

ANALYSING HERITAGE AND PARTICIPATION IN THE GOTHIC QUARTER OF BARCELONA: SOME METHODOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

Analizando patrimonio y participación en el Barrio Gótico de Barcelona:
Algunos apuntes metodológicos

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ABSTRACT Throughout this work, we will explore different methodologies applied for the study of the relation ship between the archaeological heritage located in public space, and the social fabric of the Gothic Quarter in Barcelona. The presence of archaeological elements confers a dialogue between the ruins and the quarter's inhabitants that different agents can use at different times. This study explores avenues to know and establish new dialogues, that value not only the cultural good in itself, but also all of its spatial context. We expose a series of ethnographic techniques and analyse the use of them in different situations. This work is framed in a political moment wherein privileged participative practices in an incipient institutionalisation of participation is understood as a tool of social empowerment.

Key words: Ethnography, Participation, Archaeological Heritage, Barcelona.

RESUMEN A lo largo de este trabajo vamos a explorar distintas metodologías que hemos aplicado para el estudio de la relación del patrimonio arqueológico ubicado en el espacio público y el tejido social del Barrio Gótico de Barcelona. La presencia de elementos arqueológicos confiere un diálogo ruina-habitante que distintos agentes pueden utilizar en distintos momentos. Este estudio explora la forma de conocer y establecer nuevos diálogos que valoricen no solo el bien cultural en sí mismo, sino todo su contexto espacial. Para ello expondremos una serie de técnicas etnográficas y analizaremos el uso de las mismas en distintas situaciones. Este se contextualiza en un momento marcado por la llegada al poder de los partidos de abajo, y una incipiente institucionalización de la participación entendida como herramienta de empoderamiento social.

Palabras clave: Etnografía, Participación, Patrimonio arqueológico, Barcelona.

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INTRODUCTION

Heritage practitioners are now being asked to consider community participation in heritage and archaeological planning. Likewise, several scholars have explored the impact that community involvement has for the discipline of archaeology, as well as for the preservation of heritage (Díaz-Andreu and Ruiz, 2017; Dragouni and Fouseki, 2017; Waterton, 2015; Van den Dries, 2014; Shipley and Snyder, 2013; Waterton and Smith, 2010). Politicians in several cities around the world have also showed interest in turning heritage sites into spaces that could either be transformed in sites of community engagement or touristic attractions (e.g. Appler, 2015; Degen and García, 2012; Jackson *et al.*, 2014).

Barcelona is no exception to this trend of enlarging the scope of voices that have something to say about heritage, which we believe requires a better understanding of who constitute the stakeholders in issues of urban heritage. A discussion on the intricate relations between participation, community, archaeology and heritage is beyond the scope of this paper. In this article, however, we offer some considerations about participation and heritage, resulting from fieldwork carried out in last three years in the Gothic Quarter in Barcelona (Pastor, 2016; Pastor and Ruiz, 2016a, 2016b; Ruiz and Pastor, 2015).

Our goal during the fieldwork was to understand the multiple and complex interactions that take place between the inhabitants and visitors of the urban space, and the archaeological heritage around which they live, or through which they walk while visiting the city. Our interest is to obtain a better understanding of how people interact, consciously or not, with urban heritage, which in turn will illuminate the impact of participatory processes regarding issues of heritage.

Although this study could fit the general subject of archaeology and participation, what we argue is that even before discerning why and how people should or should not participate in heritage planning and management, it is necessary to adopt an ethnographic eye to observe (Delgado, 2002), document and interpret what people are doing with heritage in their everyday lives.

With this purpose in mind, we begin this article by briefly discussing existing participatory processes occurring in Barcelona, paying special attention to those that involve or could involve questions of heritage. Then we delineate a map of the different stakeholders that we identify as taking part in heritage issues in Barcelona. This map of stakeholders has enabled us to delineate the different heritage-related actions occurring in the Gothic Quarter. Finally, we present some of the methodological strategies used while investigating the existing relations between people—also considered as stakeholders here—and heritage in the Gothic Quarter.

While there exist many studies that evaluate public participation in aspects of heritage focus by measuring the number and profile of people that visit sites, monuments or museums, we are more interested in understanding the practices and politics of heritage. Here, we understand politics as the actions of the Barcelona City Council, cultural institutions, as well as social movements.

Walking through the neighbourhood, observing people interacting with heritage, and participating in related activities are for us methods to understand practices. In short, through the qualitative methodologies, we aim to approach the politics and practices of heritage of people living or visiting the Gothic Quarter, which, in turn, provides insight into the larger issue of social participation in heritage.

IS HERITAGE ENTERING PARTICIPATION PROCESSES IN BARCELONA?

The omnipresence of participation in Barcelona's political language is undoubtedly related to Ada Colau's election as mayor in 2015.¹ Though district meetings to discuss neighbourhood concerns have existed for a long time in the city, new ways of approaching participatory processes besides face-to-face meetings with citizens are being explored. Among others, the city council launched the online platform *Decidim Barcelona*² to make sure that urban decisions are transparent, collaborative and open to the public.

Citizens, associations, institutions, and the administration itself are able to propose projects that are then voted among all the citizens who access the platform. Without entering into a debate about how open, participatory and transparent this platform is, the willingness to democratise decisions and foster a climate of participation is nowadays unquestionable in Barcelona. In this paper, we reflect on how this participation ethos has spilled over into heritage at present.

Decidim Barcelona, at a glance, shows that heritage as such appears only tangentially in two of the currently existing participatory processes³. However, as will be explained below, we identified during our fieldwork that concerns about heritage appear in other moments, scenarios and actions that we identify as participatory, but which do not accord to the *Decidim Barcelona* format.

Perhaps, one of the conceptual and political problems when dealing with heritage in Barcelona is that it occupies an ambiguous space in the urban agenda and current administration. Indeed, in terms of bureaucracy, it is unclear if heritage belongs to the realm of culture, urbanism, housing, planning, or memory, since these topics are distributed separately in distinct departments, have different budgets, and follow different logics in terms of the conception of the city and the value of heritage in urban planning.

And yet, it seems that for governmental authorities, the concept of heritage emerges as a defining term of Barcelona's assets. For example, in December 2016,

1. Barcelona en Comú is a group of political organisations and associations born out of the seeds of the 15M movements and the Platform of People Affected by Mortgages, among other left-wing or nonpartisan collectives in Barcelona.

2. Online platform launched by the Barcelona City Council in 2016. See *Decidim Barcelona*.

3. There are currently around 15 initiatives that are being debated through participatory processes, and it could be argued that two of them have some relevance in terms of heritage. One is the Teatre Arnau, an old theatre in the Poble Sec district, and the Mercat de Sant Antoni.

the Barcelona City Council approved a *Mesura de Govern*⁴ entitled “Barcelona Architecture, Heritage City” that states:

Barcelona has in its architecture and urban landscape a heritage of unquestionable citizenship value. We are a heritage city, from the physical and cultural point of view, as well as by the value its citizens give while enjoying urban physical spaces⁵.

The goal of this document is to propose objectives and specific actions to rethink heritage politics in the city. For example, one of the aims is to reinforce the value that citizens give to the architecture and the cultural landscape of the city. Though the idea of heritage values seems to be a central element in this document, and one that is believed to have an important role in people’s sense of belonging, what is missing is a how the sense of belonging is assessed, and what is understood as value when talking about heritage (Cócola, 2015; Rius, 2014).

On the other hand, a concern with heritage exists—though not explicitly—in several social movements that revolve around urban questions organised to reclaim urban space. That is, even if people involved in urban social movements do not explicitly use the language of heritage values to make arguments and claims about their right to the city (Herzfeld, 2015), as will be explained later using two examples, we argue that there is an underlying understanding that heritage should be a key element in imagining alternative models of urban development in Barcelona, thus forming an essential part of the living environment of neighbours.

Next, we discuss how heritage issues appear in two social mobilisations we participated in over the last two years: the *Salvem Drassanes* and the *El Borsí pel Barri* platforms.

*Salvem Drassanes*⁶ unites more than fifty collectives and associations. The main goal of the movement is to impede the construction of a new hotel designed in an existing urban void, situated next to the medieval wall and shipyards—both of which are well-protected heritage sites. Though the main argument against the hotel arises from the notion that Barcelona already has too many, the language of heritage emerges is employed as a means to propose alternative uses of this urban void. In other words, the proximity of the medieval wall is seen as a tool to be used to facilitate the transformation of the area into a culturally and historically rich space that residents can use.

Another example of how heritage is entering the political argumentation of urban social movements—that claim spaces can be transformed to strengthen a sense of belonging (Icomos Australia 2013)—is the *El Borsí pel Barri*.⁷ The movement demands the self-management of an iconic historic building, that for more than sixty years was a public School of Fine Arts, where Picasso, among others, worked. The building has been abandoned since 2009.

4. A *Mesura de Govern* is an initiative of the municipal government to carry out certain policies or actions. They should be explained to the Barcelona City Council, either in committee or plenary.

5. See Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016.

6. See *Salvem les Drassanes*.

7. See *El Borsí pel Barri*.

The movement protests against the building being turned into a private space, arguing not only that it possesses important patrimonial value, but also that El Borsí is part of the symbolic heritage of the city, and should be transformed into a space for the neighbourhood. This social movement involves several groups, such as the Youth Association of the Gothic Quarter, that are in need of public infrastructure to meet and organise activities.

The youth in this neighbourhood feel disenfranchised from an area that seems to favour tourists over locals. In the case of *Salvem el Borsí*, the language of heritage protection is employed to express larger social concerns, as well as a willingness to protect the social fabric of the area, since they do not want an exodus of the local population, nor the construction of more hotels.

In the two cases presented here—*Salvem les Drassanes* and *Salvem el Borsí*—a diverse grouping of local residents have learned and appropriated the language of heritage, using it to voice demands for a more holistic view of the neighbourhood's future. In the process, heritage is not merely viewed as a backdrop where social and political actions take place. Rather, it is a central element in proposing urban interventions that simultaneously promote tourism and ensure a more sustainable and liveable city for residents. In this way, heritage is not so much appreciated by its economic value, as it is for its symbolic, cultural and historical power (fig. 1a,b).

ANALYSING THE MULTIPLICITY OF STAKEHOLDERS IN HERITAGE MANAGEMENT: QUALITATIVE APPROACHES

As mentioned above, in Barcelona, heritage seems to be moving from being the “realm” of experts (archaeologists, architects or conservators) to be part of a more transversal space that involving a diverse group of disciplines, institutions, communities and people. In other words, there is a growing, though still undefined, group of stakeholders involved in heritage issues that we also wanted to map in our research (Castillo, 2015).

According to several experts, the role of a heritage manager is to deal with multiple stakeholders and values (e.g., Clark, 2009; Burtenshaw, 2014; Fredheim, and Khalaf, 2016; Labadi, 2007; Low, 2002; De la Torre, 2013). In a comparative study of three cities, Caroline Sandes (2010) analysed existing stakeholders and grouped them in the following categories: built cultural heritage professionals, development professionals, politicians, the interested public and the uninterested public (101). One insight from this categorisation is how she divides the public in two groups: the interested and uninterested, each group having a different take on what she terms the “common good”.

Taking as a point of departure these categories, we demonstrate in our study that in the Gothic Quarter, these heritage stakeholders could take and assume different roles. We describe five groups that could fit in Sandes proposed categories: administration (politicians), private sphere (including cultural built professionals and development professionals), academics, social fabric, and users of the heritagised



Fig. 1.—a) A protest organised by Salvem les Drassanes and Fem Plaça, July 2016.
b) Official presentation of the El Borsí pel Barri, February, 2017.

space. Unlike Sandes, we divide the public in two groups (users and social fabric). We also believe that these categories are multifaceted, and that stakeholders can move from one category to another depending on the moment.

In table 1 we explain the different roles stakeholders can adopt. Taking into consideration current understandings of participation in Barcelona's City Council, we consider that the social fabric is the most participative agent. The document "Reglament de Participació Ciudadana"⁸ (articles 2 and 11) states that in terms of participatory processes, the votes of associations have more weight than those of individuals. In this sense, the public powers assume that individuals, who are formally organised, have more weight than non-organised individuals when voting and proposing projects.

Although this view of participation is in fact more democratic, it privileges the ongoing labour of the social fabric. However, while conducting our study we were interested in including the opinions, unspoken behaviours and practices of the people who do not have the time or willingness to be part of a formal associations, that is, whose voices are not always heard.

TABLE 1
LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS WITH THE ROLE THEY PLAY IN HERITAGE ISSUES, THE METHODS WE USED TO STUDY THEIR ACTIONS AND RELATIONS WITH HERITAGE, THE TYPE OF DATA PRODUCED AND PROBLEMS WE FACED

Stakeholder Administration
Actions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct intervention at the physical and theoretical levels • Heritage management resources • Promotion of and investment in the mise-en-valeur of spaces and cultural policies • Dissemination and communication • Analysis of the social impact of finished actions
Methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open interviews • Semi-structured interview • Questionnaires • Focus groups • Data analysis: publications, public interventions, social media communications
Contributions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First-hand information about on-going and finished projects • Unidirectional vision from entity of power • Measure of the index of impact on public opinion • Politicised interpretation of realised action's impact • Quantitative data

8. See Ajuntament de Barcelona (2017).

Problems

- Lack of access to unpublished information
- Justificatory discourses about public events/ propagandistic publications
- Lack of self-criticism in media, internal discourses and social media
- Transmission of knowledge subordinated to political purposes
- Intermittent accessibility

Stakeholder

Private sphere

Actions

- Generation of documentation (sometimes unpublished)
- Direct intervention, in terms of conservation and restoration
- Final executor of tasks related with dissemination and didactics of heritage
- Potential investor/ patronage network

Methods

- Closed interviews and semi-structured interviews
- Focus groups
- Data analysis: website data, press, direct contact
- Surveys

Contributions

- Interventions that reflect the needs of culture professionals
- Different *modus operandi* (specially from administration) in terms of resources/ time
- Space knowledge through a neutral perspective
- Quantitative data

Problems

- Difficult access to information generated that is kept by administration
- Role about patronage and contracts
- Inability to generate discourse in opposition to public administration
- Transmission of knowledge limited to a scientific and didactic ambit

Stakeholder

Academia

Actions

- Creation of a theoretical framework about participation and heritage management
- Awareness-raising, creation, dissemination and promotion of activities embedded with scientific/ historical rigour
- Advisory agent or critical entity for heritage enhancement
- Work with the public in specific situations with bottom-up processes
- Main analyst and creator of systems to analyse the impact of projects realised in other spheres
- Formative agent for professionals and researchers

<p>Methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys • Focus groups • Open interviews, structured and semi-structured • Closed interviews • Exchange of impressions in formative encounters • Analysis of national and international publishing (on diverse levels of specialisation and formats) • Research/ fieldwork • Participative walks/ outings • Curricula and formative plans analysis
<p>Contribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source of inspiration for new projects, especially regarding heritage interpretation • Reflexivity about diachronic and synchronic concepts (space/ time) • Application of epistemological referential frameworks • Possibility of establishing quantitative data through the interpretation of qualitative information, and vice versa • Connecting agent, and evaluator of each actor's role
<p>Problems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideological-personal influences (linked to working groups) on the interpretation of case studies, academic patronage networks • Lack of public access to information/ restricted channels of dissemination • Multiplicity of actions, media or non-filtered resources linked to a fashionable topic (usually tied to economic purposes) • Knowledge generation about themes that are non-adapted to the reality of each space
<p>Stakeholder Social fabric</p>
<p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impeller and executor of bottom-up initiatives (that may or may not need support of the public authorities) • Changing and intra-community conversational agent • Generator of synergies and main activator of inclusive-exclusive dynamics • Possible and potential users of enhanced spaces
<p>Methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct, participative and floating observation • Surveys • Focus groups • Open, structured, semi-structured interviews • Participative walks • Formative encounters out of the academic ambit • To generate and to analyse audio-visual data
<p>Contributions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To know the needs of an empowered sector of citizenship • To describe different impact levels related with the institutional action plans in everyday language • Possible gathering of quantitative data on decision-making

<p>Problems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intermittent proposals framed out of the long-term plans of administration and academia • Internal tensions between groups • Lack of free time for different sectors of the public • Access to participative processes • Not being a user of the enhanced spaces • Closed or exclusive communication (for members of groups)
<p>Stakeholder Users of the heritagised public space (inhabitants and visitors)</p>
<p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actors within the studied spaces • Non-captive public and visitors • Passive agent that can be activated through the initiatives of another agent (responsiveness agent) • Generator of dynamics that permit analysis of relational behaviour • Potential receptor of cultural policies • Communicator and disseminator (word of mouth, social media)
<p>Methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct, participative and floating observation • Spontaneous interviews on improvised conversations • To generate and to analyse audio-visual data • Mapping
<p>Contribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceptualise the usual use of heritagised public spaces and musealised archaeological spaces • Conceptualise the extraordinary use of public spaces • Identify issues related to street furniture • Quantitative data
<p>Problems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intermittency • Lack of channels of communication • Multiple data and formats • Complexity for the qualitative analysis and subjective component during interpretative tasks • Difficulties of data application in the short and long term

As we can see in the table above, we used distinct methods and techniques depending the stakeholders that we encountered during our research, which will be explained below.

Observing heritage and people during planned activities

In this section, we describe the systematic observations carried out during actions and activities in which heritage played a central role. In Map 1 (fig. 2), we show the classification of the heritage locations in the area of our study. We created

TABLE 2
RESEARCH CASE STUDIES (2014-2017)

	Events	Organisations
Top-down	• Festival of Light	• Barcelona City Council • Design and Architecture Schools of Barcelona
	• Day of St George	• Barcelona City Council • Publishing companies
	• Night of the Museums	• Barcelona City Council • Network of Museums of Catalonia • Archaeological Service of Barcelona
	• Pop-Up Green	• College of Architects of Catalonia • European Biennale
Academia	• Participative walks • Teaching • Interconnection actions	• Group of Public Archaeology and Heritage -GAPP (University of Barcelona)
Bottom-up	• Action Vivim Aquí	• Parent's Association of Antoni Baixeras School • Barcelona City Council (after 2016)
	• Occupation and reuse of public squares	• Fem Plaça Collective
	• St. John Festival/ Midsummer's Eve • The <i>Borsí</i> for the neighbourhood	• Gothic neighbourhood associations
	• Festival of Gothic	• Gò (Cultural Action of the Gothic Quarter)

Though the results of these activities are explored elsewhere (Ruiz and Pastor, 2015), here we are interested in using this information to show the spatial distribution of activities and actions organised and observed during research (fig. 3).

We also mapped what we called extraordinary events that took place in the neighbourhood (fig. 4), which will be analysed below. Comparing Map 2 and Map 3, we can see that the most of the activities are concentrated in squares with signalled Roman heritage: Plaça dels Traginers, Vila de Madrid or Plaça del Vuit de Març.

Residents and public spaces

Even though these maps reflect current actions occurring in the Gothic Quarter, a historical perspective shows that two of these squares, Vila de Madrid, and Plaça Vuit de Març, have been spaces with strong neighbourhood movements in the last decade. For example, in Plaça Vila de Madrid, a consolidated neighbourhood

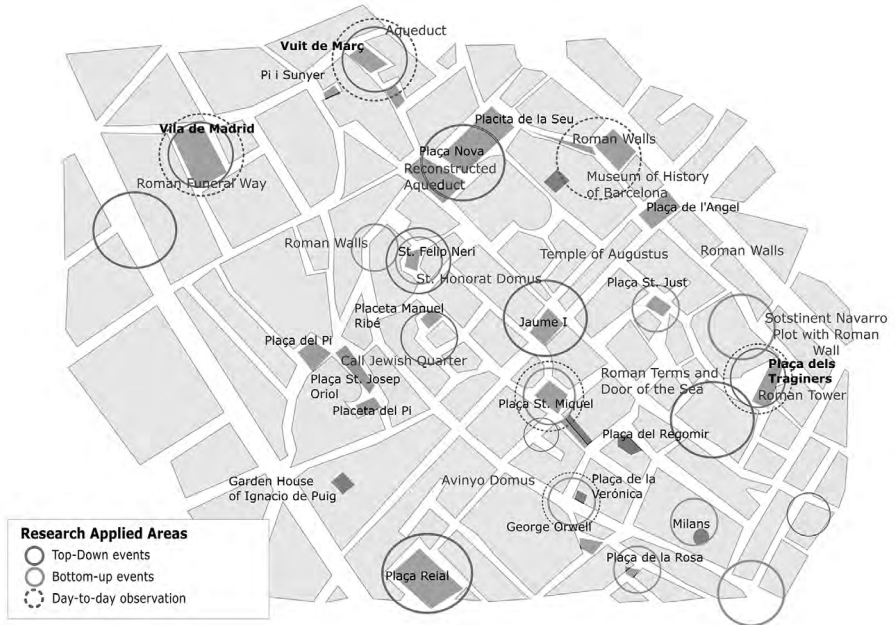


Fig. 3.—Map 2. Research areas according to type of events, and areas where day-to-day observations were conducted.



Fig. 4.—Map 3. Places where heritage assets were enhanced for specific events.

association emerged in 2005, which was especially active until 2011, during the refurbishment of the square⁹.

The renovation of the square had a strong impact in the *mise-en-valeur* of Roman heritage, and residents were able to participate in a process that involved decisions, such as the typology of the fences or the playground¹⁰. We interviewed some representatives of this association and they were satisfied with the results, especially concerning security issues (Pastor, 2014). However, they had conflicting views about the role of the new fences, arguing that they isolated certain areas of the square and limited its public use. Finally, they also expressed their concern with the lack of investment in the maintenance of the archaeological site, and complained of the opening hours being insufficient.

In the case of Vuit de Març square, the actions to recover this space started in 2009. The main objective of the mobilisations was to remove the motorcycle parking and transform this area into a public space. During these mobilisations, residents also highlighted that the archaeological remains (a Roman aqueduct) were abandoned by the administration¹¹. Unlike in the Plaça Vila de Madrid, where people who lived in the plaza were directly affected by the renovation works, a neighbourhood association was established in Plaça Vuit de Març where the people mobilised came from different areas of the Gothic Quarter, and their demands were more generic in terms of claims for a public space (fig. 5a).

However, the heritage remains located in this plaza were also used to establish dialogue with the administration, with residents proposing ways and designs to incorporate the Roman aqueduct into the plaza's reconfiguration. Finally, the square was transformed into a place for children to play, and parents who use the bar terrace to watch their kids, converse with other parents or rest. Currently, this plaza has been included in guided tours for the Night of the Museums organised by the Barcelona City Council (fig. 5b). We will further explore these two squares as case studies later in the paper.

UNVEILING SOCIAL INTERACTIONS WITH HERITAGE: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE

One of the most challenging aspects of current heritage studies is how to evaluate the impact that heritage has in society. We have explored how qualitative methodologies could also be utilised, not so much as numeric measures of impact, but as avenues to unveil existing interactions between heritage and society that, in turn, could allow researchers and project designers to measure expected impacts. We

9. See *Barrinant la Plaça*.

10. *Barrinant la Plaça* blog entry on fences of the square. Retrieved from: <https://bcn2.files.wordpress.com/2010/07/jocs.jpg>.

11. The recovery movement also contributed a proposal sketch. Retrieved from: <https://delspeixos.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/proposta-peixos1.pdf>.



Fig. 5.—a) III Calçotada Popular with no Calçots of 2011 (the last celebrated in this square) (Source: Association of Neighbours of the Gothic Quarter). b) The current appearance of the square after the refurbishment of the elevated garden during the Night of the Museums 2017.

applied some ethnographical techniques such as systematic observation, interviews, focus groups, and surveys (Pastor and Ruiz, 2016; Ruiz and Pastor, 2015).

We described public interaction and uses of top-down actions regarding heritage, and compared them with bottom-up actions that take place in the public spaces of the Gothic Quarter. In the graphs below, we listed the main techniques used during the last three years (see Table 1) and the techniques applied in each case (fig. 6).

Taking in account previous actions (Ruiz and Pastor, 2015) we created a graph that shows the use of ethnographic techniques according to the nature of the event: bottom-up or top-down (fig. 7). We quantified the number of techniques depending on its nature, which helps us to understand the relationship between techniques and the type of processes according to organiser (institutions, administrations, civil society or associations) and its suitability-application in order to plan future ethnographies.

As the table shows, the techniques most used to analyse the role of administrators are formal interviews and focus groups. On the other hand, systematic observation provided a better understanding of people's interactions with heritage and their participation in events. The democratic intention of bottom-up processes is conducive to the use of other techniques, such as observation, impromptu or spontaneous interviews, as well as face-to-face surveys.

Finally, it should be noted that while doing fieldwork during top-down activities, the people encountered were both members of the public and workers (guides or other staff), though we rarely encountered event organisers. On the contrary, during bottom-up actions (Fem Plaça or Vivim Aquí) we met both members of the public and organisers. Next we will explain how some of the ethnographic techniques informed our understanding of people and heritage interactions.

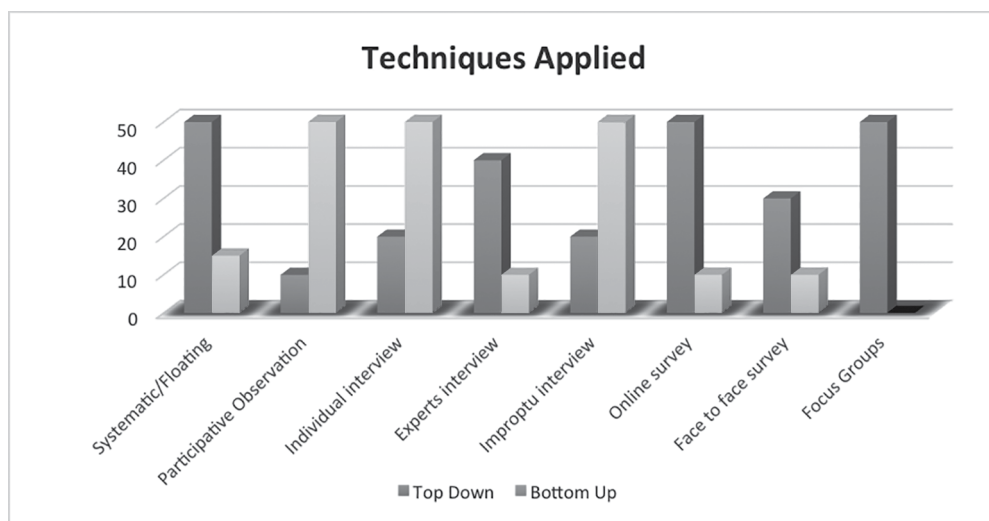


Fig. 6.—Graph 1. Percentage of techniques used depending on event.

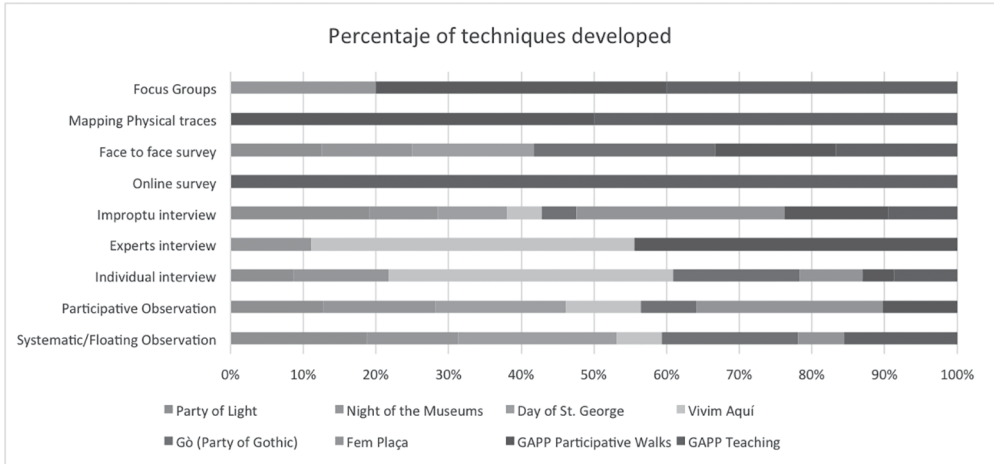


Fig. 7.—Graph 2. Proportion of techniques applied based on top-down and bottom-up processes.

Qualitative methodologies to explore relations between people and heritage

As mentioned above, despite the growing interest in making decisions more democratic and transparent in terms of urban politics in Barcelona, we believe that heritage is still not in the current agenda of participatory processes there. It seems that heritage is still a matter of ‘experts’, who have certain fears about opening up the space of decision-making to other stakeholders.

At the same time, in the current atmosphere of public participation that defines politics in Barcelona, the idea that residents should be protagonists in defining the types of heritage they feel attached to should be a priority. In this context, what seemed to us necessary was to approach the relation between people and heritage with a perspective that goes beyond statistics of visitors, and looked more like an understanding of how people (individually or collectively) appropriate (or not) urban patrimonial spaces.

Thus, we designed methodological strategies with the objective of better comprehending the interactions between people and heritage, instead of assuming that residents consider heritage as an element that could strengthen their sense of belonging to their neighbourhoods. Moreover, we believe that the interactions between people who inhabit or visit the Gothic Quarter and heritage should be explored in their own complexity and not taken for granted, because these interactions are also mediated by other urban issues that currently affect Barcelona, such as tourism, housing or mobility.

While exploring the relations between people and heritage in Barcelona, an important focus in our study has been to employ what ethnographers have defined as adaptive, omnivorous, and opportunistic actions (Luvaas, 2017). Indeed, even

though we operated with a plan, we often had to change it and allow the people (residents, guides or tourists) determine what was important and what was not, which could sometimes take us in unintended directions.

Observing people and heritage

Systematic observation was carried out both during actions organised as members of GAPP, and when we observed interactions between people and heritage on our own. We used several visual techniques, such as still photography, interval photography, and still image videos. During the celebrations of Saint Eulalia (the second patron of Barcelona, after La Mercé) that take place the second weekend of February every year, the city council organises the Festival of Light.

For this festival, schools of architecture and design or private practitioners choose a specific urban space or site (building, wall, urban furniture, façade, fountain, or square) to illuminate it and create a visual effect that transforms the meaning of that space. Since the launch of the Pla Barcino in 2012, the Museum of History of Barcelona and the Archaeological Service of the City made great effort to highlight Roman heritage during this festivity. In the last three years, Roman archaeological remains have hosted installations with light. Also, the theme of some installations were related to Roman archaeology and heritage (fig. 8a,b,c).

The Night of the Museums, in May, is another instance when the city council organises activities to disseminate the work carried out by cultural institutions and enhance various archaeological sites. Despite the presence of tourists, these activities are primarily aimed at the local public. For example, the guided tours organised by the Archaeological Service of Barcelona are only in Catalan. “We just give the tour on Catalan because we want to offer it to locals and avoid tourists,” said an anonymous guide when asked explicitly on the choice of language.

We have attended these tours during the last three years, and we observed that depending on the guide, the visit could be more or less interactive. One of the most interesting aspects during this year’s guided tour of the Wall Promenade (Passeig de les Muralles) is that the guide incorporated information about the participatory process *Vivim Aquí* that took place in one of the sections of the Roman Wall, suggesting that this bottom-up process is also part of the Roman heritage story of this area (fig. 9a,b,c).

Pop-up Green was another activity involving heritage, though not as the central topic, which occurred in September 2016. It was organised by the School of Architects of Barcelona (as part of the Landscape Biennale) in the Gothic Quarter. With the intention to protest the lack of green spaces in the Gothic Quarter, organisers asked people to fill some urban spaces with pots and plants.

One interesting aspect that should be highlighted here is that instead of using the usual and more widely known heritage spaces in the area to carry out the activity, such as Vila de Madrid or Plaça Nova, they choose to enhance squares such as Plaça



Fig. 8.—a) The Circular Ruin by the University of Barcelona, displayed at Palau Sessa-Larrard in 2016. b) Knitting the Past by LLOTJA (Design and Art School) at Baixada Viladecols (building annexed to the Roman Tower of Plaça Traguiners in 2015). c) Lampirid by EINA-UAB (Design and Art School), displayed at Plaça Traguiners in 2017.



Fig. 9.—a) The guide uses a tablet installed with the Barcino 3D app from the Archaeological Service of Barcelona to show the reconstruction of the Roman Tower at Plaça Traguiners, 2017. b) The same guide explaining the conflict between authorities and citizens at Navarro, 2015. c) In the same place, a guide shows plans for the intended transformation of the Sotstinent Navarro plot into a shared after negotiations.

de la Rosa, Sotstinent Navarro, Plaça Vuit de Març or Plaça dels Traginers (fig. 10a,b,c,d), which are less recognised areas in terms of heritage.

This movement towards more peripheral areas of the Gothic Quarter likely has to do with the Pop-Up Green organisers —well-established architects and landscape experts— collaborating with neighbourhood associations. In our opinion, this action reveals the existing dialogue between experts and some layers of social fabric with a cultural capital that is used in their urban claims.

Observing and talking about heritage

Besides attending organised activities and events, we spent several hours in the street, walking and stopping in public spaces of the Gothic Quarter where the



Fig. 10. Different moments of the Pop-Up Green in September 2016. a) Plaça Vuit de Març. b) Sotstinent Navarro plot. c) Plaça Traginers. d) Plaça de la Rosa (source: Landscape Biennale Twitter).

presence of heritage is ubiquitous. On these occasions, we were primarily interested in exploring if the presence of heritage mediated (or determined) the type of relationship people established with space.

Some of the questions we asked ourselves were: how and where people choose to sit? How long people stay in a specific area? Do people take pictures? Do people take notes? Do people pay attention and read the information panels? We were mostly conducting observations, but we also engaged in informal conversations with people.

We used visual techniques during fieldwork depending on the circumstances and our intentions. Fixed photography allowed us to document spaces and explore different aspects of it during a period of time. This is a strategy we repeated in different moments of the year and different times of the day to observe how fluctuant the use of space was.

These images of Plaça Vila de Madrid show its multiplicity of uses. According to our observations, some people arrived at the plaza in small groups, sometimes being part of a guided tour, but also alone and paying attention to the ruins. Sometimes they stopped and read the explanations on the panel, and at other times read a guidebook or listened to their guides. But what we frequently observed was that locals or visitors looked for a quiet and silent place that allowed them to escape from the loud and crowded Ramblas, located just 100 meters away. There are several fixed chairs in the plaza, which people sat on for long periods of time (sometimes 30 minutes or more), either accompanied or alone.

Plaça Vila de Madrid attracts mostly locals, and after talking with some of them, we learned that some people use this space frequently to eat their lunch or to sit during work breaks. In addition, the playground is also a unique attraction, with residents going into the plaza to spend time with their children.

In the images above, we see the perspective from inside the Barcelona City History Museum (Muhba) Interpretation Centre. From here, the permeability of space of the tombs and the new building constructed in the 1950s can be seen (fig. 11a). Up to the left, we see the crowded atmosphere of the Diada de Sant Jordi with several visitors outside and specially inside the tomb area (fig. 11b). The last image shows a group of students of the University of Barcelona doing fieldwork activities organised by GAPP (fig. 11c).

Plaça Vuit de Març, like Plaça Vila de Madrid, provides a space of tranquillity and silence for locals and visitors who want to escape from Portal del Angel, one of the busiest and more expensive commercial streets in Barcelona. As noted above, this space was, until 2011, a parking lot for motorcycles, and is now a public space with a children's playground, a restaurant, and the remains of four arcs belonging to the Roman aqueduct.

This is without doubt space designed for children and families. The name "8 March" was bestowed on it to commemorate International Women's Day, and remember the struggle of women to gain equality. But the name also makes visible the continuity of the plaza with one of the buildings in the corner —Street Ripoll 25— where Ca la Dona, the house of women, is located.



Fig. 11.—Different moments at Plaça de la Vila de Madrid. a) The Sepulchral Way from the Interpretation Centre. b) Day of St George, April 2017. c) Archaeology students doing fieldwork, May 2016.

Ca la Dona is a space where several women's groups meet to discuss, prepare actions, give services and organise events related to women's rights. Though Ca la Dona existed since the mid-1970s, the women's groups moved into the building in 2012, after it was donated by the city council. The building itself has important heritage value, and during the reconstruction, Roman remains associated with the aqueduct were documented. During the 15th century, the building hosted a medieval studies university, and on the side that faces the Plaça Vuit de Març, contains one of the few romantic gardens that still exist in Barcelona. The house has been reconstructed through an interesting participatory process (Bestraten, 2010) that transformed not just the building but the entire landscape of the square (fig. 12a).

We visited this plaza several times during the last three years to see how reforms were affecting the movement of people in this space (fig. 12b,c). As noted above, families mostly use this space with children that come to the playground after school or during the weekends. Since there aren't many chairs to sit in, several parents sit in the terrace of the bar next to the playground, and meet with other parents to converse, sometimes for almost two hours, depending also of the time of the year. Another category of people that appear in the plaza mostly with guided groups to visit the Roman aqueduct. In these cases, the period of time they spend in the plaza is shorter, no more than ten minutes, and they are completely focused on explanations given by the tour guide about Roman heritage. As far as we could observe, there was no explanation about the plaza as an entire and complex totality that encompasses the medieval building of Ca la Dona, the Roman aqueduct and the Romantic garden. That is, the Roman heritage is somehow isolated from the more complex and palimpsest style view of the plaza, and the aqueduct—even for passers-by—occupies a central role in these guided tours.

Systematic observation in both plazas shows that they are very similar in terms of their material content: they have ruins, playgrounds, public urban furniture, and bars. However, the actions and movements of people in these two spaces was very different, in the same way that the interaction between people and heritage is also different. It could be suggested that the horizontality of Sepulchral Way in Plaça Vila de Madrid, contrasted with the verticality of the four Roman arcs in Plaça Vuit de Març, not only affects the physical configuration of the plaza, but also how people contemplate and move around the ruins.

ANALYSING COMMUNITY ACTIONS WITH URBAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE AT STAKE

During the research we participated in one of the perhaps unique urban participatory processes in which heritage occupies a central position: Decidim Sotstinent Navarro¹². This process, that involved a decision on how to transform

12. See Primer dia de taller a Sotstinent Navarro. (2017).



Fig. 12.—Different moments at Plaça del Vuit de Març. a) The square, May 2017. b) Message on a panel stating “We need slowness with urgency”, November 2016. c) Panoramic view on a sunny day, November 2015.

and design an existing space in Carrer Sotstinent Navarro, can be seen as the final outcome of a long struggle spearheaded by the CEIP Àngel Baixeras school, who have been claiming that space as a playground for the school. Currently, schoolchildren play on the roof of the school, as with other schools in Barcelona (fig. 13).



Fig. 13.—Panoramic image of the plot at Sotstinent Navarro, September 2016.

This contentious space could be seen also as an opportunity for local residents, in that it could satisfy the need of public space in the Gothic Quarter, but it has also the particularity of being located next to the Roman wall, and therefore it is more than just an urban void. In the last five years, the area has been closed due to archaeological excavations. In 2005, a joint initiative of the school and Muhba resulted in *Patrimonia'm*, a project that was designed to use the Roman heritage of Barcino as a guiding principle to a series of activities conducted by teachers and students. It had a goal of socialising heritage and transmitting knowledge about the past as a way to foster a sense of belonging in a mixed group of students from different parts of the world (Garcés, Liz and Terrado, 2009).

Thus, we understand Decidim Sotstinent Navarro as a “natural” outcome of an existing struggle that with the current openness of the city council and the willingness of the counsellor of the area, materialised in a participatory process that included schoolteachers, students, parents and residents (fig. 14).

We participated in this process, that was guided by the La Col cooperative of architects as residents and “experts,” and interviewed some active members, architects, parents and teachers. We did not take on the role of researcher during our study, as common in participatory action research (PAR) methodology (Quintero and Sánchez, 2017; Chevalier and Buckles, 2013; McIntyre, 2008). Instead, we proactively provided our suggestions, but in an observatory manner. On the one hand, since 2013, we have followed the evolution of the space as a good example of a bottom-up process that could shed light onto participatory behaviours (Pastor and Ruiz, 2016a; Pastor, 2016). On the other hand, we wanted to participate as members of the social fabric with our personal interest in the recovery of public spaces in this touristified neighbourhood.

La Col organised three participatory meetings in the school. In each of the meetings, around 40 adults (parents, teachers and neighbours) and 20 children participated. In these meetings, people were asked to voice their ideas about the



Fig. 14.—Sotstinent Navarro, March 2017. The message says, “The plot is empty, until when?”.

possible uses of the space at Sotstinent Navarro, paying attention to the benefits and problems of transforming it into a public space or a playground for the use of schoolkids. What was interesting from this process is that even though the Roman wall was seen as an asset in the first meeting—something that could add value to the space and could be incorporated into its design, such as in designing children’s games with historical significance—it was later seen as just as a backdrop (fig. 15 a,b). One important aspect to note about this process is that several of the people involved in the participatory process were architects who were more concerned about technical aspects of the project than the heritage itself.

Besides these two experiences of community participation, there are other bottom-up processes in Barcelona where heritage is also used to protest against the current touristification of public spaces in the city. One example of this is the actions led by the so-called Fem Plaça movement, a diverse platform of people that once every month occupy a public space to protest against the increasing use of public space for private benefit. Last summer, the movement used heritage to question the increasing expansion of bars and terraces in historical plazas, in this case the Plaça Sant Agusti Vell (fig. 16). Through social networks, they organised a protest to raise the awareness among residents about the destruction of their heritage.



Fig. 15.—a y b) Decidim Sotstinent Navarro workshops, December 2015.



Fem Plaça

June 9, 2016 · 🌐

RECTIFIQUEM LA INFORMACIÓ: EL SANTAGUSTINA SÍ TÉ DRET A PARA-SOLS (per increïble que sembli, estant la terrassa en una plaça ombrejada...); LA INFORMACIÓ ERRÒNIA PROVÉ DEL MATEIX DISTRICTE. NO TÉ DRET, PERÒ, A FORADAR EL TERRA, MENYS QUAN INSPECCIÓ I GUB L'HAN ADVERTIT.

[See Translation](#)



Fig. 16.—Screenshot from the Fem Plaça Facebook page.

From this study, some conclusions can be made in relation to methodology, results, and the production of authorised discourses.

First of all, it should be noted that we decided to use qualitative approaches, because we think they provide a deeper understanding about the complexities of the existing urban ecosystems in Barcelona. Secondly, when applied to bottom-up and top-down processes and actions, these methodologies can inform us about the role that heritage has in the constant negotiations between residents and the administration around larger urban issues (tourism, mobility, public space and housing). Thirdly, the discussed methodologies, which involve long periods of detailed and systematic observation, are prone to view people not only as occasional consumers of heritage, but as human beings living with heritage, even if sometimes they are not fully conscious about the role heritage has in their lives. What these prolonged observations

tell us is that in specific moments, such as during political actions to claim urban rights, heritage emerges in the language and actions of citizens.

Preliminary results of our research show that heritage is not the structuring theme of current participatory processes occurring in Barcelona. However, in the contexts of social mobilisation, people “use” heritage to make broader urban claims. In other words, for people living in the Gothic Quarter, heritage is part of their everyday life, and easily turned into a political asset to make demands. The emerging role heritage has in the political language of current social movements suggests that heritage is an important factor in processes of place attachment that requires further research.

At this moment we would like to suggest that the two plazas we used as case studies (Vila de Madrid and Vuit de Març) inform existing theories of place attachment and public memory. The two spaces we examined share physical similarities in terms of their urban elements (ruins and urban furniture), but they have also similar trajectories of social mobilisation that add a new layer to understand notions of place attachment. According to Altman and Low (1992) place attachment is the innate tendency humans have to attach themselves to places in an emotional bond. Our preliminary research suggests that in both plazas, notions of place attachment are entangled with ideas of public memory (Hayden, 1995), that in turn suggest how social history is embedded in urban landscapes.

Following Dolores Hayden’s (1995) statement that “people’s experiences of the urban landscape intertwine the sense of place and the politics of space (43), the memories of the urban contestation in the Vila de Madrid and Vuit de Març plazas should also be mentioned as factors that inform how the users and residents keep emotional ties, and rely on these memories to make connections and attachments with current spaces. In turn, if people’s attachment to places are material, social and imaginative, then, urban projects that intend to foster social ties with the space in a local level should preserve the memory of the multiple and complex public histories that exist in urban places.

Another set of conclusions that we would like to proffer has to do with a reflection about knowledge production, that is, from where and for whom knowledge is produced. In this sense, it should be said that an important part of the research conducted for this paper began while we were members of a funded European Project. During that time, we had the privilege to have contact with heritage experts from several countries and disciplines that undoubtedly enriched our local understanding of heritage politics and practices.

At the same time, we detected certain fragilities in how to develop inclusive projects in the frame of cultural heritage. For example, we perceived that terms such as empowerment, community, or inclusiveness were sometimes used without meaning, only to end up in self-indulgent academic and professional papers disconnected from the needs of society. Indeed, there is still a non-explored community, which is conceived as inclusive receptor of cultural actions. Trying to fill a gap that critical heritage studies signalled some years ago (Smith, 2006), we decided to seek for methodologies that could transform what we call the new academic authorised discourse.

EPILOGUE

The new school yard at Sotstinent Navarro has been inaugurated on the 14th September of 2018 while this publication was on press. <https://www.lavanguardia.com/local/barcelona/20180915/451804337477/patio-escuela-baixeras-muralla-romana.html>

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