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Creating Participatory Dialogue in Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Interpretation: Multinational Perspectives

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Menorca Talayótica: Prehistoric and Current Communities – New Ways of Understanding

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Introduction

Menorca is part of the Balearic Islands, Spain, located in the center of Western Mediterranean. Within a small territory, it has preserved a high number of archaeological sites, primarily from the Bronze and Iron Ages (Fig. 1). Popular explanations of prehistoric Menorcan remains attribute their origin to unknown people, such as "the Moors" or even giants. However, these archaeological sites are part of the landscape of the current communities, which have developed emotional ties to them. Archaeological sites are part of their daily life, and they are viewed as pieces of their own heritage, tradition, and landscape.

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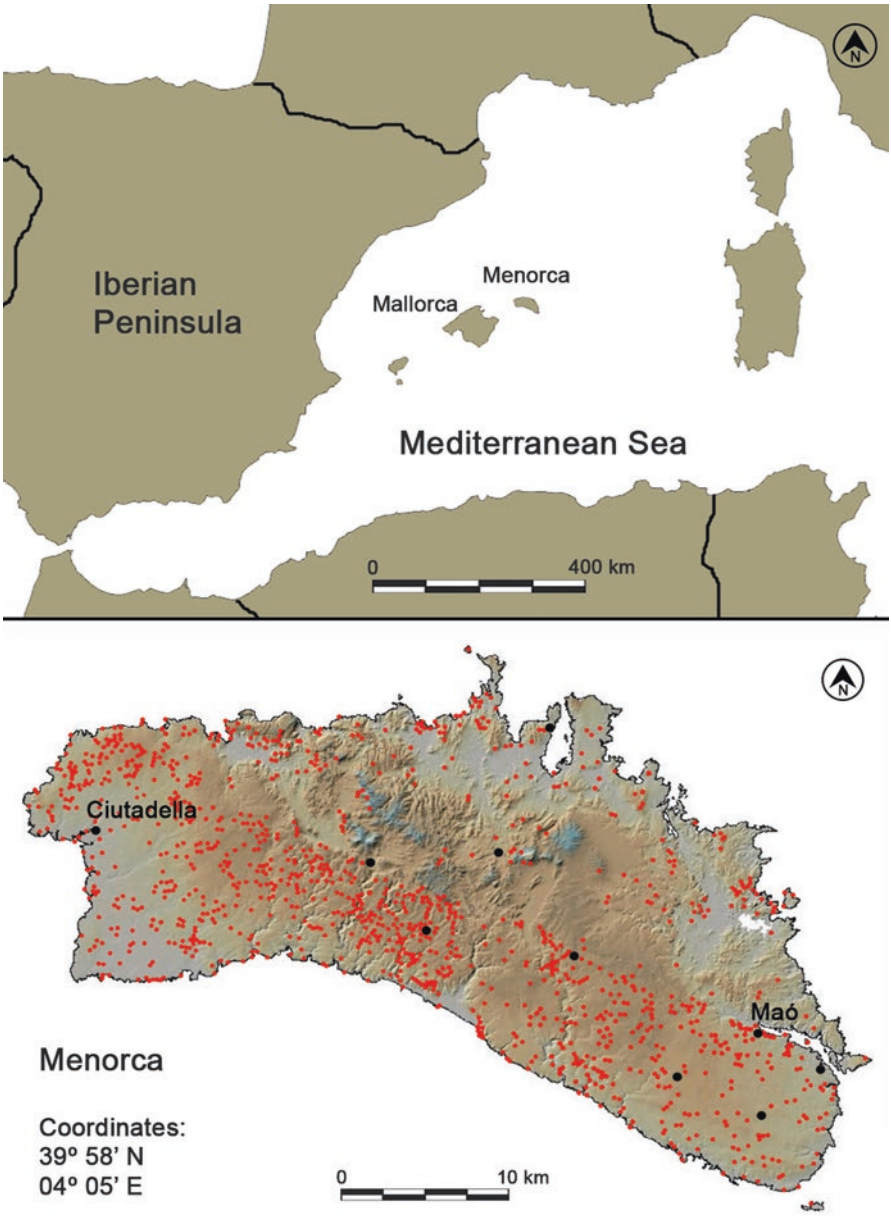

Fig. 1 Location of Menorca in the Western Mediterranean. Red dots indicate prehistoric sites. Black dots mark modern towns

The Talayotic Culture

The Talayotic culture can be defined by a set of cultural traits that developed in Mallorca and Menorca during the late Bronze and Iron Ages. The preceding stage, which occupied much of the second millennium BCE, was characterized in both islands by the presence of small human communities with little complex economy and social organization. The most significant features of these communities are buildings with megalithic technique, called *dwelling navetas or naviforms*, as well as and collective burials (Ramis, 2010). Despite its central position during the late Bronze Age, Mallorca and Menorca both seem to have been left out of the trade routes of the Western Mediterranean, as no ceramic objects from these exchange networks have been found on the islands (Delibes de Castro and Fernandez-Miranda, 1988).

At the end of the second millennium BCE, internal transformations, gradual introduction of iron, and arrival of colonists marked the evolution from the "naviform" to the Talayotic period (Pérez-Juez, 2012). Society hierarchy also changed as demonstrated in the construction of urban settlements with organized internal structure and new types of buildings. The erection of the first *talayots*, megalithic tower-like structures that give name to the Talayotic culture (Fig. 2), can be traced back to

Fig. 2 The Naveta des Tudons is the best known of the numerous funerary monuments on the island. These navetas were collective graves built in the early stages of the Talayotic culture of Menorca. (Photo: Consell Insular de Menorca)

around the year 1000 BCE in Menorca and 850 BCE in Mallorca, according to recent radiocarbon dating (e.g., Micó, 2005; Anglada et al., 2014).

During the Talayotic period the open countryside was heavily transformed. Talayotic settlements were built, for the most part, inland and with a privileged control of the territory. From the middle of the first millennium cal BC, most of them were surrounded by walls and included houses, storage areas, communal circulation spaces, and religious buildings – known as taula precincts (Fig. 3) –, cisterns, and other spaces for industrial production of pottery or metal objects. These communities followed economic strategies based on cereal agriculture and herding, primarily from ovicaprids, cattle, and pig.

Despite its monumental architecture, the Talayotic culture is relatively poor in material culture. There is very little evidence of wealth, and, in the early Talayotic period, most of the objects found at archaeological sites are made locally. From the fifth century BCE, the islands entered the Punic trading networks, and massive amounts of Punic amphorae from Ibiza are visible in the archaeological record, primarily from the fourth century BCE (Anglada et al., 2017). Artifacts coming from elsewhere in the Mediterranean are also common, including glass beads or pottery, such as imported tableware. However, during this period many indigenous cultural features survive, notably megalithic construction techniques, collective burials, manufacture of pottery without a potter's wheel, and the use of a specific type of hand mills (Anglada et al., 2017).

Fig. 3 Talayots overlooking the settlement of Torre d'en Galmés. A talayot is a monumental conical or square stone structure built in cyclopean masonry, with rows of stone without mortar. (Photo: Consell Insular de Menorca)

Talayotic necropoleis, always located away from the settlements, reflect this lack of sophistication in objects. They are all communal tombs, most of them in natural caves on cliffs by riverbeds or by the sea. Some of the funerary rituals from the early Talayotic period have attracted the interest of researchers and general public, such as the dying of cut hair (Lull et al., 1999).

The struggle for hegemony in the Western Mediterranean between Carthaginians and Romans from the third century BC found Menorca allied with the Punic side. Islanders were heavily recruited as slingers to fight the growing power of Rome in the three Punic Wars (264–146 BCE). Classical sources refer to this military specialization as well as particular local habits and traditions, such as their fondness for wine and anointment with oil (Diodoro Siculo, 2003, Diod. Sic. 5.17.4). In 123 BCE, following the destruction of Carthage by Rome, the Balearic Island were conquered in the name of the senate following accusations of piracy (Flor. Bellum Balearicum 1.43). This date marks the end of what is known as the Talayotic culture, and the local population slowly began a process of Romanization during which they adopted many aspects of Roman culture. Large parts of the sites were abandoned as the population shifted to new coastal cities. Other parts of the sites were transformed to reflect new needs, materials, and imported construction techniques. However, most of the monumental sites remained more or less intact in the landscape until the medieval reoccupation with the Muslim conquest of the tenth century.

The Social Context of Menorca

The beginning of tourism, from the second half of the twentieth century, has been one of the most influential aspects in shaping Menorca today. The arrival of tourists, however, was a late phenomenon, almost a decade after it started in the rest of the Balearic Islands. A number of reasons may have determined this delay, among which we may cite Menorca's solid industry and agricultural strength in the sixties and seventies of the twentieth century (Farré-Escofet, 1979; Beltrán, 2015; Casasnovas & Rosselló, 2002). Therefore, the twentieth century was characterized by a stable demographic model – around 40,000 inhabitants – a low mortality, and a negative migratory balance (Coll, 2005).

This situation favored the rooting of the local population to the land. The traditional way of life passed from generation to generation, within a solid rural and urban ecosystem with clear physical limits. Despite the dictatorship (1939–1975), the island was able to continue – and even reinforce – a cultural and linguistic identity in an unchanged landscape (Ramis & Ginard, 1999; Salord, 2000).[1]

The economic expansion and diversification from the late 80s caused high human mobility – workers and tourists – and changed the composition and behavior of the

[1] The language spoken in Menorca is Catalan, which has been commonly used since the thirteenth century.

island's population (Coll, 2005). At the same time, the transition to democracy, after almost four decades of dictatorship, made possible the development of local civil and political institutions, such as the Consell Insular de Menorca in 1983. The existing social and cultural fabric of the island – Ateneo de Maó and Cercle Artistic de Ciutadella – was completed with the creation of new institutions, Institut Menorquí d'Estudis in 1986. In this context, environmental movements became stronger and lobbied for a planned and sustainable tourism model in order to prevent the systematic destruction of the Spanish coastal landscape that had taken place in other areas of the country (López, 2017). This movement was primarily led by the Balearic Ornithological Group.

Social support has been vital to implement political conservationist measures. In 1993, UNESCO approved the declaration of Menorca as a Biosphere Reserve, supported by an active and engaged civil movement (Pérez-Juez, 2016). In 2003, the local government passed the "Plan Territorial Insular," a number of measures to promote a sustainable development of the island, perceived as utopian by the rest of the Balearic Islands (Murray, 2006). In fact, although this piece of legislation has proven to promote sustainability and quality of life – at least from a social and cultural point of view – it has also had an erratic implementation and, therefore, caused many social and political tensions (Obrador, 2016).

Nowadays, Menorca's population is 91,000 people, more than double from the 40,000 registered in the 1960s, as well as a large temporary, tourist population. During the summer of 2018 – July and August – the population rose between 140,000 and 200,000. Most of the economic activities during those 2 summer months are related to tourism. Although there is an internal debate about the future of Menorca's tourism in comparison to the other Balearic Islands, the image that Menorca projects to the world is also linked to the tourism industry (Blázquez, 2005). For example, neighboring Ibiza, has a very similar geographic and environmental setting but a population of 140,000 people and 3,000,000 tourists every year (Agencia d'Estratègia Turística IB, 2018). The *Menorcan way* has implied a slower growth but also has consolidated preservationist and an identity feature (Casasnovas & Casasnovas, 2019).

The Endurance of Prehistoric Monuments in the Landscape

According to the Catalog of Cultural Heritage conducted by the Consell Insular de Menorca (political administration of the island), a total of 1586 prehistoric archaeological sites have been inventoried in Menorca, out of which 1232 belong to the Talayotic culture (Fig. 1). The island hosts over two archaeological sites per square kilometer. This density is perceived to be even higher by the local population, due to the monumental architecture of the remains preserved: specific constructions with megalithic architecture have become landmarks in the landscape. Most of these places – whether navetas, caves, or other structures – have been used over time for storage and penning, as raw materials, or even as households. This close

relationship between community and prehistoric architecture is the origin of its own existence: talayots, the most monumental features of this culture were built with the specific goal of "humanizing" the landscape and giving it a social significance (Galmés, 2018).

Throughout history, locals have assigned new meanings to the monumental constructions. Significantly, some traditions have interpreted Talayotic remains as a manifestation of ancient population of giants, also as previous historic periods like "the times of the Moors" – tenth–thirteenth centuries (Pérez-Juez & Sintes, 2020). Local communities have used archaeological remains to build identitarian discourses, and despite the different cultures and peoples who have inhabited the island throughout time, the Talayotic culture and the convulsed eigteenth century are the ones that have generated more interest in literature, fine arts, or popular culture.

These cultural discourses, in contrast with the archaeological one, which is gaining interest for scientific procedures and archaeometries in the last decades, are trying to shed light on the prehistoric phases of the island, especially to study and reveal to the locals the profound distance between prehistoric and contemporary in terms of socioeconomical and cultural systems. The historiographical production in this field is wide and diverse.

Archaeological Heritage: Different Interactions

Collective Attitudes Regarding the Archaeological Heritage

The archaeological heritage of the island is currently one of the most important features of the local culture. From the second half of twentieth century, specific monuments started to be seen as landmarks in the territory, becoming pieces of the collective memory as well as symbolic references. Those monuments have provided cohesion to the cultural identity, overcoming the differences provoked by change, economic crisis, natural disasters, or social disparities.

Prehistoric remains are abundant and dispersed throughout the island, and it is still unknown the level of connection that they would have had over the course of 1500 years. Its primary context has also changed, and there is no apparent link between the sites other than they all belong to the Talayotic and pre-Talayotic periods. However, their common traces allow for an appreciation of this heritage as a continuum. The proposal to the World Heritage List used this sentiment as means to foster social awareness, and public and private institutions united in efforts to promote the importance of preserving this unique cultural heritage.

The foundations for this work were laid in the eighteenth century as local scholars began studying and writing about this remarkable culture (Casasnovas et al., 2018). From the second half of the twentieth century, economic development allowed for the investment of more public funding in research and therefore the beginning of new projects and teams. The economic boom also coincided with the

Fig. 4 Taula precinct in the settlement of Torralba d'en Salort. A taula precinct is a religious building distinguished by an enormous central pillar with a horizontal slab on top – the actual taula. Its ritual function has been documented by the offerings found inside: hearths for sacrifices of young animals, incense burners in the shape of the Punic goddess Tanit, or bronze figurines of deities. (Photo: Nurarq S.C.)

arrival of tourists, who showed an interest in the archaeological heritage, which, in turn, made the local population become more aware of the island's exceptional heritage. Prehistoric monuments became the symbols of the island, a brand that attracted people from outside. The external influence also changed the social composition of the island: emigrants who came to work and settle also brought a number of unknown cultural inputs that would eventually affect the uniformity of the local way of life. As a diversity of people settled on the island, traditional identity gathered around symbols, among others, the known and familiar prehistoric monuments. Taulas (Fig. 3) and burial navetas (Fig. 4), for instance, monuments specific to Menorca, became the logo for local companies and businesses (Fig. 5) and as well as for the touristic promotion of the island.

The historic rivalry between the two main cities of Menorca, Maó and Ciutadella (Fig. 1), has not been relevant in the common quest for protecting prehistoric heritage. The latter was the capital until the arrival of the British in the eighteenth century. Ciutadella is characterized by a more traditional society, less open to social changes and less exposed to an international influence. Maó, the current capital, has a more cosmopolitan feeling due to its administrative role in the island's government, as well as a very active trade primarily through its harbor. Clear affections and identity ties to one side or the other still exist on the island, but the Talayotic monuments have been accepted as a common heritage, despite their specific location on Menorca.

Fig. 5 Commercial brands designed by several local companies using the image of a taula ((**a**): real estate, (**b**): supermarket) and the Naveta des Tudons ((**c**): artesanal cheese, (**d**): communication agency)

Common actions are taken between scientific, private, public, and social institutions. The shared targets of preservation of cultural heritage and promoting public access have generated a myriad of actions that range from the increase of research projects to the design of school programs. Educational material, handbooks for students, visits to sites, and excavation simulations are conducted in all locations of the island. New generations have grown up knowing more about the Talayotic culture, the need to preserve it, and its uniqueness of the landscape in which it is located.

Access to archaeological sites varies. Most of the Talayotic sites are on private land, and, therefore, they are not all open to the public on a regular basis. Although they are legally protected as major historic landmarks – Bien de Interés Cultural – access is not always guaranteed. According to the law, owners of the land should allow visits 4 days per month, and most of the sites are indeed open to visitors. The Consell Insular takes care of the maintenance of 39 sites, both private and public, and a total of 47 are open to the public one way or another, most of them even displaying signs and itineraries for tourists. Four sites have a small visitor center with information and other facilities and charge in exchange of an entrance fee: Sa Naveta des Tudons, Torre d'en Galmés, Talatí de Dalt, and Torralba d'en Salort. The first two are directly managed by the Consell Insular de Menorca, whereas the other two are privately managed.[2]

[2] The site of Talatí de Dalt is located in an organic farm where the owner exploits the site as a complement to agricultural activities; as for Torralba d'en Salort, the owners (Fundació Illes Balears) rent the site to a local archaeology company in charge of managing and excavating the site.

A percentage of the Menorcan population is reluctant to pay a fee to visit the sites that have been free of charge until recently. A fee is charged at sites where regular excavation and restoration work is carried out or where facilities have been built, such as informative panels, a visitor center, or restrooms. The fee is modest, and it includes additional information, an aspect that could be improved in the future. Local reluctance to pay these fees is comprehensible if we consider the specific relationship that locals and archaeological remains have had in the past: a natural part of their landscape and of their daily life. Actually, the regional government argues that this entrance fee is paid widely as a means to promote awareness of the value of cultural heritage. On the other hand, archaeological sites are frequently visited by tourists, especially the larger and easily accessible sites, who gladly agree to pay entrance fees.

Associations and Civil Engagement

Although community engagement can be affected by a more or less conducive economic and political environment, its independence and autonomy has been, and is, a crucial agent of social and cultural change. In addition, it has a very prominent role in the pedagogical field of innovation and research. Thus, it is common to see associations generate opinion and trigger changes in the social, political, and cultural scene. Although data must always be handled with caution, Menorcan associationism displays an enviable vitality, at least with respect to the rest of the Balearic Islands. According to IBESTAD (Institut d'Estadistica de les Illes Balears), in 2010, 43.11% of the residents of the Balearic Islands belonged to some association, and the percentage for Menorca is even higher, with 60.81% of the population belonging to an association. Along the same lines, only 15.72% of the Balearic associates belonged to a cultural association, while this percentage was 20.58% in Menorca.

The origin of the associations oriented toward the safeguarding, investigation, and dissemination of heritage is linked to the bourgeois classes of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. During this time, this educated group, in constant contact with European cities through its harbor, founded the Sociedad Maonesa, with a clear interest in antiquities and historiography. During the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century two highly prestigious institutions were founded – and are still active today. On the one hand, the Cercle Artístic de Ciutadella was created in 1881; in 1997, this group founded the Societat Històrico-Arqueològica Martí i Bella, devoted exclusively to the dissemination, protection, and investigation of heritage. In 1905, the Ateneu de Maó was organized as an institution with an intense interest in cultural activity in all areas. It should be noted that this entity has published, since 1986, the *Journal of Menorca* that regularly publishes a large number of articles on archaeological heritage (Salort, 2001; Vidal Hernández, 2008). In the 1990s another important association was founded linked to the new Museum of Menorca, the Friends of the Museum – Amics del

Museu de Menorca – with over a hundred members and devoted primarily to the research and public outreach of Menorcan's history and archaeology. This association has carried out excavation projects and field schools at the sites of Talatí de Dalt and Torre d'en Galmés and collaborates in the education of a generation of local archaeologists (de Salort et al., 2018).

These cultural associations have three elements in common: first, they are non-profit organizations that thrive because of the volunteer work of their members in all management and research aspects. Second, they bring together members of all ages, guaranteeing a vital and vibrant transmission of knowledge. Finally, they all share a struggle to raise enough funding to carry out their goals, while staying stable and independent from political or media interests.

Public Administration

After the adoption of a democratic system in 1977, Spain was divided into regions called Comunidades Autónomas. These regions are responsible for managing their local archaeological heritage according to the framework established by the law "Ley de Patrimonio Histórico Español" – Ley 16/1985 (see Pérez-Juez, 2012). Thus, the regional government has the power to adopt regulations to protect and preserve cultural heritage in accordance with local conditions as long as it does not contradict the central legislation. The Balearic Islands law, la Ley 12/1998 de Patrimonio Histórico de las Islas Baleares, delegated executive functions to the Island Councils. The Island Council of Menorca (Consell Insular de Menorca) is responsible for the public management of the historical heritage, including the inventory of cultural property, adoption of protection measures, sanctioning capacity, promotion of research and dissemination, etc. This law also requires that the island councils approve, every 2 years, a Historical Heritage Management Plan, with the goal of establishing the main guidelines for preserving, researching, and facilitating public access to cultural heritage.

Thus, public cultural heritage in Menorca is managed locally, by an Institution that keeps close contact with the local community and is aware of its demands and needs. The regional government also relies on the Historic Heritage Advisory Committee, a local agency representing professional associations and institutions, which convene at the request of the government or of a third of its own members.

Detailed and updated knowledge is acquired on the ground, as officials know both historic remains and the public that visits them. There are, however, some disadvantages to this model, funding being the most notable one. The annual budget of a local administration is modest and needs the participation of larger administration to tackle projects outside of the normal operation of the year. Large restorations or other expensive investments need the financial aid of the Balearic or Spanish government, or even economic support from the European Union.

Scientific Research Projects

Menorca has a long tradition of archaeological research primarily focused on the prehistoric period of the island. The first scientific publications date to the eighteenth century, at a time in which the island was under the British rule. Between 1713 and 1802, Menorca was intermittently controlled by England, which resulted in the introduction of Enlightenment ideas to the island. This setting was ideal for the publication of books related to the history and archaeology of Menorca. Thus, in 1752, the English engineer John Armstrong published *The History of the island of Minorca*. A little later, in 1818, the local scholar Joan Ramis published a book on what he interpreted as "Celtic Antiquities of the island of Menorca," and at the end of the nineteenth century, the French researcher Émile Cartailhac published *Monuments Primitifs des Îles Baléares* (1892). These works laid the foundations for subsequent scientific studies that, as of the twenty-first century, have provided a large amount of data on the island's prehistory (Casasnovas et al., 2018).

Currently there are four higher education institutions with research projects on the island: Boston University (BU), USA, and the Spanish universities of Alicante, Granada, and Illes Baleares. Boston University is probably a good example of a foreign institution within a local community. BU has been offering a summer field school for their students since 2001. The students join a multidisciplinary team that has conducted research at several archaeological sites on the island, but primarily at Torre d'en Galmés. But at the same time, BU works with the local community, researchers, and institutions to ensure a constant interaction between local and foreigners. An important part of the annual budget is invested in restoration and site presentation, which guarantees access to both local and foreign communities. The excavation team has also collaborated with different projects that have to do with cultural heritage of the island, including consulting with public or private institutions, organizing a traveling exhibition for schools, demonstrations of experimental archaeology, and guided tours in Spanish and English. However, the most important collaboration is scientific: a good part of the research team is formed by local scholars and local research institutions, with the goal of creating networks and synergies that can bring together locals and outsiders.

As of 2020, 14 archaeological research projects – whether survey or excavation – are taking place in Menorca. Eleven of these projects are focused on prehistory, 4 of them affiliated to universities – Boston University, University of Granada, University of Alicante, and University of the Balearic Islands – while the remaining 7 are conducted by nonprofit organizations. Four of them are associations created in Menorca (Associació d'Amics of the Museum of Menorca, Associació d'Amics de Torralba, Associació Sa Cudia Cremada Fieldschool and Associació Arqueologia i Patrimoni). A fifth one was founded in neighboring Mallorca (Associació d'Amics del Museu de Manacor) and carries out a project that involves the two islands. A final one is a cultural entity from Andalucía in southern Spain – the Society for the recovery and investigation of cultural heritage – that brings together private and public investment for the research and dissemination of archaeological heritage.

Fig. 6 Volunteers participating in excavation projects carried out at the Talayotic site of Torre d'en Galmés (Photos by the authors)

Other than the four universities mentioned, the rest of the teams are not directly linked to research centers. However, scientific quality is guaranteed by the supervision of local authorities. The Council of Menorca employs archaeologists in its Department of Culture who must certify and guarantee the scientific rigor of research projects.

Funding for archaeological research varies: from private research funding from the universities to the financial support provided by the Insular Council of Menorca. Thus, in 2019, a total amount of 131.373,30 euros was allocated by the Council of Menorca to fund archaeological work. Other funding came from local city halls, associations, and other private investment. Fieldwork varies in time (2–8 weeks) and is part of a 5-year research plan. Most of the field work allows volunteers (locals or not) to participate in different tasks, along with the researchers, academics, and students (Fig. 6). Moreover, excavation permits require the consolidation of unearthed structures, which is done through local companies and, therefore, involves the participation of artisans, masons, or other professionals in this area.

Scientific publications are produced by the different teams working on the island, with an average of five publications per year between 2010 and 2020 (Ferrer & Riudavets, 2019). Results are also presented at national and international conferences, such as the European Association of Archaeologists Annual Meeting and Society for American Archaeology Annual Meeting. There is no specific requirement in getting the excavation permits to produce materials for the local community; however, public funding entails a public archaeology program that involves the local community.

Private Sector

As in many other places, archaeological heritage management in Menorca combines public and private efforts and includes the community both as a collective and as individuals. The site of Torre d'en Galmés is a good example: managed by the Consell Insular de Menorca, different teams participate in the research and preservation of the site, Amics del Museu de Menorca and Boston University since 2001, and a private company, ARQ Patrimonio, since 2016. The site has also been excavated with funding from the Spanish Department of Culture, with the goal of making it the benchmark of Talayotic culture.

Therefore, we witness a trend to promote collaboration between all agents and understand the site as a global space for community interaction. This collaboration can go from research to visits, exhibitions, historical re-enactments, workshops, gastronomic activities, hiking, concerts, participation of volunteers in excavations, etc. (Cobos & García, 2018). With the submission of the Menorca's World Heritage nomination, there has been an increase of the number of private companies specialized in heritage management and cultural tourism, such as Talaia Cultura, Menorca Arqueològica, Mediterraneum, Nurarq or Menorca Natura, and Turisme i Cultura. This increase shows the economic profit associated to cultural heritage, primarily in its touristic and educational side.

Public Outreach

Different institutions, whether private or public, carry out public outreach programs. Museums on the island are especially active and organize exhibits, lectures, guided tours, etc. The Museu de Menorca (local museum) plays an important role in this field and shows how local institutions and communities have become closer. The Museum was founded in 1975 with the donation of private collections gathered by local scholars in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It was under the supervision of the country central government until 1984, when responsibilities over culture were transferred to the regions (comunidades autónomas). Finally, in 2011, and after a long claim by the Consell Insular, the governance of the museum was finally delegated to the island. The Association Amics del Museu de Menorca (Friends of the Museum) is a nonprofit organization linked to the museum in order to guarantee community participation. Its board of directors includes members with or without a professional or academic connection to the heritage field, who approve proposals for activities dealing with research and public outreach. Both entities (museum and association) do not always coincide in their points of view, which provides a critical view of the museum's approach to dealing with heritage and community.

Public outreach is now an expected component of work undertaken by all research teams. As part of excavation and research projects, all groups working on Menorca have participated actively in sharing results with the community. This way, locals and tourist can learn firsthand from the researchers, either through open doors days, lectures, exhibitions, etc. In addition, all research teams have incorporated

social media to their projects, and all of them are active online (e.g., Anglada et al., 2012). Good dissemination needs not only skills on communication but also understanding of the message to be conveyed (McManamon, 2000). Community members participate as fieldwork volunteers, assisting site tours, and in many other activities. Almost all, if not all, archaeologists working on the island have carried out guided visits to the sites, which in turn give them a better understanding of visitors' interests and previous knowledge. This feedback is then used in publications, talks, or advising, which makes for a firsthand source of information. On the other hand, many members of the population do not participate in the decision-making process of the public outreach activities.

Talayotic Menorca: Candidate for the World Heritage List

Talayotic Menorca constitutes a serial cultural candidacy that has been nominated for the UNESCO World Heritage List. The nomination includes several representative archaeological sites of the Talayotic Culture of Menorca. In 2009, the Institut Menorquí d'Estudis, through its Section of History and Archeology, unanimously agreed to request that the Insular Council of Menorca begin the process to nominate the prehistoric heritage of Menorca as UNESCO World Heritage. On April 14, 2010, the Plenary Session of the Insular Council of Menorca unanimously approved the beginning of the actions to complete the candidacy, which was inscribed on the Indicative List of the Spanish Department of Culture on January 29, 2013. In September 2015, a draft was sent to the World Heritage Center at UNESCO, Paris, for revision before final submission in February 2016. After reviewing the proposal and visiting the sites, ICOMOS representatives recommended to postpone the World Heritage nomination to a subsequent evaluation cycle and requested several changes. One of the most relevant is introduction of the landscape in the nomination, as it is singular and specific to the prehistoric heritage. The local institutions are currently working on the new file (https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/3433/). The regional government has created an agency to encourage local participation: the Advisory Committee for the Candidacy of Talayotic Menorca. The committee includes representatives of the island's civil society: associations linked to cultural heritage, cultural tourism professionals, landowners where archaeological sites are located, etc. This participation is still limited and much more could be done to promote public involvement in the decision-making process.

Challenges

The Menorcan approach of involving communities in protecting and preserving Talayotic heritage seems to have more advantages than disadvantages. However, this does not mean that there are not challenges that should be discussed and addressed.

The first challenge has to do with the focus of the research most promoted by local authorities, associations, or academic institutions. There is an unquestionable popular awareness and appreciation for the Talayotic sites but also for other time periods that most recent research has not addressed, such as medieval or eighteenth-century periods. Although access to public funding is open to everyone, most of the projects that regularly opt for these funds deal with prehistory. One of the reasons might be that later periods have been studied through documents and additional sources. There is, however, one permanent ongoing project focused on Roman archaeology, Sanitja (Es Mercadal), and other projects that approach later periods only as part of the diachronic study of Talayotic sites. The candidacy of Menorcan Talayotic Culture to the World Heritage List might have also promoted this situation. There should be an encouragement – whether coming from local authorities, cultural associations, or research institutions – to expand the scope of archaeological research to later time periods.

This challenge is linked to funding itself. Most of the archaeology on the island is funded by the local authority – Consell Insular de Menorca – which puts archaeological research at the mercy of political and economic circumstances, as confirmed during the 2008 economic crisis, when public funding dropped dramatically (Ferrer & Riudavets, 2019). Moreover, grants are provided in small quantities and do not intend to fund the total of the research cost, which makes it difficult for smaller scientific groups with limited economic resources. Large, interdisciplinary, or even island-wide projects are difficult, and most of them are confined to the study of specific sites. This has undoubtedly affected the failure of the previous World Heritage proposal. The new file is addressing this gap by promoting landscape archaeology and broader studies of the territory.

The second challenge comes from the pressure of tourism. As most societies have done through history, local communities have interacted with the sites as part of their economic landscape, using it for purposes such as agriculture, extraction of raw materials for construction, touristic development, etc. For the most part, locals enjoy their archaeological remains and have treated them with respect. However, pressures from the ever-increasing numbers of tourists, and also from related development projects, are a growing threat to the conservation of heritage sites. This is also connected with the risk that criteria to restore archaeological remains could be influenced by tourism, in order to emphasize a uniform image of the island's archaeology, or even favoring the preservation and public access to Talayotic sites instead of other monuments from later periods.

Finally, although there is a growing interest to have archaeological research teams and other institutions involved in public outreach; this has been, again, very targeted to certain time periods, even specific groups. There is no doubt that active community involvement exists: local communities are invited to participate in all stages of a project, including project goals and research questions. Public outreach per se usually involves the experts informing the locals about the results of research or inviting them to observe or even participate in archaeology. Schools, museums, and associations organize regular lectures, visits to sites, or other activities, such as

the recent program "Torres, talaies i talaiots de la Mediterrània, un cant pels drets humans," which encourages local participation in the lighting of a chain of fires that can be seen from island to island. However, there is room in Menorca for the type of community archaeology projects that are taking place elsewhere, which include more integrated cooperation and participation by community members during all phases of work.

Conclusion

Although a direct cultural connection between current islanders and those from prehistoric times does not exist on Menorca, both communities share a common ground: they inhabit the same territory, with same physical and geographical limits. In Smith and Van Dommelen's (2018) words, the islands present "distinct identities that are not so much isolated as local and integrative from islanders' perspectives — and these monuments play a key role in asserting, embodying, and 'nailing down' these local identities." Although these authors mainly refer to the final stages of the Talayotic period, their assessment can be applied to modern times. Thus, some authors have suggested that the early publication of Joan Ramis on the prehistory of the island, in 1818, could have had the goal of claiming Menorcan identity at a time when the island had become part of the Spanish crown after a century of belonging successively to England, France, and England again. That specific situation was perceived by local scholars as a threat to the island's culture and history, with a potential risk of having its own identity diluted in the new political context (Casasnovas et al., 2018). As mentioned above, the rebirth of a strong interest in prehistoric monuments during the second half of the twentieth century could be associated to the new social and cultural changes and external influences that would have forced Menorcans to find landmarks and references in their distant and unique past.

In any case, the local concern for prehistory and archaeological preservation goes beyond finding iconic milestones or references to go back to. There is a true interest in the protection of these monuments and the landscape in which they have existed for the past 3000 years. Local administration, academic institutions, associations, and individuals on the island will all need to continue working together to ensure the protection, research, preservation, and public access to these invaluable cultural resources. The ties between communities and prehistoric remains exist and represent a good example of the importance of social support in the preservation of cultural heritage. However, an ongoing dialogue should be the key to guarantee that success will continue in the future. Sharing information and points of view about heritage-related topics is a good starting point for future actions. As we include more and more stakeholders in the process of preserving and transmitting archaeological heritage, we should keep in mind that heritage is really about common and shared values.

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