes 2011). Significantly, marginal groups of ‘relatively reduced population intimately bounded to specific territories, were among the primary objects of study in Spain. Those groups were socially equivalent at the time with the indigenous groups of the United States: that is, marginal, discriminated, poor, with differential cultural traits from the rest of peninsular cultures’ (Brandes 2011, 24).

During the dictatorship in Spain, the State filled the intellectual and social spheres of cultural representation with images of its own making. Basically, cultural representations of groups rooted in certain rural territories diluted individuality into stereotypical social abstractions. Rural areas were chosen because they were regarded as the embodiment of stability, tradition and fidelity to Catholicism. One of the fundamental tools to do so was the generation of reified folkloric representations (Ortiz 1999), the *maragatos* being enthroned as an exemplary ‘local culture’ attached to their land and religion. The spread of these folkloric images explains the widespread popular assumption of the *maragato* difference throughout Spain. Even after the establishment of democracy in 1975, this construction dies hard and continues to be sustained and investigated by scholars and others.

### The heritage machine

In 1975, Maragatería was a poor and depopulated region where none of the splendid past of the differential *maragato* social group remained. For these reasons, the State implemented a military gunfire range in the area during the 1980s that further hindered economic development and rendered life in the area really tough (Alonso González and Macías Vázquez 2014). Moreover, the folkloric groups organised during the dictatorship faded away and would only reappear during the 1990s. This decade brought about significant changes in Spain, including sustained economic growth and neoliberal forms of governmentality that became deeply rooted during the 2000s. In social terms, economic growth involved the appearance of middle and upper-middle classes in urban centres, such as Madrid and Barcelona, with residents willing to purchase second residences in rural areas. This has greatly affected Maragatería, which has become a preferred area for real estate, tourism and second residence investments. Moreover, many people who emigrated from Maragatería during the

1950s and 1960s have returned to their villages after their retirement. These social processes were paralleled by the arrival of entrepreneurs supported by neoliberal programmes of expert governance at a European Union (EU) level such as LEADER, while the agency of public institutions remained largely feeble and superficial. Clearly, the ‘traditional’ dynamics of local communities in Maragatería – mainly rural peasant groups in transition to modernity – have been transformed by the arrival of this multiplicity of social actors.

Because of the wealth of cultural heritage in the region – archaeological sites, monumental housing, folkloric traditions and gastronomy, etc. – the politics of heritage have become fundamental in Maragatería. Usually, the State and UNESCO are the focus of most heritage ethnographies (Herzfeld 2006). This comes as no surprise because they still remain the most powerful actors in the shaping of national collective memories and their heritages, which legitimizes their own institutional existence (Raj Isar 2011). Therefore, models such as Smith’s ‘authorised heritage discourse’ (2006) that define heritage as the result of a dominant power group that legitimises what the national heritage is, fail to account for contexts like Maragatería. This is so because of its peripheral location and scarce socio-economic weight and the growing role of neoliberal institutions of governance, which have minimised the presence and intervention of the State in the heritage realm. Consequently, the tight relation between processes of heritagisation and the configuration of identities underscored by most heritage literature (Smith 2006) is here a floating and liquid process rather than the outcome of the action of a central agency, such as the State.

The ‘points of subjectification’ that organise the construction of identities and condition the becoming of social assemblages, bodies and discourses do not derive any more from a transcendent central source of power, as subjectification has become ‘the self-application of power, making oneself conform to a normalized standard’ (Bonta and Protevi 2004, 130). This is in tune with a supermodern period that exacerbates the modern trope and with post-political governmental techniques, characterised by the rise of experts and the reduction of politics to social administration (Žižek 2000). Post-politics is associated with new ‘technologies of citizenship’ (Cruikshank 1999) that aim to create self-disciplined, morally responsible and autonomous subjects in what Rose has defined as an ethnopolitical turn (2001). In this context, politics is reduced to the administration of forms of value creation and appropriation under a public sphere organised by socio-scientific knowledge, which prevents the universalisation of particular demands and reinforces the forging of individuals as entrepreneurs.

In terms of heritage, this period is dominated in Maragatería by what I call the heritage machine. The heritage machine connects the most diverse material and discursive elements from a certain environment to generate a determinate social structure. This structure – of values, meaning and action – exists as long as the different elements of the machine are held together (Mahler 2008). The heritage machine is not a fictional entity or abstraction, but rather a unit of production of different material and discursive features. The most varied elements can be

brought into it, from the cultural representation of the *maragatos*, to European funding programmes, aesthetic tastes and evaluations, urban planning policies, old plows and agricultural tools, and many others. It provides new ways of representing and performing socio-economic and political relations and identities, in a process of selection and purification that emerges relationally in social contexts of interaction (Saldanha 2007, 128).

Heritage should then be conceived as a quasi-cause, a driving force, the co-constitutive cause and effect of the social interplay that conditions many ongoing processes in Maragatería. In this sense, heritage works as a resource for the ‘reproduction of difference between social groups and the hegemony of who has preferential access to the production and distribution of heritage properties’ (García Canclini 1997, 61). Through different strategies, dominant groups define what is to be preserved and establish hierarchies of refinement and quality. This is done through the establishment of links between material and symbolic structures that can serve to create social, spatial and temporal metaphors and hierarchies. For Grossberg, ‘Access and investment or participation (as a structure of belonging) are distributed within particular structure terrains’ (1996, 102). Heritage has become fundamental in this process, by defining ‘kinds of persons in relation to the kinds of experience they have available, the “ways of belonging” constitutive of agency define a distribution of acts’ (1996, 102). Furthermore, if ‘agency is the product of a territorialising machine’ (1996, 102), my long-term heritage ethnography in Maragatería proved useful to analyse the central vectors through which the heritage machine enacts these differential distributions of agency, power and identity.

### ***Heritage politics and policies: the neoliberal framework***

The feeble presence of State forms – the provincial, regional and national governments – in the territory is limited to the maintenance of bureaucratic procedures of heritage recording, cataloguing and classification. Mainly, this involves declaring heritage features as ‘Goods of Cultural Interest’ (GCI). In Maragatería, the declaration of two towers, two villages, one church and one archaeological site reveals the positivist and traditional conception of heritage held by institutions. However, the declaration of the villages of Castrillo de los Polvazares and Santiago Millas as GCI has had a real impact, providing canonical examples of the commoditisation of heritage. Castrillo has become the touristic site *par excellence* in Maragatería and the central locus of display for invented traditions in the area, whereas Santiago Millas presents a vast concentration of both invented and real *maragato* monumental architecture. Both places have mostly attracted upper-middle classes in search of second residences in attractive rural areas. This has led to the skyrocketing of real estate prices and the gradual displacement of the local community to other villages as younger generations cannot afford to buy property. Thus, although the State form is not the main actor in heritagisation processes, it continues to further the gap between representations

and reality: both heritagised villages are exemplary of *maragato* architecture and urban planning and are therefore considered *unique representations* of the Maragatería.

The main social actor in the area in terms of funding and agency is the LEADER Rural Development Group ‘Montañas del Teleno’ (RDGMT), supported by EU funds. These kinds of projects are utmost representatives of neoliberal governmentality: they bypass public institutions, are not democratically elected but led by experts and promote economic development by supporting individuals rather than communities (Rizzo 2012; Rose 2000). The territorial scope of the RDGMT goes beyond Maragatería to include other nearby counties. This adds a further layer of territorial complexity because the RDGMT attempts to invent and promote a new territorial identity to bring together these different counties. Tasks of ‘identity awareness raising’ or ‘territorial identity development’ are actually comprised in the guidelines of the projects (LEADER 1999). The paradox of this endeavour comes, first, by the pre-existence of real territorial identities rooted in the social imagery, which renders absurdly the attempt to create new ones, and, second, by the transitory character of those projects that always have an ‘expiry date’.

Ultimately, the RDGMT identity-building strategies come down to referring in the official publications to the ‘peoples of the *Montañas del Teleno*’, or the organisation of national gatherings with other similar projects where folkloric groups are chosen as representatives of each Spanish region, such as the ‘peoples of the *Montañas del Teleno*’. In this sense, the RDGMT partakes in the construction of the local inhabitants of Maragatería as reified heritage representations and subaltern subjects in different ways. A first strategy entails the consideration of local ‘peasants’ and their folkloric representations as ‘territorial resources’ in their official publications, website and marketing strategies. The Maragatería is marketed to urban tourists as a rural land of traditional craftsmen and folklore where a harmonic relation with nature is preserved. Thus, although arts and crafts are not promoted financially, the ‘peoples of the *Montañas del Teleno*’ are presented as one of the reasons to visit the area, along with gastronomy and natural attractions. In practice, RDGMT funding is geared to the promotion of the tourism economy, including the creation of trekking or cultural itineraries, rural hotels and cottages or service sector businesses. This development model prioritises the individual entrepreneur who implements innovative projects and businesses promoting sustainable development and other empty signifiers characteristic of the development rhetoric (Saraceno 1994). However, it overlooks the fact that it is local people, their identity, tradition and their common heritage that produce the value marketed and appropriated by the entrepreneurs (Alonso Gonzalez 2014). Actually, the heritage machine tends to undermine the tourism–heritage assemblage in the long run: it creates cultural representations of local identities for consumption, but lets the real modes of existence behind the representations fade away.

If the State form generated cultural representations to shape national communities, the heritage machine furthers the process of abstraction of the *maragato*

difference under a new identity label: the ‘peoples of Montañas del Teleno’. Most importantly, this difference is not used for the construction of imagined national communities, but rather as a brand for marketing purposes by both the RDGMT and the entrepreneurs who promote the heritage economy. Not only is ethnicity commoditised (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009), but now ‘the very constituents of people’s embodied identities, their “race” and respective histories that once ensured their persecution and subordinate status, could now be transformed into capital’ (Meskell 2012, 2). In doing so, the heritage machine ‘structurates the ways subjects can change or stabilise around certain identities’, defining ‘certain formations of practices as the possible sites of individual investments, sites at which subjects and identities are constructed. It defines the vectors by which people and practices can or cannot move between, and connect, such investments’ (Grossberg 1997, 15).

As other neoliberal governmentality entities, the RDGMT promotes the development of a heritage ‘expert culture’ in Maragatería. For instance, in 2009, a cultural resource management company was brought from Granada (800 kilometres away from Maragatería) to ‘teach’ heritage values to the people in different villages in a series of public seminars. The underlying rationale is that ‘heritage’ is a universal idea rather than an empirical local construction, and therefore, anyone can teach about it anywhere. Moreover, heritage is not a given, but rather a concept that has to be taught to people who are ignorant about it, presupposing that they are ‘heritage deficient’ (Andrews 2010). One of the seminars was held in Lagunas de Somoza, where the State heritage catalogue wrongly classified a windmill as a tower and declared it GCI. Although its condition is bad, everyone in the village knows and appreciates the windmill, unique in the north-west Spanish. However, the ‘heritage expert’ lectured the local public about their wrongdoings in letting the ‘medieval tower’ to decay. Even if the public told her that it was a windmill, she reaffirmed her position, arguing that the public records could not be wrong, thus reemphasising the locals’ ignorance. Although everyone left the room and she could not finish the lecture, the episode illustrates the expert conception of heritage: the material has to be privileged over the immaterial when it can provide economic value, and the managerial–bureaucratic knowledge cannot be challenged by the people.

The articulation of novel identities and expert cultures goes hand in hand with the promotion of tourism investment by the RDGMT. The attempt to shift from an agricultural to a service-based post-industrial economy has led the RDGMT to promote tourism investment, drawing on the touristic attractiveness of Maragatería. Recipients of these funds are normally foreign entrepreneurs most interested in promoting the heritage economy and enhancing the aesthetics of villages to catalyse the arrival of tourism. The underpinnings of this process become apparent in the villages located along the Saint James Way, a UNESCO World Heritage trail whose significance and affluence are growing in recent years. Here, the spatial planning guidelines determine the constitution of a neoliberal space (Gunder 2010) where the RDGMT has supported the creation

of many hotels and rural houses. Again, the Way is conceived as a territorial resource from which entrepreneurs can extract economic value. Treated as a touristic product rather than as a spiritual community of affect and practice, the pilgrim is rapidly becoming a tourist, and the common values of the Way are fading away, that is, the affective environment that provides value, including the solidarity practices, volunteer work and the overall spiritual character. The neoliberal approach to heritage in Maragatería threatens the long-time endurance of the Way as a tourism resource due to the dissatisfaction of pilgrims, who perceive the lack of authenticity and feel deceived by market practices in a supposedly religious and spiritual trail. Moreover, many *maragato* villages are nearly deserted during winter – when it is not profitable to keep businesses open – and crowded during summer times when the Way is packed with pilgrim-tourists. These multiple reterritorialisations take place not only in the Way, but also in other *maragato* villages. Therefore, rather than a return to nationalism and imagined or real communities, the heritage machine fosters the construction of ever more individualised identities through symbolic and metacultural associations and economic investments that draw on heritage values.

### ***The individualisation of identity: material culture and ideology***

The supermodern ethos and the neoliberal governmentality paradigm result in an increasing individualisation of identities. Indeed, Augé (2008) has argued that supermodernity amplifies the possibility of ‘ethno-self-analysis’ in the social sciences, a tendency increasingly adopted by individuals in their symbolic expressions of identity and the self. However, it would be deceiving to argue that the RDGMT is responsible for this transformation. Many social actors, both foreign and local, intervene in the social sphere to further the distinctive traits of the heritage machine. In addition, we should conceive the articulation of identity as a process and a gradient (Fox and Ward 2008), thus avoiding the creation of dualistic categories (individualised communitarian, for instance). Following Hernando Gonzalo (2002, 103), the process of individualisation implies a weakening of the emotional bonds with reality, the use of temporal rather than spatial references as sources of identity, the positive assessment of change and the increased use of metaphoric and abstract forms for representing their identities and explaining social reality. This becomes apparent in the aesthetic and structural transformations of houses during recent decades in Maragatería. Here, urban upper-middle class groups are attracted by and utilise the cultural representations of the *maragatos* in the construction of their houses as sources of self-expression and identity differentiation (Madigan and Munro 1996). The imitation or restoration of *maragato* monumental houses provides symbolic and economic capital in the post-industrial global hierarchies of value (Herzfeld 2004) and enables them to represent and materialise their individualised identities in the house. In fact, the market of restored and invented *maragato* houses has undergone a real estate bubble with prices rocketing throughout the 1990s and the 2000s, with housing



Figure 2. Supermodern house imitating *maragato* architecture built from scratch in Val de San Lorenzo. The design and materials are modern, but its external appearance is intended to look vernacular. Source: Author.

prices reaching €1 million (Figure 2). This resulted in a rural gentrification process in this overall peripheral and low-income area, showing the depth and complex connections between global capital, real estate and cultural heritage (Winter 2011).

In turn, vernacular houses owned by local people, traditionally made of stone and straw or tile, started to incorporate as many modern materials (metal windows, plastic roofs, bricks) and spaces (garages, toilets) as they could afford. However, the heritage machine tends to purify and filter out these elements that are now considered ugly by urban criteria of taste, and are also accused of decreasing the overall aesthetic value of villages. This ‘purification’ is performed both immanently through social criteria of distinction and taste that permeate local social values, and transcendently through urban planning policies. Whereas the traditional relation between the individual and the house was metonymic, the supermodern individual uses the house as an abstract metaphor. It is deterritorialised from the local spatial context, but meaningful in temporal terms, as it materialises past cultural identities perceived as ‘other’ in the house. Material culture serves here to further the individualisation process, as differences between individuals tend to be exacerbated and lead to the production of even more individualised objects (Hernando Gonzalo 2012, 20). Individualised subjects tend to conceive the house as a symbol of individuality, a representational device that creates hierarchies through the symbolic ordering of temporal perceptions. This is clear in the use of internal and external façades as spaces of display. Most houses of urban newcomers display threshers, yokes, plows and vernacular



Figure 3. Restored *maragato* house with a plow on display in the façade, at the left of the picture. Source: Author.

objects hung in walls as ‘trophies’ intended to symbolise both a link to and an overcoming of tradition and to be seen by visitors and other local neighbours. For the latter, those objects represent a powerful message because they embody the living memory of the harsh pre-industrial past they lived, depending on the plough for their survival until a few decades ago. Unsurprisingly, local people perceive these objects negatively and try to get rid of them while at the same time incorporating modern materials in their houses to establish a symbolic link with modernity (Figure 3).

The ostentatious appropriation and display of those objects in supermodern houses create an inclusive disjunction, an exclusion involving judgment, a temporal ordering and a hierarchy: the life of ‘peasants’ becomes a reified image, the object of enunciation, while the supermodern individual is the active subject of enunciation that has both symbolically incorporated and existentially overcome that past. The monumental houses in the area serve to convey symbolic meanings and become the object of desire for many people, something already noted by Bourdieu in the 1980s, when higher-income individuals tended to associate aesthetic categories with the notion of home (1984, 247–248). This is so because they are associated with the individualised identities of dominant subjects, which are idealised in western society due to their association with higher levels of material control and power and, similarly, because ‘those who access power and dominate society typically have individualised identities’ (Hernando Gonzalo 2002, 202).

As in other areas of north-west Spain (González-Ruibal 2005), the arrival of modernity to the *maragato* villages had broken the communitarian ethos that

prevailed hitherto. The almost complete formal architectural homogeneity in the buildings of the village was disrupted by the construction of modern buildings and the use of modern materials (bricks, concrete, metal or plastic becoming elements as signs of distinction, wealth and modernity for locals). In turn, the heritage machine does perform not only a break from tradition, as modernity does, but also a disjunctive connection with the past, that is, a symbolic connection with tradition not in order to reinstate community and affirm a communitarian ethos, but rather to assert an individual *identity from and through difference*. Villages like Santiago Millas reflect those multiple presents in their materiality. Pre-industrial homogenous buildings stand side by side with large supermodern buildings, whose homogeneity lies precisely in the repetition of a certain form of differing, or a ritornello in Deleuzian terminology. That is, each supermodern house is different from the others, but all they share the will to ‘play’ with traditional and past elements in terms of heritage.

Every 2 years, an association of urban newcomers organises the feast of the *Patios Maragatos* in Santiago Millas, where a series of monumental heritagised houses, both restored and built from scratch, are open to the public. The *patios* are carefully manipulated ‘displays of order’ (Herzfeld 2001), intended to symbolise the good taste of the family presenting them. Curiously enough, most local inhabitants who own ‘authentic’ monumental *maragato* houses with patios do not open them to visitors. As my ethnography showed, they are not interested in opening them to the public because the patios are considered intimate familial spaces. In addition, their identities and social position within the local community are not related to the display of good manners and criteria of taste in tune with the logics of the heritage machine. Furthermore, during the same celebration, the association organised a performance of a *maragato* drummer within the local Museum of *Maragato* muleteers. Paradoxically, local drummers often play in local events and celebrations: if people want to see them they can do so in a real context rather than in the museum. However, the heritage machine required the display of reified ethnicity as a metacultural product to be consumed under certain criteria of taste: the drummer was extricated from community to perform alone in front of a public. The heritage machine breaks with both the pre-modern and modern worlds – the functional/instrumental relation with reality – and moves to the symbolic realm, thus curtailing the immanent relations through which the relational premodern identities are constituted (Hernando Gonzalo 2002).

The spatial organisation of *maragato* villages also reflects the effects of the heritage machine. In Val de San Lorenzo, the local elites try to imitate the models of the ‘culturally refined’ dominant identities of the individualised urban newcomers building large, traditional-looking houses. Because they own hotels and businesses, they are most interested in preserving a vernacular aesthetic look in the village. However, their world views and functional interests differ from urban newcomers, and their houses become reinterpretations of the newcomers’ houses: copies of copies, simulacra. Their new residences are made of bricks, but covered

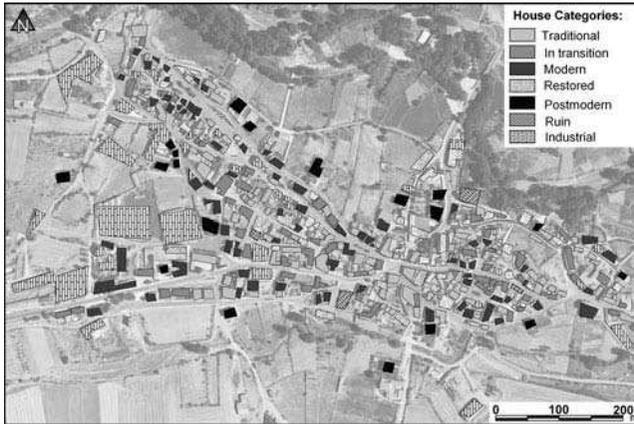


Figure 4. Analysis of house typologies in *maragato* villages: the case of Val de San Lorenzo. Restored *maragato* houses are concentrated in the city centre. Postmodern houses built by locals are located in the outskirts of the village, surrounding it. Source: Author.

by vernacular stones to resemble the *maragato* houses externally. However, internally, the houses follow average modern architectural patterns without vernacular material culture displayed in the façades. Moreover, although their houses try to reinstate a symbolic ideal of community in formal architectural terms, they are spatially isolated and separated from the centre of the village and break the homogeneity of the urban grid. This results not only from a desire for individualisation, but also basically for the need of functional and modern commodities that require space: swimming pools, garages and barbecues, which are considered signs of bad taste according to the values of the heritage machine (Figure 4).

In Val de San Lorenzo, the local government promoted a transition to a tourism-based economy as a response to agro-industrial decay. The heritagisation of the village during the 2000s resulted in the creation of two museums and the design of urban planning guidelines. Those guidelines sanctioned the removal of the traditional *pochos*, stone benches where people gather to chat in front of their houses. The hegemonic character of the measure of a local government against its own neighbours to favour the interests of newcomers and elites is clear: benches are used by locals, while newcomers prefer staying at home or in the patios. This difference does not only result from a functional choice, but also derives from a certain structure of thought associated with a conception of place, space and the role of the house in the villages.

Traditionally, houses were left open and neighbours would get into each other's houses indiscriminately (Brandes 1975). As such, the boundaries between public and private and between the village and the house were fluid. The benches functioned as 'contact zones' (Pratt 1991) where sociability was enacted and

community bonds reinforced. The suppression of the benches reinforces the individualisation of subjects and houses, and the boundaries between community and families and individuals become solid and striated. Striation 'results from stratification, the overcoding, centralization, hierarchization, binarization, and segmentation for the free movements of signs, particles, bodies, territories spaces, and so on' (Bonta and Protevi 2004, 151). The removal of the benches prevents the façade and the surroundings of the house from functioning as contact zones. Then, façades can become 'clean' representational devices. In fact, façades are used by the heritage machine as central aesthetic areas for display suited for the tourist gaze. Therefore, the heritagisation of Val de San Lorenzo involved the removal of tradition and its metacultural recreation according to the heritage machine, which privileges the creation of spaces to be seen rather than to be lived, promoting one dominant regime of signs, one way of thinking and acting.

This is connected to another component of the heritage machine: the revival of regionalist and nationalist ideologies. In Maragatería, the regionalist Leonese ideology has emerged strongly since the 1980s. It has furthered the modern task of deterritorialising certain features and reterritorialising them as cultural abstractions that stand for the Leonese identity and culture. In the case of the *poços*, members of the Leonese regionalist party strongly advocated for their preservation. However, for them, the benches were to be preserved because they were constituent parts of the Leonese identity, not simply because they were fundamental sites of socialisation for neighbours. Therefore, advocates of the Leonese agenda and ideology also promoted the heritagisation of the village and the metacultural resignification of a certain mode of existence, but diverged in the representational meaning to be conveyed.

## **Conclusions**

The heritage machine is a provisional dominant system co-constitutive with the global post-political and neoliberal order. As the State form withdraws from the public sphere, a multiplicity of social actors replaces it and further emphasises the modern twofold process of abstraction and obliteration of reality, reworking institutions and social relations to suit market logics. The heritage machine constructs social differences embedded in structures of power and inequality and manifest in visual symbols and forms of interaction that reproduce images and discourses of difference. It does not construct transcendent metanarratives (e.g. the nation), but rather affirms individual identities associated with certain governmental practices, group behaviours, cultural and spatial practices. It thrives on the value produced by sociocultural differences while at the same reproducing the basic modern ethos: if the notion that identities are constructed through difference is one of the heaviest legacies of modernity (Grossberg 1996), super-modern subjectivities construct themselves through a metacultural differentiation from others, represented as 'traditional', 'primitive' and 'backward' in both spatial and temporal terms. As García Canclini argues:

In order to integrate the popular classes into the process of capitalist development, the dominant classes ... separate the economic basis from cultural representations and break the unity between production, circulation, and consumption and between individuals and the community. At a second stage, or simultaneously, they put the pieces back together again and subordinate them to a globalisation of culture that corresponds to the nationalisation of capital. (1993, XIII)

The heritage machine ‘implies individualisation, and with it, the capacity to generate a will to power’ (Hernando Gonzalo 2002, 189). Heritage is a crucial vector to channel the process of individualisation because objects have become:

symbols that can represent the manifold differences that exist today, and which can facilitate the visualisation of that effort of differentiation, that particularisation that defines identity. Thus, objects attain a relevance that had never had hitherto, because they are now embedded with a high symbolic charge. Objects are now the repositories of something or a lot of the identity of their possessor. (Hernando Gonzalo 2002, 191)

The heritage machine creates new material contexts and articulations of the social that define which behaviours, identities and subjectivities are ‘legitimate’, combining specific historical configurations of social differentiation to establish a new symbolic landscape, a new regime of truth and a novel material organisation of reality. My heritage ethnography suggests that the workings of the heritage machine exceed the scope of disciplinary modern strategies deployed by ‘central agencies’ like the State: it is adapted to an era of control rather than discipline (Deleuze 1992). What matters here is not to legitimise national narratives or to devise new forms of governing the population (although it contributes to this end), but rather to work in tune with post-industrial economies. The heritage machine does not construct a single form of diversity, but multiple differing diversities.

This conception of heritage and governmentality avoids accordingly certain social actors (state, market or experts) more power than they actually have, and it advocates a more *diffuse* understanding of agency. Heritage agency is to be located below individuals and above structures, in abstract machines that determine the functioning of a certain social assemblage. These machines articulate internal inequalities, disguising certain differences and emphasising others, ‘fixing thresholds of uniformity and otherness that make it possible to classify disparate subjects in a continuum from “inappropriate and unacceptable” to “tolerable subordinates”’ (Briones 2005, 16). The cultural representations of ‘others’ can be used to stand for something else: as abstractions, *maragatos* can be territorial resources, symbols of tradition and authenticity and representatives of the Leonese identity, among many others. Meanwhile, the different modes of existence of ‘real’ *maragatos* are undermined by the heritage machine: their economies disrupted, their villages gentrified and their memories and identities socially constructed as subaltern, uninteresting and backward.

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