RE-designing Access to Cultural Heritage
for a wider participation in preservation, (re-)use and management of European Culture

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GOOD PRACTICES OF SOCIAL PARTICIPATION IN CULTURAL HERITAGE

AUTHORS: MAURIZIO TOSCANO AND SILVANA COLELLA

The REACH repository of good practices related to social participation in cultural heritage (CH) is a fundamental component of the Social Platform established by the REACH project. Carried out with the contribution of project partners, this collection comprises over 100 records[1] from 26 countries of European and extra European participatory activities in the field of cultural heritage, with an emphasis on small-scale, localised interventions, but also including examples of larger collaborative projects and global or distributed online initiatives.[2]

The REACH repository has a global geographic scope and a multifocal thematic orientation. Due to this expansive reach, a variety of initiatives are recorded which capture the nuances of participation in action. Both quantitative and qualitative assessments of these records are included. This highlights five emerging patterns of participatory approaches, identifying areas of commonality that characterise a sizable proportion of the collected records. These areas are defined in relation to specific groups of beneficiaries (minorities, indigenous communities and women) or in relation to modalities of participation (the role of the arts, digital platforms and archaeology).

1. APPROACH

The first step consisted of putting together a common project protocol, for internal use only, to provide guidelines on how to focus the research. For example, the starting point were the CH categories of the REACH pilots, reworked to cover a larger spectrum of topics: 'urban', 'rural', 'institutional', 'minorities/indigenous' and 'intangible'. Then, a series of aspects relevant to describe each activity were indicated: 'what', 'where', 'who', 'target group', 'framework', 'short description', 'language', 'participatory approaches', 'public engagement strategies', 'data management', 'relevant documents and media', 'web links' and 'sources'. Finally, instead of defining a strict protocol to identify and select good practices in CH participation, the consortium decided to take a more flexible approach, combining the personal experience of the experts involved in the activity, with some general guidelines, such as:

- favour less-known, local initiatives instead of large, well-represented projects already cited in several collections of EU success stories;
- take advantage of the partners' direct experience in participatory activities; focus on approaches and practices and not on the project itself;

[1] This figure was accurate at the time of writing in January 2019.
[2] Records can be found on the REACH Open Heritage website: https://www.open-heritage.eu/heritage-data/good-practices/

- look for stories and not just for records;
- look for good practices beyond European borders to provide a more diverse catalogue of activities that could potentially be replicated;
- take into consideration only initiatives with a proven record of active participation, rather than activities in which the public is involved simply as an audience;
- do not discard beforehand unsuccessfully initiatives if they followed an interesting approach, as they can be a source of different lessons learnt to avoid pitfalls;
- use the REACH identified cross-cutting themes of preservation, (re-)use and management to provide a specific perspective on participatory approaches.

This process led to the identification of the main components shared by nearly every case:

- an organiser, promoting the initiative;
- a CH field, object of the initiative;
- some beneficiaries, involved in participatory actions;
- a location, physical or virtual, where participation takes place;
- a participatory approach, focused on the role played by the public and the goal towards which its involvement is oriented; one or more public engagement strategies, to improve the project's attractiveness and ensure that engagement efforts are effective and match expectations.

2. THE PARTICIPATORY DIMENSION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

2.1 QUANTITATIVE DESCRIPTION

In order to introduce the REACH collection of good practices, a brief quantitative description of the dataset as a whole is necessary. The dataset represents a valid and large collection of practices to be evaluated qualitatively; its geographical and linguistic variance is contingent on the expertise and personal experience of the people that have been directly involved in the search. Favouring local, bottom-up initiatives entails some difficulties: many of these activities were not described in English or did not have a well curated website, where information could be easily garnered. Due to this bias, the following charts should be taken just as descriptive of the data collected so far, and do not represent a statistically significant overview of the phenomenon of social participation in cultural heritage. The dataset will be kept open for the inclusion of new records for the whole length of the project and an effort is ongoing to increase its statistical significance with the coverage of additional countries, especially in Europe.

Within the charts, each case was classifiable under multiple categories, which is why the totals exceed 100%. 35% of the total recorded activities involves some kind of participation in research data, during either collection or analysis.

The distribution across the various typologies of CH is uneven, with an equal number of cases from urban and rural contexts (35% each), 30% on institutional heritage, 23% about minorities and 17% of initiatives related to intangible heritage.

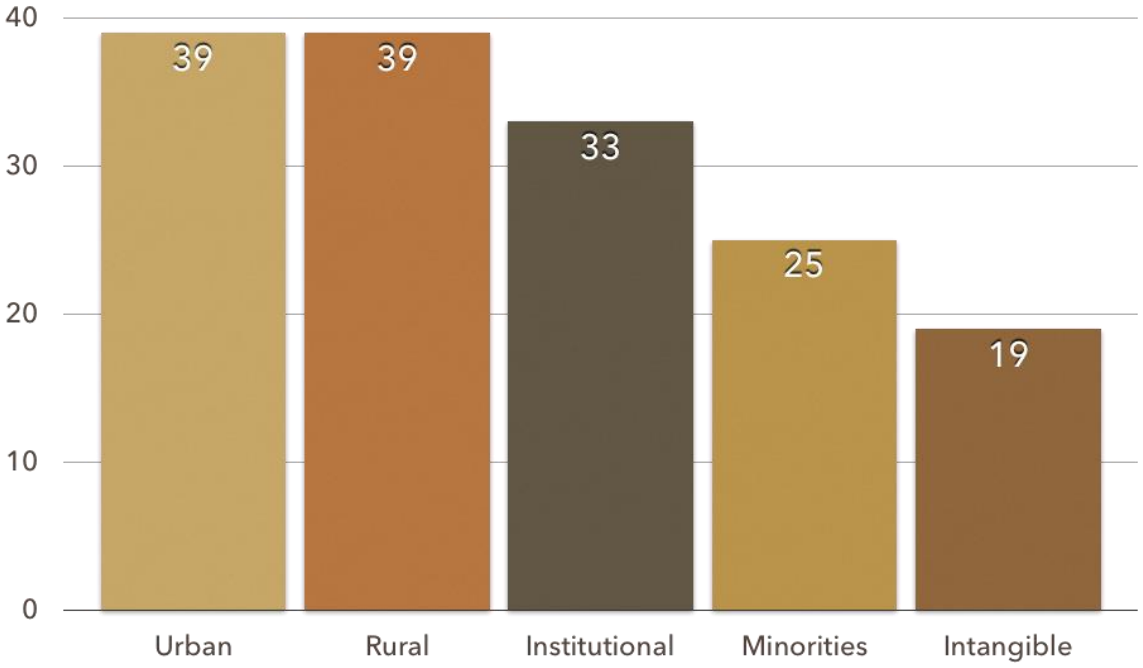

Figure 1. Quantification of examples recorded according to predefined CH typologies. Source: M. Toscano

In terms of the aims of participation, the vast majority of initiatives fall within the "preservation" field (60%), followed by "use and re-use" (47%) and "management" (25%). Figure 2 shows a correlation between the two categories (CH typologies and aims), but because these charts are descriptive of the dataset rather than analytical, no further inference is possible at this stage.

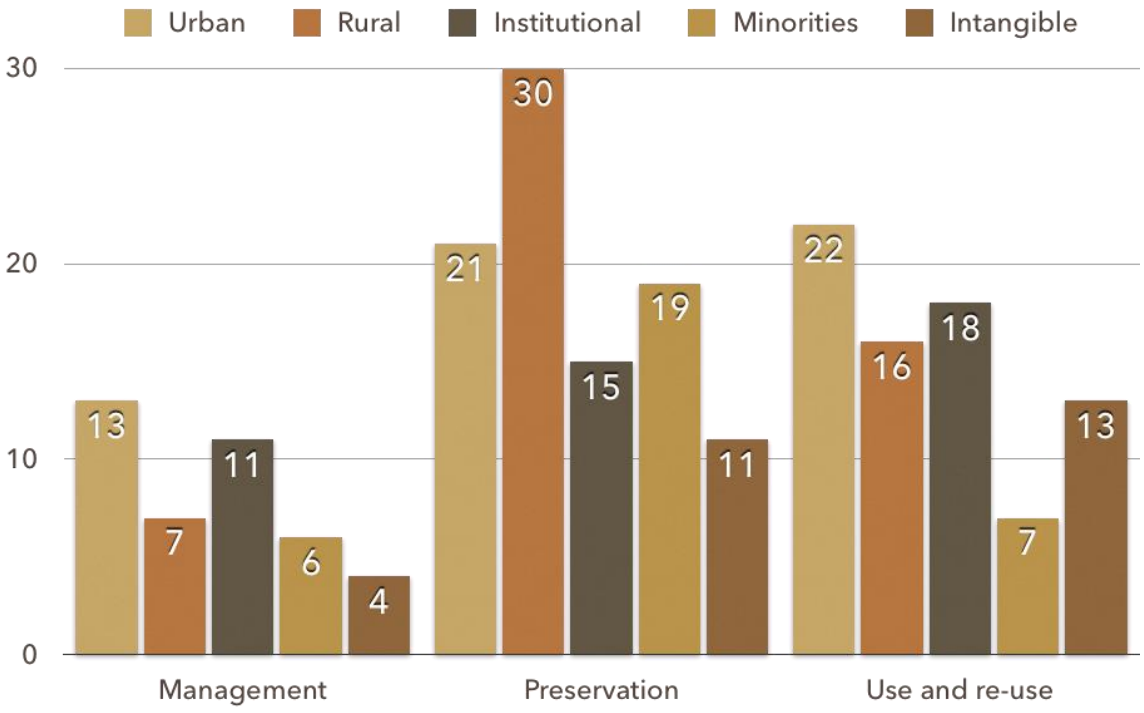

Figure 2. Correlation between CH typologies and aims of participation. Source: M. Toscano

2.2 PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES: AN OVERVIEW

Participation comes in many shades. It takes different forms in different contexts; it may originate in institutional initiatives or community actions, and involve a variety of beneficiaries, from large, undefined audiences to small and specific groups of citizens and stakeholders. Not all modes of participation in cultural heritage entail the sharing of responsibility and power that defines participatory governance[3]. However, they all bear witness to the increasing interest, especially in the twenty-first century, in democratising access to culture, and opening up the fruition, management and preservation of heritage to ensure the active and effective collaboration of communities, neighbourhoods and individuals.

Achieving a level of participation that is truly transformative requires both short- and long-term processes, whereby participatory approaches are tested and experiments are conducted which facilitate the transition from 'rhetoric' to 'practice'; from the theoretical consensus about the importance of participation, to the realisation of sustainable initiatives that verify, in the field, what works and what doesn't. For this reason, mapping exercises such as the one undertaken by REACH are relevant, as they gather a variety of examples of participation in action. With over a hundred records of good practices, European and extra European, on a large or a small scale, the REACH repository provides ample material for a qualitative investigation of the modalities according to which social participation in cultural heritage is imagined and implemented.

The literature on participation – Arnstein (1969) and Wilcox (1994), in particular – distinguishes between degrees of participation measured against an eight-step 'ladder' (Arnstein) or five 'stances' (Wilcox). The spectrum of positions Wilcox and Arnstein identify runs the gamut from minimal to optimal participation, the latter being achieved when citizens fully share control, power and responsibilities. Rather than simply classifying the entries in the REACH repository according to these yardsticks, it is more useful to highlight how participation is interpreted by the various actors involved in any given practice, what strategies and approaches are adopted (some more frequently than others), what social groups are involved in targeted actions (large audiences, minorities, indigenous communities, women or disadvantaged groups of citizens) and how participation is evolving.

As Wilcox rightly argues, 'different levels [of participation] are appropriate at different times to meet the expectations of different interests' (Wilcox, 1994: 4). In other words, no one-fits-all model can apply to every case, hence the need to be observant and open-minded when it comes to assessing good practices. Each one of them contains valuable lessons. The records collected in the REACH repository of good practices are diverse, but some common trends or patterns can be detected that show the nuances of participation in relation to recurrent strategies or approaches. In what follows, five constellations of participatory practices will be presented in more detail, to emphasise commonalities across different projects and to flag innovative approaches. Some projects include practices that are here classified under different constellations; the patterns thus identified ought not to be regarded as a rigid classificatory grid.

[3] See the recent report of the OMC working group of Member States' experts, *Participatory Governance of Cultural Heritage* (2018).

2.2.1 Participation, minorities, indigenous and local communities

The Roma community is the single largest ethnic minority group in Europe. It has suffered several forms of discrimination throughout history, which have caused situations of exclusion in different social areas, from work and education to housing and political rights. The REACH project, with its specific minority focussed pilot on Hungarian Roma cultural heritage, is committed to tracing good practices of participation that involve Roma groups at various levels. So far the archive contains eight records, which range from recent initiatives (**Cloudfactory**) to long-standing projects (**Gandhi Institutes**), aimed at safeguarding both tangible (**First Roma Country House**) and intangible aspects of Roma heritage (**Rajko Method**; **RomaInterbellum**). Interactive participatory approaches characterise nearly all these practices. **The First Roma Country House**, for example, created by a civic initiative in 2001, has worked closely with the local community ever since, organising programmes for children, teenagers and the elderly, which help to forge a stronger connection with the past. Similarly, though with an orientation towards the future, the **Cloudfactory** social design workshop, in the Bódva Valley, brings together children living in extreme poverty and young designers to co-produce not only objects but also, most importantly, 'perspectives' to help children imagine future career plans. Through oral history, Roma families were directly involved in creating the **Romani local collection in Újpest**, while the COST project **RomaInterbellum** relies on crowdsourcing modalities to compile a comprehensive multilingual bibliographical record of the Roma and their culture. While these and other activities illustrate how participation can drive heritage preservation, the question of increasing the visibility (and sustainability) of marginalised cultural heritage sites remains problematic.

Good practices that foster the participation of Indigenous communities such as the **Cuddie Spring project** (in New South Wales, Australia) are of particular relevance as they openly address intercultural issues, seeking sustainable solutions. The model of participation adopted by researchers and archaeologists at Cuddie Spring entails the involvement of Aboriginal people not just during fieldwork or excavations, but also in the process of investigating culture and history, as well as in disseminating information to the general public. This is achieved by providing employment and training to indigenous people, subject to availability of funds, and by gaining the trust of local communities through repeated consultations, negotiations with land-owners, regular visits to the area, and the production of documents (reports) in 'plain English'. The traditional knowledge of indigenous and rural communities, their intangible heritage, can best be safeguarded by encouraging participatory forms of collaborations as the **CONECT-e** (Spain)**, Anta-Cusco** (Perù) and **Vale de Copán** (Honduras) projects testify. The **Anta-Cusco** project taps into the local knowledge of medicinal plants, agriculture and natural heritage, which elderly people still possess, to activate forms of intergenerational exchange and learning that can ensure the effective transmission of valuable expertise and the valorisation of existing biodiversity. In this case, protecting and re-activating forms of intangible heritage that are about to disappear can *only* be warranted by engaging the local indigenous communities in collaborative and participatory activities.

When actions are undertaken that address minority heritage and indigenous communities, participatory approaches are not just advisable, they are necessary, whether to preserve marginalised heritage sites, re-activate local knowledge that would otherwise be lost, or engage indigenous people in projects located in their own territory. The REACH dataset contains unequivocal evidence of the validity of participatory strategies in this respect.

2.2.2 Participation and gender

Women are not a minority. Yet their presence as producers and transmitters of cultural heritage has often remained in the shadows, as several scholars in the field of heritage studies have been arguing for quite some time.[4] It is therefore important to flag good practices that encourage the participation of women or manifest a high degree of gender awareness. The REACH repository contains several examples of projects notable for their sensitivity to gender dynamics in the cultural heritage field. These projects differ in terms of scale and approaches, but they all place strong emphasis on a gendered notion of participation, whether highlighting women's contribution to the creation of heritage (**MoMoWo**, **e-xiliad@s**), their specific knowledge and expertise (**Bobbin Lace Tradition**, **The Çatalhöyük CPBR project**, **Mayan-Achi Food System**), or the entrepreneurial possibilities arising from a combination of tradition and innovation (**Rural Heritage and Creative Female Entrepreneurs**, **Umm-el-Jimal Women's Empowerment Project**).

Some projects are specifically designed to tap into the knowledge and experience of mothers. To preserve the **Mayan-Achi** food system, in Guatemala, the Mother Earth Association has devised a programme based on mother-to-mother participatory workshops, which promote the exchange of knowledge about nutrition, local plants and seeds with a view to marketing organic products thus providing women with an additional source of income. Museums too are showing some interest in promoting initiatives targeted to a specific sector of the public, migrant women, as in the project **Mothers** supported by the Civic Museums of Reggio Emilia, Italy. Based on storytelling sessions and interviews conducted with a group of 40 adult women of different nationalities, this initiative aimed to create transcultural bridges between migrants' experiences and the representations of motherhood celebrated in the arts. Though this practice follows a top-down approach to participation, its value resides in fostering integration through heritage interpretation.

Bottom-up approaches are not lacking as testified, for instance, by the **e-xiliad@s** initiative – which aims to collect online information about the Spanish republican exile, and openly solicits women to contribute to the collection by sharing their experience of exile – and the **Umm-el-Jimal Women's Empowerment Project** in Northern Jordan, run by women's associations and designed to increase the active participation of local women in the provision of hospitality and cultural education services in an area of high heritage value. Finally, the desire to keep alive the memory of both female craft – the **bobbin lace tradition** in Balatonendréd, Hungary – and women's professional contribution to the creation of tangible heritage (**MoMoWo**) has inspired good practices of participation, involving younger generations and helping to disseminate knowledge about women's creativity.

Some might object that singling out good practices solely for their focus on women may have the unintended effect of further demarcating marginalisation. This objection would be valid if the cultural heritage sector were already fully attuned to the importance of recognising gender as a central component in the creation, management, interpretation and transmission of heritage. However, this is not the case, even when it comes to gathering and assessing best practices in participation and participatory governance, which ought to be understood as truly inclusive processes.

[4] see Smith 2008, Levy 2013, Shortliffe 2015, Colella 2018.

By highlighting examples of women's inclusion, REACH aims to encourage further research along similar lines, advancing an idea of participation that eschews the gender blindness still prevailing in many heritage contexts.

2.2.3 The role of the arts in participatory approaches

A sizable percentage of good practices in the REACH dataset rely on participatory approaches that capitalise on the impact of the arts – the theatre, street and public art, and creative sessions – in order to expand the reach of participatory actions. This finding is of relevance as it illuminates the social function the arts can successfully perform in heritage projects, as catalysts of public interest. The arts are usefully deployed in a variety of initiatives, whether small or large, local, regional or international, as strategic tools to enhance people's participation and involvement.

In some cases, the arts provide both the object and the method: the **Independent Theatre** in Budapest not only performs Roma plays thus preserving intangible heritage, it also offers non-formal art education and support to young prospective professionals by organising art-based participatory programmes. In other cases, local artists have launched bottom-up initiatives to safeguard intangible traditions (**Puppetry in Chrudim**, Czech Republic) or tangible remains (**stained glass, Libyně**; **Luková revitalisation**) that have then attracted the attention and collaboration of municipalities, civic organisations and volunteers, giving rise to successful participatory actions in small towns. In other cases, deploying the arts is an integral part of innovative methods devised to engage people in reflective activities: the Horizon 2020 project **TRACES** explicitly leverages the potential of artistic expression to address painful and difficult aspects of a divisive historical legacy, by organising creative co-production experiments involving heritage professionals, stakeholders, researchers and artists. Along similar lines, the Horizon 2020 project **UnREST** mobilises the power of theatrical performances to provoke ethical and political questions about modes of remembrance. Paired with qualitative reception analysis of audiences' experience, impressions and feelings, the staging of a play can trigger participatory processes.

Collaborative street art is also central in municipal projects, as in the case of **Almócita** in Spain, that are undertaken with the full participation of citizens, aiming to reverse the decline and rural depopulation of the area. The bottom-up collective initiative, **Percurso do Negro** in Porto Alegro (Brazil), uses public spaces to exhibit, and render more visible, the semi-hidden heritage of the Afro-Brazilian community, with public art playing no marginal role in creating tangible signs of the presence of this community throughout history. Other initiatives are designed to increase accessibility to culture, specifically addressing the needs of people with sensory disabilities: the **Opera Festival** in Macerata, Italy, has a programme of activities (touch tours, audio descriptions and assistive listening) that allow visually impaired and deaf citizens to enjoy the performances. The involvement of active spectators in decision-making processes is the aim of the European project **BeSpectACTive!** Focused on audience engagement with artistic creation and cultural organisations, the project illustrates how participatory governance in the performing arts can be implemented.

The vital role the arts play in participatory approaches to culture and heritage can hardly be underestimated. The traditional form of participation – attending arts performances – is not what is at stake here; rather, several good practices in the REACH repository demonstrate that, through the arts, a widening of participation can be achieved, in local contexts, as well as in larger transnational cases.

2.2.4 Participation and digital platforms

In addition to the promotion and dissemination of existing heritage knowledge to wider audiences, digital platforms also allow people to create their own shared heritage or to shape the content of online collections. Several initiatives in the REACH dataset perform this function, soliciting the direct contribution of participants through custom-made online platforms, apps and games. A distinction can be drawn between place-specific projects (**Historic Graves**, **LabIN, WomenOfIreland**, **Hetor and People's Republic of Stoke Croft**) and global or distributed online initiatives (**LandMark and Museum of Broken Relationships**), but they share similar strategies.

Participation is often activated in the shape of an online crowdsourcing of ideas, memories, personal stories, and other data according to the thematic focus of each initiative. The **LabIN** project, based in Granada, adopts the user-centred, open-innovation system of the living lab to gather citizens' ideas about improvements to the city environment, including the cultural heritage dimension. This method is supplemented with in-situ activities such as workshops, or seminars with volunteers in order to scale up the participatory component. Similarly, the Irish **Historic Graves** initiative has an online platform for the transcription of memorial epitaphs open to all registered users. Training workshops are also offered to local communities interested in contributing to surveying historic graveyards. The combination of online interaction with local workshops and meetings works best in terms of ensuring meaningful participation.

As for global initiatives that capitalise on bottom-up approaches, tapping into the resources of digital technology allows for a considerable expansion of participation in content creation, as exemplified by the community mapping exercise of the **LandMark** project (aimed at quantifying the lands collectively held and used by Indigenous Peoples), or the collection of personal stories about heart breaks, launched by the **Museum of Broken Relationships**, which confers the status of heritage to a multiplicity of experiences across the world. The value of this participatory approach resides in the opportunity thus created for shaping and sharing forms of heritage that are collectively deemed important.

Digital technology is also instrumental in enabling citizens to act as skilled storytellers and curators, as in the activities planned by the **PLUGGY** project which test the collaborative practice of 'distributed curation' of heritage content, emphasising everyday competence rather than formal artistic education. Users are thus allowed to create virtual exhibitions, which are then hosted on the PLUGGY social platform. Targeting all sectors of the creative industries, the **Europeana Space** project facilitates the creative (re-)use of digital cultural content with a view to increasing opportunities for employment and economic growth. In this case, though participatory practices are addressed to a specific professional sector, it is the link between participation, creativity and economic impact that is deserving of attention.

That digital instruments have the potential to enhance participation is by now a self-evident truth. As the REACH dataset demonstrates, nearly all dissemination activities make extensive use of digital and social media platforms; but the most interesting experiments pertain to the intelligent application of digital tools in order to shift the emphasis from users-consumers to active creators, in line with the 3.0 model of culture theorised by Sacco.[5]

2.2.5 Participatory archaeology

A rich set of data in the REACH repository points to the pivotal role archaeology can play in encouraging long-lasting forms of participation. Several designations are in use – public archaeology, community archaeology, archaeology from below, experimental and reconstructive archaeology – which testify to the long tradition of public engagement inscribed in the history of this preservation orientated disciplinary field. That in the REACH repository archaeology-driven participatory practices are numerous should come as no surprise. A variety of approaches are adopted, ranging from research partnerships with local communities to educational games and role-playing.

One project tests the method of **Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR**) in a well-known archaeological site, **Çatalhöyük**, in Turkey. Based on the assumption that research too can be democratised, the team of archaeologists working in the area have devised a series of long-term capacity-building activities to educate indigenous communities and ensure their involvement in the process of knowledge production. Engaged in all aspects of the research project as partners, community members effectively contribute to the sustainability of the project itself. The **recovery of traditional irrigation channels** in Spain, carried out under the auspices of the MEMOLA project, is the result of a participatory and collaborative set of initiatives that brought together researchers, students, volunteers, local farmers and irrigators, involved not only in the recovery work, but also in management and decision-making processes. It is a telling example of social participation for the sake of preserving and re-activating rural heritage.

Historical reconstruction and experimental archaeology are the main channels through which social participation is achieved in the **Gilena Museographic Collection** and the **Historical Vlahos Dwelling** project. In the former, over 120 volunteers are involved in the development of research, educational and dissemination activities aimed at 'socialising' heritage in entertaining ways. Several good practices in the archaeological field have a marked educational orientation, placing children, teenagers, students, teachers and schools at the centre of participatory processes. The **Heritage Education Programme** in Uruguay has reached over 500 students in rural areas via a series of initiatives carried out in collaboration with local schools. Based on the principles of inclusive archaeology, the **Heritage for All** project in Poland is addressed to students with learning and cognitive problems, and aims to tackle fundamental questions about the perception of history and heritage by taking into account the perspectives of young people with cognitive disabilities. To raise awareness about archaeological heritage and its conservation, the MEMOLA team has built an **Archaeodrome** (an artificial archaeological site), which allows primary-school pupils to practice excavation techniques and to discover the history of their city via hands-on experimentations.

[5] See Sacco 2011.

Finally, devising novel ways to expand the reach of public participation in contemporary archaeology is the main objective of the large collaborative project **NEARCH**, funded by the European Commission Culture Programme. Their public engagement strategies include a virtual 'European Day of Archaeology' (which encourages collaboration between professionals and amateurs), a mobile app (to allow the public to interact with historical records and resources) and a call for projects aimed at gauging public perceptions of archaeology.

These and other initiatives confirm the propensity of archaeology to inspire participatory practices, collaborative and inclusive, capable of raising the awareness of communities as regards their local heritage. The examples included in the REACH archive show that engaging the public yields mutual benefits if participation is not limited to excavation work, but is instead understood as an opportunity to share knowledge about the past and to involve local communities in making decisions that affect the development of their territory.

2.2.6 Other trends

In addition to these five clusters, it is worth mentioning examples of good practices that may not coalesce into a distinct pattern, but are nonetheless noticeable for their emphasis on specific participatory outcomes. Capacity building, for instance, is a priority in at least five cases (**Inca Road, Acting Communities, NewPilgrimAge, CHOICE and Independent Theatre**); activities oriented towards the revitalisation of abandoned sites or buildings, which produce positive effects in terms of increased tourist flows and local participation, are not lacking (**Architecture of the Abandoned, Terra Incognita, Project Querença and Forget Heritage**), and the well-known concept of the 'museum without walls' or ecomuseum has been adapted and re-modelled in a variety of practices (**La Ponte Ecomuseum, Valls d'Aneu Ecomuseum, Almócita Ecomuseum, Parabiago Ecomuseum and River Caicena Ecomuseum**) all designed to improve local networks and to spur place-based development. Last, but not least, building resilience is the explicit goal of some interventions (**EcoDa, ProteCHt2save and Cloudfactory**) that focus either on the resilience of heritage in relation to climate change or on strengthening civic practices of resilience.

This overview has identified five areas of commonality across the sample of good practices collected in the REACH dataset. The five constellations of participatory approaches have been classified either in relation to groups of beneficiaries or according to modalities of social participation. This classification has the advantage of highlighting two fundamental aspects: *who* is involved and *how.*

2.3 TAXONOMY

While compiling records, each contributor could choose up to five 'keywords' that best captured defining aspects of the activity under review. This process has generated a rich list of keywords, more than 150, some of which occur more frequently. The taxonomy graphic included below illustrates, in a succinct form, the range of themes, approaches, purposes and outcomes covered in the REACH repository.

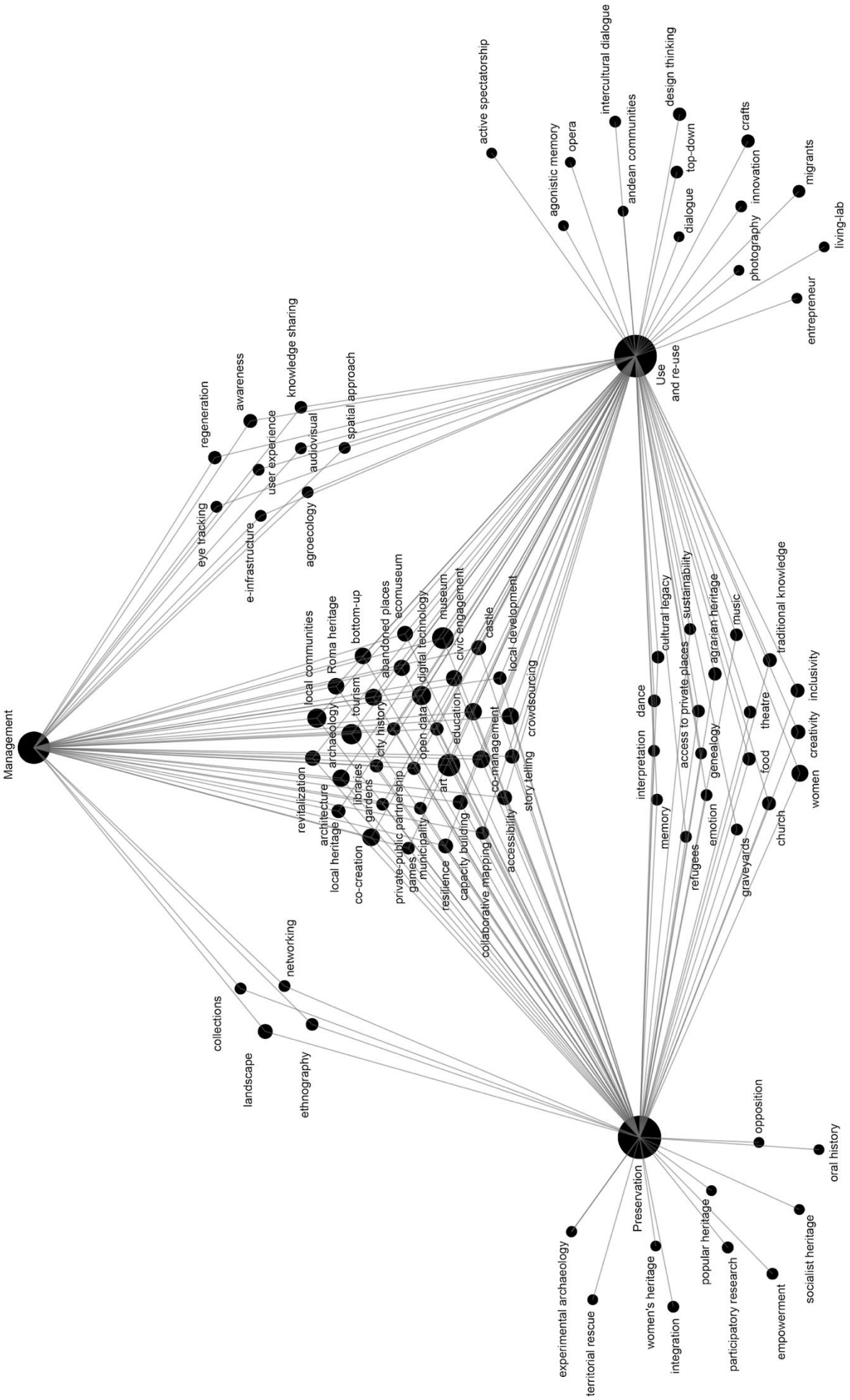

Figure 3: bivariate graph showing the relationship between CH approaches and taxonomy tags. Source: M. Toscano

3. CONCLUSION

The work described in this document has produced a number of tangible results and some potential impact. The main result is obviously the database of good practice, composed of over 100 records describing activities spread across several CH topics and a multitude of countries, linked by a common approach that facilitates openness to civil society. This repository has value as a whole but it also holds a variety of valuable data within, such as: several stakeholders identified, both as organisers and as beneficiaries of these initiatives; a wide range of different participatory approaches (crowdsourcing, collaborative mapping, co-creative sessions, co-management, collaborative media production, interviews, intergenerational meetings, role-playing, storytelling, capacity building, revitalisation of abandoned sites, conflict management, creative residences, living lab and forum theatre); a large collection of participatory engagement strategies and a reviewed list of about 90 taxonomy terms, which reflects the thematic richness of the subject under study.

Another valuable result is the reflection carried out to identify common tendencies and recurring strategies in implementing participation in a fairly broad selection of cases. This critical review, which proves the potential of the dataset as a source of investigation, will also inform further analyses to be conducted on public engagement strategies (PES). These strategies are necessary for a participatory project to be effective and, as such, are deserving of more specific scrutiny, which will be provided in a separate document (a scholarly article) in the next few months.

Final thoughts:

- Social participation is not just a catchphrase; it is a global occurrence in the cultural heritage field. Mapping out good practices extensively, though still partially, as the REACH repository does, serves the purpose of pinpointing a diverse range of concrete situations in which participation has happened and is happening. Put differently, the transition from rhetoric to praxis is well underway. Pure forms of participatory governance may still be infrequent, but the orientation towards modalities of participation that blur the distinction between professionals and amateurs or facilitate the release of control and power, in tentative ways, to communities and citizens is unmistakable.
- The value of incentivising social participation in cultural heritage is linked to the need for higher inclusivity, felt all the more keenly in troubled times by citizens as well as institutions. The REACH repository shows that widening participation in culture and heritage, by addressing the interests of minorities, indigenous communities, disadvantaged groups of citizens, is a socially responsible commitment that many are willing to undertake. The sustainability of these initiatives is inextricably bound up with the ceding of responsibility and decision-making power to the very communities or groups involved in any given action.
- While commitments to mainstreaming gender in the development sector have a long history, in cultural heritage gender issues tend to hover on the margins. Hence the need to render women's participation more explicit, to flag initiatives that raise gender awareness and to collect examples of good practices that tap into the resources and capabilities of women, across the world.

This is a necessary first step in the broader process of sensitising individuals and institutions to the gender dynamics at work in the heritage field. Unlike other datasets, the REACH repository charts specific activities that illustrate how gender awareness can make a difference.

More evidence is needed in this respect, as well as more incentives to integrate gender issues in the theory and practice of heritage.

- As for modes of participation, the findings confirm the crucial role of digital platforms in providing a virtual space for participatory interactions as well as content creation shared by many. The pre-eminence of the digital, however, should not be understood as a replacement for other types of activities – workshops, meetings and seminars – which remain valuable forms of engagement. The arts too emerge as a powerful catalyst of participation; the high incidence of art-related initiatives in the REACH repository suggests that creativity can be successfully harnessed to encourage models of participation that combine reflectivity and entertainment. With its proven record of community participation, archaeology provides several examples of effective involvement of different groups of citizens in activities that concern the management of heritage resources, whether cultural or natural.
- Museums and cultural institutions have a long tradition in participatory activities and their presence in the REACH repository is relevant, as a transversal topic connected with arts, minorities and migrants, gender and rural heritage (ecomuseums).
- Public engagement strategies (PES), a subject barely touched on in this document, should be considered as a key element of participatory approaches in CH, as they are an answer to the specific problem of how to bring people in and attract their interest, how to engage the public so as to make a participatory approach work more effectively. In this sense, PES help to better define the audience and can be targeted to specific groups.
- Data gathering and management methodologies, underrepresented and not fully exploited in the current REACH dataset, do not apply to the full set of public oriented initiative, as in many cases there is no data or it is just instrumental to pass on information. However, experience shows that, where applicable, having a well-structured approach to managing data improves the meaningfulness of participation as it makes clear how each contribution is incorporated into the collective effort towards a shared objective.

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