THE PAST IS AROUND THE CORNER:
EXPLORING THE USES OF THE PAST IN PUBLIC SPACES

El pasado está a la vuelta de la esquina:
Explorando los usos del pasado en el espacio público

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ABSTRACT Narratives about the past do not only exist in museums, heritage sites and books. Our streets are crowded by images and words that evoke cultures, events and figures extracted directly from history, which are adapted to social, political and economic interests. As a consequence, public space constitutes a privileged scenario for studying contemporary uses of the past. The aim of this text is to talk about the role of the past in people's daily life, through the study of its expression in the public space —street and business names, heritage sites, commemorative monuments, street art, advertisements, architecture, commemorations, etc.— and to offer some methodological statements for its analysis. The implementation of this kind of study will serve to create a better understanding of the meanings of the past in the present, and what they imply for people.

Keywords: Public Space, Uses of the Past, Ethnography, Collective Memory, Urban Space.

RESUMEN Las narrativas sobre el pasado no solo existen en museos, lugares patrimoniales y libros. Nuestras calles están llenas de imágenes y trabajos que evocan culturas, eventos y figuras históricas, y que se adaptan a intereses sociales, políticos y económicos. Como consecuencia, el espacio público constituye un escenario privilegiado para el estudio de los usos contemporáneos del pasado. El objetivo de este artículo es hablar sobre el rol del pasado en la vida diaria de las personas, a través del estudio de sus expresiones en el espacio público —nombres de calles y comercios, sitios patrimoniales, monumentos conmemorativos, arte urbano, anuncios, arquitectura, conmemoraciones, etc.— y ofrecer algunas propuestas metodológicas para su análisis. La implementación de este tipo de estudios servirá para crear un mejor entendimiento de los significados del pasado en el presente y lo que implican para las personas.

Palabras clave: Espacio público, Usos del pasado, Etnografía, Memoria colectiva, Espacio urbano.

MEANINGS OF THE PAST

The conceptual, theoretical and practical development of public archaeology in recent decades is leading to a more reflexive consideration of the role of archaeology and its implications for current society. It is true that, generally speaking, the incorporation of these socially engaged perspectives is far from being generalised. However, and step by step, public archaeology is shaking off the obsolete image of the archaeologist as researcher completely devoted to peoples of the past and disconnected, in the development of its professional practice, from today's sociopolitical and economic realities.

In this sense, one of the main research trends in public archaeology is to identify, analyse and interpret the meanings of the past and heritage in the present, going beyond official discourses —promoted by public authorities and experts— and extending towards people's narratives about the past in everyday life (see Holtorf, 2005, 2007; Lähdesmäki, Raninen & Nordqvist, 2013).

Dealing with this topic implies taking into account two main considerations. The first is that the past is not 'dead' and encapsulated in museum glass cases or in archaeological sites. Instead, the past is alive, and we can find it under so many different shapes, from mass media and commercial brands to political discourses. Directly related to this, the second consideration is that experts do not have a monopoly on producing discourses on the past, even though scientific discourse has acquired a certain degree of hegemony. People adapt the past to their own interests and needs, thus providing different narratives —which can be more or less accurate regarding its *scientificity*— and can choose to agree with official discourses or be in conflict with them. However, what cannot be denied is that between the wide diversity of visions that exist both in official and popular imaginaries, there is a permanent dialogue and a reciprocal influence.

The popular appropriation of the past and, above all, its footprint, is not new. Pre-modern societies assimilated traces of the past as part of their own realities, and provided them with specific meanings. Thereby, archaeological remains became milestones in the landscape, scenarios for legends and stories and symbols of the local imaginary (see Gazin-Schwartz & Holtorf, 2011). Logically, these traditional perceptions have changed over the last century due to the development of mass culture and the impact of globalisation. New popular ways of interpreting and interacting with the past have arisen in accordance with the new sociocultural and political realities.

In this regard, the materiality of the past has assumed the condition of cultural product —what we call *heritage*, with a particular emphasis on its economic dimension— that deserves protection and scientific supervision. This has happened in parallel —and deeply linked— with the professionalisation of archaeology, and the development of legislative frameworks for heritage protection. At the same time, the rise of education and culture as basic rights in democratic regimes, altogether with the major availability of leisure time, has favoured the popularisation of the scientific discourse.

Nevertheless, the popularisation of scientific visions of the past do not imply a mere replication, but multiple reinterpretations. This process of *domestication* (Kristiansen, 1992) has happened to such a degree that we can find allusions to the past in almost every single aspect of our daily life, due to its capacity of adaptation to very different purposes: selling, experiencing, legitimating, building identity, confronting, etc.

To know and to understand these quotidian uses of the past constitute one of the responsibilities of archaeologists, if we are to assume archaeology to be a more socially–oriented and transformative discipline, concerned about the interactions between people, the past and the heritage. This statement widens the boundaries of the discipline itself, situating discourses and practices around the materiality of the past, whether they happen in the past or in the present, as a main object of attention (Hamilakis & Anagnostopoulos, 2009). In doing so, we have the chance to identify the meanings of the past and its traces in today's society, and with which purposes and through which mechanisms these processes of meaning–making are carried out. But how to approach it?

Different but complementary research lines are being developed under the umbrella of public archaeology. One of the most popular is the study of mass media, where popular ideas about the past and the heritage are created, reiterated and disseminated in many directions. Films, TV shows, comics, novels, magazines, and so on, are crucial for the construction of collective imaginaries due to their ability to communicate and engaging people with the past (Kristiansen, 1992; Clack & Brittain, 2007; Holtorf, 2007; Ruiz Zapatero, 2012; Comendador, 2013; Vizcaíno Estevan, 2013).

For its part, the study of archaeology and marketing gives interesting insights on the values and qualities that people associate with symbols and images of the past, and how they work in the service of the capitalist logic through advertisements, brands and also touristic experiences (Rowan & Baram, 2004; Hamilakis & Duke, 2010; Aparicio, 2016).

A more direct way to understand the meanings of the past in contemporary societies is the study of social perceptions. By turning to social research methods (questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, etc.,) we can dig into the conceptions and misconceptions about the past in the collective imaginary (see Baschet *et al.,* 1984; Gouletquer, 1986; Lett, 1993, 1994; Högberg, 2007; Vizcaíno Estevan, 2015). Unfortunately, this is still an underdeveloped field, and the relative progressions have been made mostly in relation to social perceptions of heritage and archaeology as a discipline.

Finally, there is the study of the uses of the past in the public space. As a scenario of the public life, public space is often filled with references to the past —e.g., street and business names, monuments, street art. However, these references are neither equally evident nor effective in transmitting their messages, due to their differences in the format, the context and the agency.

In this paper, I will focus on this particular field of study with the aim of providing an overview on the topic and some methodological statements. I start by defining *public space* —together with other linked concepts— and its role in

performing collective memory and identity; and how, as a consequence, it becomes a privileged scenario for the representation of the past. Next, I will examine the main formats or mediums through which the past is expressed in the public space, giving brief explanations about their particularities as well as some illustrative examples. I will then move to discuss the methodological framework for the identification, documentation and analysis of the uses of the past. I will conclude with some remarks on the social utility of this field of study and some basic guidelines for its implementation.

THE PUBLIC SPACE AS SCENARIO FOR DISCOURSES ON THE PAST

In the study of the uses of the past in the public space, as usually happens with those research topics that are approached from different disciplines, the terminology employed for referring to similar concepts is rather diverse. And, conversely, some specific terms that have broader meanings are used indiscriminately without putting them into context. Even though this is not the place for delving into the complexities of the terms, it is at least necessary to give some basic definitions in order to specify the meanings that we are dealing with.

About the notion of *public space*, it has today two main acceptations that are necessarily juxtaposed (Delgado & Malet, 2011). On the one hand, there is the public space as a conceived space —not materialised— related to bourgeois democratic values. On the other hand, there is the public space as the physical dimension of public life, that is to say, its *scenario*. This second category is the one that interests us the most, since the public space is filled with images and imaginaries that include references to the past.

It is important to highlight that public space should not be understood as opposite to private space. Traditionally, the public/private dichotomy has used the jurisdictional dimension as the main argument for the differentiation. In this text, however, I use the term public space in reference to the physical space that serves as scenario of public life; in particular, to those collective spaces that are used transitorily in urban contexts, and show a multitude of uses and meanings, regardless of the public or semi-public nature of the places that integrate it (Delgado, 1999).

As a consequence, the study of the construction of the past in private spaces, especially in houses, has been left aside in this work. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that this field of study still remains uninvestigated due, in part, to methodological limitations —starting with the accessibility of private spaces. What seems clear is that its application can offer interesting insights on how discourses about the past are adapted to family universes, and performed in domestic spaces: the fridge as a display of travel narratives through magnets and postcards; the living room as a shrine of the family life, where souvenirs, reproductions and artistic interpretations of symbols from the past are exhibited; the garden, in some cases, with replicas of well-known icons of art history; or the building hall —halfway between the private and the public— as scenario of collectively shared narratives about heritage and historic episodes.

At the same time, the concept of *urban* employed here is not restricted to the idea of the city as an urbanised space with a high population density, buildings and services—even though it is its most habitual scenario. The urban goes beyond the materialised space, and talks about its users, about particular ways of organising social life within modernity, characterised by hypersociality, plurality and liquid realities (Delgado, 1999). In this sense, the contemporary uses of the past to be analysed here are in line with this concept of urban, in contrast with the traditional interactions of pre-modern societies that have been mentioned above.

Having said that, and as one may suppose, the interest of focusing on the public space lies in its crucial role as a scenario for the expression of symbolic systems and, therefore, as a place for collective identification, which also implies contestation (Schein, 2009: 382). Collective identification, whatever its character, is grounded in practices, messages and symbols that are collectively shared (Anderson, 1995) and can be performed both in ordinary and extraordinary contexts. One of the most important sources of symbolic capital for collective identification is, actually, the past (Hamilakis & Yalouri, 1996), and this explains its recurrent use in the public space.

The references consist not only of material evidence from the past (heritage), but also of contemporary reinterpretations of tangible and intangible elements, such as names, symbols and icons. Despite the different nature of these two main categories, which are grounded in the aura of authenticity of heritage and the inauthenticity —meaning the lack of sense of *pastness* (Lovata, 2007)— of the contemporary reinterpretations of the elements of the past, both of them are the consequence of processes of selection, remembrance and oblivion. In other words, they are socially constructed and represent an embellished —even mythologised— version of the past (Foote & Azaryahu, 2007: 126).

The expression of the past in the public space can take place in different scenarios. Cities are likely to include more references, both in quantitative and qualitative terms, due to the density of its public space. Nevertheless, this is not a completely definitive factor. Other variables, such as the evidence of a prominent past (through iconic elements, e.g., monumental heritage, historic figures or events, representative symbols) and the geopolitical status (with the following search for symbolic capital to legitimise its importance), can determine the proliferation of public allusions to the past.

Consequently, the phenomenon can be identified either in a city, in a small village or in an uninhabited or a low-inhabited area where urban relations typically exist. It is the case, for example, of an archaeological area that is uninhabited by a permanent population, but is surrounded by restaurants and shops with names and symbols from the past that are adapted to visitors' fluctuations and imaginaries. In accordance with the definition considered in this text, the urban, as a social condition and not as a physical reality, can happen even in a remote village. At the same time, not all cities necessarily contemplate urban realities. Urban, in this sense, is not the opposite of rural (Delgado, 1999: 24).

In addition to the scenario, *agency* is another important element to be taken into consideration. Following Wulf Kansteiner's (2002) classification of the historical

factors that produce collective memory (Kansteiner, 2002), there are "memory makers," which adopt and adapt the intellectual and cultural traditions that frame the representations of the past; and "memory users," the ones that use, ignore or transform the cultural productions to their own interests and needs. Neither memory makers nor memory users constitute closed and homogeneous categories, and neither do they represent the sometimes-assumed dichotomy active agents vs. passive consumers. There is, instead, a plurality of situations and interactions, even though in practice not all these agents materialise the use of the space in the public space.

Diversity of agency, however, does not imply equality in the accessibility or in the impact of the message. In fact, the study of the uses of the past itself has traditionally been restricted to the identification of the official ways of expressing the past in the landscape: street names, memorials, commemorative monuments, etc. (see a detailed bibliography in Foote & Azaryahu, 2007: 125). This is in part due to the visibility of the mechanisms implemented by public authorities, but it is also related to the underestimation of the role of society in the symbolic construction of the public space and the collective memory.

It is true that the official narratives are more powerfully expressed in the street, and that public authorities control meaningful formats to reinforce them, such as museums and monuments. They have, therefore, a clear influence on popular discourses. Nonetheless, we cannot forget that society also has an important role in memory-making processes by accepting, reinforcing, contrasting, refusing and influencing in other discourses. That is why it is crucial to pay attention to the everyday social practices, where identity is performed (Halbwachs, 1992; Ederson, 2002; Maus, 2015), which result in the construction of the "ordinary landscapes" (Meinig, 1979). These practices reflect shared representations of the past, but also conflicts and dissonances. In the end, discourses on the past and identity are plural, and emanate from very different agents, weaving a complex net of interactions and influences.

The uses of the past in the public space cannot be explained exclusively through the identity factor. Representing the past is also linked with other motivations, from utility (e.g., street names serve for orientation) to economy (shop and restaurant names for sales), and aesthetics (street art for visual enjoyment). All of them can appear in combination with, and reinforcing collective identity discourses, which go beyond ethnicity, and talk about gender, class, neighbourhood and even consumption. In this sense, globalisation and the radicalisation of modernity are encouraging the use of the past in the reaffirmation of local identities, but also in the construction of transnational and global identities (Baram & Rowan, 2004), where consumption plays a key role as a display of identity (Kohl, 2004; Vizcaíno Estevan, 2016).

EXPRESSING THE PAST IN THE PUBLIC SPACE: FORMATS AND AGENCY

If we take as granted the role of the past in the social, political and economic dynamics of the present, it seems logical to admit the existence of many different narratives about the past that coexist, interact and are in conflict within the same place.

Whether it is a city, a village or an urbanised area in the countryside, the public space should be read as a global text. However, a global text does not necessarily mean homogeneity, nor even coherence between the different discourses and uses of the past. Rather, it talks about syntax, a sum of realities that are combined in order to express meanings, which make sense in that particular scenario and in the framework of its specific social realities.

The construction of discourses of the past in the public space revolves around a series of symbolic milestones that, as noted above, are linked with the materiality of the past and/ or its contemporary reinterpretations. A quick glance of the literature evidences how diverse the terminology used for talking about these milestones is, from the well-known "*lieux de mémoire*" (Nora, 1984), to the "landmarks of memory" (Halbwachs, 1992), the "geographies of memory" (Foote & Azaryahu, 2007) or the "practices of memory" (Maus, 2015), among others.

But, beyond the terminological differences, all of them agree on the idea that these references serve as fulcrums for collective identification and as activators of shared memories, even though their capacity of influence varies depending on their format and agency. For example, references to the past can be classified into official and unofficial, what allows distinguishing the initiatives of public authorities from those raised "from below". They can also be classified into tangible and intangible, thus differentiating physical marks (street and business names, monuments) from immaterial practices (rituals, commemorations, parades). Also into temporary and long-term features, if they are planned —or at least assumed— to be ephemeral (street art, celebrations), or settled to endure (sculptures, architecture). Even into language and image-oriented discourses, depending on the importance of written texts or visual icons.

Nonetheless, reality seems more diverse, and stagnant dichotomies are not always helpful for fully understanding the complexity of these symbolic milestones, where different groups, interests and languages are involved. For example, despite the fact that street name changing is one of the most common —and more restricting— ways for public authorities to materialise the official discourse of the past, some of its changes are promoted by social pressure, giving people the chance to introduce their own key-point references.

And it works the other way round as well. Street art, generally seen as a product of popular initiative, often with a stigma of illegality, can in some cases be an instrument of official institutions to connect with society. For its part, immaterial practices of remembering work better if displayed in tangible scenarios, such as heritage sites, commemorative monuments or other kinds of symbolic spaces. Mediums that are supposed to be endurable can rapidly disappear or be altered due to social and political changes, be it through official channels or in a drastic way —including vandalism and destructive practices. And visual formats also need to have written support in order to be fully understood.

It is therefore important to assume that the geography of public memory is dynamic (Foote & Azaryahu, 2007), and that symbolic milestones —including

heritage— are transformed, adapted, reinterpreted and removed from the public space in accordance with social changes.

In the end, the landscape is a complex reality with multiple faces and meanings that change depending on who looks at it and how it is approached (Meinig, 1979a). What is clear is that besides their differences in format, agency and content, all the references that integrate the landscapes of memory can influence the construction of collective identification processes and narratives about the past; they are, indeed, expressions of broader socio-political and economic discourses (Schein, 2009: 398). Taking this into account, it is worthwhile to explore the ways in which, or under which formats, the uses of the past are expressed in the public space.

Heritage

Heritage constitutes the material evidence of the past and, as such, its nature is clearly different from the rest of the formats mentioned in this work. However, it is worth introducing at least some basic insight into it. Particularly, in this text I employ a restrictive vision of archaeological heritage, referring to monuments and remains of the past that are visible in the street, which constitutes the public space's main scenario. Museums and archaeological sites —at least those that are not visible from outside— are excluded from this study because the transmission of their narratives require entering the building and using their installations.

Through temporality, heritage is provided with an aura of authenticity (Lowenthal, 1998), which is used by public authorities to construct the authorised heritage discourse (Smith, 2006). Indeed, controlling heritage —in the form of visible monuments in the landscape or as a resource in museums— means, somehow, possessing the truth; that is to say, the most legitimised version of the past, because heritage is assumed to be authentic and objective. In this lies the uncritical notion of heritage as synonym of "inheritance," meaning something given and assumed as is, which has to be bequeathed for future generations.

Conversely, as we know, heritage is a cultural construction of the present that is the result of sociopolitical processes of selection, remembrance, oblivion and destruction (Prats, 1997). This is why, when approaching the study of the uses of the past in the public space, it is necessary to identify which pasts and which kind of monuments are being officially recovered, and which are being ignored. Preservation is, indeed, selective. Public heritage protection —and, in a broader sense, heritage legal frameworks— is clear evidence of the application of ideologies (Maus, 2015:219) that shape the historic discourses and appearances of villages and cities, thus creating symbolic landscapes (Meinig, 1979b).

It is not a coincidence, to provide some illustrative examples, that the public historic discourse in Thessaloniki favours ancient Greek and Byzantine heritage, highlighting the two main foundations of the Greek national identity, whereas references to other pasts and ethnicities, which due to political reasons can appear conflictive —such as the Jewish and Ottoman— are silenced (Kasvikis, Theodoroudi

& Kotsakis 2012). And in Bucharest, the existence of dissonant narratives of the recent past is leading to a crossroads in the management of local heritage: on the one hand, tourists are looking for the heritage of communism associated with the Ceausescu regime, whereas Romanian authorities are trying to project a renovated image of the country, far separated from the communist legacy (Light, 2010).

Commemorative monuments

In the 19th Century, with the rise of nationalisms, states deployed different and complementary strategies for popularising the names and images that were considered indispensable for national history. One of the implemented strategies was to introduce history as a compulsory subject in public education, thus instilling in new generations a sense of a shared past. Another strategy was to mark public space and landscape with references to historic personalities and events, with the aim of reinforcing the national sense of belonging. Among these, commemorative monuments acquired a particular relevance (Therborn, 2010).

In the case of European countries, pre-Roman and medieval times constituted prolific sources of symbolic capital, especially those related with warlike episodes and the ideal of the fight for freedom. Boudicca, Vercingetorix and Viriatus for the English, French and Portuguese/ Spanish ancient times (Salema das Neves, 2014), and William Wallace (Ederson, 1997) or Joan of Arc (Cohen, 1989) as Scottish and French medieval heroes, are just some of the many examples that can be cited in relation to the construction of commemorative monuments.

Most of the monuments erected in the 19th and part of the 20th centuries still stand today, and still represent somewhat sacred symbols for national discourses. However, the national devotion to these places is probably less powerful today than in past centuries, not because of a theoretical decline of nationalistic identification in a global context, but because of the proliferation of more and more diverse references to the past in the public space, and the projection of new discourses and meanings on traditional monuments (see the case of Boudicca in Lawson, 2013).

In this sense, compared to the monopoly of heroes and glorious episodes materialised in the 19th to 20th centuries, there has been during the last decade a growing interest in the inclusion of global collectives constituted of anonymous peoples —workers, women, victims of genocides and wars (see some controversial examples in Wagner-Pacifici & Schwartz, 1991, and Vinitzky-Seroussi, 2002)— and cultures (Foote & Azaryahu 2007: 131); but also abstract symbols and archaeological icons founded at local scale, which are more "democratic" —meaning that every place bets for its particular icon— and go beyond warlike and essentialist links, building a more culturally and territorially oriented identification.

Also the aesthetics have changed from the classical look —triumphal arcs, monumental columns, and sculptural ensembles— to contemporary reinterpretations, including abstract representations. And even the spatial location, experiencing a process

of decentralisation, where neuralgic spaces are combined with new meaningful spaces, such as roundabouts and accesses to towns and cities (fig. 1).

Street names

Together with commemorative monuments, the study of street names has been most popular when analysing the geographies of memory and identity in the public space (see Alderman, 2008; Rose-Redwood, Alderman & Azaryahu, 2009). Moreover, in recent years there has been a growing interest in going beyond classification and description, and approaching streets from a critical and political point of view (Azaryahu, 2011). Even though monuments and streets share, among others, a very restrictive character in their formulation due to their official character —especially in moments of rigid control over the public space by public authorities— they are different in their nature and functionality.

Street names are mainly written texts on plaques, so that, at first, the information provided is limited —although in some cases, especially in historic centres, they

Fig. 1.—Replica and abstract interpretation of the Lady of Elche –an Iberian stone bust of the 5th-4th centuries BC. València, Spain (Photo credit: Carles Rodrigo).

are accompanied by images that reinforce the interpretation. As far as the uses of the past is concerned, street names normally consist of local or national heroes and kings, battles, geographical features and relevant personalities (fig. 2), often of worldwide renown, linked to sciences, culture and politics —with a prominent gender bias (Oto-Peralías, 2016: 16).

This implies that the network of street names that integrate the symbolic geography of a given place, do not provide a comprehensive historic discourse, but a series of names of different epochs and categories (Azaryahu, 1996). In effect, the importance of street names lies in their ability to popularise names of personalities and places that, according to the official discourse, are important to become familiar

Fig. 2.—Archimedes' street. Brussels, Belgium (Photo credit: Tono Vizcaíno).

with. Since street names are, above all, instruments for people's spatial orientation, these references are truly integrated in daily routines. And in becoming familiar, an emotional link is built between names and neighbours, even when they do not have additional information on who or what these referents are. The key point here is that once they are anchored in the collective imaginary, they can be reactivated in other contexts, whatever their nature, which can provide more information: museums, commemorative monuments, mass media, institutional ceremonies, official education, etc. In doing so, their social consideration and knowledge increases.

Needless to say, hierarchical distribution of the references in the street map determines —and is determined by— their popularity. Size, people flows, location, population and infrastructures are key elements for evaluating the use of the past in the streets. But street naming, as happens with the other formats, does not necessarily reflect an agreed version of history. On the contrary, they are part of the political agendas and, as such, experiment reformulations along with sociopolitical changes, thus becoming places of dissonance and contestation, also "from below". It is the case, for example, of the use of Martin Luther King's name as an identity support for African-American communities in the American South (Alderman, 2000). And the controversy generated during the last years in Spain because of the removing of surviving allusions to Franco's dictatorship in the public space (De Andrés, 2006). Even though these changes are made in compliance with the Spanish law —the Ley de Memoria Histórica— the initiative is struggling not only with the resistance of conservative parties, but also with the complaints of many neighbours who do not want the names to be changed because, according to the press, the changes will generate confusion and bureaucratic troubles.

Architecture

Imitating or reinterpreting architectural styles from other historic periods is another way of using the past in the present. The aesthetical evocation establishes a link with a past that is seen as meaningful, be it for a particular family, for a specific community, for the whole town or city, or for the nation.

The phenomenon is not new. The use of ancient architectures with the aim of reaffirming identity can be followed back to the 19th and 20th centuries, often as part of authorities' programmatic initiatives for recovering an idealised past. This is the case, for example, of the urban expansion and embellishment of Athens when recognised as the capital of Greece after the War of Independence (1821-1832), where neoclassical architecture played a central role (Bastéa, 2000). Or the process of medievalisation that Barcelona's city centre —the Gòtic neighbourhood— experimented with since the beginning of the 20th century, following the wishes of the Catalan bourgeoisie, which wanted to materialise a glorious medieval past, seen as the rise of the Catalan nation (Cócola, 2011). There were many other architectonic revivals, such as the neo-Mudéjar in Spain, the neo-Gothic in continental Europe or the neo-Egyptian in specific cases both in Egypt and abroad.

It is true that most of these neo-styles do not have continuity nowadays, in the sense of generalised architectonic trends. However, and leaving aside the omnipresence of classical architecture —assumed as inherent in Western architecture since the Renaissance, and spread to the United States via Europe— the past is still being recreated in buildings; sometimes affecting the whole construction, but in other cases just some of its elements.

There are different motivations for this phenomenon. One of them is the affirmation of the place of origin, regardless of whether the building is located in that place of origin —thus strengthening a shared sense of belonging with the majority of the inhabitants (fig. 3) —or elsewhere— thus emphasising identity as

Fig. 3.—Minoan architectural elements in a contemporary building. Heraklion, Greece (Photo credit: Flora Michelaki).

a way of establishing a symbolic distance within the new community, but also as a reivindication of a collective memory that has been undermined. It is the case of the new AEK stadium in Athens and the evocation of Anatolian atmospheres as a tribute to the memory of the Greeks displaced after the Ottoman occupation, which were the founders of this football team (Athletic Union of Constantinople, 2017).

The use of ancient architectures can be also motivated by aesthetic reasons, or by what could be called the "archaeological effect", when the existence of a nearby monument or archaeological site stimulates the replication of its characteristics. In other cases, it helps to reinforce the message or atmosphere that wants to be transmitted, especially when there is a commercial interest. It happens, for example, with casinos and hotels that want to evoke luxury and sophistication through Egyptian architecture, or with health resorts that use classical scenarios to reinforce the idea of wellbeing. But often, the use of the past in architectonic features is the result of the combination of some —or all— of the reasons mentioned above. Greek restaurants are a good example (fig. 4), where ancient Greek architecture is used to emphasise the idea of authenticity and tradition, but also serves as a way of affirming national identity, especially when the restaurant is located out of Greece.

Fig. 4.—Ancient Greek temple' façade in a Greek restaurant. Leuven, Belgium (Photo credit: Tono Vizcaíno).

It is interesting to note how depending on the context and on the past being represented, the perception of these architectural referents can vary. When applied in modern areas of the city and, especially, when using styles of remote times —with whom there is a symbolic and temporal distance— architectural revivals are seen as something theatrical, even kitsch. On the contrary, in historical centres there is a long-term tradition of establishing a discursive coherence between the historic or vernacular architecture and the new constructions. Sometimes it has led to an absolute replication of traditional architecture, so that it is difficult to identify to the naked eye what is historic and what is new —which opens an interesting debate on authenticity (Holtorf, 2013). In other cases, the identification is not literal, but a contemporary reinterpretation of some of the traditional architectonical elements.

Street art

Street art here is understood as graffiti and mural paintings that can be found in the public space and are part of the urban ornament, in line with statues and commemorative monuments. However, and apart from its format, street art has its own particularities.

Generally speaking, it is the result of non-official initiatives, consisting of artistic interventions that not always are executed with the consent of the authorities. This phenomenon explains the social stigmatisation that part of street art still has, and also its recurrent social commitment and critical character. Nonetheless, and as explained before, official institutions can also promote it.

Another of its particularities is the ephemeral nature. Contrary to statues and commemorative monuments, street art is not conceived to last for that long. In fact, it is a good reflection of the changing nature of public spaces and urban realities, which are in continuous process of transformation. In this sense, even though street art was originally linked to city's lifestyle, nowadays we can find it also in small villages, what could reinforce the idea of the urban as a social compound that surpasses the limits of the city as a physical scenario.

In street art, the past usually adopts the form of isolated but recognisable symbols (pyramids, columns, icons, gods), so that the spectator can identify them. Moreover, are the popular pasts, such as the Egyptian or the Greek, the ones that are used the most, and this helps in providing a sense of universality, as the street art itself is supposed to be. There are also cases in which references to the past become more complex and result in the representation of elaborated scenes set in the remote times (fig. 5).

With regards to the motivations for using the past in street art, it seems clear that, in accordance with its format, there is a combination of generating aesthetic experiences and conveying specific messages —including those about identity. The interesting point here is that, contrary to the official nature and the solemnity associated to statues and commemorative monuments —at least in their original conception, because their meaning can be changed— street art is often used as

Fig. 5.—Representation of the Judgement of Osiris in a wall mural painting. València, Spain (Photo credit: Xavier Benavent).

platform for social and political criticism (fig. 6), so that the past assumes, once again, a role in contestation and dissonance.

Naming, branding and advertising

One of the clearest evidences of the domestication of the past today is its transformation into commodities, which explains the success of cultural tourism, but also the use of the past as a brand and as part of advertising strategies (Holtorf, 2007). A simple walk on the street is enough to realise the significant amount of business (restaurants, cafes, shops, supermarkets, real estate companies, banks) that incorporate referents from the past in their names and in advertising their products. The consumer goods that can be found in some of those business are not studied here because of their different nature, but they are likewise a rich source for analysing the uses of the past (see, among others, Ruiz Zapatero, 2002 and Talalay, 2004).

In doing so, the past is transformed and adapted to market logic (Vizcaíno Estevan, 2016), and generates a stereotyped and idealised vision of it, which can

Fig. 6.—"Selfie", a creation of the street artist' ESCIF. València, Spain (Photo credit: streetagainst.com).

be easily recognised by people. In these cases, the symbolic capital rescued from the past consists, basically, of popular names that go from historical personalities, mythological figures and old cities, to heritage sites, archaeological icons and even expressions in ancient languages. With the aim of emphasising their meaning, these names are usually accompanied by old-style typographies, and especially by images of symbols and art pieces (fig. 7). In other cases, the references are exclusively visual, without the support of written components.

Why use the past for naming, branding and advertising? There are different but correlated reasons. On the one hand, the identity factor, which leads to the reiteration of particular icons —with local, regional, national or transnational levels of projection— in business and even in institutional buildings. It is the case

Fig. 7.—Oceanus Lounge Club, where classical typography, ornament patterns and letters are combined. Alicante, Spain (Photo credit: Tono Vizcaíno).

of Elche (Spain), where streets are filled with continuous allusions to the so-called Lady of Elche, an Iberian sculpture from the 5th to 4th century BC with which the local population has built a deep sense of identification, due to its role in projecting the name of the city. The proliferation of this iconic image in the public space, expressed in many different formats and contexts but, above all, in the names of shops and restaurants, speaks to a shared discourse on local identity by, at least, local authorities and a significant part of the population.

On the other hand, the use of the past in businesses shows an interest in highlighting those values collectively associated to specific pasts and figures, trying to reinforce the sellable qualities of businesses and products (fig. 8). For example, travel agencies use the Egyptian exoticism for evoking long-distance travels, whereas gyms use the fierceness of Greek hoplites —especially Spartans— in order to appeal their customers. Nevertheless, we have to take into account also other possible explanations, such as aesthetics, puns, personal issues, etc., or a combination thereof, for this usage.

Fig. 8.—Correlation between name and product at Achilles Heels shoe's shop. London, England (Photo credit: Nando Carranza).

Commemorative events and festivities

Sporadically, the public space becomes the scenario of commemorative events and festivities that put the past into the centre of attention. I do not talk here about living history activities organised by museums and other institutions with mainly didactic purposes, but about celebrations whose aim is to commemorate the past, although not exclusively. As a result of the initiative of public authorities and/or associations of diverse nature, these ceremonies function as ephemeral performances of the narratives of identity by evoking personalities, events and symbols that are considered milestones of a shared history (Frost & Laing, 2013).

Contrary to the formats seen before, commemorative events are intangible and ephemeral, so that they do not last in the public space for so long, even though in some cases they are celebrated regularly as part of ephemeris. Nevertheless, the celebration usually takes place within the framework of symbolic physical scenarios that are related to the past being celebrated or, at least, have a significant meaning for the community that commemorates it, such as heritage sites and commemorative monuments.

The commemoration of the past adopts different physiognomies and ritualities depending on the objectives, the agency and the context where it takes place. From official parades, to formal homages and popular re-enactments —including fairs and markets— we can find plenty of possibilities happening in the public space. Even more, there are festivities apparently not related with the commemoration of the past that sometimes include allusions to meaningful periods and cultures, as happens, for example, with Les Falles in València (fig. 9), but also with some traditional dances and theatrical performances.

In any case, and despite their ephemeral character, the fact of being living representation of shared symbols and discourses, convert commemorative events into powerful instruments for building links between people and particular narratives of the past, which are deeply shaped by political agendas (Hannam & Halewood, 2006; González & Alonso, 2013).

Fig. 9.—Huge reproduction of Nefertiti's bust in Les Falles festival. València, Spain (Photo credit: Paco Pavón).

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

The study of the projection of the past in the public space, with special attention to the processes of collective memory making, has been developed by different disciplines in the areas of social sciences and humanities (see a bibliographical compilation in Rose-Redwood, Alderman & Azaryahu, 2008). Sociology, anthropology, psychology, communication studies and, above all, history and human geography, have brought the topic to the fore, approaching it from different perspectives, such as social narratives, intangible rituals and practices, sociopolitical contexts, temporary dimension and spatial locations, among others (Schein, 2009).

In the field of archaeology, however, the scientific production in this topic is still marginal. This is mainly due to the dominant conception of the discipline, which considers that its focus of attention is restricted to societies of the past and, therefore, recognises a very limited temporality to their materiality. One of the main consequences of this statement is the disconnect with the present, and a logical lack of methodological grounding concerning how to study the relations between archaeology, in its wider sense, and society.

If, as this is the case, we are to understand how, who, and why the past is used in the public space today, we need to expand our methodological toolkit and look for spaces of hybridisation with other social sciences, with the aim of opening new possibilities for contemporary archaeological research. Here lies the importance of the "ethnographic turn" in archaeology (Castañeda, 2008) and the progressive configuration of the so-called "archaeological ethnography," which goes beyond the idea of merging the professional practices of archaeology and anthropology, and stands for deeper ontological and epistemological reflections (Hamilakis & Anagnostopoulos, 2009).

Methodologically speaking, the exploration of the uses of the past in the public space can be approached through different social research techniques that, in combination, help to offer a detailed image. The fieldwork consists of a process of systematic observation and documentation (Angrosino, 2007), adapted to the particularities of the social marks being studied. In this sense, it is not the same to register monuments, street art or commemorative celebrations, because their sources of information, their accessibility and their durability are rather different. Monuments, for example, can be easily localised through touristic guides and maps, and thanks to their durability, do not offer particular problems of accessibility and study. On the contrary, street art, as part of suburban culture, is not officially recognised and thus it is difficult to locate; moreover, its perishable nature makes it difficult to identify every manifestation. Commemorative celebrations, for its part, pose the inherent particularities of intangible realities and also the characteristic limitations of temporary events.

Participant observation and mapping constitute the most appropriate techniques for registering this diversity of references and the social contexts in which they are conceived. As mentioned above, the process of documentation has to be systematic and, consequently, it has to be developed in the field, at street level, making use

of maps, fieldwork notebooks and photographic devices. There are, however, complementary sources of information that can be helpful in delimiting the object of study —such as city street guides, touristic guides, commercial catalogues, local publications, online search engines, etc.

After fieldwork, all the data collected have to be processed and preferably expressed in a map, with the aim of offering an integrating and holistic vision. The ways through which the information is graphically shown in a map depends on the objectives of the research, but there are some basic parameters that are interesting to take into account under the form of different layers: the format of the references (street name, monument, street art, restaurant, shop), agency (public authorities, associations, private sector, individuals), date of creation —here, land registries, council board documents, business directories and comparative cartographies are useful— and the culture/ period represented. The consideration of all these parameters, altogether with the sociopolitical contextualisation, is crucial for interpreting into the motivations and meanings of the references.

On the other hand, speaking with people during the fieldwork is probably the best way to fully understand why the past is used in the public space, since the landscape and its narratives are built by people. Through informal interviews we have the chance to know, for example, the precise reasons behind individuals naming their restaurants after historical figures, so that we can confirm or refute our previous thoughts. In the end, it helps us to explore people's perceptions of the past and its materialisation in everyday scenarios.

Before closing this brief methodological overview, it is my intention to highlight the growing importance of the internet and social media in the implementation of ethnographic fieldwork. Indeed, digital ethnography is offering new tools that are of great interest for observation and documentation processes, but it also is widening the scope and the topics of ethnographic research itself (Postill & Pink, 2012; Varis 2015). In the case of archaeology, digital ethnography opens a fascinating field of study on the uses and perceptions of the past and the heritage in social media, as part of people's virtual projections of their daily life.

Through my personal experience with the project Piedra[1], modest in its scope but pioneering in its use of social media for systematically documenting the uses of the past in the street, I have had the chance to experiment with the possibilities of this new trend. Taking advantage of Instagram, the initiative consists of a sort of digital fieldwork notebook where examples of uses of the past can be uploaded, with their corresponding images, geo-localisation, brief explanations and hashtags for classifying information. In my view, the interesting point here is that this is not a mere digitalisation of the fieldwork notebook, that is to say, a change of reality from the analogical to the digital. It is rather a different way of producing and disseminating information, since it allows the co-creation of knowledge —such as with other users who are not necessarily experts in history or archaeology contributing with their own

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1. See the Piedra Instragam page at https://www.instagram.com/_piedra_/

snapshots and interpretations, expanding the network and the data available— and also the possibility of combining documentation, dissemination and interaction at the same time. In other words, it places people centre stage: as an object of study, as a contributor and as a recipient.

SOME REFLECTIONS AND GUIDELINES

The aim of this text has been to bring to the fore the study of the uses of the past in the public space with a double purpose. On the one hand, it is to underline its suitability for approaching the processes through which the past is adapted to sociopolitical and economic interests, thus generating a wide range of meanings that contextually situates the past in contemporary scenarios. In a more specific way, the topic allows for an understanding of how the public space, as a place for social encounters and communication filled with a dense network of symbols, becomes an arena where different narratives of the past dialogue and get in conflict. What would be more complex to elucidate is the ways in which people interact with these quotidian references, and the extent to which they have an impact on popular conceptions of the past, which would require specific qualitative studies on social perceptions.

On the other hand, underlying the suitability of this kind of study comes with the recognition of the need for a rigorous scientific approach. The fact that conventional statements and techniques of archaeology do not contemplate the particularities of studying the contemporary reception of the past and its materiality cannot justify the lack of a solid epistemological and methodological background —and even less to leave this field of study in a marginal position within the discipline. The boundary-crossing between the social sciences is providing good results, particularly with regards to the implementation of the ethnographic look, both in the digital and in the physical spheres. Indeed, is in these dynamics of hybridisation where new spaces for reflexivity and action are flourishing in the field of archaeology.

In line with this statement, mapping the uses of the past in the public space should not be an end in itself. It is not only about documenting the reproduction of images and names and the accuracy in their representation, but also, and primarily, about uncovering from a critical perspective the sociopolitical dynamics that are hidden behind them. Since contemporary topographies of the past are mirrors of society, and since the past is culturally produced and reproduced according to diverse social ecosystems within public scenarios, it is crucial to recognise and stand up for the social relevance of this type of study.

In this sense, there are many questions to be answered. Which collective memory is being built as hegemonic and what are the interests behind it? What social realities are unveiled by the dissonant discourses of the past? How can we explain the differences between overwhelmed and empty spaces? Which are the consequences of globalisation in the topography of memory? What is indicating the use of particular cultures and periods? Does it happen the same way in the city centre and in the

periphery? Or in an upper-class neighbourhood and in a working class one? What is going on in areas with important component of migrant population? Are they preserving references from their places of origin, or are they using the local past? In that case, can it be seen as a tool of social inclusion or, on the contrary, as a one more evidence of cultural homogenisation? Which kind of discriminations (ideology, gender, class, creed, ethnicity, sexual orientation) can we identify? Moreover, what kind of historic references should be promoted in order to avoid them?

Asking these questions and approaching the use of the past in public spaces from a critical and rigorous perspective, allows us not only to understand and to note the values and meanings produced by society regarding the past and the heritage, but also to report hidden discriminatory discourses. And —the most important— it gives us the chance to challenge them and to generate and propose new narratives and dialogues that bet on for diversity and multivocality and not for essentialist identification; at least in the domain of the official milestones of memory, which can also influence popular interpretations and expressions. Here, one more time, archaeology can be a useful tool for reflection, action and transformation of the complex network of relations woven between society and the past. In doing so, we, as archaeologists, are reinforcing our public role and our commitment with the present.

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