

Taxonomic panic and the art of "making do" at a heritage site: The case of Hampi UNESCO site, India

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Abstract

The article seeks reasons behind the "spatial cleansing" that was initiated at the Hampi UNESCO World Heritage site in India in 2011, and resulted in a significant number of residents being evicted. The local authorities, supported by archaeological bodies and tourism agencies, first targeted the medieval bazaar where people lived and worked within an informal tourism sector. I argue that this was the outcome of a "taxonomic panic", caused by the fear by authorities of a "confusion of categories". I analyse how the official representations of Hampi's landscape, created by archaeologists and tourism specialists, reveal this panic. I also demonstrate how the residents of a disappearing village responded to the authorities' way of imagining and managing the site by employing different practices of making do. The article is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Hampi as well as on secondary data.

KEYWORDS: Hampi, India, UNESCO World Heritage site, tourism, heritage, spatial cleansing, taxonomic panic, local practices

Contested space, competing meanings: The case of Hampi

The UNESCO politics of world heritage protection has often been critically described in terms of a regime (Zacharias 2010; Bendix, Eggert & Peselmann 2013; Coombe & Weiss 2015). UNESCO is usually portrayed as 'a chief villain' (Eriksen 2001: 127) responsible for violating local communities' cultural rights: 'certain understandings about the nature and meaning of heritage have been excluded in heritage practices', which has had 'consequences for the expression of cultural and social identity' (Smith 2006: 42). Frequently, communities living within UNESCO sites are constrained by these heritage regimes rather than empowered by them (Brumann & Berliner 2016). At the same time, the World Heritage brand is a 'honey-pot' that attracts visitors and income via tourism (Cleere 2006) and thus can bring economic and social benefits to local communities through, at the very least, employment opportunities.

Hampi, the former capital of the Hindu Vijayanagara Empire in southern India (see Verghese & Dallapiccola 2010), was designated as a World Heritage site in 1986. This

initially brought prosperity to the local residents who inhabited the medieval-era ruins. They have shifted from the less profitable agriculture to the tourism sector, turning their homes into family-run guest houses, small restaurants and shops, and other tourist amenities which serve the needs of mostly low-budget foreign visitors.¹ The centre of these activities was the bazaar, a nearly one-kilometre long main street situated in front of the Virupaksha temple and lined on both sides by colonnaded stone pavilions called *mandapas*, adapted both for residential and business purposes. The temple, believed to predate the Vijayanagara Empire, is considered to be a living sanctuary and attracts domestic pilgrims from all around the Karnataka state and beyond. Both the Virupaksha temple and the bazaar used to be not only Hampi's 'physical, spiritual, and mythological core' (LeDuc 2012: 30), but also the social and economic centre of the village's life (see Krog 2007).

The bazaar was the first place in Hampi targeted by the authorities. In July 2011 the residents of the *mandapas* were handed eviction notices and the following day bulldozers tore down all the modern structures, additions and extensions that had been constructed by the villagers over and around the ruins. As a result of this first "demolition" – as it is referred to by Hampi residents – more than two hundred families became displaced, losing their properties and sources of income. This clearance continued in the subsequent years, resulting in the erasing of nearly two thirds of the village population (approximately 2,500) from Hampi's landscape. These actions were undertaken through the collaboration between the district's governing body and the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), which is the main institution responsible for preserving 'the monuments of national importance' in India (*The Ancient Monuments...* 1958). UNESCO's authority was often employed to legitimize the decisions undertaken in order to protect fragile and precious heritage (see Bloch 2016).

The so called public consultations which took place at the site were both sporadic and a sham, and did not help to overcome mutually overlapping, and often contradictory interests of multiple stakeholders involved in this contentious site (Thakur 2010).² Only

¹ Hampi had been initially "discovered" by European hippies in the 1970s, who had searched for a peaceful and quiet spot as an alternative to the increasingly overcrowded Goa, situated some 300 kilometers away. These were followed by backpackers. Currently, the more high-budget tourists stay in the upmarket hotels in the nearby city of Hospet or government-run lodges on the route between Hospet and Hampi, while Hampi village serves the needs of low-budget visitors.

² The ASI is responsible for maintaining 58 centrally protected monuments in Hampi, including the Virupaksha temple and the main bazaar (see The ASI Hampi mini-circle 2015). However, it is not the only archaeological institution which exercises authority over Hampi. The Karnataka State Department of Archaeology, Museums and Heritage administers those monuments at Hampi – approximately 1600 – which are not protected by the ASI as "the monuments of national importance". There are also other structures which remain officially unprotected. Additionally, in order to implement an integrated management plan for the site, the Hampi World Heritage Area Management Authority (HWHAMA) was established in 2002 as an "umbrella institution". There are also other governmental agencies (on the local, state, and central level), as well as non-governmental actors (Indian and Western scholars, media, NGO activists, religious leaders, businessmen in tourism sector etc.) involved in defining and managing Hampi's heritage. I elaborate on this 'crowded institutional landscape' (LeDuc 2012: 32), which entails often competing visions and interests, and creates 'the inter-institutional space', where power is scattered among numerous actors who use heritage (and tourism) 'for different ends and interests' (Kraivanja 2014: 90, 108), elsewhere (Bloch 2016).

after eviction, the affected people, with the support of an external NGO³, managed to win a satellite resettlement site a few kilometres from Hampi. Meanwhile, the poorest families, who could not afford to rent rooms in nearby villages, set up a shack encampment on a patch of land on Hampi’s outskirts. The remaining residents still live in the last quarter left, and fear that relocation is imminent for them too.



*Figure 1a,b: The main bazaar before and after “spatial cleansing”,
photo by Surendra Kumar*

This article seeks to explain why the local authorities, supported by archaeology and tourism experts, targeted the bazaar area in particular, given that within the protected area there are other bazaars lined with uninhabited *mandapas*. As many residents and their supporters have argued (e.g. Fritz & Michell 2012), the bazaar could have been kept as a living heritage site, thereby continuing the medieval tradition of a bustling marketplace

³ An Indian, based in a state capital Bangalore, NGO Equations (Equitable Tourism Options) is a research, campaign and advocacy organization which works for sustainable tourism development in India. The organization, alerted by some community members, prepared a fact-finding report on eviction and demolition in Hampi, helped to write a petition to different decision-makers on the state and national level, and to file a case in the High Court of Karnataka State.

full of vendors and customers. I argue that one of the driving forces behind clearing the Hampi's landscape of people was a "taxonomic panic", caused by the authorities' fear of a "confusion of categories" (Herzfeld 2006; Douglas 1966). Removing residents from the *mandapas* has served to clarify the boundaries: between past and present, traditional and modern, material and social.

In the article I demonstrate how this panic is reflected in the primarily visual official representations of Hampi's landscape, created by both central and state archaeological institutions and tourism departments, which put themselves in a position of guardians of the site's conceptual order. For this purpose, I analyse photo books, tourist guidebooks, brochures, and leaflets that can be found at the site, either in the information offices run by the Karnataka Department of Tourism or in the market.

Finally, I demonstrate how the boundaries drawn by official ideologies have been negotiated through local practices of making do adopted by residents, who have either already been displaced or are being threatened with eviction, in order to question the experts' way of imagining and the authorities' manner of managing the local landscape. I was able to observe these practices during a five-month period of ethnographic fieldwork during 2013 and 2014, while the conversations and informal interviews with villagers, tourism sector migrants, and various officials helped me to grasp different perspectives towards the heritage site and its landscape. I also refer to the secondary data acquired during this research⁴.

Taxonomic panic: What is wrong with the bazaar?

An atmosphere of alienation and distrust between residents and governing bodies (Krog 2007: 4) had been created long before people were erased from the Hampi's landscape. It was preceded by a stigmatization of them as "illegal squatters" in a public discourse created by certain Hindu religious leaders, archaeologists, political authorities, and media. In the narratives of government officials, in press articles, and in experts' reports, they were continually represented as immoral individuals, who economically exploited both the (inter)national heritage and sacred land (Bloch 2017; see e.g. UNESCO-ICOMOS Report 2007: 35, 38–40). This rhetoric was supported by claims that tourism had led to the area's moral decay (LeDuc 2012: 32). The residents were constructed as incapable of understanding and appreciating the monuments and, as such, they posed a threat to the heritage site, which in turn necessitated their removal (Bloch 2016).

⁴ The project was financed by the National Science Centre – the main governmental body in Poland responsible for providing research funding – granted on the basis of decision number DEC-2011/03/B/HS2/03488. I arrived in Hampi one and a half years after evictions had started and it was a challenging fieldwork. The already displaced residents were angry while those still living in a village – confused and suspicious. It took me a considerable length of time, casual visits, talks, and lots of *chai* to win the trust of villagers: hanging-out and chatting was the best way to find out what people thought about the situation. I participated in their daily activities, observing on how they dealt with the constraints imposed on them. My advantage was that I wanted to talk to them while no authorities were interested in doing so. Most of all, residents hoped that I could help them to figure out the authorities' plans for those who had not yet been evicted. I managed to establish contact with numerous decision-makers involved in representing and managing Hampi, however, most of them were reluctant to speak with an intrusive young female researcher, while some of them talked to me openly but unofficially.

What is wrong with marketplaces, especially at heritage sites? Michael Herzfeld notices that in the historic parts of towns and cities in all three countries of his studies – Thailand, Greece and Italy:

the market spaces that define communal life as well as interaction with encompassing economic spheres are rapidly disappearing, or being replaced by new kinds of market that embody the principles of a rationalized economy (Herzfeld 2006: 143).

He argues that marketplaces automatically evoke ‘images of disorder’ and a fear by authorities of spaces that cannot be fully controlled by them.⁵ In other words, bazaars induce a ‘taxonomic panic’, which is caused ‘not only by a violation of conceptual limits but especially by a “confusion of categories” – a classic case of what [Mary] Douglas calls “matter out of place”’ (Herzfeld 2006: 143–4; following Douglas 1966). It therefore explains, according to Herzfeld, the attempts undertaken in order to replace the messiness of markets and alleyways with large, harmoniously organized spaces: ‘the creation of large open spaces ..., generating a marked contrast with local tolerance of crowding, represents the intrusive presence of regimentation and aesthetic domination’ (Herzfeld 2006: 127).

In similar vein, Ben Campkin argues ‘that there are many areas of spatial investigation in which [Mary] Douglas’ ideas on dirt, and other theories of excluded and degraded matter, may be – and have already been – useful in terms of both physical spaces and spaces of representation’ (Campkin 2013: 51). Douglas perceived taxonomic systems of particular cultures as dominant ways of classifying constructed on binary entities, with purity defining “order” and pollution violating it:

... dirt is a kind of compendium category for all events which blur, smudge, contradict, or otherwise confuse accepted classifications. The underlying feeling is that a system of values which is habitually expressed in a given arrangement of things has been violated (Douglas 2003: 109).

While such fixed, structuralist thinking of culture poses certain limitations (Campkin 2013: 54–8), it helps us to understand why those who do not follow ‘the official designation of spatial meaning and use’ risk being defined as ‘matter out of place’ (Herzfeld 2006: 130).

Herzfeld seeks to explain how the “modern European” way of classifying has prevailed over other systems globally. The gradual disappearance of bazaars has also taken place in post-socialist countries (Stępień 2013), where the old “disorder” has given way to a new capitalist “order”, which is embodied in the symmetrically organized and neatly arranged space of shopping malls. In the case of non-European countries these rationalization processes are influenced by images of ‘Oriental’ disorder (Said 1978: 38, 233), which are still very much alive in ‘tourism imaginaries’ (Salazar 2013)⁶. The authorities

⁵ Bazaars are classic examples of what Tim Edensor – in his ethnographic study of another Indian World Heritage site, Taj Mahal in the city of Agra – calls a ‘heterogeneous tourist space’ where residents and tourists mingle. In contrast to an ‘enclavic space’ of tourist ghettos, the former violate the boundary between ‘the tourist’ and ‘the local’ (Edensor 1998: 149-180).

⁶ This is a reason of why, especially in older critical studies, tourism to postcolonial countries was conceptualized as a new form of imperialism (Nash 1977), a cannibalism (Bruner 1989), or a mirror of racism (MacCannell 1992: 121–146). See also: Crick 1989.

of postcolonial states, following the often internalized paradigm of modernity, try to adjust to their own imaginations of “the West”. The principles of practicality and efficiency are usually cited in support of ‘spatial cleansing’ (Herzfeld 2006: 132–3).

James Scott, in *Seeing like a State*, also argues that in ‘modernizing’ projects scientifically measured practicality is conflated with aesthetics and leads to spatial segregation (Scott 1998: 140). According to this logic, particular social entities and activities should be ascribed to their own places (Scott 1998: 111–2). Bazaars encroaching on public space, slums in official areas of the cities, and those inhabiting monuments violate this conceptual order and become “matters out of place”. The ‘beautification’ of Delhi, implemented as a part of preparation for the Commonwealth Games in 2010, could serve as an example here. Hundreds of shelters were demolished and thousands of people displaced, not only as a result of slum clearances (Dupont 2011), as is usually the case in these kinds of grand international events, but also as the outcome of “widening” the narrow bazaars by cutting off the buildings which “encroached” on the street space. Shops at Amrit Kaur bazaar were also given ‘a uniform design’, dustbins and public toilets were installed, and pavements added (Sonkar 2010).

Another example, reflecting the tendency towards spatial segregation caused by “taxonomic panic” in India, is the constant effort by the municipal authorities at Dharamsala in Himachal Pradesh state to remove stall vendors from the roadsides of McLeod Ganj town (the location of my second field site in the project⁷).

According to Herzfeld, this modern way of thinking about space is a symptom of “crypto-colonialism” (Herzfeld 2002), i.e. countries’ self-perception through the dominant discourses originating from the Western European tradition. This refers even to those countries which have never been colonized and fetishize their independence (as in the case of Thailand that Herzfeld researched)⁸. The “Western” concepts of space and material heritage overlap (see Bloch 2016) and entail the removal of local populations:

[T]heme parks, partially made up of ancient materials but heavily restored and refurbished to suit modern ideas about the past, come to replace densely populated areas and in turn create growing zones of disaffected and displaced people (Herzfeld 2006: 132).

It is this way in which the logic of ‘colonialist evolutionism’ is being reproduced, perceived as ‘a march toward the ultimate in urbanity and “civilization”’ (Herzfeld 2006: 128). “Taxonomic panic”, therefore, reflects a fear of categorical disorder produced by the “uncivilized

⁷ The research in Hampi was conducted within a broader multi-sited project on power relations in the Indian tourism sector.

⁸ As I mentioned earlier in regard to the ‘modernization’ processes in post-socialist Central-Eastern Europe this is not only the case of non-European/non-Western countries. The discursive opposition of the “West” and the “East” or the “West” and “the rest” cannot be anymore understood in terms of geography. The postcolonial condition can be identified in many other settings (both within European/Western countries and non-European/non-Western ones) as the power relations nowadays operate in different directions (see e.g. Boissevain 1996). Neither I do not mean that communities in “tourism contexts” are mere recipients of the power impositions as I demonstrate later in this paper when analyzing the local responses to the experts’ way of imagining, and the authorities’ manner of managing, the site and its heritage (see Nogués Pedregal 2008).

Orient”. Those, who are not capable of understanding the idea of material heritage and treating it in a “proper manner”, are perceived as “uncivilized”, e.g. the Hampi residents.

Here the “taxonomic panic” still takes its toll. After clearance of the main bazaar, government officials were put under pressure by temple authorities over the fact that pilgrims could no longer buy *puja*⁹ items. The Hampi World Heritage Area Management Authority responded by installing a dozen uniform, tin shopping booths at the bus stand area as the only authorized space of trading. Following the archaeological expert’s report on the kind of stock available at the bazaar in the medieval past, only religious objects were allowed to be sold there and only by those residents who could prove that they had already been vendors of such items before 2011. Those accepted were asked to pay nearly 350 USD to book a booth, on top of a monthly rent. Not surprisingly, the government stalls have remained empty. People ignored the authorities’ efforts to “civilize” local trade and claimed that they could not stand the heat inside the tiny, tin booths, which, in contrast to the airy, stone *mandapas*, were unsuited to the hot climate. Moreover, according to the vendors, the booths could not provide successful businesses since they were placed too far from the temple.

The same scenario was observed by Robert Shepherd (2012a; 2012b) at Wutai Shan, a Buddhist sanctuary in China, which had also been proclaimed a UNESCO World Heritage site. The souvenir and religious object vendors there have been restricted to a few designated sites, mostly in parking areas, far from temples and monasteries where they used to offer their goods. Moreover, those who wanted to be approved as vendors were obliged to purchase an annual licence that cost approximately 750 USD (Shepherd 2012a: 66). As Herzfeld observes with regard to the gradual disappearance of markets around the world:

This really has much more to do with politics – with relegating potentially “dangerous” populations to spaces where they can be subjected to increased surveillance, and away from those spaces where their continuing presence is indeed viewed by the authorities as “matter out of place” (Hertzfeld 2006: 132).

The 2014 *Hampi Utsava* (Hampi Festival) also served as a pretext to remove the encampment of huts, rigged up from bamboo and plastic sheeting on the village outskirts by the poorest among those evicted. *Hampi Utsava* is Hampi’s largest annual state-sponsored event and is attended not only by people from surrounding villages but also by state and even central government officials. In order to make space for this massive event, aimed at promoting Hampi’s heritage, all the huts were torn down and three big stages were built to give a platform for official speeches and folk dances. The people, defined as “matter out of place” again, shifted to the outskirts of the resettlement site and remained living in tents there, waiting for bank loans being granted to them so that they could start building.

⁹ Sanskrit: *pūjā*. A ritual or a prayer performed by devotees, especially while visiting the temple.



Figure 2: Huts rigged up from bamboo, palm leaves and plastic on the outskirts of the resettlement site, photo by the author

The Hampi resettlement project reflects the authorities' way of thinking about space and heritage. Through its provisions the residents removed from the monuments' surroundings were relocated to a barren patch of grassland some three to four kilometres away from Hampi's boundaries. They have lost their court battle to win a spot at the site where the shack encampment was previously situated. They believed this location would not only be closer to the original village, but it would also allow them to keep its name, i.e. remain physically and symbolically within Hampi's boundaries. Placed behind another village which separates them from the former site, they can no longer refer to Hampi. Indeed, it is also likely that they will not even be granted a distinct name to maintain their identity, since the allocated spot abuts another village which is likely to absorb them.¹⁰

A further complication emerged from the resettlement site being located on a former burial ground. This caused consternation among Hindus and controversy among the few Muslims who were also evicted, since the site was next to an ancient Muslim tomb. All this demonstrates the imagined hierarchy in the authorities' thinking about the heritage sites and the role it plays in the nation-building project (see Bloch 2017).

In the new satellite village, no marketplace has been planned. The evicted residents, who lost their sources of livelihood, decided to jointly purchase a separate piece of land situated one kilometre further away from the new residential site. Located in the middle of a sugarcane field, the intention is to build a marketplace with shops, restaurants

¹⁰ When I visited Hampi in 2017 the official name of the site was Gori given after a Muslim tomb located nearby. However, the residents never called it in this way, instead saying "New Hampi Village" or even "New Vijayanagara".

and rooms for rent there. The domestic and public space will thus be physically separated, with no “confusion of categories”, in contrast to the bazaar where *mandapas* had served as both homes and business premises. The residential site, in turn, consists of identical, tiny plots measuring 20 to 30ft in length and width, which is a “low profit house” according to the governmental housing scheme. The houses are planned to be built one by one, in rows, facing the parallel streets. Everything will thus be predictable and controllable, visually regulated and regimented (see Scott 1998: 140).



Figure 3: New satellite village under construction, photo by the author

Heritage representations: Who is matter out of place?

In spite of the number of different bodies involved in the management of Hampi World Heritage site¹¹, all of them seem to share a similar perception of heritage landscape founded on the spatial segregation principle, which is reflected in the official image-making policy. The representations of the site that can be found in photo books, tourist guidebooks, brochures, or leaflets, focus on deliberately chosen icons and demonstrate how authorities and experts, both in archaeology and tourism management, see Hampi’s landscape. What all of them have in common is the almost total absence of social life, a ‘splendid isolation’ as Herzfeld calls it (2006: 143). The bazaar, the present-day Hampi as a village community, even the religious activities of the pilgrims have been erased from the aestheticised landscape, reduced to a built heritage surrounded by lawns.

In its almost 100-page illustrated tourist guidebook on Hampi, published in the popular *World Heritage Series*, the Archaeological Survey of India admittedly mentions ‘bustling bazaars’ and ‘ostentatious festivals’ (Devakunjari 2007: front cover), but attributes

¹¹ For a detailed description of those bodies and their complex mutual relations, see: Bloch 2016.

them to the past, rather than the present. In the photographs representing today's Hampi the monuments dominate. They are named, framed, elevated, enshrined and mechanically reproduced; transformed into a tourist attraction through all the stages defined by Dean MacCannell in his classic work (1976: 43–5). Among the 68 photos included in the tourist guidebook, only eleven present humans, and among those only three show people in the foreground. In the remaining eight pictures the people are either tourists or are placed in the background.

The contemporary bazaar does not exist in the ASI's representations of Hampi. Even the picture of Virupaksha's *gopura*¹² – the landmark of Hampi's religious and social landscape – was taken in order to omit a view of the bazaar. This is an extremely difficult task and one still can see the roofs of the cars parked in front of the temple, as well as the blurred tops of people's heads (Devakunjari 2007: 74–5). There is a single mention that the Chariot Festival¹³, 'celebrated annually in Virupaksha temple, is an elaborate affair' (Devakunjari 2007: 74), but no photograph illustrates this event. The only visual representation of the main bazaar focuses on its abandoned part, farthest away from the Virupaksha temple; the photo caption reads: "Remains of the medieval Hampi Bazaar".



Figure 4: Hampi bazaar and Virupaksha temple during Chariot Festival in 2014, photo by the author

¹² Sanskrit: *gô-pura*. A monumental, ornate tower, leading to Dravidian temples.

¹³ Probably the most popular of Hampi's Hindu festivals – part of its living tradition – which celebrates the holy marriage of Virupaksha and Pampa (local emanations of Shiva and Parvati deities). Devotees – villagers and pilgrims – celebrate this event by throwing banana offerings towards a giant wooden chariot pulled in the procession through the bazaar, and by breaking coconuts on the chariot's platform. The whole temple is decorated with banana leaves and garlands of marigolds and jasmine flowers. The divine couple is held in the chariot and escorted by an elephant that blesses the crowd.

The whole four-line paragraph on the bazaar is even more meaningful. Apart from providing some technical details on length, width and architecture details of *mandapas*, it merely says that the bazaar was ‘once impressive’ and ‘[t]hough it lies in ruins today, it once served as one of the important thoroughfares of the city’ (Devakunjari 2007: 78). Again, the marketplace and its social functions are attributed to the past. This is emphasized by the double use of “once”, while the “dead” monuments, as Hampi residents call the abandoned structures, are the current representations of the site’s landscape. It is worth noting that the guidebook was published four years before Hampi’s clearance, when the bazaar was still very vibrant. Hence, the “cleansing” cannot be used as an excuse for the absence of the bazaar’s representations.

The Karnataka Department of Tourism’s splendidly illustrated booklet with 12 large panoramic, aerial pictures of Hampi area, shows tiny human figures only on one of them, with the caption: ‘The Tungabhadra river, which has seen the rise and fall of the Empire. Even today, the only object of human advancement seen in these serene waters, is the coracle’ (Karnataka Department of Tourism [a]). What is significant in the context of this message is the fact that Tungabhadra river, along with the Virupaksha temple and the bazaar, make up the core of local spiritual and social life: pilgrims scatter the ashes of cremated relatives into the waters, local Brahmins¹⁴ conduct prayers on the *ghats*¹⁵, villagers bathe, wash clothes, meet and chat on the banks of the river. It must have been challenging for the photographer to capture so many sights of Hampi without the presence of people. The only humans mentioned in the captions are the past architects of Vijayanagara Empire (and their artistry), the contemporary tourist guides (as “fabulous storytellers”), and the tourists themselves (who “hate to leave” the abandoned Vittala temple).



Figure 5: Pilgrims at the Tungabhadra river during Chariot Festival in 2014, photo by the author

¹⁴ Here it refers to Hindu priests.

¹⁵ Sanskrit: *ghaṭṭa*. A flight of steps leading down to a river or other holy waters.

The Department also published a widely available, free, pocket-size leaflet, in its own *World Heritage Site* series (Karnataka Department of Tourism [b]). It consists of nine images and none of them present either people or the bazaar, although, as the text says, “[a]t Hampi, the past comes alive”. This, however, does not occur in the form of living heritage, as the villagers understand it, but rather through “[w]hispering winds, magnificent ruins, traces and scents of a bygone era”. The authors of the leaflet directly describe Hampi as “the world’s largest open-air museum”. Again, they recall the bygone splendour of the bazaar and the merchants, who “traded in diamonds, pearls, fine silks, brocades, horses and more”, but they do not refer to the way Hampi residents continued this tradition. The only reference to the living tradition that can be found in this publication is that the Virupaksha temple “is still used for worship” (but no photo illustrates that) and that Anegondi, located on the other side of Tungabhadra river, has been selected under the Rural Tourism Project of the Union Tourism Ministry, which aims at “socio-economic and cultural development of the local people”. Evidently, Hampi residents have not been included into this category¹⁶.

The state Directorate of Archaeology and Museums’s¹⁷ photo book on Vijayanagara (Rao & Gopal 2009) proves how entrenched such an image is and how it can be traced to the colonial representations of Indian heritage, when the European, nineteenth century archaeological gaze shaped the way in which material remains of the past were perceived in the colonies (Bloch 2016). The book contains the earliest colonial photographs of Hampi dated 1856, accompanied by pictures taken in 1983 and their contemporary counterparts from 2008 (therefore, three photos of each structure), along with the comments on the current condition of each photographed monument. It is particularly striking that it does not make any difference whether the pictures were taken by the British colonial colonel in the mid-19th century or by the Indian Director of Archaeology and Museums at the beginning of the 21st century. Apart from the concept itself, i.e. to document the same sites, they looked at Hampi’s heritage and landscape in a very similar way.

The publication reveals the archaeologists’ attitude towards (what they would evidently condemn as) “encroachments” onto the material past caused by a living present, mostly in the form of modernity. The mixing of these two realms – the traditional form and the modern one – evidently causes the fear of a “confusion of categories”. Here are some excerpts which illustrate this perception:

In the foreground we can notice roofs of the modern shops, while more than hundred years ago the frontage was open with only the remains of the pillared *matapa* [*mandapa*]. The tree on the right has given place to modern shops ... [therefore] [e]fforts are being made to remove the modern structures (shops) in front of the *gopura*, so that a better ambience is provided to the beautiful and tall *gopura* (Rao & Gopal 2009: 53).

¹⁶ I elaborate on the differences between Hampi’s and Anegondi’s struggles to establish themselves as living heritage communities in: Bloch 2017.

¹⁷ The Directorate is the body within the Karnataka State Department of Archaeology, Museums and Heritage.

The encroachments in the front and sides of the temple have been removed so as to give a clearly better picture of the monument (ibid.: 153).

The left side [of the stone gateway] has been covered and will have to be removed. The electrical pole will also be shifted (ibid.: 151).

The authors often complain about electricity as a disturbing element: ‘The intrusive factor is an electrical pole in between’ (ibid.: 141) or ‘[t]he skyline is now disturbed by electrical wires’ (ibid.: 43). It seems that the act of removing the presence of modernity resembles debris clearance with both the debris and electricity seen as “matter out of place”:

The entire complex has been cleared of the unnecessary debris and the monument now presents a more beautiful glimpse with *gopura* of Virupaksha in distant background (ibid.: 59).

The front portion of the monument has been cleaned of extra debris and the entire complex now looks more elegant than it was (ibid.: 49).

The attempts to create physical barriers within the landscape, in order to draw conceptual boundaries between the protected material past and the encroaching present, could already be seen by the fencing-off of the monuments and the erection of protection notice boards: ‘The road leading to bazaar has been redone and chain link mesh has been provided to avoid further encroachment of the area’ (ibid.: 43).



Figure 6: The protection notice board put by the Archaeological Survey of India in front of cleared mandapas of the main bazaar, photo by the author

The archaeologists appeared not only to want to keep the structures ‘intact’ (ibid.: 121) – according to the conservationist paradigm (Choay 2001) – but also pursue an aesthetic agenda, which has already been mentioned with respect to “beautification” projects.

The authors clearly state that ‘the entire area has been cleared up to give a better aesthetic appearance’ (Rao & Gopal 2009: 73). The other expressions used in the book to describe the desirable effect include ‘a pleasing appearance’ (ibid.: 87), ‘beautiful [appearance]’ (ibid.: 119) and ‘elegant look’, an expression that appears nearly every second page (e.g. ‘debris clearance have made the structure more elegant’, ibid.: 113).

The authors also reveal the colonial gaze (Weiler 2013) as their inspiration: ‘The Greenlaw pictures illustrate his love of the picturesque’ (Rao & Gopal 2009: 107). ‘The picturesque’ requires open and clear space, ‘neat’ (ibid.: 117) and ‘spruced’ (ibid.: 131). Nature corresponds with this concept but only when it serves to frame the monument. Therefore, the ‘unwanted vegetation has to be cleared’ (ibid.: 127) and replaced by lawns: ‘The area in the front and the sides of the entrance has been spruced and lawn has been provided’ (ibid.: 131). The aim is to make a monument ‘visible’ (ibid.: 109) or even ‘clearly visible’ (ibid.: 113). Such an organized, regulated space, without modern additions, debris and weed – with no ‘confusion of categories’ – ‘present[s] a better picture today’ (ibid.: 125).

The number of lawns at the Hampi site is striking, given that the land would be barren during the dry season if it is not irrigated regularly. Maintaining such a vast green area purely for the reason of aesthetics is inconceivable to the villagers. Again there are similarities with Taihuai town in Wutai Shan. Here the residents sent a petition to Beijing complaining that the local plan was aimed at ‘turning the site into depopulated wasteland’ (Shepherd 2012a: 67). Herzfeld also noticed the authorities’ tendency to replace the community of Pom Mahakan – a district of Bangkok cleared of its inhabitants because of 18th-century citadel located within and proclaimed a UNESCO World Heritage site – with a lawn:

Current plans call for its replacement by an empty park space; one section of empty lawn has already replaced the garden the residents had constructed (the military were called in to do the job, creating tremendous fear), and the plan is to raze the remainder of the community (including several old wooden houses) to the ground and cover the rest of the area with yet more lawn (Herzfeld 2006: 144).

There is one, seemingly significant difference between the state Directorate’s photo book and the previously analysed representations – namely, the human figures. Just like Greenlaw both the Australian photographer of the 1983 book and the Indian archaeologists, who continued a project in 2008, decided to place people in their pictures. However, it is hard to resist the impression that these are only figures posing next to the monuments and, therefore, serve only to provide a sense of scale and are not presented as the rightful users of the site. Katharina Weiler, who analysed the colonial photography of Indian ruins, noticed that isolated human figures or trees served only as a scale guide for depiction of the ruins (Weiler 2013: 55). In Rao and Gopal’s book, only two of the sixty structures that have been photographed are illustrated with some aspects of social life, i.e. a group of school children, a small vendor waiting for customers in front of his stall, and farmers with their carts. However, both these photographs are provided with information about ‘encroachments’ and the ‘modern structures’ that need to be ‘removed’ or ‘shifted’ (Rao & Gopal 2009: 151-2).

People have been erased from the official representations of Hampi, therefore, or merely pushed to the background and, therefore, have been denied their right to this heritage. The vision of Hampi as a combination of material culture and nature, where present-day residents are excluded, is reflected in the description of the Hampi's landscape in the *Integrated Management Plan*:

[Hampi is] one of the most outstanding places in the world with widespread archaeological remains of the erstwhile metropolis within a spectacularly beautiful natural setting characterized by boulder landscape and the meandering river Tungabhadra (IMP 2007: 4).

The official representations of Hampi resemble the classic image of a contrived paradise – a space that exists beyond social relations – as defined by Graham Dann (1996) in his analysis of tourist brochures. Removing physical aspects of human presence, in the form of homes and businesses, entailed removing social space from the Hampi's landscape and reflected the taxonomic panic as defined by Herzfeld.

Local practices: 'Don't worry, be Hampi'

The above evidence reveals that Hampi is a contested space, understood as a 'geographical location where conflicts in the form of opposition, confrontation, subversion, and/or resistance engage actors whose social positions are defined by differential control of resources and access to power' (Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003: 18; see also Krog 2007). The residents' presence was erased from the official representations of Hampi and their voices were silenced in a public sphere (although they attempted to create an alternative discourse of intangible heritage, see Bloch 2016). In response, they have adopted certain practices to question the experts' way of imagining, and the authorities' manner of managing, the site. Although people threatened with spatial cleansing 'have little power to affect the planning that displaces them from their accustomed lifestyles and abodes', they still 'manage to "muddle through" and to change the meanings of those contested spaces' (Scott 1998: 328, following Herzfeld 2006: 130). Spatial visions and arrangements designed and imposed by state authorities are always confronted with local practices which both challenge and appropriate them. This is a reason why "rational", top-down planning so frequently fails (Scott 1998).¹⁸

In Hampi, the most common form of response to the authorities' attempts to control the space was simply to carry on against adversity (see Krog 2007: 146). This often took the form of 'the art of making do' (Shepherd 2012b: 108), an 'improvisation in the face of unpredictability' (Scott 1998: 6) or creative 'evasion', as in the case of the Cretan town of Rethemnos, also studied by Herzfeld, where residents struggled to inhabit late medieval and early Renaissance houses that had become archaeological sites (Herzfeld 1991). The local practices of social reproduction and resistance confronted the 'monumental' time of official state ideologies, a 'monumentalized history' (Herzfeld 1991: xi). Yet, as Shepherd

¹⁸ Although it leaves behind the 'side effects' in a form of bureaucratic machinery and increased state presence (Ferguson 1994).

(2012b) points out, this does not usually involve open resistance, but rather a series of tactics which aim at making do by negating, appropriating, adjusting or remaking.



Figure 7: Ram wearing the T-shirt with his design, photo by the author

What I found surprising when starting fieldwork in Hampi in 2013 (already seventeen months after the bazaar clearance), was that life – understood as daily practices – in the village seemed to continue as normal. Obviously, the yet-to-be-evicted residents expressed deep sorrow and confusion about their uncertain future. One of the shopkeepers admitted that ‘actually we are not looking for customers but for JCBs’¹⁹, while another, when asked about his plans for the next year, said: ‘About Hampi, nothing is sure.’ People were frustrated and suspicious. There were many narratives of blame circulating among the villagers: they accused the UNESCO, the government, politicians of different parties, the archaeology, the temple authorities, etc., not excluding their own neighbours.

Even so, everyday they woke up very early in the morning, carefully swept the dusty streets in front of their abodes, soaked them with water or covered with a mixture of cow dung and water which is believed to have antiseptic properties. Then the women drew *rangoli* – ornamental patterns made with finely ground powder sprinkled with fingers – in front of each household, shop or guest house, to ward off evil. The villagers paid considerable attention to keeping their broken space clean, both in the physical and ritual sense. They even improved some aspects, like painting walls, repairing stairs or decorating restaurants. Although the village’s landscape had changed dramatically over the course of the ongoing “spatial cleansing” – the debris left after the houses and premises’ demolition was not removed for a long time – people did try to make it clean, and carry on regardless.

¹⁹ An abbreviation for J C Bamford Excavators Ltd., a British company specializing in construction machinery, commonly used in India for bulldozers.

The local T-shirt seller designed a new product – a T-shirt saying: ‘Don’t worry, be Hampi,’ which has become popular among both locals and tourists.

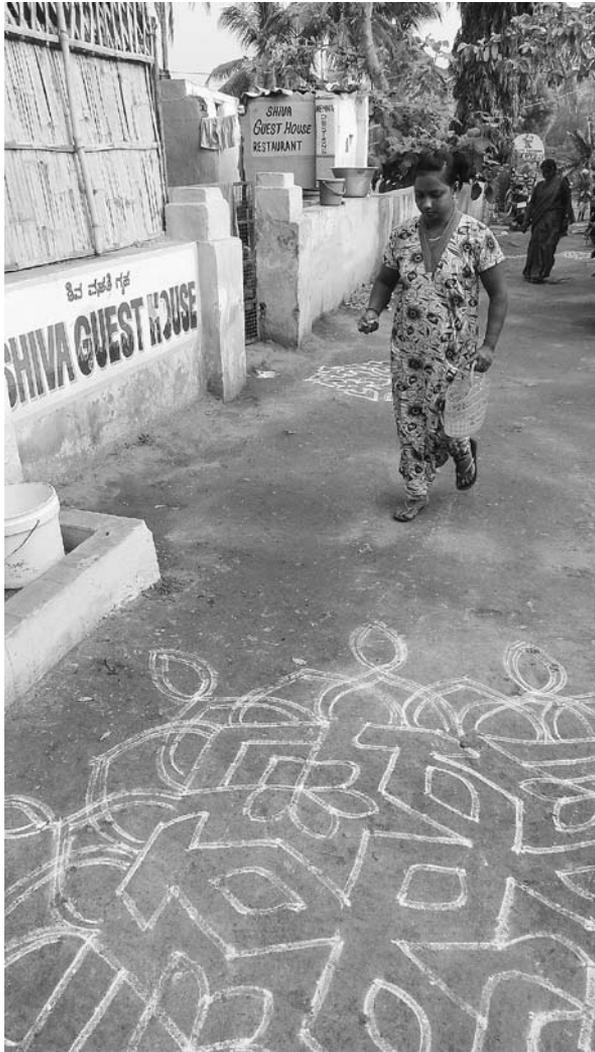


Figure 8: Carrying on: rangoli in front of households and enterprises, photo by the author

The more the authorities attempted to clarify the boundaries between monuments and people, the more the latter ignored them, evading the rules imposed on them. While meeting with neighbours to have a chat or during afternoon walks, people roamed among the empty structures, neglecting the boards which had appeared all around the village and

declared: “This land belongs to the Archaeological Survey of India and all encroachments are illegal”. The metal fences installed along the *mandapas* failed to stop petty vendors from setting up their makeshift stalls with coconuts or *chai* on the ground behind the new barriers. Those, who lost their rooftop restaurants as a result of the authorities’ attempt to keep the temple’s *gopura* more “visible”, made temporary arrangements out of plastic tables and chairs that could be easily removed in case of the official control. Soon after the demolition, a woman who lost a terrace in front of her tiny, two-room guest house, installed a provisional food stall on the empty space. She cooked and served breakfast snacks and *chai* from the metal bed. Other vendors complied when asked to move their stalls behind the newly drawn lines, but once the authorities left, they moved them forward again. The religious item vendors, who were forced into uniform booths at the bus stand, evaded official attempts at containment and roamed around the temple, offering their assorted goods to the pilgrims. Their means of resistance were makeshift, moveable stalls or carts put simply on the roadside, with which they could easily appropriate the space that was refused to them.

The district authorities, tired of this cat and mouse game, attempted to force the *Gram Panchayat*, i.e. democratically elected village council, to control the vendors and remove them from the monument area. The Gram Panchayat, however, ignored their request. Still, there was a strong feeling of loss expressed by villagers while referring to the gradual disappearance of familiar sights, sounds and smells associated with local service-providers. A shoe-maker, a hairdresser, a florist, a *samosa*²⁰ maker, all left a shrinking Hampi in search of better income opportunities in neighbouring towns. The everyday



Figure 9: Makeshift, moveable stalls and carts put in Hampi, photo by the author

²⁰ A snack – stuffed, deep-fried pastry – common especially in North India.

inconveniences experienced by villagers as a result of this loss reminded them of being erased bit by bit.

In response to the ongoing ‘spatial cleaning’, they continued secret construction activities – a practice also pursued in Taihuai town, Wutai Shan (Shepherd 2012b: 92, 110–2) and the Old Town of Rethemnos (Herzfeld 1991: 149). Shepherd demonstrates how the demolition at the site led to a burst of new construction: guest houses, shops etc. In Hampi the subdivisions, extensions and additions were constructed despite development regulations and the risk of them being torn down by the authorities. Moreover, people not only invested in renovation and new construction – they also purchased real estate in order to incorporate business premises and accommodate expanding families. On the one hand, they hoped for compensation in the event of expected demolition, although these hopes could be in vain given the authorities’ claims that all constructions in the “core zone” were illegal. On the other hand, all these activities reinforced village development and, as such, contradicted the authorities’ attempts to freeze the site in some imagined time.

The mandapas were treated by Hampi residents in a similar way: they believed that by inhabiting them they made them living, as opposed to ‘dead monuments’, i.e. abandoned, uninhabited structures which belonged more to the sphere of hostile wilderness (see Krog 2007: 108, 95–7). The evicted residents presented themselves as those who took care of the *mandapas*, both physically – by protecting them from falling into ruin (repairing, propping up, plastering etc), and spiritually – by performing everyday religious rituals inside. Indeed,



Figure 10: The remaining residents still live in the last quarter of Hampi village that has not been cleared, photo by the author

when bulldozers removed modern walls added by residents to mandapas in order to turn the pavilions into a safe home space, some of them collapsed without such props. Usage was therefore something which determined the value of a building, being a temple or a mandapa.

On the other hand, the villagers who still lived in the last remaining quarter of Hampi tried to adjust to the imagined expectations of the authorities towards the local landscape. One such a practice was repainting the facades of their homes and premises from popular garish colours to a discreet sandy shade which would correspond with the sandstone that most of the monuments in Hampi were built of. This tactic of *mimesis* in regard to aesthetic was aimed at negotiating their presence at the site.

The “spatial cleansing” of Hampi affected not only the village residents, but also seasonal migrants working in the tourism sector who used to come to Hampi every year for a couple of months. Although perceived as highly mobile and capable of abandoning the sinking ship easily, they continued their petty businesses in a disappearing village, simply finding other premises that they could rent, and therefore stimulating the further appropriation of space. Of significance here is the story of Devan²¹, a restaurateur from Tamil Nadu state, who came to Hampi for the first time in 1999, the peak of tourism development in the village. He rented a restaurant in a guest house situated between the Virupaksha temple and the Tungabhadra river. This enterprise was very successful until the demolition of the whole quarter, which took place a year after the bazaar’s clearance. Although a tough Tamil man and despite not being the landlord, Devan cried when he saw the restaurant where he had invested so much time, energy and heart, being torn down.

However, that same year he rented new premises – a small banana plantation located by the river which he turned into a popular chill-out spot. There were even local officials among his customers. Nevertheless, the following year he also lost this restaurant – the bulldozers literally smashed the bamboo huts he had just assembled. The plantation owner was accused of running illegal commercial activity on agricultural land and charges against him were made in court. Devan was given six hours to secure valuable items from the restaurant – fridges, ovens, furniture. After this demolition, he shifted to the other side of the river to look for a safer location, but the next year I found him renting a restaurant in the heart of yet-to-be-demolished part of Hampi.

This is not an exceptional example; migrants who had lost rented space in the course of “spatial cleansing” immediately searched for some alternative to continue their businesses, therefore adapting to the changing landscape and available opportunities.

The above practices prove that spatial mobility cannot be understood in terms of individual freedom or randomness. Mobile tourism sector workers, like nomads, move along specified routes established by social networks. Setting up a successful migrant business requires a certain emplacement and intimacy. In most cases I know of, tenants and landlords have been tied to each other for years despite their relationship often being challenging and uneasy. Even if there is a rupture, finding new premises depends to a large extent on the migrant’s “good name” in a given location. Therefore, migrants who had been working in Hampi for many years were reluctant to leave the village despite its shrinking space.

²¹ The name is a pseudonym to protect the privacy of the person.

Mobile tourism services providers, whom I worked with, also seemed to be very attached to Hampi and its sacred landscape, regardless of whether they were Hindus or not. Both Muslims and Buddhists, who did business in Hampi, said that they chose Hampi “because it is a *shanti*²² place”, i.e. calm and peaceful one, “with a good energy”, which they attributed to the presence of “a living temple”. Furthermore, this perception of the sacred landscape was projected onto local people, who were seen as “kind, good people, who do not make trouble to the outsiders”, who “do not swagger”. It is worth mentioning here that most migrants had worked earlier in beach villages of neighbouring Goa state, which, in contrast, they associated with intense competition, rush and dishonesty. For the same reason none of them considered shifting their business to the nearby city of Hospet. Indeed, there was a widespread consensus that large Indian cities were “ugly, crowded, and loud”.

The changing landscape of Hampi was filled with affection. Those who were born there often recalled their childhood when they used to play hide-and-seek around the ruins and getting off the school bus one stop before the village in order to hang around. Those, who grew up in *manpadas*, idealized life there, even though there was an absence of the basic amenities, such as running water or toilets, which would be available at the resettlement site. The remaining residents often expressed affection for their homes, officially labelled as illegal constructions, and recalled efforts made to build simple houses, which were gradually expanded thanks to the income from tourism. The woman, who installed a provisional food stall on the empty space left after the terrace in front of her house was removed, recalled the same memories each time we had a chat:

When [after marriage] I moved to Hampi from Andhra Pradesh²³, nothing was here [at the surviving quarter], just us, that tiny shop and one more house of a man who worked in the temple. To build this house we had to carry many buckets of sand from the river on our heads. I was scared because the water level was so high that it came up to our necks. And now they say we have no right to be here.

She was evidently depressed, could not sleep and had lost her appetite. A migrant from Nepal, who ran a seasonal restaurant in Hampi for almost ten years – first at the bazaar and then after its clearing in the remaining part of the village – said sorrowfully:

Before, we used to plan for a long time, we had a restaurant for many years in one place, and we were in a book [Lonely Planet guidebook]. So many people came, we were even on Google, so people did not have to ask how to find us, they just checked on their mobiles and we were there. And now everything disappeared from Google.

I found it striking how these emotions and perceptions were inconsistent with the demonized image of tourism workers as immoral creatures responsible for the economic exploitation of sacred land that has been created by Hindu religious leaders (Joseph & Kavoori 2001), and which, in the case of Hampi, largely contributed to its clearance (Bloch 2017).

²² Sanskrit: *śāntih*.

²³ A neighbouring state.

Conclusion

The modern built space of Hampi, associated with the living presence of the people, has been gradually disappearing since 2011. The erasing of the local community from the Hampi's landscape, both physically and in official representations, reflects the "taxonomic panic" by authorities – the fear of a "confusion of categories" and a desire for spatial segregation understood as the process of clarifying boundaries between past and present, traditional and modern, material and social, public space and zones of intimate everyday life.

The bazaar was the first target of "spatial cleansing" since it evoked categorical disorder, being a space that cannot be fully controlled. This 'taxonomic panic' was intensified by the fact that villagers lived in the *mandapas*, thus violating the distinction between living space and archaeological frozen past. The authorities' vision of the site – reflected in official representations – entailed a clear segregation between the monuments and people, as well as residential and commercial space, with both being symmetrically organized, regulated and regimented. The 'monuments have been extricated from communities' by the drawing of official boundaries and an attempt to impose a 'domain of the rule of law' (Guha-Thakurta 2004: 269), which would introduce conceptual order within the site. Such a creation of confined spaces was inspired by the modern European concept of categorizing and separating, based on a Cartesian model. This is a model which has become a universal standard in the globalized world (see Hertzfeld, in Byrne 2011: 148).

Categorical disorder – as evoked by marketplaces or people living within monuments – has been condemned through its attribution to the "uncivilized Orient". Hence, often repeated arguments about "practicality" and "efficiency" in support of clearing densely populated spaces of marketplaces and creating an aestheticized landscape, have produced a built heritage surrounded by lawns. Modern structures, people, debris and weed are all perceived here as "matter out of place". Experts play a crucial role in defining boundaries between the protected material past and the encroaching present, and often present themselves not as simply another stakeholder but as 'stewards' or 'arbitrators' (Smith 2006: 51). In Hampi these experts were the archaeologists and tourism specialists. As Tapati Guha-Thakurta points out, a 'more open, combustible domain of public memories and claims' often lose in confrontation with 'the bounded spheres of scholarly and administrative authority' (Guha-Thakurta 2004: 303).

'Taxonomic panic' was even stronger at Hampi, because of the complex fabric of this World Heritage site. The classic idea of a heritage site is founded on the concepts of 'boundedness' and being 'manageable' (Smith 2006: 31). Therefore, it is applied to conventional heritage sites with a single object of clearly defined boundaries that can be easily separated from the social fabric by a park or garden space. However, such a vision has been implemented at Hampi site which is 'an intensely interwoven fabric of continuously used land and networks with multiple layers' (UNESCO-ICOMOS Report 2007: 20), a living settlement with its development aspirations. Some critics argue that a 100 meter-radius 'prohibited area' around 'a monument of national importance' – which imposes restrictions towards inhabitants and bans any constructions or modernization – makes no sense in a country as overpopulated as India where different spatial layers interweave and cannot be easily separated (Aparna Tandon, following Fong *et al.* 2012: 50).

Nalini Thakur (2010) suggests applying the concept of ‘cultural landscape’ to the case of Hampi, since it is a discourse that offers a wider view of heritage and space than the idea of ‘a site’ (Smith 2006: 162–92; see Moore & Whelan 2007). There have also been calls for ‘participatory awareness building’ and ‘inclusive management of a “living historic site”’ aimed at ‘fostering the social cohesion within the site’ (UNESCO-ICOMOS Report 2007: 36). However, these suggestions were never pursued, simply because the residents of Hampi village were seen by authorities and most experts as “matter out of place”; there was no political desire to meet their perspectives or needs. In the face of this, the excluded villagers showed a strong determination to simply carry on against adversity and make do by creatively evading imposed rules and bans towards “their” space. It did not take the form of open resistance but rather the art of making do – a series of tactics aimed at appropriating, adjusting or remaking, through maintaining the area, a continuous adapting to the changing landscape or secretly pursuing construction activities, and therefore negotiating their presence at the site.

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Povzetek

Vsebina članka se osredotoča na t.i. "prostorsko čiščenje" (Herzfeld 2006), ki je leta 2011 na območju UNESCO-ve svetovne dediščine v mestu Hampi v Indiji, vodilo v množični izgon tamkajšnjih lokalnih prebivalcev. Lokalne oblasti so proces uveljavitve dediščinske politike najprej sprožile v samem jedru mesta in sicer na območju srednjeveškega bazarja, kjer so nekoč živeli lokalni prebivalci in znotraj neformalnega turističnega sektorja ponujali različne usluge za turiste. Uvedba dediščinske politike je povzročila "taksonomsko paniko", ki je postopoma vodila v strah pred avtoritetami in "zmedo kategorij". Vsebina članka analizira formalni diskurz skozi katerega lokalne avtoritete skušajo ustvariti Hampi kulturno pokrajino in ga sopostavlja ob vsakdanje prakse lokalnih prebivalcev ki skozi različne taktike upravljajo in delujejo znotraj omenjenih formalnih okvirjev.

Ključne besede: Hampi, Indija, UNESCO svetovna dediščina, turizem, dediščina, prostorsko čiščenje, taksonomična panika, lokalne prakse.

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