**Debated Urban Places: Social Embeddedness of Communist Heritage Usage**

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**Abstract**

Heritage protection is one of the formal ways to strengthen special status and to indicate symbolic meaning of the place. According to Bourdieu, symbols are set by social agents or institutions holding prominent amount of capital. Heritage sites are regarded as presentation of symbolic power in the city, and practices, used by agents to legitimate their views on the sites, – as instruments of legitimizing power positions.

Research focuses on two cases of communist residential architecture in China and Russia. For China research site refers to 1950-s, representing so-called Soviet style buildings. For Russia the case lies within 1920-30-s avant-garde architectural movement, also known as constructivism or functionalism. Both architectural phenomenon were arousing during special periods of national history which are debated recently: post-revolutionary period in USSR and post-Guomindang victory in China.

Cases are described regarding positions of agents – residents, non-residents, authorities, business, experts and urban wanderers. Qualitative data is used for analysis: interviews, reports and recommendations, excursions texts and programs, flâneur notes, mass-media, real estate advertisement and documents, physical observations.

Instruments of legitimizing certain views and values, which would result in practices of handling the heritage sites, are divided into two general groups: “productive”, which establish new symbols and messages, and “negative”, which would be more concentrated on emotional construction of loss and longing for forgotten. Moscow site practices are characterized by constructing attachment to “undeservingly forgotten” places – as it was in the case of constructivist architecture until recently. High level of sense of belonging, transmitted by media about Chinese site, is opposed to alienating and mentor intonation of media reports concerning Moscow site, although admiring the architecture aesthetics and history.

**Keywords –** sustainable city, heritage protection, social embeddedness, memory, field analysis, communist architecture, socialist architecture.