

# pca

european journal of  
postclassicalarchaeologies

volume 9/2019

SAP Società Archeologica s.r.l.

Mantova 2019

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How to **quote**: please use "PCA" as abbreviation and "European Journal of Post-Classical Archaeologies" as full title.

**Cover image**: statue of Mont'e Prama (from F. Pinna with modifications).

"Post-Classical Archaeologies" is indexed in Scopus. It was approved on 2015-05-13 according to ERIH PLUS criteria for inclusion and indexed in Carhus+2018. Classified A by ANVUR (Agenzia Nazionale di Valutazione del sistema Universitario e della Ricerca).

## DESIGN

Paolo Vedovetto

## PUBLISHER

SAP Società Archeologica s.r.l.  
Strada Fienili 39/a, 46020 Quingentole, Mantova  
[www.archeologica.it](http://www.archeologica.it)

Authorised by Mantua court no. 4/2011 of April 8, 2011

For subscription and all other information visit the web site [www.postclassical.it](http://www.postclassical.it)

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# Participative processes in cultural heritage management. Methodology and critical results based on experiences within the Spanish World Heritage context

This paper stems from a pro-active and pragmatic research perspective, based on experiences in cultural heritage management within the Spanish World Heritage context. It argues the idea of participatory experiences as a way to improve the management of historical urban landscapes or archaeological sites. Firstly, the terminological confusion of the experts needs to be considered. Secondly, participative processes are often confused with diffusion or education. Thirdly, the discourses and the proposals made by the inhabitants are sometimes directed by experts – consciously or unconsciously – and consequently, they do not show the ordinary perception and necessities of the communities. A self-critical position and a good methodology, will allow us to obtain satisfactory results if we really want to introduce changes on a social basis in the discourse/treatment of cultural heritage.

**Keywords:** social perception, mapping stakeholders, community involvement, World Heritage, Spain

*Questo articolo nasce da una prospettiva di ricerca proattiva e pragmatica basata su esperienze di gestione nel contesto del Patrimonio dell'Umanità in Spagna. Discute dell'uso di esperienze partecipative per migliorare la gestione dei paesaggi storici urbani o dei siti archeologici. Primo, deve essere considerata la confusione terminologica degli esperti. Secondo, i processi partecipativi sono spesso confusi con la comunicazione o la didattica. Terzo, i discorsi e le proposte avanzati dagli abitanti sono a volte indirizzati dagli esperti (coscientemente o inconscientemente), dunque non rispecchiano le ordinarie percezioni e necessità delle comunità. Una posizione autocritica e una buona metodologia permetteranno di ottenere risultati soddisfacenti se vogliamo introdurre cambiamenti nel discorso o nel trattamento del patrimonio culturale su base sociale.*

**Parole chiave:** percezione sociale, mappatura degli stakeholders, coinvolgimento della comunità, Patrimonio dell'Umanità, Spagna

## 1. Introduction

As a researcher of Cultural Heritage Management, I have assumed participation after many previous studies and activities related to the topic of heritage. From a pragmatic point of view, the participatory

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process in Cultural Heritage is not an aim in management. Rather, it is an often forgotten, but important tool to improve the treatment of Cultural Heritage. Hence, as I am interested in improving cultural heritage management, researching participatory processes has become essential to my work.

There is an international consensus (from a legal and scientific-technical perspective) that Cultural Heritage is the part of the past (material or immaterial) that we have decided to preserve, but who decides what is to be preserved? And which past is to be preserved? Without going deeper into the matter, in much of Europe and the Western countries, the citizens are the ones who decide. How do they do this? The people do it in the same way as we do with all kinds of cultural and socio-economic values that are representative of the collective interest: we delegate to others our decisions or opinions about what should be preserved. Indeed, scholars and technicians are the ones who decide what is important to preserve about the past, with the complicity of the politicians as a matter of fact in many cases. The European project "Heritage Values Network" (<http://heritagevalues.net/>) is a clear example of this. Of course, there are some very active important civic initiatives that aim to preserve part of our past, although they are not "officially" recognized. In any case, these initiatives are a minority when compared with the great variety of parts of our past that several management agencies (public or private but with collective social interests as objectives) treat on a daily basis in our European context. Even part of this social and independent expression of an interest in the past usually ends up being included as part of the interest of these agencies (for example: throughout the European Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, also known as Faro Convention, 2005).

It is impossible to live without the past. It is unique indeed, but we adapt its "substance" to the interests of the present. In this context, the term interest can be considered a synonym of power and ideology (Smith 2006). Moreover, it should be remembered that if cultural heritage exists, it is because most people want to have it and keep it, even when citizens delegate its treatment elsewhere. Therefore, this can be understood as a first stage in the participatory process (remember: voters elect politicians who represent them)<sup>1</sup>. Paradoxically, however, the first social conflict people encounter is with the specialists: people need the past... but not "our concept" (academic) of the past and the value that we as academics attribute to it.

<sup>1</sup> The bibliography about the level and tools of the participation is numerous. An adaptation to the Cultural Heritage context in Spain can be read in DURÁN 2007 (the case Cultural Landscape).

Our work as researchers begins with wondering about some theoretical questions concerning why Cultural Heritage exists or what the meaning of Cultural Heritage is in our society today. Having understood the necessity of the past for the present, the ethical use, the relativist positions or postcolonial and colonial aptitudes concerning the topic, in certain occasions we agree with more radical and postmodern claims concerning the Cultural Heritage role in the (post)modern world. Although these are interesting points that we share and that can be valid support for our discourse, because they are not incompatible with our position, we will not delve into them in this article.

The research we develop is in between the management practice and a theoretical approach. The focus of our work is to analyze how managers treat cultural heritage and the best practices or solutions proposed. These best practices have been identified regarding the satisfaction they produce, not only in the specialized world, but even among lay people. This aim of pursuing best practices in cultural heritage management is the reason for our studies, which will later be of practical use to managers and other people working with cultural heritage. The aim is to develop models or tools to improve management practice. By recognizing the multiple experiences and best actions/practices in management (for example in the case of a building restoration project or in land planning or in UNESCO inscriptions of World Heritage), the idea is to become facilitators, applying the practical “know how” to transform the theoretical models. After that, the cycle starts again when the manager adapts the theoretical models to each case and produces new best practices.

The distance between the concept of cultural heritage held by the specialist, and the concept held by lay people is unavoidable, but the problem is that little by little this distance is growing. We know this cited gap is part of a more complex process that affects other cultural, social and economic values and interests. Nevertheless, it is this reality that we need to come back to, in order to connect people with our idea of the value of the past and vice versa. The knowledge balance between lay and experts is necessary when working in management. In the same way as we need a specific and strong methodology to exhibit, interpret or restore cultural heritage, it also is necessary for the process of involving people. Performing practical works or specific actions is not enough; we need to go deeper into the topic and to train young people to be specialized in “social relations” with specific preparation in psychology and sociology, rather than hiring people coming from a more descriptive (critical) and passive anthropological or ethnographical perspective. Indeed, even cultural heritage managers have to learn about these social sciences to work in participatory process.

As a consequence of this, multidisciplinary knowledge contribution is needed. Thus, in 2010 I started to experiment with the help of specialists from social psychology (R. Alzate, C. Merino and I. Fernández from University of Basque Country) and sociologists (M. Domínguez, from Complutense University of Madrid) in different scenarios. We have developed a preliminary methodology for participatory processes that we currently continue contrasting and checking. Our idea is to distribute the knowledge to the manager and to train future specialists in the topic, since it is necessary to develop this expertise.

Consequently, this paper shows our doubts and proposals for working in participation from a very critical and constructive position as a result of our own experimentation. The article is divided into in three parts:

- theoretical perspective and understanding of cultural heritage management and what cultural heritage dimensions mean for us in this context;
- our methodological approach: three basic steps and examples of the problems we found in each example;
- conclusions and opinions from a cultural heritage management perspective.

## **2. The dimensions of cultural heritage from a management research perspective and the importance of considering participatory processes**

Cultural heritage is a concept with several dimensions from a management perspective, which includes values (de la Torre 2013) and other social visions that are also very important. Students in cultural heritage should understand this early on. The excellent cultural heritage manager will be the person who combines these perspectives the best. Indeed, a cultural heritage manager not only is an archaeologist, an architect, a journalist or a tourism operator; he or she certainly is a person with a background in one or two of these topics but also with a strong specialization in cultural heritage (from anthropological theory to law, including economics or historical and artistic knowledge). We define management as the set of activities that allow us to preserve and spread as well as to enjoy cultural heritage (Querol 2010, p. 51). Although intervention in cultural heritage also is planned by the management practitioners, it is another kind of activity that we will not be dealing with in this article. Management is an activity where many disciplines have to be taken into account, and the manager must learn many of the tools and concepts even outside the specific background. Even experts or professionals in



DIMENSION	
SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL	Architecture, town planning, archaeology, anthropology, restoration, landscape, law, sociology, management, enterprise, tourism, etc.
POLITICAL, ADMINISTRATIVE	Authority, revenue, protection/prevention, tourism
SOCIAL	Visitors (mostly tourists) Affected or implicated (citizens, communities, property, workers)

Fig. 1. Model representing the dimensions of cultural heritage to help the managerial work (source: based on Castillo, Querol 2014, p. 7).

building restoration or in historical interpretation of archaeological sites/arts works, also need to know what cultural heritage management is and how it relates professionally. From my experience as a lecturer in postgraduate programs and specialized courses, students in cultural heritage are mainly archaeologists/anthropologists, historians, art historians, architects (from restoration or urban planning), tourist agents or even sometimes people from law, journalism, ICT or communication specialisms. However, other specialists, such as sociologists, psychologists or economists, rarely are present; today these are very important profiles to be considered in the treatment of cultural heritage (especially regarding participatory processes) (fig. 1).

My own professional profile is grounded in archaeology, but this has been transformed greatly. Consequently, my perceptions of and relation to cultural values/assets/properties are mediated by my background and later specializations (museums, urban planning, restoration, law, ICT, World Heritage and so on). In the best of cases, I share my time between archaeologists, architects and jurists and lately with people from social sciences. Clearly, my basic perspective or understanding of cultural heritage is scientific and technical, but certainly I take part in and contribute to the other dimensions too. For example, I work with politicians on a constant basis. They are key protagonists in the management agenda. The value of cultural heritage for them is apparently different from mine or from that of my colleagues, but I have to understand and respect their approach if I am researching and working in cultural heritage management. Politicians are important agents. The same can be said concerning the social dimension: visitors to sites are very important too, although my research deals less with them and more with inhabitants and their image or perception of the city. There are many approaches to cultural heritage,

and perspectives vary greatly depending on the person interacting with the cultural heritage and even the situation within which each person interacts with this heritage. At times I am even the inhabitant and enjoy heritage spaces with my children, for example, in the historical park of Retiro, in Madrid. My approach to heritage is at that moment absolutely different from when I am working or walking with my colleagues in the same area, or when I visit historical parks with my family in other cities. My way of enjoying the spaces, monuments, archaeological sites and common past perspective changes a lot depending on the context.

This reflection is crucial to understand the changing of cultural heritage values and concepts in relation to the passing of time; at the same time (moment) we might have several ways of understanding/enjoying/participating/ignoring cultural heritage. If we think we need to have an agreement concerning the values and what they mean in each case, or how we could assess the heritage asset, this could be worrying. However, it is also a fantastic challenge if we assume these values will never be the same. Consequently, another lesson students need to bear in mind is the flexibility necessary in management: how many dimensions are to be considered in the treatment of cultural heritage? The only fixed thing in cultural heritage is the agreement in valuing a part of the past, but the reasons for doing it are multiple. It can be said that one needs to constantly have one's eyes open and to listen to opinions and different ways of understanding the (collective) past, the tangible and intangible heritage.

On the other hand, participation as a principle is very unusual in cultural heritage management. There are cases in relation to tribunal causes, in which people try to stop the destruction of archaeological sites or other properties. Even in these cases, it is mainly the experts who encourage and involve citizens. Therefore participation as spontaneous actions of communities in cultural heritage management is poor or less meaningful than we would like to be in most of the cases. We have to accept and assume that managers/specialists/etc. provoking/encouraging/involving people are the usual ways of participation in cultural heritage. The desire could be to change this, and encourage less top-down and more bottom-up actions, but this is a goal for the future, toward which we have to continue to work. Therefore, in sociological terminology, it is better to speak about participatory processes than participation.

Looking at the managerial activity within cultural heritage from a more practical perspective, we can see that today in management there is an important claim: to change the principle "all for the people but without the people" (a classic sentence used by politicians in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the context of the European government system known as enlightened despotism).

But how? Even among the people who actively participate in the first dimension, they have different opinions about how to defend, respect, conserve or preserve the past everybody wants; that is the only truth.

In my opinion, the methodology to be followed has three necessary and complementary steps to achieve good participatory processes in cultural heritage management:

- Social perception studies: part of this is indeed participation.
- Mapping Stakeholders: part of this is perception studies.
- Participatory actions: these need 1 and 2 for the success.

Having significant experience with participatory actions, we can prove that it is impossible to speak about “pure participation” in cultural heritage. Nevertheless, it is clearly necessary to continue experimenting and developing methodologies to work with participatory actions in open spaces<sup>2</sup>.

### **3. Steps of participatory processes: first methodological problems**

In 2013, during the filming process of our documentary (Castillo 2014), we asked the people and the experts their opinion about the concepts of Archaeology and World Heritage, and they expressed several definitions and interpretations. This example could be enough to show the difference in conceptualization between the scientific-technical world and the knowledge of lay people. For this reason, we estimated that we needed to look for communication channels with the citizens prior to proposing any participative action. We needed to know how the people perceived what we call cultural heritage, and to learn about this, to better understand the value of the past in the present and the treatment necessary to preserve it.

#### *3.1. Studies of social perceptions: a basic first step*

During 2013 and 2014 we carried out studies of social perceptions in three Spanish World Heritage (WH) cities (Alcalá de Henares, Cordoba and Toledo). The traditional methodology used in sociological and psy-

<sup>2</sup> For urban context, i.e.: PORIA *et al.* 2013; TORILL *et al.* 2013; RUIZ, PASTOR 2015 From the urban planning perspective, there are a lot of participatory experiences and their number continues to grow, even in landscapes and rural areas with several strategies. But concerning the treatment of cultural heritage (beyond the architectural point of view) these kinds of activities are very scarce and absolutely necessary. In the same way, the participatory experience in relation to museums or archaeological sites and other kinds of “close spaces” are more common (i.e. a lot of references in the journal “Public Archaeology” or in THOMAS, LEA 2014), but the public in this case is composed by people interested in cultural heritage, as opposed to situations in which heritage is in the middle of the country or in urban areas. In these cases the situation is more complex.

chological studies was adopted, trying to merge these visions. First, two discussion groups for each city were developed, and based on the results obtained, we designed a questionnaire that was completed by around 400 inhabitants per city (distributed by age (only adults), gender and districts). The margin of error was 5%. The results were predictable but very hard to compare between the three cities.

In short, the perception of WH by citizens is far from the specialized vision, so that, at best, WH works as an advertising reference, that generates pride and where the benefits of increased tourism or economic resources can be seen (such as restorations, urban improvements, cleaning, transport, etc). However, the qualities that made those assets recognised as WH for their outstanding universal value are very vaguely known. Not to speak about what happens with the archaeological dimension of these places, which is absolutely unknown (Castillo *et al.* 2014).

To start, I would like to outline what our idea of the archaeological dimension in the city is. From a legal point of view, we could use the UNESCO recommendation of Historic Urban Landscape (2011). We understand the town or city as a stratigraphic space with layers like a complex archaeological site, regardless of whether a specific "space", such as an archaeological site, is to be shown in the city to the visitors or not etc. Nevertheless, people, in the best cases, only see this spaces, as our surveys showed very clearly, without connection with the rest of the archeological narrative of the city. Unfortunately, people remember the polemic cases too (e.g. scandals where civil works have been stopped because there is archaeological heritage, and the organization which promoted the work did not study the area).

Concerning the "positive cases" linked to WH sites and associated values, we found there is a perverse interpretation of them. We showed these spaces as examples of archaeology and numerous times people understood them as the archaeological heritage of the city. Most of the urban archaeological sites were disconnected from the discourse of the city in a historical and holistic way or only show one part of it (i.e, the remains of walls) or worse, they are only decoration for the city (an expert friend in interpretation taught us to call them "archaeological flower vases") or they are located and conserved in a parking area and we do not understand well the function they have because the new environment only shows parked cars around them.

Another more practical question, but as important for an adequate methodology was: how do we "capture", or select the inhabitants of the cities to know their opinion in a focus group that will allowus to design a survey for everybody?

For our experimental project, we used the multiple associations in the cities as contacts: from the police office to NGOs, or cultural organizations. We could observe that most of these associations or groups had the discourse already built and that they wanted to speak about their specific interests, not about the question or topic that the facilitator offered in the meeting. A good facilitator is very important here. We have counted on social psychologists for this phase of the study, but they had no background in cultural heritage. Regarding the orthodox methodology of social sciences, this kind of “objective” facilitator is the best. But we were not sure of the basis of our own experience: sometimes the facilitator allowed the participant to speak a lot on certain topics that did have not a clear or specific significance to the study and objective of the focus group.

In spite of these problems, the experience was continued with the use of questionnaires. The fieldwork is very important too: when we interviewed people, we discovered the problem of how to ask the correct questions. Even with our “best intentions”, the survey sometimes resulted in a patronizing and/or guided approach, especially when we carried out the interview personally. It should be remembered that we had specific guidelines regarding how to construct the questions and the order in which the information should be supplied. The design was made by specialists. This last statement might be considered contradictory to the previous one; however, when interacting with people in practice, they answer in several ways: interrupting at times, advancing the topics or to the future questions, asking for further explanation on the topic or communicating their difficulty in understanding the question, etc. And yet, these situations, opinions and extra conversations between interviewer and interviewee modify the questions and answers — more than the interviewer would like — and are unavoidable.

Consequently, the results of our surveys and social perceptions can be considered reliable from a scientific point of view (especially from sociologist/psychologist perspective). However, doubts could be raised concerning the success of our participatory objectives, because in a sense, we as experts guided the activity, even from the first phase. We could only contrast the difference in concepts/values between experts and lay people, but to position our understanding to that of lay people, we need to use education and training to attract them, and that is opposed, or at least different, to participation. Lay people should promote the initiative and start by themselves. The truth is that in most of the cases, experts need to focus on the objective of participation to trigger the process (Castillo *et al.* 2016).

### *3.2. Importance of stakeholders: another methodology which needs improvement*

Our proposal of mapping stakeholders began with reviewing examples of this kind of information in management plans or similar documents for WH sites (i.e Millar 2007) or preservation plans for diffusion of several-heritage properties (Castillo *et al.* 2014 and Castillo 2015a). The definition and consideration of stakeholders have been very simplified by managers and specialists with these kinds of tools of management (plans/projects, etc). They are shown as the direct agents that are involved at present in the management or in a specific activity. Sometimes potential agents or organizations are considered (e.g. foundations or banks for economic support, environmental organizations) regarding the environment or land planning responsibilities. Even in these former cases the considered actors are clearly deficient. At least, one has to consider specific persons or key persons in a community. People who can boycott a project are very important, not only the positive or pro-active persons and organizations. People and agencies/enterprises with a different and contrasting, even negative understanding compared to our concept/value of cultural heritage are also very important.

Consequently, we propose another way to understand the stakeholders and we have developed systems to classify them. They are very important to consider, and not only in planning. In our opinion the mapping of stakeholders is a tool in itself and should be very dynamic, since it has to be used in several ways in cultural heritage management, such as solving conflicts, focusing discourses, marketing and developing the image of the cultural property, logistics and leadership, and diffusion. Most of these elements imply participatory processes at different scales and the agents have to be activated in several ways related to the specific necessities. The traditional manager uses stakeholders like a contact list, but it is absolutely necessary to work them into more complex strategies.

A significant part of the problems in management is the lack of connection among stakeholders and the simplification of the organization and people directly involved in cultural heritage (fig. 2).

### *3.3. Questioning a participatory experience*

Every day experiences of community participation are growing in European countries (for example: the activities during European Year of Cultural Heritage, [https://europa.eu/cultural-heritage/european-year-cultural-heritage\\_en](https://europa.eu/cultural-heritage/european-year-cultural-heritage_en)). That means promotion for our governments (even

TRADITIONAL	PROPOSAL
Part of the management plans (static)	Independent tool (dynamic)
Consider direct agents involved	Potential and indirect agents involved
Organizations	Organizations and key persons
Positive agents	Positive and negative agents
List of contact	List of contacts relation to the sector, areas, kind of implication and actions
...	Scales and channels of discourses by agents

Fig. 2. Comparative models of traditional and new vision of mapping stakeholders in Cultural Heritage Management. Traditional vision is based on information included in the management plans of World Heritage Sites (source: UNESCO and Castillo 2015).

though they sometimes manipulated this as an example of a democratic and transparent system). But certainly, the results in these processes are questionable. We have just started to incorporate all of this and need more time (years) to evaluate the effectiveness and results in our cases (mainly cities and cultural heritage).

There is no doubt about the need to include people in decisions regarding the treatment of cultural heritage, but I have reservations concerning this as participation, because, in most of these processes, we ask about how to excavate or recover a space, and how to preserve or diffuse it... but we do not want (or dare?) to ask if people want to make them.

That has been the case for participatory process on the island of Menorca (Spain). The 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference in World Heritage: People and Communities, was held in the spring of 2015, in Menorca, with people from over 30 countries and more than 100 papers presented (Castillo 2015b). We proposed to the participants that they join the conference with several actions that they had themselves suggested earlier. Part of the suggestions was related to working with the social media, with a very active Facebook page (the most followed event concerning cultural heritage in English and Spanish). The conference was promoted by the regional government (Consell Insular) because they wanted the island to be designated as WH site. In the case of the inhabitants of Menorca, we had had some meetings in November 2014 in which we invited people from associations/organizations (133) to participate in several ways: one of them was to propose activities about cultural heritage in the island in relation to the conference topic (during the days the conference took place or just before). The associations invited



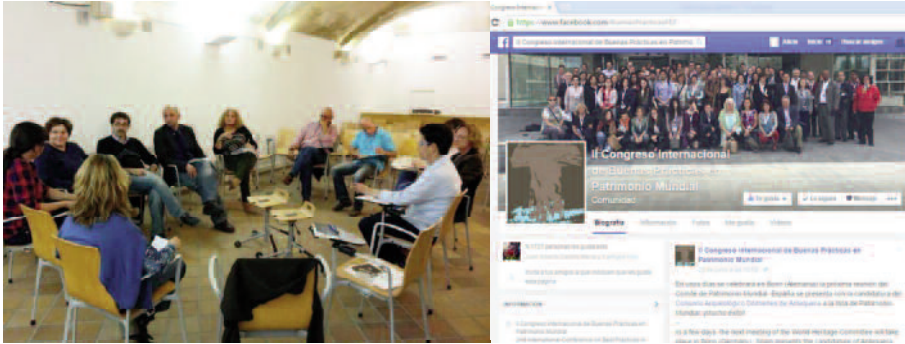


Fig. 3. Meeting in Mahón (November 2014) and Facebook page of the II International Conference on Best Practices in World Heritage: People and Communities (2015). Source: Author and J. Almansa (community manager of the conference).

ranged from those for young people to other groups with different aims such as cultural objectives, education, security, gender equality, and so on. Finally, we met around 20 people in two meetings. The venues for the meetings were “neutral” and independent spaces to those directly related to the regional government. These places were the libraries of the most important cities (Ciudadella and Maó). In these first meetings people started claiming that they did not agree with the effort the regional government – the Consell Insular – was making regarding the nomination as WH site. They thought there were other values and problems on the island that needed attention, which were more important than the WH recognition. We had to explain both the reasons for pursuing this recognition and the work that the regional government was doing. We explained that the important thing was not being designated as WH site but the actions that were being performed in order to reach it. In fact, many cultural properties would have benefited indirectly through preservation and dissemination. People “understood” and changed their positions, and finally decided to collaborate/participate with us and started to propose their own actions. This change of perspective happened because we made them understand that WH could be good for the island in many ways, and that the Menorca Conference as an international point of reference in WH was a very good initiative. Even if I think that this was a positive experience in relation to cultural heritage management, I still have doubts regarding whether it was education or participation. Sometimes it depends on how you describe the experience. I think a self-critical position is absolutely necessary.



During two Saturdays in January and April 2015, following a proposal of the inhabitants and in collaboration with the town councils, we placed a marquee in the city of Ciudadella and another in Mahón where different activities related to the Conference and to the WH nomination were developed. We acted as facilitators to show part of the action proposals, but we were not involved in them. Around 800 inhabitants visited the tents. In the case of Ciudadella, where the weather was horrible, it was almost a miracle that anyone came to visit us (around 300 of them). The activities proposed by the people were in some cases very superficial or not too original from an academic point of view, and people were attracted to some aspects of cultural heritage that for us could be too basic or simple. For example, there was a high school competition organized to design the mascot of the WH nomination, or a truck driver that offered to show advertisements campaigning for Menorca Talayotic on his truck. The objective of a participative process has already been started although the appropriation of the discourses and modification to them can become very difficult for the people. Often this results in more instrumental actions than active ones (with exceptions, as was the case of a theater play that was shown during the Conference which was an artistic interpretation of the Talayotic culture). In spite of the fact that this was only an incipient participation concerning that which is understood and modified in the discourse of WH, we considered it important to encourage the communities to continue with these activities.

As a consequence of all the experience gained in participative actions, we observed that a key element is to focus on the meeting points, the common ground shared by the participants, and not on the differences. Conventional academic research instead is carried out by contrasting knowledge, which involves classifying everything in a way that can be reduced to stereotypes. This new approach to cultural heritage management, based on participative actions, entails abandoning elitist knowledge in several ways and opening up a new way to understand the world, which is more complex than a specialized work but apparently superficial for our understanding.

#### **4. Conclusions**

We consider participation very important in cultural heritage, but in most cases participation is just a participatory process, because the experts with interest in cultural heritage are the ones encouraging people to get involved in the topic.

Many very important actions in cultural heritage management, which include public engagement (such as educational activities or just activities for enjoying cultural heritage), are not participative experiences. For decades, museums and archaeological sites have developed different works ranging from outreach to educational or pedagogical activities with very good results. Consequently, participative actions are sometimes unnecessary or not a priority, considering other management activities. Similarly, this could be the case of restoration or interpretation or maintenance of cultural property. We need to avoid this trend (as it is currently the case within the European Union) and think more about the objectives of our activities. Then, participation processes will be very useful for cultural and archaeological heritage.

Due to the reasons discussed, participation has several levels/degrees of interaction as many experts have defined, and therefore needs to be focused on specific objectives in our contexts. The objective must not be to involve just the people and nothing else. Why involve people in each case? And what are the specific added values for them and for the experts or cultural heritage in general? Certainly, there have been many very good experiences of inhabitants/citizens about the past, scientific past or other ways of understanding the past without them deciding anything. Neither the people nor us need to be always involved in everything. Sometimes, it is necessary to remember this “obvious fact”, because the value of community involvement could be underestimated and this process in cultural heritage management and other aspects of considering the past are very important and necessary today.

In the case of cultural heritage management, participative actions are only a tool or an additional part to be considered which can be transversally integrated with other activities. Participation must be included in a more complex strategy of management, if not, it is only a specific action and, consequently, it will have little effect in changing things/facts. It happens in a similar way to what occurs with dissemination when the people are promoting it. If you only use marketing tools without connection with elaborated archeological or cultural discourses the result of dissemination will be poor.

Improving the methodology to work in participatory process in cultural heritage is necessary because it is fundamental for the success of the initiatives. There are a lot of variables that need to be reviewed, supervised and understood. We are used to studying the people and cultural heritage from an anthropological or ethnographical point of view, but participation is closer to sociology and to social psychology (read, for example, Alguacil's references in this paper).

We need more time and experiences to have a solid ground to improve the participatory experience. Nevertheless, at least, we should work to encourage the following:

- Social perceptions studies and mapping stakeholders
- Training people to become experts in the topic, and to dedicate themselves exclusively to this.

We need to assume a new concept of cultural heritage that is inclusive with a lot of ways of understanding the past. We do not have to reject our point of view (scientific technical dimension is another one more), we only must consider at the same level the views of the others and that is the real challenge in cultural heritage management today.

### **Acknowledgements**

The studies and works has been supported by Minorca regional government and two projects of R+D+I Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness: "Archaeological dimension in World Heritage cities: advances in heritage management in Alcala de Henares (Spain), Puebla (Mexico) and Havana (Cuba)" (2014-2016) and "Treatment of archaeological properties in the World Heritage Cities of the European Union and Hispano-America. HAR 2009-0691" (2009-2013).

All my gratitude to my research team on Cultural Heritage Management, especially Marta Domínguez, María Ángeles Querol, Isabel Salto-Weiss and Ana Yañez, and to the Organizing Committee of Menorca Conference 2015, specially Simón Gornés, Joana Goal and Jaime Almansa. I am thankful to to all the people and friends who have participated in the experiences commented here. My apologies for not including here many other names, especially those of my students from Complutense University of Madrid which have collaborated with surveys, messages, transcriptions, social media, etc. To all of them: thank you.

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