

# Concrete Memories and Sensory Pasts: Everyday Heritage and the Politics of Nationhood

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## ABSTRACT

This paper interrogates how Singapore's everyday heritage has been framed through embodied and sensory experiences. While buildings and other landmarks have been conserved as heritage icons, this designation also includes particular routes known as heritage trails. Buildings and trails by themselves are not invested with symbolic meaning; it is the processes of heritage packaging that consign particular landmarks and sites with a heritage purpose. By employing the notion of "concrete memories," I argue that heritage landmarks and trails form a site through which the nation's history is selectively interpreted, negotiated, and experienced by different actants. Concrete memories comprise three key features: familiarity, sensory remembering, and ownership. The discussion of concrete memories is undergirded by broad methodological principles of actor-network theory. The intention is to call attention to embodied tourism in heritage tourism studies while at the same time addressing the production and consumption of heritage and power relations through heritage networks.

**Keywords:** everyday heritage, concrete memories, heritage trails, heritagization, sensory remembering, actor-network theory, Singapore

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## Introduction

In 2008, the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) of Singapore announced that its conservation program would extend beyond buildings to include other landmarks and structures such as bridges, pavilions, and towers that are emblematic of the nation's history and heritage.<sup>1</sup> Such

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