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Emotional conflict and trauma: the recovery of stolen memory using a mixed-methods approach

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This paper presents the results of a research project carried out in Portomarín, a small town in Galicia (Spain), which was flooded as a result of the construction of a dam in 1963. A new town was built a short distance away, but a strong sense of rootlessness remains among the inhabitants of the town. To what extent does the population of Portomarín recognise its memory regarding the forced removal as heritage? What means can be employed to incorporate the historical process of the forced removal into its identity? How can heritage education contribute towards the population overcoming these feelings of rootlessness? The inhabitants' conceptions of their forced removal were identified, and an educational activity was implemented in the town's school regarding the process of the removal. The hypothesis is confirmed that a community that does not foster intergenerational dialogue about its past (which in this case was traumatic) and does not develop its own strategy to assist in explaining and understanding its local history does not construct a shared identity.

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Introduction

Communities have progressively acquired prominence in heritage management. The objectual view has changed along with the evaluation of exceptionality from expert criteria towards a progressive approach to the anthropological concept of culture with a holistic and processual approach and community participation (Cortés-Vázquez et al., 2017). In the most recent legislation relating to heritage, community participation has come to be seen as both a necessity and a duty. A community which does not participate in the transmission of its heritage loses interest, distances itself from it and may even destroy it. For its heritage to be accepted as its own, processes of social participation, education, and awareness-raising are necessary in order to contribute towards its resignification (Quintero, 2011). The heritagisation process includes “relationships of power, accumulation of capital (symbolic, economic, educational, etc.), relationships between the community itself and the emotional burden of these practices and assets” (Jiménez-Esquinas and Quintero-Morón, 2017, p. 1853).

In the words of Smith, “Heritage is a multilayered performance—be this a performance of visiting, managing, interpretation, or conservation—that embodies acts of remembrance and commemoration while negotiating and constructing a sense of place, belonging and understanding in the present” (Smith, 2006, p. 3). History education, oriented towards civic socialisation, incorporates the emotional dimension by way of informed memories in order to obtain a balanced understanding of the importance of the past in the present (Smith and Campbell, 2015). The commemorative places of a traumatic event can become heritage as spaces for the conciliation of conflict and the reconstruction of local memory, making use of the testimonies and significations of the main characters and custodians of that narrative (Hunt, 2010). Indeed, there is a whole line of research along these lines on heritage and conflict and on the management of traumatic memory and shameful, uncomfortable or negative heritage (Graham et al., 2000; Meskell, 2002; Prats, 2005).

Prats refers to uncomfortable heritage (Prats, 2004, p. 89) which exists but which nobody knows how to deal with due to the fact that it is incorrect and undesirable from the present-day point of view, even though it fulfils all of the requirements to be appreciated and activated (Prats, 2005, p. 26). Some authors propose that the heritagisation of these elements supposes a work of communal reflection which proves to be therapeutic as it makes it possible to deal with, manage, work with and publicly present our shadows, traumas, and misfortunes (Huysen, 2003).

Place-based education is one of the strategies which makes use of the local ecological, cultural and historical context (Elfer, 2016). Its development has been greater in the field of environmental education, but its many-faceted potential for promoting processes of co-responsibility among students (Sobel, 2014) makes it suitable for history and heritage education. It fosters commitment to civic ideals, a participative attitude and a sense of belonging to and identity with a community (McInerney et al., 2011; Sánchez and Murga-Menoyo, 2019).

This study identifies the conceptions regarding local heritage held by the inhabitants of Portomarín, a rural community forcibly relocated, in 1963, to another site due to the construction of a dam. This uprooting took place during the Franco dictatorship (1939–1975), a context which must be taken into account in understanding the conflict and trauma brought about by the relocation. The degree to which heritage education can provide the inhabitants of the town with tools for the management of their recent history is analysed. Results are presented which reveal to what extent this event is present in the autobiographical memory and in the construction of identity of this community. Strategies are explored to enable the rediscovery and resignification of the

two sites: the former location, which reappears during seasons of drought, and the new site. The research required the participation of elderly people who lived in the old site at the moment of the relocation (IOP: Inhabitants of Old Portomarín), adults who have only lived in the new site (INP: Inhabitants of the New Portomarín) and local primary school children (Sch).

The following objectives were formulated:

1. To identify the perception of the inhabitants of Portomarín regarding the forced removal.
2. To investigate what means the local population can employ in order to incorporate the historical process of the relocation into their identity.
3. To characterise how heritage education can contribute towards overcoming the sense of rootlessness.

Justification

The town of Portomarín (Lugo, Galicia), of medieval origin and located on the route of the Way of Saint James (Camino de Santiago), disappeared under the River Miño in 1963, during the dictatorship of General Franco, as a result of the creation of the Belesar reservoir. A short distance away and at a higher altitude a new town was built, which differed greatly from the original. Some buildings of the old town were moved brick by brick to the new site. When the old town (OP) was flooded, some locals moved to the new site (NP) while others decided to leave the area.

The present study originates from two prior projects. The first made it possible to lay the groundwork to the case via a theoretical approach (Castro-Fernández and López-Facal, 2018). Portomarín has an ageing population and memories of the removal are scarce apart from the ruined constructions which appear from under the water in times of drought and the buildings which were transferred to and decontextualised in the new site. As time goes by, there are fewer and fewer witnesses to the removal. Without them, it will be difficult to reconstruct the town’s history in a comprehensive manner. Portomarín has enormous potential as a site of memory.

The second study was carried out with a group of trainee primary school teachers. It was observed that heritage education has a transforming power when traumatic experiences of the past are approached in situ via personal memories with the aim of promoting the construction of a democratic citizenship and preventing trauma from being forgotten (Castro-Fernández and López-Facal, 2019). Two subgroups were organised. One of them was experimental and moved to Portomarín. It was observed that this immersion into the local population, with whom its heritage was approached as a socially conflictive problem, modified perceptions of heritage education. The control group worked on the same contents in the classroom with no contact with the local population. The results confirmed that approaching a problematic context contributes to developing the capacities of empathy and critical argumentation of future teachers and modifies the way education is approached.

These two projects provided the premises for the new hypotheses: (1) In spite of the comfort acquired, emotional links were submerged under the River Miño and the inhabitants of old Portomarín (IOP) did not develop a feeling of belonging to the new town; (2) The inhabitants of the new town (INP) did not develop a sense attachment to the old town due to the fact that they were not provided with the necessary tools to feel it as their own, neither did they attribute value to their surroundings; (3) Intergenerational dialogue regarding what happened before, during and after the removal has been practically interrupted, probably in order to avoid opening up old wounds and reliving

the emotional conflict which arose from the construction of the dam; (4) The INP did not truly redress the emotional damage, the denaturalisation of the relocated buildings and the spiritual profanation suffered by their predecessors; (5) The Way of Saint James monopolised plans for local development, leading to a significant rift between institutional heritage policies and (the absence of) community participation.

The moral debt with the experiences of the inhabitants' forebears lives on and, from the perspective of history education, can contribute towards building a social counter-memory and dismantling a fictionalised identity. To this end, the subjects' links with their heritage, territory and history were taken as a central axis. In order to build a comprehensible narrative regarding NP, it is essential to reconstruct its most recent history with the help of the local people, taking into account their experiences and testimony, their memories and loss thereof.

"A being deprived of culture is one who has never acquired the culture of their forefathers, or has forgotten or lost it" Todorov (2008, p. 35). The key lies in making an exemplary use of memory, making the most of the lessons of the past to take action in the present. It is not merely a question of gathering and ordering certain facts, but rather of selecting the most relevant ones, not so much as to find the truth but to find good. Memory contributes to the reconstruction of what happened in order to learn from it. It is a "social process of relationship, conservation, resignification and transmission of the past and, therefore, a rich source for extracting lessons for the defence of rights" (Maceira Ochoa, 2012, p. 10). This research takes into account the relationship between education and heritage, memory and identity, territory and emotion.

Method

Our hypothesis is that a community is not able to construct a shared identity if it does not foster intergenerational dialogue about its past and does not develop its own strategy for explaining its history. The focus of study are the subjects, via a mixed methodology, principally based on real-life testimonies. The principles of heritage communities and social participation of the Faro Convention (Council of Europe, 2005) are assumed.

Tools. Different data collection tools have been employed in order to make comparisons between the groups studied: 1. Local community

- a. Old Portomarín (OP): questionnaires, group discussions (GD) and in-depth individual interviews (Ideep).
- b. New Portomarín (NP): questionnaires, group discussions (GD) and in-depth individual interviews (Ideep).
- c. Relocated people (Reloc): in-depth individual interviews (Ideep).

2. School community: Three questionnaires, intergenerational workshop (IW) and school assembly (Sch-Ass).

3. Experts (Exp): individual interviews.

The tools were validated according to their aspects of form, structure and content by six lecturers from the Universities of Murcia, the Basque Country, Huelva, Valladolid and Santiago de Compostela, experts in research methodology, heritage education, historical thinking and education, and the teaching of Francoist repression in Galicia. The validation process highlighted as strengths that the desired objective was clearly explicit; the extension was appropriate; the writing and selection of the items was appropriate (depending on the response, mainly nominal and ordinal data were handled); the content and form were user-friendly for the participant in the research; the course of action in the responses was easy and did not require the opinions of other

people; the dimensions (categories) making up each tool were identified. The weak points taken into account for improvement consisted of including the code of each tool and the place of implementation; clarifying terminology; making it possible to choose one or several responses in some questions; seeking the reciprocal opinion among the groups interviewed; and avoiding value judgements in the formulation of the questions and topics so as to avoid bias in the research.

Characterisation of the sample. Via the questionnaires designed for the collection of data, a probabilistic sample, of a random nature and by cluster, has been taken (Bisquerra, 1989; Buendía et al., 1998). The remaining tools have employed an intentional sample (Deslauriers, 2004).

The groups classified for the organisation of the fieldwork were: 1. The local community

- a. Old Portomarín (IOP): people who were living in the old town at the time of the removal. The distribution according to sex of the sample is balanced. Most of those surveyed were between 16 and 25 years of age at the time of the relocation. Their mean age in the present day is 75 years of age. The sample is reduced (34 cases), thus statistical support for the results is limited.
- b. New Portomarín (INP): adults who have only lived in the new site, which is their place of reference. Their connection with the old town is low and is channelled by their relationship with the previous group. The sample is more numerous (109 individuals). The distribution by sex is balanced with a slight majority of women. More than half are aged between 31 and 45 years of age with a lower number of individuals below the age of 30. Their mean age is 42 years of age.
- c. Relocated (Reloc): adults who lived in the old town and, following the forced removal, moved away from Portomarín. The sample consists of only three people due to the difficulty in tracking down these individuals and the lack of interest shown by members of this group in participating in the research.

2. Schoolchildren (Sch): pupils from the three last years of primary education, aged between 10 and 13 years of age, who are in the same class in the only school in Portomarín. All of the work has been carried out with the same group. The sample size is small: 13 pupils (3 girls and 10 boys).

3. Experts (Exp): their witness was employed to contrast the data collected. This group consists of two technicians, one belonging to the local council of Portomarín and the other to the management of cultural heritage in the regional government of Galicia.

Procedure

Phase 1: Data collection in the local community. 143 individuals were surveyed (34 Old Portomarín and 109 New Portomarín). The difference in the number of cases is due to the difficulty in finding people who experienced the forced removal as a result of the time which has passed since then and, also, the reluctance of some people to respond to the survey. However, the numbers are sufficient to offer consistent and comparable results with the New Portomarín group. The data collection was carried out between October 2018 and February 2019. The registered population of the town in February 2019 was 1526 inhabitants.

The questionnaire filled in by the inhabitants of Old Portomarín contained questions relating to their feelings towards both towns and their memories of the process of the removal. For the residents of the present-day town, the questionnaire was

similar to the former, but was oriented towards their role as receivers of the narrative. The fact that the two questionnaires shared a large number of questions made it possible to establish comparisons between both groups and to observe the mark which the discourse regarding the relocation has left in each group.

Two discussion groups were organised: inhabitants of the new town (3 men and 3 women) and residents of the old town (4 men and 5 women). The participants were of two types: those who were born in the new town and those who had been forced to abandon their homes and move to live in the new town. The number of participants was small in order to facilitate participation. The aim was to obtain qualitative information on perception, knowledge and memory with regard to the removal. A filtering of informants was carried out to interview them in depth. The themes covered were addressed in the form of open questions in order to make room for emerging issues which could be of use for the study.

Eleven semi-structured in-depth individual interviews (Ideep) were carried out with residents of New Portomarín (3), of the old town (5) and relocated individuals (3). The aim was to discover their experiences regarding the removal and to identify crossed histories.

Phase 2: Data collection with primary schoolchildren. Two questionnaires were distributed in order to detect what the children knew about the removal, who had received information from their families or from school and even who had no knowledge of the issue at all. The first questionnaire was given before carrying out an educational intervention and the second after it in order to evaluate if any change was brought about in their opinions or attitudes. The aim was to analyse the children's perceptions and the capacity of the activity to modify their feelings towards Portomarín.

The intervention consisted of several activities. First of all, an intergenerational workshop (IW) was held with the participation of three residents of Old Portomarín. The workshop was carried out in two phases: (1) active listening based on oral testimonies, videos and images of the old town and the removal explained by the invited residents; (2) a group reflection on the emotional impact of the removal on routines, roots and traditions. After that, a mural of emotions was created with the identification of the experiences narrated in different heritage elements of the old town. An educational excursion around Portomarín was also organised, including the ruins of the old site, in order to identify these elements and to favour the construction of a civic identity based on the surroundings.

The following activity, concerning negotiation and consensus, consisted of a school assembly (Sch-Ass) to draw up a heritage itinerary around Portomarín based on the knowledge acquired and the emotions perceived. The schoolchildren filled in a questionnaire in order to discover their perceptions and sense of identification with their heritage. Via a guided debate among teachers and pupils, with arguments for and against the removal, the children's awareness of their heritage was stimulated. To draw up the itinerary, photographs of the old and new towns of Portomarín were used with a QR code attached with the children's explanation of the associated emotion.

The pupils were also asked to do a project at home in order to gather family material about the old town and the time of the removal.

Phase 3: Data collection with experts. Two semi-structured in-depth interviews were carried out in order to learn the experts' opinions of two issues: (a) to what degree the memory of the relocation of Portomarín should be integrated into the

management of the local heritage and (b) to assess the impact of the removal on the heritage dimension of Portomarín.

Data analysis

Quantitative. The attitudes and opinions of the different groups were analysed. The predominant perspectives of the removal were identified along with its impact at that time, how the narrative has been transmitted and what the heritage evaluation made of the town has been. Due to the different historical contexts of each group analysed, comparable but also specific data has been sought. A descriptive statistical analysis of the data has been carried out. Based on the numerical results, guidelines have been established and the discourse of the different informants has been systematised. The unstructured nature of the data obtained from the schoolchildren does not make it possible to establish very clear contrasts between their narrative and that of the rest of the groups. However, it does reveal certain fixed representations in the imagination of the younger generations.

Qualitative. Via the assumptions of Grounded Theory, we aimed to define the basic social processes related with the history of Portomarín and its relocation. The interviews and discussion groups held in the local community were based on semi-structured techniques with a tendency towards being open. Although this generated a greater dispersion of themes, it made it possible to relate the different dimensions in order to explain the whole. The analysis of the results has been aimed at highlighting the differences between the groups. The data reduction has been carried out via codes (labels) and thematic axes (groups of codes). The construction of the codes has been established in a combined (axial) manner (Strauss and Corbin, 2002). An initial reading of the analytical material and the prior knowledge of the theme of the study and of the aims, has oriented the construction of the codes in a deductive way. The organisation of the codes has guided the initial phases of data reduction and has provided a common analytical framework for the interviews and discussion groups. Other codes have been obtained inductively as a response to coding needs based on the different repetition patterns observed or by the identification of the importance of certain elements in the discourse. As far as the schoolchildren are concerned, an in vivo coding has been sought. In other words, the interventions themselves have been analysed as units of significance. This procedure does not follow a common structure and the elements of discourse belonging to other qualitative techniques were extremely atomised. The type of coding is considered appropriate in these cases in order to approach the data collected.

Results

Process and trauma. The central event of the recent history of Portomarín is the flooding of the old town due to the construction of a dam and the removal, brick by brick, of its main architectural elements to another site and, therefore, this is the most important element of this study. It is a transversal and many-faceted issue, which appears constantly in the participants' representations.

Negative consequences attributed to the move. The main consequence was the loss of the activities particular to the town, especially those related with the subsistence economy. The move altered the town's rural nature and its relationship with the surrounding area, in particular with the River Miño. This perception is shared among those who did not experience the move. There is, therefore, an initial consensus concerning the loss of the differentiating activity of Portomarín.

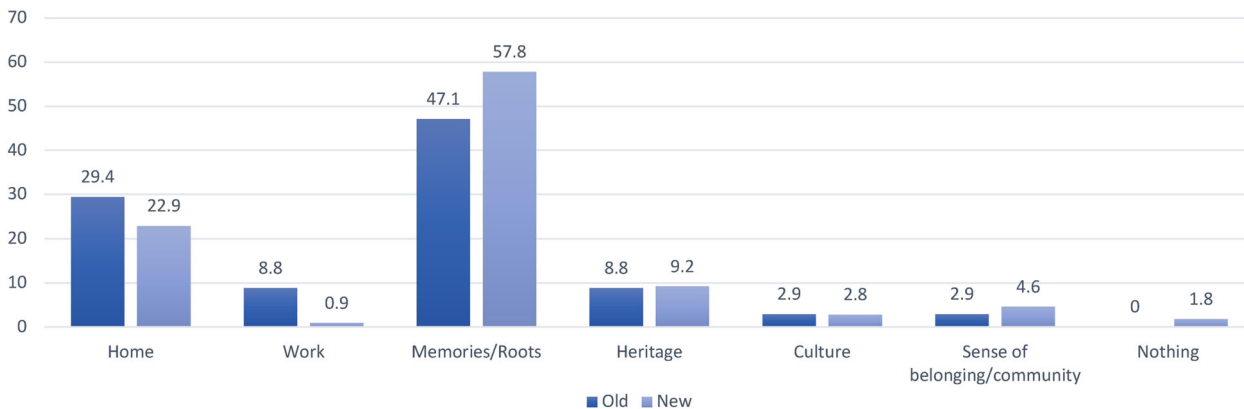


Fig. 1 Local community. Most important losses due to the forced removal.

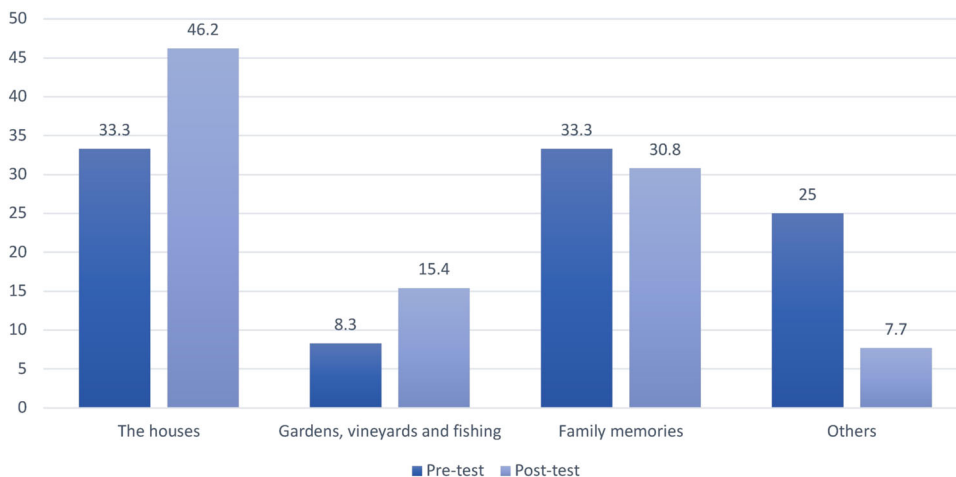


Fig. 2 School community. Most important losses due to the forced removal.

Also worthy of note is the loss of its patterns of sociability. Losing the town meant losing the scenario of co-existence. These types of significations are recurrent among those who experienced the move. The sense of community was severely altered and a process of rootlessness was set in motion: “with the change of town, many associations of friendship were unmade ... there were people who stayed and tried to find a way of life here the best they could, but many people moved away” (Exp-2). The informants from New Portomarín (INP) are sensitive to this loss and include it in their discourse.

This breaking of bonds was exacerbated by people leaving the town. Among this group, references to depopulation are important, albeit in a more descriptive than painful tone. They are part of this exodus and restrict themselves to making reference to it, to narrating the experience. For them, the dimension of community was not directly affected.

In this issue, a greater consensus is evident: the pain of those affected by the experience of a traumatic experience is recognised. A notable coincidence in the evaluation of the loss of memories and roots is registered, as is that of homes, families and friends (Fig. 1). The schoolchildren also identify the loss in terms of family; there is an increase in the percentage who consider that the most significant loss was that of homes, followed by that of memories, particularly after the activities were carried out (Fig. 2).

Differences with regard to the gains. The perception of the gains derived from the move is greater among the informants from the new town of Portomarín and the relocated people than

among those who experienced the move. Among the latter, the benefit of some who were able to make money is relativised, but none of them accepted that the impact was to the common good. Even those who accepted that they had profited in some way pointed out that this did not make up for the pain: “We were very poor people, my parents had seven children ... the money was welcome at the time because two of my brothers were married and had no job ... but it did not compensate at all the suffering of my parents” (DG-IOP 1). The general tendency among the inhabitants of the old town interviewed was to make this type of reflection on the few occasions on which mention was made of the profits. They responded with heterogeneity in the questionnaire (Fig. 3).

Both the relocated people and the INP highlighted that the disappearance of the town made it possible to occupy a new space with modern services and infrastructures and an attractive urban design, to leave the rural landscape and to enjoy new work opportunities and improve their living conditions (Fig. 3): “They didn’t lose anything because in the old town ... it was basically just fields” (Ideep-Reloc 2). These opinions lack the emotion found in the group of residents of Old Portomarín.

The perception of the schoolchildren regarding benefits, coinciding with that of the inhabitants of New Portomarín, was different after the activities were carried out. Initially, they considered that the main benefit was a new type of work but, after learning new information, they stressed the improvement in the quality of life (Fig. 4).

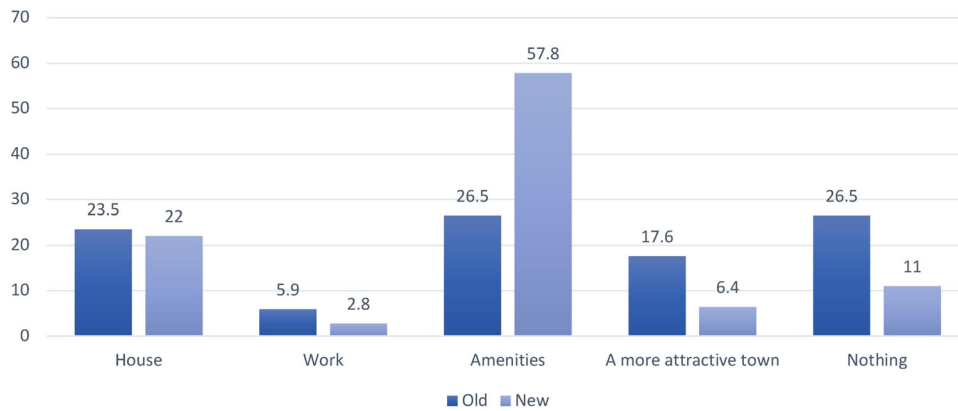


Fig. 3 Local community. The most important gains after the forced removal.

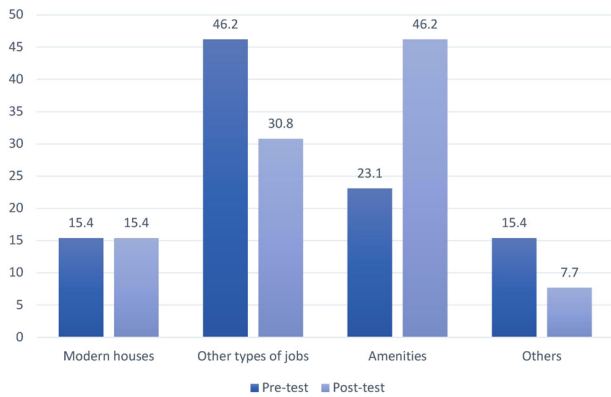


Fig. 4 School community. The most important gains after the forced removal.

Compensation and grievance. The inhabitants of the old town of Portomarín consider that the compensation they received was unfair. They consider themselves to be victims of the state administration and the company responsible for carrying out the construction work, the expropriation and the move. There is discrepancy among this group regarding whether those who lost most were those who owned most property in the old town. The perceptions of grievance, compensation and profit are relativised depending on their personal experience, but they agree on the fact that nobody had any choice, it was all imposed by the Francoist dictatorship with only defencelessness and neglect for those affected. The personal impact is evaluated negatively. The locals lament the loss of traditions. The inhabitants of the new town share this narrative, although they value more the improvements achieved in housing and jobs. They did not express value for the effect on relationships among the community (Fig. 5).

The narrative: complexity in the restitution of a singular history. The functionality of the narrative differs depending on the informant: re-composition of the memory of everyday life or knowledge of the truth in a context of defencelessness.

Attitudes against trauma. The attitude of the majority is silence. The general feeling is of pain followed by uncertainty, insecurity, anger and betrayal. The survivors of Old Portomarín hide these feelings. Some recognise that they do not wish to share their experiences. They justify their silence with the lack of interest of the current inhabitants. They consider that the young people value the move as an opportunity to live in a better town. Only a

minority are of the opinion that some young people share a similar perception to them, such as a lack of roots (Fig. 6).

The inhabitants of New Portomarín interviewed questioned this covering up of feelings of the IOP. Even among the group of relocated people an attitude of silence and of hiding feelings prevails, thereby making it difficult to exchange information: “My brother would know, but they never told me, and I never asked anything” (Ideep-Reloc-1). However, the majority of the INP consider the experience of the move for the older people as a loss of their roots (Fig. 7).

The memory is linked more to a process of otherness, of recognition of the pain of others than to a real process of information exchange. The experts expressed the need to promote this dialogue: “I think they have ... a trauma ... yes, it would be good for them to talk about it, even if it was only as therapy” (individual interview, Exp-1).

Usefulness and perspective with regard to the narrative. The inhabitants of the old town stress their experiences and hardly mention the move. They mention memories and ways of life which are difficult to forget. This attitude is coherent with the desire to ease the pain and focus attention on their space of relationship and the way of life which was lost. The most striking memories are related with the most traumatic aspects: the flooding, the forced removal, the pain of the people and, specifically, that of the elderly population at that time (Fig. 8). They also transmit certain urgency for preserving this history which will die with them. They consider themselves as guardians of this memory, and that time is of the essence because it ends with them. Recovering memories linked to the past involves gathering all that its main characters are willing to share: “an initial part would be to compile the personal memories which still remain ... the only way of knowing this memory is by enabling people to tell it, and to record what they tell” (Exp-1).

The inhabitants of the new town are interested in gathering information relating to the grievance and defencelessness of the original inhabitants in order to reconstruct a narrative to do justice. They consider that the trauma and the personal experience of the pain of the process of reconstructing the narrative should be separated: “How can the memory be preserved? ... We cannot preserve the memory of the people who bore witness to the event and were left traumatised ... It must be preserved ... (it would be) via information, via knowledge ... Those whose eyes weep every time they speak of it will not be alive forever ... the important thing is that the story is known” (INP-1-DG). What is most shocking about the narrative received is that the people were forcibly removed, and the old buildings were taken apart and rebuilt (Fig. 9). Everybody learned about what happened within

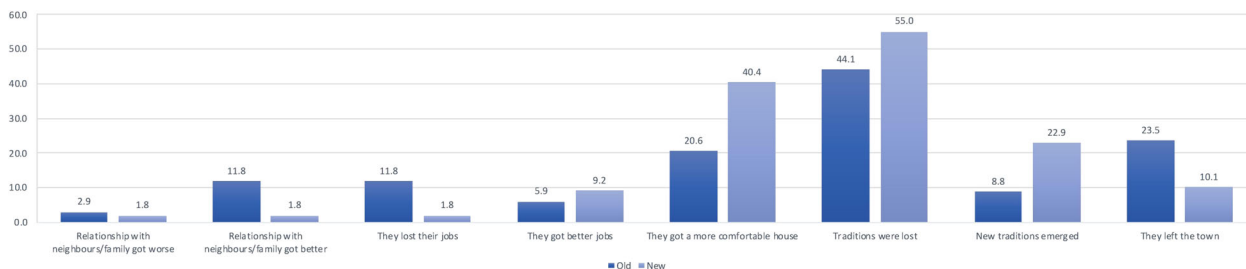


Fig. 5 Local community. How did the move affect your family? Note: The sum of the percentages is not equal to 100% due to the fact that each person was able to respond to several options.

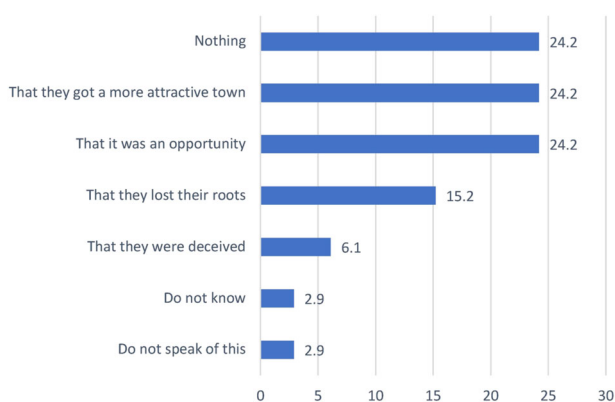


Fig. 6 Local community. Inhabitants of Old Portomarín. What do you think the young people think about the forced removal?

their family and a high percentage (75%) during their education. For those who never knew the old town, the most relevant tools are photographs and press cuttings (94%).

The schoolchildren take part in the same narrative, albeit in a fragmented manner. The majority mention that they know about the story via their families and from school. They highlight, above all, the traumatic aspects, particularly the forced removal: people were forced to leave their homes. However, they consider that their knowledge is scarce, that they know little or nothing of the most relevant aspects. The school activities managed to increase their curiosity about the history of Portomarín and, upon completing these activities, the majority were interested in knowing more (75%). When asked what aspects they would like to know more about, they mentioned the everyday life in the original town. The most valued activity of those carried out was the visit to the ruins of the old town (54%).

Divergent spaces with regard to the trauma and the narrative. The emotional detachment of the inhabitants of New Portomarín with the old town affects their identification with the spaces of the trauma: “the connections are gradually being lost ... the emotional connection, I mean, it’s just one more story, a story which people tell: Listen, just so that you know, once there was such and such a thing here, and one day they came and took it and put it two hundred metres higher up, but ... there is no emotional element behind it” (INP-Ideep-1). Nevertheless, these people form an active part of the narrative, albeit as receivers, as they have experienced the relationship with the process, the trauma and its consequences.

The relocated group, however, reveal even more divergent significations, even more detached from the old town of Portomarín. They seem to have also distanced themselves from the trauma and do not seek the restitution of the narrative because it has become something alien to them. Not having

formed part of the community which settled in the new town seems to have distanced them from the emotional experience. The places and spaces with which they have generated roots are those to which they moved after moving away from Portomarín. They mention no direct effects of the trauma, the uprooting or the pain. Certain experiences of childhood or youth are mentioned with some nostalgia, albeit without the emotion expressed by their former neighbours.

The activities carried out with the schoolchildren contribute towards moderating the idealisation of life in the old town of Portomarín. The opinion of the children who would have liked to have lived in the old town fell from 92 to 69% after discovering the realism of the experiences in the intergenerational workshop.

New Portomarín as a place in dispute. The majority of the inhabitants of new Portomarín perceive the ruins of the old town as a permanent reminder of the trauma: “We would have preferred never to have seen the ruins of Portomarín ... they bring back to me a thousand memories of my parents, of my grandparents, who suffered so much because of the reservoir” (ONP-Ideep1). The inhabitants of the new town share this pain, but what they truly feel is curiosity (Fig. 10).

The ruins are an element with enormous potential for restoring the history and preserving the narrative of everyday life. One of the experts consulted stated: “An attempt should be made to preserve the physical medium ..., the streets, what is interpretable and legible in Portomarín. It is a complicated problem for preservation, as it is an element which is flooded for part of the year, which can only be seen at certain times ... but to preserve it is complicated ... We can record it, it can be drawn, it can be digitalised and interpreted and, on that basis, and with the support of memory, it could even be possible to have a virtual Portomarín in the new Portomarín, or wherever, so as to always have the reference. It is not necessary to be physically there or to touch the stones, but it is good that they are there, or that we know they are there” (Exp1).

The ruins can be converted into a tourist attraction. The majority of the INP consider them to be a place of high environmental and heritage value. They value positively the idea of converting the ruins into a space for exchange which can contribute an added value to the local people. Contrary to the case of the IOP, it is a place frequently visited by this group for walks.

The visit made by the schoolchildren to the ruins seems to have satisfied the curiosity which they initially expressed (from 92.3% to 75%) and gave rise to a feeling of sadness in the majority (from 53.8% to 75%).

Relationships with New Portomarín. The inhabitants of the old town avoid expressing their opinions about the new town, even though the interviews led to this point. In the discussion group, little attention was paid to this aspect and the new town was

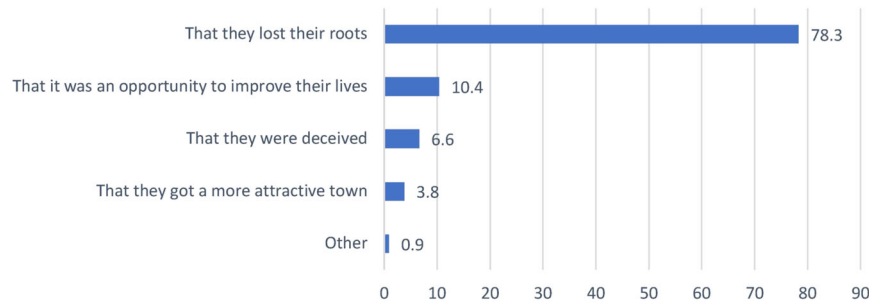


Fig. 7 Local community. Inhabitants of New Portomarín. What do you think the old people think about the forced removal?

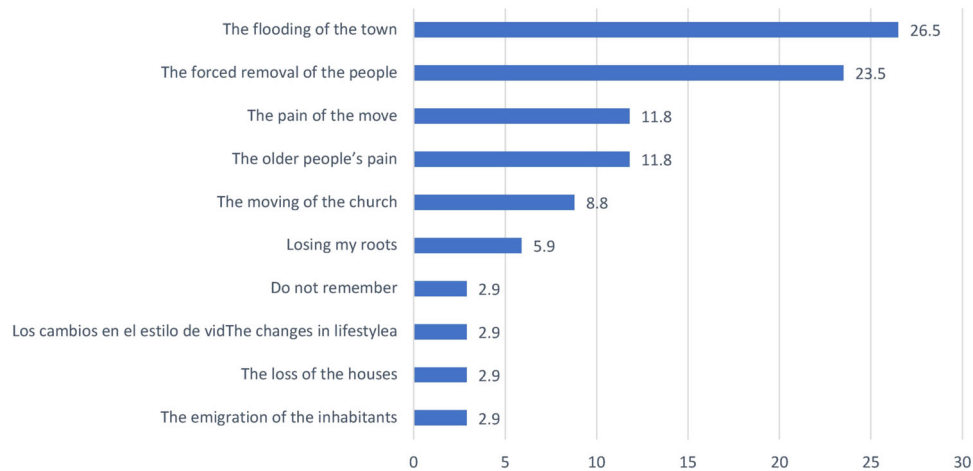


Fig. 8 Local community. Inhabitants of Old Portomarín. What memory has had the biggest impact on you?

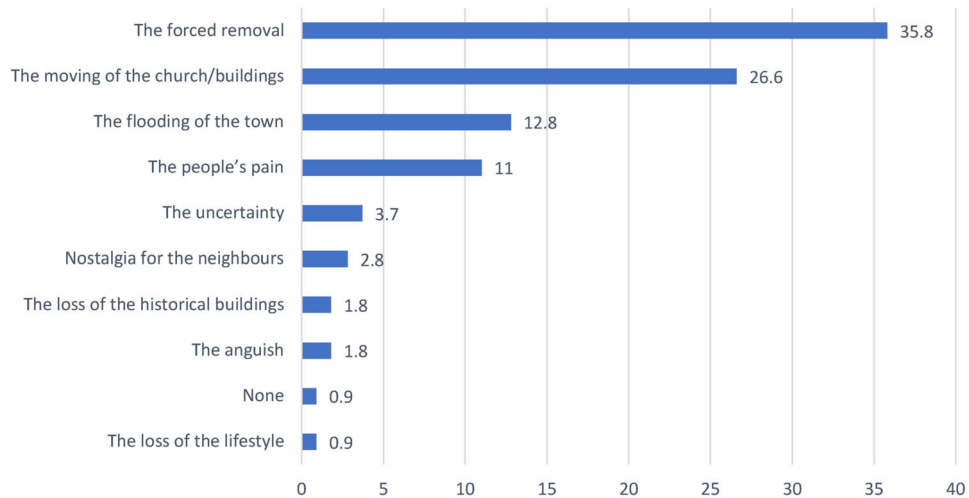


Fig. 9 Local community. Inhabitants of New Portomarín. What memory has had the biggest impact on you?

compared negatively with the old one. 73.5% did not express preference for the new site. This opinion worsens the sense of rootlessness. The discourse of the inhabitants of New Portomarín is practically the opposite; the new town is their place of reference, of relationship, and their home. 59.3% valued it positively.

The local community as a whole expressed a broad consensus regarding the buildings moved to the new site, considering them as fundamental for the identity of present-day Portomarín: “What would be of the new town if they hadn’t moved the churches? Five things were moved here, they could have moved many more because there were some very beautiful mansions. I

believe that it would not be Portomarín today if they hadn’t moved the church ... it would be a new town with nothing ... without history. These buildings are art and a part of our history” (IOP-GD-4). For the inhabitants of the old site, the distinctive nature of the new town is dependent on the buildings that were moved. The inhabitants of the new town are in agreement with this aspect and make reference to the restorative sense of these buildings due to their architectonic and heritage value. The symbolic consideration of the architectural elements moved may explain why the local people feel identified with the new site (55.9% IOP and 86% INP).

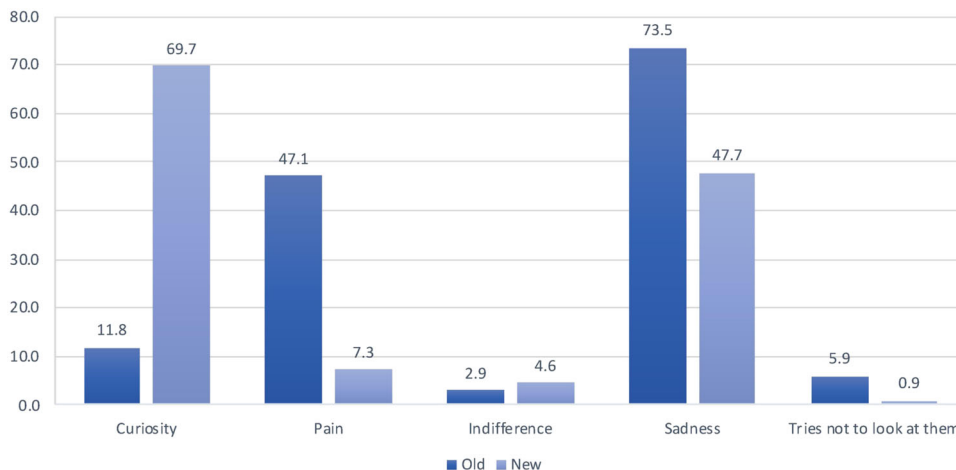


Fig. 10 Local community. Feelings upon seeing the ruins. Note: The sum of the percentages is not equal to 100% due to the fact that each person was able to respond to several options.

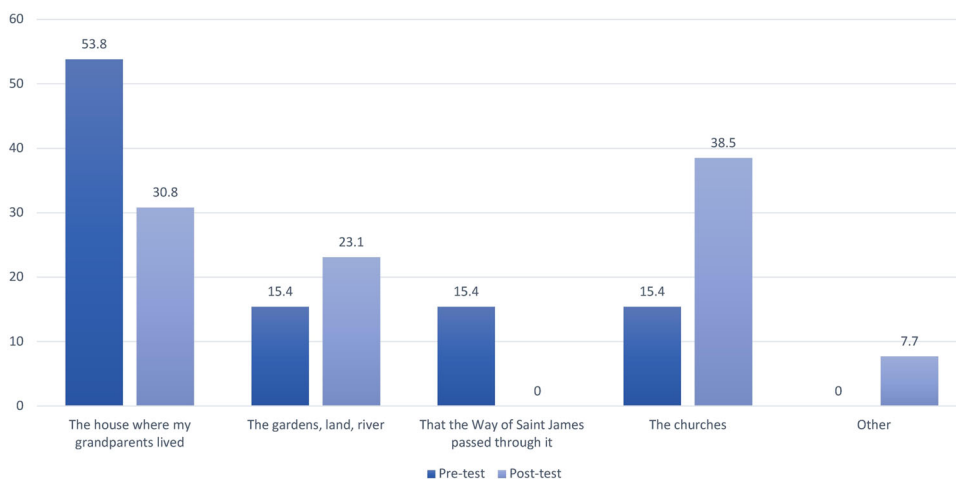


Fig. 11 School community. What was the most important thing in Old Portomarín?

The schoolchildren also point to the church as the element which they would like children from other places to know (34.8%). What they most value is the old town, although they do not specify whether they are referring to the buildings that were moved or to the ruins which are preserved in situ.

One of the experts also recognised the determining role of the buildings which were moved in the construction of a shared identity: “A new urban space was built which had nothing to do with the previous one, but it has enabled the citizens of Portomarín, at least that’s my impression from afar, to be able to transform it into heritage, to understand it as their town, their living space, their place of reference” (Exp1). More than a few inhabitants of the new town have a sense of attachment due to the singular history of the town. They highlight the fact that links have been strengthened due to the narrative of suffering and to the history of the move.

Both groups agree in considering that that the most important thing in New Portomarín is tourism and the pilgrimage associated to the Way of Saint James. They also agree on valuing their immaterial heritage, although the inhabitants of Old Portomarín lend more significance to the historical buildings whereas those of the new town value more the cultural practices and the history of the former site. The IOP particularly value the old style of life associated with activities such as fishing and

agriculture and attribute less importance to the improvements in the connections of the present-day town.

The schoolchildren changed their perception of the old town of Portomarín following the educational intervention. Aspects relating to the homelife of their predecessors lost significance and the heritage of the buildings gained in importance. This change may be due to the emphasis placed on these elements during the classroom activities (Fig. 11). They consider that the churches are the most important elements in the new town, although the responses were more heterogeneous in the post-test, most probably because they had acquired new knowledge (Fig. 12).

Redefining the space: The Way of Saint James as the key element.

The new town of Portomarín is still associated to the losing of their roots for those who experienced the move while for the inhabitants of the new town it represents modernity and progress. However, there is a consensus in that the Way of Saint James is currently the most important activity: “We owe everything to the Way. That’s why the word Portomarín is synonymous with the Way because without it the heritage we are speaking of would not have existed in Portomarín” (Exp2). The relationship of dependence on this economic factor is also highlighted: “At least the pilgrims come, because, if they didn’t, I don’t know what we

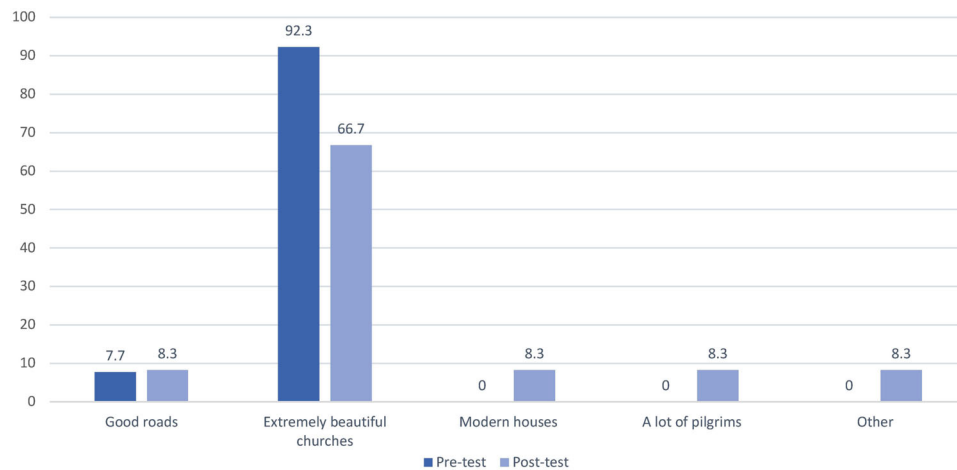


Fig. 12 School community. What is the most important thing in New Portomarín?

would live on in Portomarín!” (INP-GD-1). Nonetheless, two problems were highlighted. First of all, the excessive dependence on the Way does not allow for other types of activities to grow: “The Way of Saint James is a blessing for us, of course, but, in another sense, it is also a kind of curse ... It does not allow us the possibility of having things that we deserve” (INP-Ideep-2). Secondly, the mass tourism it generates is described as an obstacle which affects the local people (high prices, businesses oriented only towards pilgrims): “The Way of Saint James is going to do more to put an end to the town than the move” (INP-Ideep-1).

Difficulties in establishing the nexus in New Portomarín. Pessimism and worrying about the future may impede advancement in the recovery of the narrative as an integrating history of the town leading to the construction of a collective identity. The perception of having been abandoned by the institutions of government is related with endemic problems in the rural community, such as the exodus of the population and the absence of job opportunities: “As a consequence of having an important resource such as the Way of Saint James, we are ignored in many other aspects ... They say “They have enough with the Way” ... And that is basically the burden we are left with now. Many services we had, which were cutting-edge in their time, 56 years ago, are totally obsolete today” (INP-Ideep-1).

Nobody’s testimony has spontaneously made reference to the creation of a museum or an interpretation centre to contribute to the (re)construction of the unique narrative of Portomarín. The references are more related with direct interpellation, but there seems to be a consensus in considering such an element as positive and useful as a nexus of social cohesion. Mentions of a space of this type as a mere means for exhibition to visitors are scarce and are interwoven with the symbolic elements: “I think it could have the effect of facilitating the recovery of this memory ... it doesn’t matter how many initiatives are begun by the government or by experts ... if there is no interpretation centre which empowers them and which puts them at the level of cultural value of what, for them, is their personal memory, then they will probably be very reluctant” (Exp-1).

Discussion

Objective 1: To identify the perception of the forced removal.

The population of Portomarín builds the narrative of the removal by focusing on their pain and loss. The trauma is understandable taking into account the seriousness of a situation which completely altered their context and their relationships of proximity.

None of the participants are insensitive to this perception regardless of the differences with respect to the importance of what was lost.

In their minds, it is not so relevant who won or who lost, and the compensation received, but rather that there is a general sense of grievance and defencelessness: a flooded town whose inhabitants cannot recover what belongs to them. This type of testimony is homogenous.

The experience and the transmission of the trauma strengthen the link with Portomarín. The generations closest to the move, the children of the town’s inhabitants at the time, consider themselves the nexus with this history.

Objective 2: Investigating the means which can be employed by the population in order to incorporate the process of the move into their identity.

The recovery of the town’s memory makes it possible to build a better-informed history “in which hidden issues or relegated problems appear to be forgotten” (Fernández, 2009, p. 21). The difficulty derives from the trauma caused by the move. Silence has been imposed, along with the concealment of painful experiences which impede the restitution of a shared memory. To this, another problem is added: the discrepancies between generations regarding the transmission of the history and the relationship with present-day Portomarín. The narrative of spoliation is still alive in the imagination of the town’s inhabitants, but it is threatened by conscious forgetfulness, by the passing of time, by the loss of individual memories and by the lack of consensus regarding what should be remembered.

Faced with these difficulties, Portomarín is a social scenario characterised by a close family relationship among its inhabitants. Therefore, there is a foundation for the establishment of intergenerational dialogue and the shared reconstruction of the narrative. There is, furthermore, a desire to have a space or medium which enables the promotion of the sharing of local memory.

Incorporating the forced removal into the collective identity consists of rebuilding an integral narrative in which all participate and in which everybody feels they are represented; in other words, recovering the narrative of the recent history of Portomarín, being able to re-establish certain elements of identity and of intergenerational connection.

Objective 3: To characterise how heritage education can contribute towards overcoming the sense of rootlessness deriving from the forced removal. There is enormous potential for

establishing a narrative in Portomarín which, as well as being restorative on a sentimental level, can contribute towards forming links of identity. This history can be reflected in an educational intervention, based on the territory and the needs of its community.

In this study, an educational activity has been designed and put into action which incorporates the emotional dimension as the catalyst for developing learning processes associated with elements of memory. Two elements were selected. Firstly, the physical remains of the removal manifested in the ruins of the old town of Portomarín. The ruins and their surroundings are an element of the heritage of the present-day town, a significant component of its history, a connection between the old and the new and an educational site, albeit embroiled in an emotional dispute. Secondly, the buildings moved brick by brick, the churches and the arch of the medieval bridge, which are heritage symbols expressing “in a synthetic and emotionally effective way a relationship between ideas and values” (Prats, 2004, p. 29). These elements, although they provoke different feelings, are assumed as points of reference of the collective identity.

The educational intervention has reinforced the idea that the move forms part of the narrative in the children’s imagination, albeit with no special emotional relevance. An event which was so shocking and transformative for several generations of the local community, arouses in the schoolchildren the same level of emotion as other elements. This fact seems to indicate that the narrative is not being transmitted as a connective element of community identity. The results of the activities carried out indicate that education can contribute towards redirecting this dialogue and generating processes of shared heritagisation. However, the time dedicated to the intervention was insufficient and a broader educational project would have been required with more involvement from the children’s families for the creation of a true learning community. In fact, the children were asked to do a small project at home which consisted of compiling family memories relating to the history of Portomarín, but the desired results were not achieved and only 2 out of the 13 participants completed the task. This is probably due to the fact that there is no consolidated work dynamic between the school and the families.

In the non-formal context, it is equally important to establish processes which promote the activation of heritage based on its environment, such as the emotional and territorial intelligence of the general public (Cuenca-López and Estepa-Giménez, 2017). The Way of Saint James is the main economic engine of the town, but it blocks the reconstruction of identity from an endogenous perspective in a context of depopulation and the absence of job opportunities. The area is progressively losing its distinctive activities and growing increasingly dependent on tourism and the commercialisation of culture, as occurs in other places which make their living from the Way (Jiménez-Esquinas and Sánchez-Carretero, 2018). The success of the Way has been accompanied by a certain degree of institutional abandonment and value is taken away from what is truly exceptional about Portomarín: its people and their memories.

The pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela dominates the plans for local development, generating a significant rift between heritage policies and community participation. A similar situation has occurred along other stretches of the Way, where the participation of the local population in the taking of decisions and the organisation of initiatives relating to heritage has not been incentivised, and the association of heritage with its touristic use has prevailed in public policy-making (Sánchez-Carretero, 2012). Along general lines, the enhancement of cultural heritage has occurred in “an environment of economic investment and political debate

around what should be preserved, represented, remembered, documented or eliminated” (Alonso, 2013, p. 489). It is necessary to defend the preservation of heritage in the context of its relationship with the people and the land. The heritage of Portomarín is its key economic foundation. However, the participation of the town’s citizens should be encouraged in terms of its management and use.

The idea of opening up a space such as an interpretation centre is an attractive option as a tool for the reconstruction of memory. One of the experts consulted suggested the possibility of a virtual Portomarín, by way of its digitalisation, which, with the support of recovered oral memory, can contribute towards restoring the local history, even though the ruins of the town are submerged for the majority of the year.

Conclusion

In this study, the heritage conceptions of the inhabitants of a town forcibly moved due to the construction of a dam have been identified. The hypothesis has been confirmed that a community which does not foster intergenerational dialogue about its past (in this case a traumatic past) and does not develop its own strategy to contribute towards explaining and understanding local history is not able to build a shared identity.

The trauma lives on in those people who experienced the forced removal and who bear it in silence and suppress their emotions. The receivers of this fragmented narrative demand a greater exchange of information in order to allow themselves to reconstruct this traumatic history and have a desire to clarify the situation of grievance and defencelessness in a repressive context. The discourse regarding the move and the sense of identification with the old and new towns is different between the two groups. The consensus seems to lie in considering the buildings moved brick by brick from the old town as elements of reconciliation, of restoration from the trauma and as fundamental in the reconstruction of a common identity. This position is even clearer among the inhabitants of the new Portomarín than among those of the old town. The latent lack of intergenerational dialogue does not favour the shared reconstruction of the emotional memory in a critical and informed manner.

The importance attributed to the moved buildings as remains of the past and symbols of the present-day town has also been identified in the imagination of the school community. However, the absence of emotional attachment to the move makes it difficult to transmit the local history. The activities carried out with the children have managed to bring to the fore emotions attached to the local heritage and to increase interest in the everyday memories of the old town. However, these activities have proved to be insufficient. It is desirable that the community itself establish an internal strategy of a prospective nature in order to assess which heritage elements should be included in its collective identity and with which meanings. The excessive presence of tourism linked with the Way of Saint James, the main economic resource of Portomarín, and rural depopulation threaten to destroy the attempts to create a heritage identity from an endogenous perspective.

Bearing in mind that “participating is sharing ... communicating and relating” (Alguacil, 2005, p. 5), education can trigger participatory processes, as a right and human’s needs, which foster the construction of a critical and committed citizenship which is conscious of its heritage values, capable of signifying its space and preserving the memory of its community. These participatory processes, which on occasions lack of enough procedures and goodwill (Sánchez-Carretero and Jiménez-Esquinas, 2016), must foster the awareness of heritage, applying the sequence of knowing, understanding, respecting

and valuing (Fontal, 2003). They must also promote the activation of the subjects with capacity for reflection and decision as they are heritage agents and not merely passive bearers and transmitters of culture who are lacking in will (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004).

Data availability

All data generated or analysed during this study are included in this published article.

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The authors declare no competing interests.

Additional information

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