

The day you move to a social house you know that the destiny of that place is not in your hands

This is not the first time that a story about a disappearing neighborhood captures my imagination. When I was working on my dissertation years ago in Manchester there was another video, about another demolition, another case of terminal architecture that struck me and made me think about how the destiny of certain places is not featured in any official history, and yet this non-presence solidifies in unexpected ways, is inherited by other places, other people. I still like to show the video sometimes.

Today I am supposed to bring in the 'heritage' perspective. But I am still battling with this word, with its uses. Heritage is one of those 'warmly persuasive' words that are so vague and, at the same time, so loaded with meaning, expectations...and borders. Between what constitutes heritage and what does not, between people that have a heritage and people that don't. What happened to their heritage? Was it lost? Bargained? Sold?

These questions are like Matryoshka dolls, each opens to reveal another, hidden, perhaps smaller but not any less difficult to answer. This is why when I first watched Julieta's film I felt...I don't know. Relief?

The questions are all there, about memory, representation, what gets to be preserved and what disappears. But also, what happens in between, how this process is non-linear, how it entails multiple displacements, misunderstandings, roadblocks, frustration, failure.

I feel I know less and less what to say and what to do

This is actually what I want to talk about with you today, failure. Because as a researcher, and especially as someone that is supposed to research heritage, failure is not only a certainty...but it is an extremely productive category. The failure we know is almost inevitably dissolved into a narrative of redemption, of encountering difficulties and then overcoming them, learning from them. But what if you solve one thing and then there is another problem? And another, and another. What if the failure is incremental? What if it is systemic? What if you feel at the end that you have not learnt, that you are not better than when you started?

'I is somebody else' is not a story about failure, however it contains it, it thinks through it, it asks all questions without hiding the fact that in the end there might not be an answer. It deals with the ambivalences of this type of projects, with the uncomfortable intimacy between different positions: that of an artist displaced from her own practice, of the inhabitants of Woensel West, of the project's

partners, of the housing corporation, of urban planners and policy makers. Positions that shift, evolve, overlap, trigger doubt.

*How could I be different from them?*

I question my position all the time.

I am also working in an environment that I perceive as foreign, in a foreign city, on a neighborhood that is not my own. And while I chase different definitions of what exactly constitutes urban heritage, of what does it mean to curate it... I find myself more and more attracted to the idea of failure. Of failed places, of failing temporalities. Looking at this European context of multiple crisis, where conflicts over memory are always conflicts over territory, heritage becomes the remedy, the cure for small and big catastrophes, its meaning contracting or expanding depending on who administers the medicine. Heritage as speech act, heritage as (political) style. And I find myself trapped between oppositions: grassroots vs institutionalized, museum vs neighborhood, official vs unofficial.

*With blind faith and with extraordinary and quite unjustified dedication and perseverance*

But what if we replace crisis with failure? What if we acknowledge that there is no readymade therapy? That heritage is born of negotiations, false starts, wrong turns. That ultimately neighborhoods cannot be curated nor cured. That memories are mobile and sometimes distorted, faulty. That protecting something might not necessarily mean 'saving' it, that what we see as bounded might become suddenly unbound.

'I is somebody else' puts us in front of this other type of story, one in which questions open up to reveal more questions, where a piece of urban heritage ends up being swallowed by a neighborhood instead of producing yet more enclosures, of engendering more borders. For me personally, the film works as visual scaffolding on which I can anchor the slippery concepts I am working with. At the same time, it makes me rethink reflexivity in my practice, which sometimes feels like a tired, obligatory exercise bound to fail. Here we go again with failure, but it is at this point that we might start to glimpse how it can actually be productive. Because now this 15 minutes-long venture into the uncertain territories of participatory work and disappearing neighborhoods has entered the museum, here to stay, inserting this type of non-presence, of un-centeredness into the narrative. And what can this do to the institution? How does failure feel in the museum/for a museum? Perhaps it will feel like a small displacement, and, borrowing from Julieta's words, one that might be forced towards a poetic gesture, making us think through failure and towards recognizing our responsibility in it, our stakes and our position...as untenable it might be.