

**Review of: Lähdesmäki, T., Thomas, S. & Zhu, Y. (eds) (2019). *Politics of Scale: New Directions in Critical Heritage Studies*. New York: Berghahn. 190 pages, 15 illus., bibliog., index. ISBN 978-1-78920-016-4 (hardback), eISBN 978-1-78920-017-1.**

*Richard Bigambo*

The book *“Politics of Scale: New Directions in Critical Heritage Studies”*, edited by Tuuli Lähdesmäki, Suzie Thomas, and Yujie Zhu assembles nine chapters, which dissect different aspects of politics of scale in cultural heritage. Scale and politics of scale are unexplored topics in critical heritage studies. Thus, this book is among the first of its kind to consider and thoroughly discuss the topic of politics of scale and how it relates to cultural heritage while using multiple case studies. The book is divided into three parts, each of which has three chapters, with an addition of a general introduction and an afterword chapter. The introduction chapter, which is written by the editors, presents an introductory note to both the subject matter of the book and the chapters within. The chapter contains a clear statement on what the book entails and provides an adequate account of the general issue of politics of scale and how it relates to cultural heritage.

The first part *“Scaled Conceptualization of Heritage”*, as the heading suggests, discusses how the issue of scale is conceptualized in heritage management and cites specific cases of China (YUJIE ZHU), European Union (TUULI LÄHEDESMÄKI & KATJA MÄKINEN) and in digital heritage (RHIANNON BETTIVIA & ELIZABETH STAINFORTH). All the chapters, in this part, follow the same pattern, i.e. they first introduce the issue of scale in cultural heritage by providing a brief historical account of the term. This is followed by in-depth discussions of the individual cases and their specific attributes to shed more light on the subject matter. For introductory purposes, this approach is effective as it eases the reader into the topic discussed and ensures an understanding of the subject in question.

The second part *“Scale in Heritage Institutions and Policies”* is a continuation of the first part. As such, it provides a more focused view of the issue of politics of scale in heritage institutions and policies. The discussions in this section concentrate on how the politics of scale influence the way heritage is conceived, perceived, interpreted, and managed at different levels, i.e. local, national, and international. For instance, the chapter by ROWENA BUTLAND concentrates on how the politics of scale affects the way the Angkor World Heritage Site in

Cambodia is defined and valued; while the chapter by SATU KÄHKÖNEN & TUULI LÄHEDESMÄKI focuses on the influence of politics scale in the conceptualisation of heritage within the Finnish Cultural Environmental policy. Like the first part, the discussions in this part are presented systematically with rich and diverse information that makes it easier for the reader to follow the discussion.

The third part *“Scale in Heritage Practice”* discusses how the politics of scale affects different heritage practices. The chapters in this section divert from previous chapters in the book that concentrated on tangible heritage to discuss how politics of scale is manifested within different heritage practices that can be categorised as intangible cultural heritage (see UNESCO, 2003). This is similar to the last part of the book, the afterword chapter, which presents a well rounded up discussion on the scale-heritage relationship using intangible cultural heritage perspectives. The use of intangible cultural heritage makes the ensuing discussion very interesting as this form of heritage belongs to local communities but requires the attention of the national and international authorities as part of the safeguarding initiatives. Such complexities are discussed in what KRISTIN KUUTMA categorises as three angles of identification, ownership, and representation.

In general, the book makes a compelling case and presents a coherent discussion on the topic of the Politics of Scale. From the introduction to the afterword, the arguments within the chapters are clear and well-articulated. Although the topic of politics of scale has been neglected in critical heritage studies, the contributors have delved deeper into the topic and present a thorough coverage that enrich the understanding of both experts and novice readers in the field of critical heritage studies. However, while the book promised global coverage in terms of examples (LÄHEDESMÄKI ET AL., 2019, p. 12), it did not deliver. Apart from the chapters by YUJIE ZHU (China) and ROWENA BUTLAND (Cambodia), the discussions in the book are more Eurocentric rather than global. Such coverage has denied the book with the diversity that would have resulted from including chapters from other parts of the globe, e.g. Africa and South America. In those areas, the issues of politics of scale are more pronounced as a result and reaction to the introduction of what Smith calls *“Authorised Heritage Discourse”* (see SMITH, 2006).

Similarly, although the book is well organised, probably the chapter by TUULI LÄHEDESMÄKI & KATJA MÄKINEN in the first part would have made more sense if it was placed in the second part, i.e. Scale

in Heritage Institutions and Policies. The part would then have discussions relating politics of scale at the local, national, and international levels. As it stands, the chapter seemed to be out of place discussing manifestations of politics of scale at the international level while others are focusing on conceptualising the politics of scale. However, this minor weakness should not take us away from the fact that the book is a magnificent contribution to the field of critical heritage and a must read for those interested in the subject matter.

## References

- Lähedesmäki, T., Zhu, Y. & Thomas, S. (2019). Introduction: Heritage and Scale. In T. Lähedesmäki, Y. Zhu & S. Thomas (eds) (2019). *Politics of Scale: New Directions in Critical Heritage Studies*. (pp. 1-18). New York: Berghahn.
- Smith, L. (2006). *Uses of Heritage*. London: Routledge.
- UNESCO (2003). *The Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Paris: UNESCO.

Richard Bigambo  
University of Dar es Salaam  
Tanzania  
rbigambo@udsm.ac.tz

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5806-5590>