





Recovering the Memories of the Capdella Cardboard Hospital Through Community Archaeology

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ABSTRACT

This study reveals the early results of diverse community archaeology activities taking place in a contemporary archaeological site, a cardboard hospital built in 1912 in the Vall Fosca (Catalan Pyrenees). This isolated valley, formerly used to breed cattle, had three hydroelectric power facilities erected in the twentieth century. In 2019, the Torre Capdella Town Council and the National Museum of Science and Technology of Catalonia initiated a project involving local communities. The main scope of this work is to comprehend the materiality of the working class and to provide new narratives about the people who built them and subsequently occupied part of the valley.

Résumé: Cette étude présente les premiers résultats des activités archéologiques d'une communauté diverse mises en œuvre sur un site archéologique contemporain, un hôpital en carton construit en 1912 dans le Vall Fosca (Pyénées catalanes). Dans cette vallée isolée, autrefois utilisée pour l'élevage de bétail, trois centrales hydroélectriques ont été construites

au 20ème siècle. En 2019, le Conseil municipal de Torre Capdella et le Musée national de Science et de Technologie de Catalogne ont lancé un projet avec la participation des communautés locales. L'objet principal de ces travaux est d'avoir une compréhension de la matérialité de la classe ouvrière et de proposer des récits inédits sur les populations qui les ont construites et qui ont par la suite occupé une partie de la vallée.

Resumen: Este estudio revela los primeros resultados de las diversas actividades de arqueología comunitaria que tienen lugar en un yacimiento arqueológico contemporáneo, un hospital de cartón construido en 1912 en la Vall Fosca (el Pirineo catalán). Este valle aislado, antiguamente utilizado para la cría de ganado, contó con tres instalaciones de energía hidroeléctrica construidas en el siglo XX. En 2019, el Ayuntamiento de Torre Capdella y el Museo Nacional de la Ciencia y la Tecnología de Cataluña iniciaron un proyecto con la participación de las comunidades locales. El objetivo principal de este trabajo es comprender la materialidad de la clase trabajadora y proporcionar nuevas narrativas sobre las personas que las construyeron y posteriormente ocuparon parte del valle.

KEY WORDS

Public archaeology, Archaeological conservation, Ethnography, Mountain archaeology

Introduction

This study explores research conducted at a historic structure that sheds light on the second Catalan industrial revolution, the progress made in hydroelectric power, and the resulting socio-cultural changes experienced by the local communities in the Catalan Pyrenees. This article presents a case study on the community archaeology initiatives undertaken at a cardboard and wooden hospital that was established during the construction of the first major hydroelectric power station in Catalonia, from 1911 to 1914. The Capdella power station, situated in Capdella (Vall Fosca, Catalan Pyrenees), led to the development of additional buildings and services and the establishment of a new town, referred to as the Colony of the Capdella Power Station (Figure 1). During the 1990s, the power plant underwent automation of its operations and maintenance. These events coincided with the deliberate and organised destruction of homes and the expulsion of inhabitants, carried out by the FECSA Corporation (Electrical Forces of Catalonia). A significant number of workers experienced homelessness and unemployment, triggering



Figure 1. Capdella Hydroelectric Power Station. July 2023. Ana Pastor.

a sequence of violent uprisings that left several historical records and documents destroyed. Consequently, a substantial amount of information regarding the everyday experiences of working-class individuals residing in these areas was irretrievably lost. There are no documented testimonials concerning the many uses of the site, but certain stories and objects depict different periods in the history of the site and the valley.

The cardboard hospital, through its various transformations and the diverse individuals who have influenced it, serves as a location that not only witnessed change but also harbours community trauma. The loss of employment has caused a wound in the valley, especially among those who lived there in the 1970s. This project aims to recover the life stories of the individuals who occupied this space over the last century. It also aims to create a place where “new memories of the future” can be shaped. It incorporates elements of archaeology and community conservation to ensure that the voices of the local community are included in the project’s activities (Remacha Acebrón and Pastor Pérez, 2023). An approach centred on the ethics of care as well as an intersectional perspective, working to include people of diverse age, ability, educational and cognitive backgrounds, has been tried to be applied through all the activities of the project. Our proposal is grounded in a social, co-creational premise and aims to generate new insights into the experiences of the working-class individuals involved in the construction and operation of this particular space.

This initiative originated in 2015 when a study was conducted to rediscover the origins of the cardboard hospital (Figure 2). The building, cre-



Figure 2. View of the Surgical Wing of the Capdella Cardboard Hospital. July 2023. Ana Pastor.

ated by Christoph & Unmack, gained significant global prominence in the early twentieth century due to its innovative prefabricated constructions. Hence, its reinterpretation is partially attributed to its distinctive historical and architectural characteristics (Remacha Acebrón, 2021).

The initial analysis emphasised the distinctiveness of the building and its exceptional preservation, as it is possibly the last remaining structure with these architectural features in Europe and potentially other regions (Remacha Acebrón, 2017a, 2017b, 2021). The structures have endured until today due to their continuous reuse, as the severe mountain climate they are exposed to—which includes significant rainfall, storms, and snowfall—would not be favourable to these movable structures. The National Museum of Science and Technology of Catalonia (MNACTEC) bought the building in 2018 and is responsible for carrying out these research works in collaboration with the Capdella Hydroelectric Museum.¹

Since 2018, participatory workshops and events, primarily involving the residents of the valley, have been carried out to understand the community's perception of the heritage site. The guiding principles for this community archaeology project were: first, to assemble an interdisciplinary team and second, to involve all the communities in the valley, allowing anyone interested to contribute to developing the collective memories associated with the uses of this building and its role in local communities. The individuals taking part in such events have the authority to determine the building's future. These decisions were influenced by the unique physical

construction and its symbolic significance. In addition, the work team was structured in a horizontal manner, with each specialist contributing their knowledge in several dedicated areas, such as architecture, heritage management, conservation and restoration, archaeology, history, and anthropology. This essay focuses on the archaeology and community conservation section, namely our work since 2021 to restore the physical aspects of the cardboard hospital and its surrounding regions or contact zones.

A Brief History of the Site

The Vall Fosca is a Pyrenean valley characterised by a 200 km glacier formation and a water capacity of 50,000,000 m³. This volume is made possible by the presence of over 30 lakes in its headwaters, which are protected as a natural reserve. Currently, the valley is inhabited by approximately 1000 people who are dispersed in small villages along the Flamisell River in the northern part of the Pallars Jussà region. It is commonly known as Ribera de Flamisell and Vall de Capdella (Calvet Mir et al. 2010, p. 153).

The Vall Fosca was the first valley in the Pyrenees to see the construction of a hydroelectric power plant. The Capdella Hydroelectric Power Station was at the beginning of the second industrial revolution in Catalonia. In the early twentieth century, the Catalan industry experienced substantial growth; however, its progress was hindered by its significant reliance on imported coal. At that time, there was a search for alternative energy sources, with hydroelectric energy being the most feasible option due to its abundance of natural resources and economic viability. The rush for water-power brought a serious dispute between two prominent corporations: Barcelona Traction Light and Power, commonly referred to as “La Canadenca”, and Energia Electrica de Catalunya (EEC), which was in charge of building the Capdella Power Station. The two corporations fiercely competed to be first to secure energy production and transportation, aiming to maintain their monopoly on the energy industry. Due to the urgency of the construction, EEC utilised prefabricated elements to ensure rapid construction of all industrial buildings: workers’ houses, workshops, warehouses, and shops.

To facilitate the project’s progress, a team of European engineers and businessmen arrived, primarily from the French Alps. Given the project’s international nature, the decision was made to buy a moveable architectural model to serve as a hospital (Remacha Acebrón, 2021). The cardboard hospital was a prefabricated prototype created by Christoph & Unmack, a company that was first established in Denmark in 1882 and then relocated to Niesky, Germany. By the late nineteenth century, the enterprise was involved in the large-scale manufacturing of various build-

ing models. This presented a unique opportunity to revolutionise the field of design and construction (Wurm, 1969). The notable attributes of the prototype were its construction materials, affordability, and portability.² Furthermore, the hospital had well separated interior spaces and skylights that ensured constant flow of fresh air and natural lights in the rooms. As such, it aligned with the prevailing hygienic trend of that historical era, which was influenced by military conflicts and migratory movements (Wenzel, 2012). The company's impact endured for many years and even extended to the Bauhaus school where, in 1942, director Walter Gropius pioneered the renowned "Packaged House System" (Wachsmann et al., 2003). The Third Reich selected Christoph & Unmack to operate some concentration camps, which ultimately led to its demise after the war (Wenzel, 2012).

Migratory movements were at the core of the construction of the Capdella Power Plant. Based on census data from the National Institute of Statistics (INE), the population of the valley in 1900 was approximately 1500 individuals. Prior to industrial intervention, the area was highly isolated due to its orography, harsh climate, and lack of transportation infrastructure. The Vall Fosca was home to a small number of villages. The population seldom left those villages, with notable exception being Pyrenean-wide social celebrations and family visits. During the construction phase of the Capdella Power Plant, which began in 1911, the works employed some 4000 labourers from various regions of Spain, as well as from foreign countries. As a result, the valley experienced an exponential rise in the demography (Boneta i Carrera, 2003). At this point, the majority of the valley's inhabitants were primarily engaged in agricultural and animal activities, while only a minority of the local populace contributed to the construction of the hydroelectric power station.³ With the industrialisation there was a shift in economic activities. Secondary and tertiary industries took precedence over primary activity for the first time. A large number of workers found a job in energy production and stayed in the valley after the completion of the works in 1914. This rise in the population was particularly notable in the settlements located near the operational centres (Barrachina Jiménez and Tulla Pujol 2010, p. 563) and resulted in enduring socio-economic changes unlike any seen in the past.

The hospital played a crucial role in addressing the healthcare emergencies that occurred among the multitude of workers involved in the construction of the hydroelectric power station (Remacha Acebrón, 2021). The hospital was constructed in two distinct phases, each clearly discernible at the material level. It was divided into a treatment wing and a surgery wing, with the latter having additional lighting. Despite its initial purpose as a temporary structure, the building became a vital facility for the residents of the hydroelectric power station colony, particularly during the 1918 Span-

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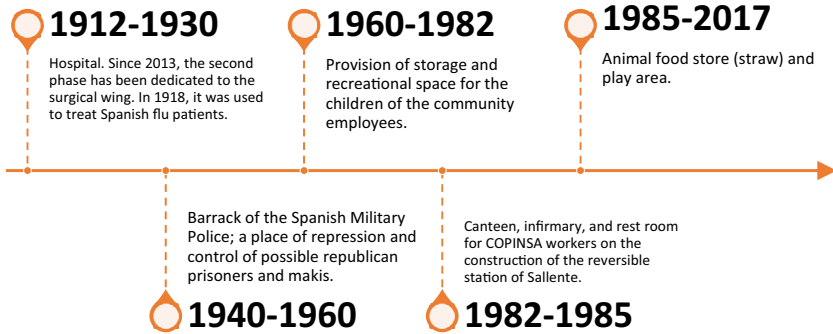


Figure 3. Periods of the cardboard hospital's use. Authors.

ish Flu pandemic that caused widespread devastation in the country. During the 1930s its use as a sanitary facility ended, and it was repurposed for various functions that evolved in accordance with the valley's historical circumstances. The building served as a barracks for the Civil Guard, a storage facility for tools and materials owned by the local residents, and eventually a cafeteria for the workers of the COPINSA Company. COPINSA constructed the Reversible Power Station in Sallent, situated at the end of the valley, between 1980 and 1990 (Remacha Acebrón, 2021 and Figure 3). Subsequently, residents have resumed using the hospital, now as an ad hoc storage facility for their personal belongings, including provisions for their animals. The building's past is marked by many uses and subtle changes, ultimately bringing us to the present day. The different areas, influenced by their previous uses and inherent characteristics, exhibit varying levels of preservation.

From Ethnography to Community Archaeology

The process of configuring this project through active involvement and collaborative creation commenced with an ethnographic study conducted by a team of interdisciplinary experts between 2019 and 2023. This study revealed that the hospital and its socio-historical environment were profoundly ingrained in the memories of the local populace as well as in the recollections of those who left the region long ago. The testimonies provide insights into the different uses and emotions raised by the hospital's area within the local communities. We have selected some testimonies belonging to different periods (see Figure 3). These individuals remember when the Central de Capdella settlement flourished, with a high population density, notable events such as the funfair, and amenities including a cinema



Figure 4. Cement Tennis Court in the “Poblado de la Central”. Ana Pastor.

and a tennis court (see Figure 4). The former production zones have now become tranquil, occasionally disrupted by the sound of the operational power station’s turbines or the flow of electricity through the power lines. These reminders indicate that this place is a rich tapestry of experiences and different periods in time, which scholars like Kerstin Barndt would describe as “fertile decadence.” In her work, Barndt invites us to engage in a multitemporal reflection, suggesting that the ruins possess an optimistic quality as they await the emergence of new narratives that reflect the current use of these transformations (2009, p. 272). This message of “something new to be built” inspires our project, as the idea of generating new common narratives for the future brings new breath to the valley and to this space. That is why we believe that even though some stories show wounds, there is a halo of healing and looking towards the future through re-signifying this place.

The oral testimonies where the hospital building plays a central role are crucial in understanding the material culture that has emerged on the site through the cleaning, prospecting, excavation, and preservation activities. These various oral histories help us pursue the goals of this project and to examine perceptions of the space across different generations. We find testimonies that place us in three fundamental phases: health, occupation by the military police and its subsequent abandonment, and informal uses.

They are key to appreciate the evolution of the site itself, and to establish connections with both the past and the future of the valley. Several

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accounts gathered in 2021 pertain to the initial period when the facility was used as a hospital:

“...of course I remember what the hospital was like; my mother was admitted in 1928... I was six years old, but I remember perfectly well that my mother did not work in the hydroelectric plant, but my father did; that is why they let her be admitted” (Verbal Communication 2020) former valley resident and current resident of El Pont de Suert.

“We were children, but we knew that there were people there who were really messed up. Sometimes people died or had limbs amputated because of accidents at work; other times they were simply cured of an illness” (Verbal Communication 2020) former valley resident and current resident of El Pont de Suert.

“I have a trauma from the hospital. When we were children, in the colony, there was an accident in which a girl was killed. The poor girl was taken to the hospital, but she died there. I will always remember that accident and that girl” (Verbal Communication 2020) former valley resident and current resident of El Pont de Suert.

The ethnographic research reveals that the older generations possess memories that are strongly associated with the sanitary role of the building and its involvement in the construction of the hydroelectric power station. In this context, the hospital is seen as a negative memory space: a place that elicits emotions ranging from apprehension to distress.

After the Civil War ended in 1939, some individuals retained memories of minor feuds associated with the war. However, they also regarded the occupation of the space by the Military police as an opportunity to acquire new skills:

“I used to go to be taught to type; we also sewed with the corporal’s wife” (Verbal Communication 2020) an inhabitant of the Vall Fosca.

One testimony tells of a Republican prisoner who was able to return to the valley after leaving prison, when the barracks were occupied by his oppressors:

“My grandfather was a Republican. He was in prison for six years, and when he returned to Capella, he went to live just in front of the old hospital, where the Guardia Civil was at the time. Every day, he made himself a hearty lunch and went outside to eat it. Then the corporals of the Guardia Civil, who didn’t eat very well, would tell him how well he looked after himself. He would reply that he ate better than them. I think it was his little revenge” (Verbal communication 2021) current resident of the Vall Fosca.

After 1960 the building and its immediate surroundings hold significance for younger generations, specifically those born in the late sixties and seventies. They used this space as a play area and associated it with a spot for “keeping the little treasures of childhood” (Verbal Communication 2021) current resident of the Vall Fosca. Or:

“I remember that there were medicines and syringes on the floor; when we were little we used to take the medicine bottles and we used to make the kind of pots you make as a child” (Verbal communication 2021) current resident of the Vall Fosca.

“I don’t remember what happened in our village, but there was a time when we used to go to school in Capdella, and when we came back we used to pass in front of the hospital, and I remember telling my sister to wait for me at the door while I played with the other children inside” (Verbal communication 2021) inhabitant of the Vall Fosca.

From our point of view, gathering these oral histories that, in the future, will be shown alongside the artefacts is an important part of a community archaeology project that aims to show how this building speaks to many voices and spans many times. Ethnography helps to add that layer of emotional and significant value to the building beyond its architectural values. It has helped the local communities and different visitors and participants of the activities to manifest appreciation for the diverse experiences and identities of the communities comprising the valley; not only for the hospital structure’s architectural design and uniqueness.

First Archaeological Prospections of the Field

Archaeologists initiated the first exploration and assessment in May 2021 to develop a plan for mapping and characterising the structural components. To enhance the organisation of our archaeological research findings, we divided the area into several zones (Figure 5). This enabled us to categorise the objects we discovered both within and outside the enclosure based on their respective zones.

Previously recovered materials by the museum in combination with the ethnographical sources enabled us to discern some of the applications and activities carried out within the building before our first intervention. We started the process by doing a surface-level cleaning of rooms 1–3 (Figure 6), which constituted the hospital’s healing area. We collected an assortment of objects belonging to different time periods (Figures 7–8, 9–10). We were interested in examining the overlapping of uses, objects, and known histories associated with the location in order to develop multivocal

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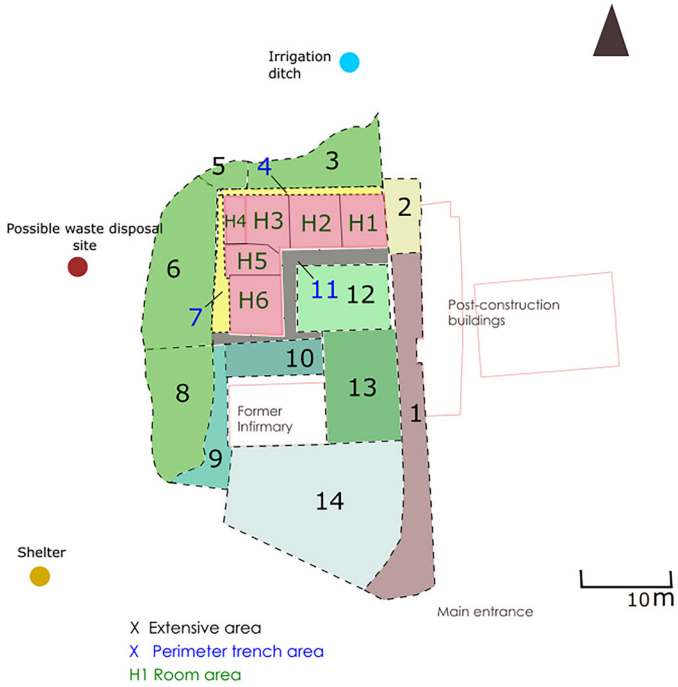


Figure 5. Map for archaeological research. HVF Team.



Figure 6. Initial overview of Room 1. HVF Team.

and multitemporal discourses. For example, the finding of multiple bottle caps from both beer and stronger alcoholic beverages suggested significant



Figure 7–8. Exterior lamp found in H1. HVF Team.



Figure 9–10. A bottle of Skol beer from 1976 to 1979 and a poster from 1976 advertising singers of the time. See <https://botellasserigrafadas.blogspot.com/2012/05/skol.html> (access 15 Feb 2024). HVF Team.

alcohol consumption in the area after its military use (after 1960). Additionally, cigarette packets were also found. These findings may indicate the



Figure 11. Accumulation of sheets in H1. HVF Team.

occurrence of parties, but they can also be used to establish chronological references. It is worth noting that the Skol bottle cap discovered may date back to the late 1970s, as it bears the label “*unión cervecera*”, which represents a merger between the brand name established in 1976 and the label associated with productions from the 1960s and 1970s (Figure 9–10).

The mattresses and sheets discovered at the site (see to Figure 11) are associated with the construction era of the Sallent Reversible Power Station in the 1980s. During this time, workers occasionally slept in shifts in this area. The presence of various types of headboards suggests that the beds were repurposed, with the bunk beds being more contemporary and the white headboards potentially associated with earlier periods. Similarly, the bedsteads, depicted in Figure 12, also originate from several time periods.

After evaluating the safety of the area, a decision was made to develop a participatory approach to public and community archaeology. This approach would prioritise the retrieval of narratives concerning individuals connected to the material culture not only of the hospital but also of the surrounding area. Specifically, it would focus on the experiences of workers and labourers at the different hydroelectric plants of the valley, their fami-



Figure 12. Accumulation of bedsteads on the north wall. HVF Team.

lies, and the potential interactions between these newly arrived communities and the existing populations in the valley. Essentially, the proposal suggested conducting a series of community-based archaeological activities, including surveys, cleaning, and exploratory walks. These activities would integrate scientific and social elements and aim to enhance participatory actions to preserve cultural heritage within the framework of an archaeological excavation of the recent past. To strengthen these networks of social commitment and empower local communities through knowledge-sharing initiatives we focused on archaeology and cultural heritage community management. Those will be addressed in the following sections.

The Community's Propection

In July 2021, we conducted a community archaeological walk, adopting an analytical format founded on the principles of critical public and community archaeology (Westmont, 2022), where knowledge is collaboratively developed via a bottom-up approach. As one of the primary goals of the hospital project was to empower the residents of the valley to decide what is conserved and how it is preserved, public archaeology was incorporated into the project in parallel to architectural restoration. The double objective of this community propection was to publicise the advancements in the first cleansing of the area and to engage in further discussions on site. Community-based propection allows for the exploration of inquiries posed by the local community regarding an archaeological site. A signifi-

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cant scientific environment is fostered, identified as a contact zone (Ripanti, 2022), where the proposed archaeological project's objectives are deliberated and contrasted with the interests of the valley's inhabitants. In the case of the Vall Fosca, this action emphasised how archaeology provides access to unconscious memories, actions, and spatial uses that were not intentionally preserved but are crucial for understanding history, particularly in a location like this, which we view as a lingering source of discomfort. From our perspective, to create relevant narratives in a new environment, it is essential to bring back the memories embedded in it by time and brought forth through collaborative knowledge creation (Olivier 2019). However, public archaeology in Spain is still under both theoretical and methodological development (Almansa Sánchez, 2013). Although many project incorporate visible dissemination, community involvement, and open days (Ayán Vila, 2021; Jiménez-Esquinas, 2020), we still have a lot of administrative involvement and must add theoretical reflections on the topic to prevent extractive patterns (Almansa Sánchez, 2017).

The City Council and the valley's various social networks announced the activities. Here we indicated the flexibility of the timetable, the suitability of the activity for different ages, the accompaniment of adults, the number of organisers to manage safety, the guarantee of shaded spaces and the possibility of returning to an air-conditioned spot quickly. We also indicated the possibility of doing part of the activity in the museum for people with reduced mobility, and with experts in cognitive divergence. A



Figure 13. Collaborating with a team to conduct a prospection of the hospital's northern perimeter. HVF Team.

telephone number was available at all times to answer any questions. The activity, endorsed by the Hydroelectric Museum and the Torre de Capdella Town Council, was deemed successful as both shifts during the weekend were fully booked with two concurrent groups (Figure 13). The average age of participants ranged from 35 to 40 years old, with a diverse mix of teenagers and retired individuals also involved. Although more women than men participated, they only accounted for 56% of the total. We discovered that nearly all participants had connections to the area; they were either permanent inhabitants or frequent weekend visitors who owned property in the valley or nearby regions. Additionally, one group included former employees of the Reversible Power Station of Sallent, a part of the COPINSA Company (see Figure 3). They shared their experiences at the site, discussing its use as a place for workers to eat and take breaks, and revisiting personal memories that enhanced the collective learning experience. Interestingly, during the informal dialogues that we noted in the activity there were not many historical discrepancies, but rather discoveries about different chronological times and uses.

The activity was highly cooperative, with coordination groups assigning various responsibilities to all members, such as photographing, preparing and collecting artefacts, bagging, and using GPS. For instance, an individual was assigned the responsibility of managing the marker, determining the north direction in the photographs, creating a tag, and collecting geographic data. The participants were highly engaged and systematic in completing the tasks, forming a strong cohesion and team spirit in a brief period. We also collectively investigated the nearby neighbourhood in search of construction remains or artefacts that could be connected to the hospital. The entire group demonstrated significant awareness and interest in cultural heritage, including examples from their own personal experiences. The attendees shared their comments and posed questions regarding the building's condition, the restoration methods, and other related matters.

There was extensive deliberation about the site's future and the potential interventions on the hospital building. The discussion also focused on the possibility of establishing work camps for excavation. Two individuals mentioned their positive experiences in archaeological work camps in the past and expressed interest in using the space for similar activities. Fruitful arguments occurred regarding the instability of investing in cultural initiatives, which impacted the daily life of the valley. One of the things we were able to contrast is that the community was very pleased to have a museum that simultaneously functions as a cultural centre. This reinforced the idea that the museum would serve as a base for more activities in subsequent campaigns.



Figure 14. North area, trench excavated in July 2022. Ana Pastor.

During the prospection, there was a strong interest in locating artefacts from the hospital's early period and the potential location of the waste disposal site, where used medicines were discarded; participants also discussed areas to investigate in a future prospection. Many objections were made concerning the inadequate condition of the surgical area and the accumulation of bedsteads that was causing damage to the cardboard walls of the hospital. Based on these comments gathered during this activity, we discussed the next measures to be done by the archaeological team. We decided to prioritise cleaning and excavating the northern half of the hospital and excavated a trench as per the diverse participant's request (Figure 14). Those actions were developed during the spring of 2022 by a mixed team of archaeologists and council workers.

These tasks were essential to proceed with planning the rehabilitation of the building. Following the intervention, we assessed the possibility of continuing the grassroots component of the project by conducting workshops on object conservation and memory preservation. Those actions had the objective of preserving and building new common narratives for the recovered artefacts and will be detailed in the next section.

The Community Conservation Workshops

From 2021 to 2022, extensive archaeological research was conducted, resulting in a large quantity of materials. Consequently, we considered establishing workshops focused on conserving archaeological artefacts. These workshops aimed to raise public awareness about the preservation of cultural heritage and provide a platform for communities to engage in critical discussions about the history associated with the cardboard hospital (Pastor Pérez and Díaz-Andreu 2022). We began with the premise that gaining a direct understanding of the principles of decision making in conservation could serve as a preventive conservation strategy by enhancing the connections of collective stewardship (Pastor Pérez 2021). We created community conservation workshops, named “Conserving Objects, Conserving Memories”, to emphasise the concept of collaborating on shared narratives and recalling the memories and practical purposes of the artefacts found during our archaeological excavation at the site (Figure 15). The activity facilitated intergenerational interactions as participants engaged in a perceptible dialogue between past and present and assisted each other in describing the pieces. The workshops took place in July 2022 and August 2023. In the latter instance, there was a shift towards incorporating photogrammetric methods, with a focus on social issues.

As aforementioned, this project suggests incorporating local people’s narratives about their artefacts into community-based conservation efforts



Figure 15. Working table set up in H1 and ready for the activity in August 2023. Ana Pastor.

alongside education on the preservation of archaeological items. Our inspiration comes from public and community archaeology in a critical format (Kiddey, 2024; Richardson & Almansa-Sánchez, 2015; Westmont, 2022). This is a field that aims to link archaeological methods with current social issues (Carman, 2011; Gould, 2016; Oldham, 2017), while also working towards decolonising and depatriarchalising archaeological knowledge in an intersectional manner (Kiddey, 2020; Vienni, 2014). The conservation actions were also influenced by the previously discussed ethnographic and oral history research, aiming to reconnect with overlooked narratives of the working class. In our perspective, by incorporating the stories and experiences of living in the valley into the archaeological conservation process, the materiality of the artefacts and the hospital would become more meaningful in terms of conservation in the short and the long term.

The workshops became spaces for debate and discussion and some relevant questions arose. For instance, why such a distinctive place had not been investigated earlier; questioning the historical relevance of the site. The workshops enabled participants to spend additional time in the environment and contemplate it in a more context-specific manner. This led to several fruitful discussions that we are summarising here. The participants also discussed the social conflicts that arose in the area two decades ago and how those impacted the conservation of the site. They informed us of the involvement of the present Capdella Town Council Administration in setting efforts to preserve the hospital in a community-led way. Participants also addressed the deterioration of the site, its historical significance, the importance of maintaining its social and community functions and the concept of hospitality. They suggested a restoration that considers various uses, viewing the hospital as an integral part of the colony, the buildings of the Hydroelectric Power Station of Capdella, and the valley. These workshops were also the scenario of new proposals, for example that the building could be repurposed as a museum or a library for literary workshops. It was also mentioned to leave it empty for various events, considering the valley's increasing cultural appeal and the lack of spaces for cultural events with the exception of the museum.

The action plan was drawn up with an intersectional-intergenerational approach, emphasising inclusivity across various age groups and accommodating diverse timetables as indicated by participants. One more time we called for participation by contacting all the city council channels and a mailing list including all the participants from the previous prospection. We informed them that there were spaces for people with reduced mobility in the Capdella Hydroelectric Museum. This activity was organised in partnership with Dr. Laia Colomer, a specialist in participation applied to cultural heritage and with substantial experience in initiatives with rural communities in Norway (Colomer, 2023a, 2023b). Conservation materials

chosen for the workshops were safe for participants to use and participants were given personal protection equipment. The artefacts were chosen based on their chronological representation and ease of handling and cleaning to avoid causing breakages and consequent frustration. During each workshop, we covered topics including the state of conservation, mechanical and chemical cleaning, methods for stabilising pieces that have changed media, and the subsequent procedures to follow. The conservation expert sat alongside the participants to provide encouragement and to address ontological dilemmas. It was an opportunity to stress the importance of well-trained staff, which contributes to the conservation of the works. These pieces evoke multiple perspectives on the hospital's history and potential future uses, reflecting the voices of the community rather than experts.

The workshops included the work with conservation worksheets meant to record the treatment applied and, in the meantime, to collect participants' impressions of the artefacts (Figure 16). The objective was to comprehend the implications of the artefacts and develop narratives based on them. During the exercise, we provided participants with a dossier contain-

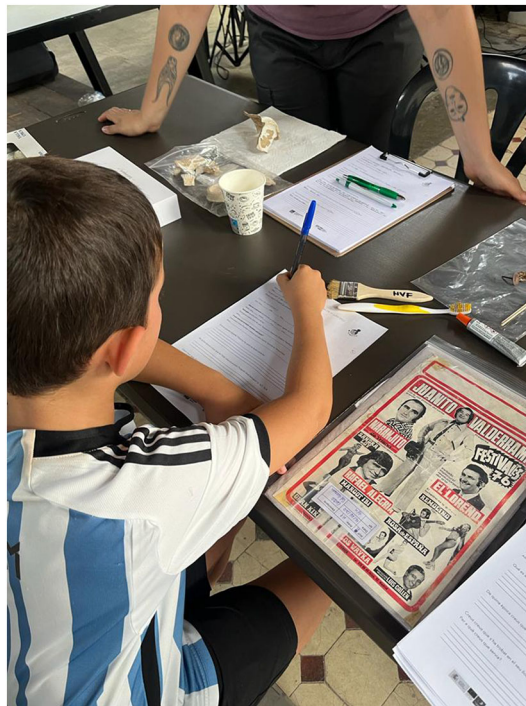


Figure 16. Participant filling in the worksheet. Ana Pastor.



Figure 17. Explaining the virtualization methodology to the public. Ana Pastor.

ing all the objects discovered during the excavation and cleaning efforts in 2021 and 2022. We wanted to learn from the connections between objects as proposed by them. In the worksheets we added some questions pertain to usage, like: What do you believe the purpose of the object in question was? Do you believe it was connected to the hospital? Do you think this artefact must be shown in a museum? In many cases, if individuals argued that the item should be shown in a museum, it was because of its significance in understanding the past events of the location and not for the apparent aesthetic or historical values of the object. However, great emphasis was placed on trying to find out if the pieces would be contemporary with the building's use as a hospital, and if those would be the only pieces that should be put in a museum. When the building is restored, efforts will take place to include a temporary exhibition with the pieces restored in these workshops.

During the summer of 2023, in workshops supported by the scientific dissemination project HidroPats!⁴ we initiated photogrammetry tasks in participatory workshops at the Capdella Hydroelectric Museum (Figure 17). This included showcasing the project and objects restored by participants. The digitised pieces form part of an open repository and will be included in various dissemination actions by the museum. This event caused very fruitful situations of knowledge transfer between participants of the workshop the year prior, and the new attendees.

Conclusions and Further Actions

In the 1980s and 1990s, the Vall Fosca experienced collective anguish owing to the mechanisation of hydroelectric power stations and the transition of businesses from FECSA to ENDESA, which took control of the stations and their energy exploitation. This resulted in the loss of many jobs and future employment opportunities for the younger local community, as well as the disruption of the traditional way of life in the industrial settlements. Thousands of documents, images, prominent festivals, services, and houses were destroyed completely. These industrial regions are remembered nostalgically by the valley's community due to the significant and unforeseen loss that occurred. Local public bodies have historically focused on representing the social model during industrialisation and landscape transformation. Recently, heritage projects like the cardboard hospital have started incorporating narratives of the society that existed outside industrialisation in the hyper-industrialised valley. Farmers, shepherds, and housewives, among others, have been able to contribute their stories to these cultural processes.

The work at the cardboard hospital intends to help recover the memories of all individuals who have lived in this valley in recent decades, not only those associated with its initial phase during the power station's construction. This place aims to shed light on the overlooked daily experiences of labourers whose narratives have intertwined in various locations, such as the workers' colony, meadows, orchards, and pathways of this valley. Each planned activity aims to study everyday features and highlight the objects found during cleaning, prospecting, and excavation operations. Those features and objects belong to various chronologies and convey stories in the present. We prioritised the significance of the site's materiality in developing activities, emphasising the importance of connecting artefacts with testimonies and providing a place to share and disseminate the voices of local knowledge. We have endeavoured to ensure that each of these activities is accessible and intergenerational by adjusting spaces and schedules and enhancing flexibility in participating events and the hospital area. We intend for the project to create interconnected networks and involve more neighbours to redefine this and other areas. After carrying out various workshops in recent years, it appears that the local populations regard the space as more alive and "their own" than ever before. These comments are really encouraging. We can feel that local communities know that they are an active part of the decision-making process.

Archaeological studies reveal connections between human interactions and the environment, enabling the reconstruction of historical activities and narratives within a landscape (Renes, 2014) and shedding light on the

lives of various working classes. By combining archaeological methods with ethnographies and retrieving common memories through material artefacts, we can connect the past and present, leading to the creation of new shared memories. Local communities are actively involved in all research activities in this space, emphasising that the writing of history is not solely controlled by academic experts. Universities, museums, and cultural departments are increasingly focused on serving the public. We need to address the class biases present in historic discourses by establishing areas for interaction and attentive hearing. This will enable us to develop programmes that are more specific, empathetic, and collaboratively developed with the communities at large rather than imposed on them. By doing this, we can redefine the spaces and jointly co-create heritage management techniques that are more sustainable in the long run. This process helps us to bring new voices from the cultural landscape to light, identify future needs, address long-term economic and sustainability challenges, assess the influence of the past on the present and future, and suggest strategies where heritage supports the wellbeing of the valley's residents.

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Notes

1. This museum is part of a network called the Territorial System lead by MNACTEC.
2. As a result, Christoph & Unmack won important architectural prizes, such as the Red Cross Award for their field hospital at the Antwerp Universal Exposition in 1885.
3. Following the construction of the Capdella Power Plant, three additional power stations were constructed in the valley: the two hydroelectric power plants in Molinos in 1919, in Plana de Mont-Ros in 1937, and the reversible power plant in Sallente-Gento between 1980 and 1985.
4. See: <https://hidropats.wordpress.com/> (Access 18 Feb 2024).

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