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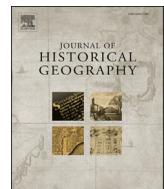
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## Industrial Obelisks: Working-class memory and Barcelona's chimney-monuments

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## ABSTRACT

This study critically examines the transformation of industrial chimneys into monuments within Barcelona's deindustrializing urban landscapes. Since the 1970s, redevelopment contexts and reimaging strategies have led to the conservation of industrial chimneys as public art and historic monuments. This paper explores the intersection of urban memory, heritage, and transformation in Barcelona, highlighting the absence of a coherent 'Authorized Heritage Discourse' and the resulting ambiguity in the meaning of these monuments. Analyzing this unique heritage practice, the study considers its impact on historic memory and working-class identity within the city's urban fabric. The research situates chimney-monuments within broader discussions on postindustrial redevelopment, urban design, heritage conservation, and public memory amidst deindustrialization. By examining the symbolic and material dimensions of industrial chimneys within Barcelona's political-economic shifts and contemporary social movements, the paper unpacks their polysemic meanings. This analysis contributes to local debates and reflects broader European trends. The study questions how these monuments are integrated into working-class memory politics and shifting heritage regimes. Recognizing that historic monuments are dynamic material and cultural processes subject to ongoing resignification, the paper concludes with a discussion on the potential roles of insurgent heritage practices in connecting past and present social struggles.

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'Industrial Barcelona was so beautiful!' exclaimed a poster to the Barcelona Then and Now Facebook group, captioning a 1976 photograph of the neighborhood of Poblenou, historically known as the 'Catalan Manchester'. 'I prefer today's decorative chimneys', a commentator responded. Little remains of this workaday landscape, aside from a solitary, conserved chimney. The city of Barcelona, in the Spanish autonomous community of Catalonia, retains at least 71 obsolete factory chimneys, most having been conserved, partially reconstructed, or even relocated brick-by-brick since the 1970s. Chimney-monuments stand prominently throughout Spain — often, as the sole remaining factory elements retained in brownfield redevelopment — appearing anachronistically in public spaces, roundabouts, and interior patios of housing developments.

As industrial chimneys were gradually incorporated into urban design strategies throughout Spain since the 1990s, the study, structural survey, and material conservation of these new

monuments have become a niche industry: narrating their cultural-historical values and ensuring their structural integrity has meant (re)learning how they had come into existence, a task of industrial archaeologists, historians, architects, and engineers.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *El vapor i 'els vapors': Actes de les II Jornades d'Arqueologia Industrial de Catalunya* [Steam and factories: Proceedings of the II Meeting of Industrial Archaeology of Catalonia], Sabadell, Enginyers Industrials de Catalunya (1994), *Les Xemeneies Industrials* [Industrial Chimneys], Jornades del Museu 2, Museu de la Ciència i de la Tècnica de Catalunya (MNCACTEC, 1997). A substantial archive is available at the Documentation Center of the MNCACTEC, Terrassa, Spain. Also see César Díaz Gómez and Ramon Gumà Esteve, 'Patología, Diagnóstico y Recuperación de Chimeneas Industriales de Fábrica de Ladrillo Cerámico' [Pathology, Diagnostics and Recuperation of Ceramic Tile Factory Chimneys], *Informes de la Construcción* 51 (1999) 23–39; Gracia López Patiño, Pedro Verdejo Gimeno, Alicia Martínez Anton, Javier Benlloch Marco, 'Proceso de ejecución de chimeneas industriales de ladrillo valencianas y murcianas' [Construction processes of Valencian and Murcian brick industrial chimneys], *Informes de la Construcción* 68 (2016), np.; Gracia López Patiño, Jose M. Adam, Pedro Verdejo Gimeno, and Gabriele Milani, 'Causes of Damage to Industrial Brick Masonry Chimneys', *Engineering Failure Analysis* 74 (2017) 188–201.

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Barcelona and its surrounding industrial towns led the trend of monumentalizing solitary chimneys, an approach exported worldwide as a result of the city's influence in vanguardist urban design, its key role in Ibero-American architectural education, and its reimaging as a post-industrial city inserted into the international tourist and service economies.<sup>2</sup>

As predominantly visual elements, decorative chimneys play symptomatic, albeit vague, roles, role in place identity, deindustrial representation, and the memory of working-class struggle.<sup>3</sup> Chimney-monuments often illustrate scholars' and activists' cautionary tales regarding the appropriate path to postindustrial redevelopment while narrating industrial pasts.<sup>4</sup> What does it mean that these chimneys were reappropriated as monuments through the tools of conservation, inserted in urban designs through what is widely considered to be *inappropriate* heritage practice? Notwithstanding these tensions, these chimneys continue to play important roles as local landmarks, as place identifiers, and as representations of Barcelona's deindustrialization.

Barcelona was a frontrunner in this industrial monumentalization approach, which remains underway in other towns and cities in Spain.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, the European Federation of Industrial and Technical Heritage (E-FAITH) estimates that only 5% of industrial chimneys remain standing on the continent, labelling them highly at-risk elements of industrial heritage. The demolition of industrial chimneys, or their conversion to isolated monuments, continues to ignite controversy among heritage specialists and public historians: according to the Spanish representative of The International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage (TICCIH), 'I can't say that I am against chimneys, but they are often the only element left from a factory. But they are parts of an entire industrial system, and leaving a chimney without any context makes no sense'.<sup>6</sup> Other industrial heritage scholars go further, calling lone chimneys 'repugnant',<sup>7</sup> the results of 'cynical, commercial approaches which permitted the minimal conservation of historical memory' that reflect 'a postindustrial attitude of low self-esteem toward the industrial past'.<sup>8</sup> In this line of thought, isolated landmarks like chimneys, water towers, and other iconic elements disregard 'buildings' spatial aspects, their connections to the landscape and wider systems, their internal industrial processes, and their intangible heritage', limiting their pedagogical potential.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>2</sup> According to interviews with Barcelona-based architects, this monumental approach was directly exported to Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil, and other examples can be found in the USA, China, and Australia.

<sup>3</sup> Particularly with the post-dictatorship leftist city hall in Barcelona, and later under the leftist political platform En Comú Podem, we can also consider the naming of plazas after anarco-syndicalist leaders such as Salvador Seguí and Joan Peiró, and neighborhood activists such as Valerie Powles and Josep Maria Huertas Claveria, as part of this same trend.

<sup>4</sup> Paz Benito del Pozo and Pablo Alonso González, 'Industrial Heritage and Place Identity in Spain', *The Geographical Journal* 102 (2012) 446–464.

<sup>5</sup> For example, see the campaigns of the Asociación en Defensa de las Chimeneas y el Patrimonio Industrial en Málaga (Association for the Defense of Chimneys and Industrial Heritage in Málaga). In a number of regions of Spain, all remaining smokestacks are listed heritage elements.

<sup>6</sup> Translated by author from Spanish text available at: <http://ticcih.es/articulo-en-berria-chimeneas-una-memoria-en-pie/> (accessed 28 June 2024). Originally published in: Enekoitz Tellería Sarriegi, 'Tximiniak: Memoria Bat Zutik', *Berria* (2021, September 30).

<sup>7</sup> Luis Loures, 'Industrial heritage: Merging past and future towards sustainable cities', in *Industrial Heritage Protection and Redevelopment*, ed. by Michael Louw (Chadstone, Australia: Images Publishing: 2018), 17–25.

<sup>8</sup> Personal interview, 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Louw, 'Preface', *Industrial Heritage Protection and Redevelopment* ed. by Michael Louw (Chadstone, Australia: Images Publishing: 2018), 4.

However, as I will establish, it is an oversimplification of historical processes to see conserved, solitary chimneys as *mistakes* of heritage practice. Rather, their official endowment of heritage value only came later.

In recent years, numerous European countries or regions have funded projects around the study, documentation, and celebration of industrial chimneys as heritage, but between redevelopment pressure, costs of repair in maintenance, and their mnemonic association with an environmentally degraded past, chimneys are demolished across Europe every day.<sup>10</sup> The preoccupation of restoring chimneys and other key industrial landmarks can be understood as a cultural response to deindustrialization and its long cultural, social, economic, and ecological 'half-life'.<sup>11</sup> Because 'industrial development and decline happen *in place*', it is essential to emphasize the geographical variations of deindustrialization and post-industrialism.<sup>12</sup> This is especially prescient in exploring working-class memory politics in historically industrial cities undergoing rapid redevelopment.<sup>13</sup>

In what follows, I (re)construct the history of the monumentalization of industrial chimneys in Barcelona. Special emphasis has been placed on deindustrialization and post-industrial transformations since the 1970s, as they relate to memory politics, urban design strategies, social movements, heritage, and memory debates. I rely primarily upon archival research, interviews with heritage practitioners, memory activists, architects, and planners, and draw upon the results of a methodological experiment through the *Industrial Obelisks* exhibition at the Barcelona History Museum, where museumgoers were asked to interpret what these monuments signify about Barcelona's relation with its industrial past. The figures here originate from that exhibition, with captions contextualizing the sites where these chimney-monuments preside. From there, I question the future of working-class memory politics and activism in a city undergoing severe gentrification.

### Signifying elements: Deindustrialization and reconstruction in Barcelona

In 1996, Horacio Capel, a key figure in Spanish heritage and geography scholarship, noted 'It's curious [Barcelona's] fixation with chimneys, some of the most frequently conserved elements. We don't know if it is for the reduced space they occupy, their association with industrial activity, or their spectacular phallic character' (Figs. 1 and 2).<sup>14</sup> A decade later, Martí Checa-Artasu described Poblenou as 'a totemic park full of chimneys, factories like

<sup>10</sup> Initiatives to document, conserve, and celebrate industrial chimneys have been underway in Czechia, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Turkey, and Spain. Most notably, see *Les Beffrois du Travail* in Roubaix, France <https://non-lieu.fr/> (accessed 28 June 2024), and *Tovární Komín* in Czechia. See: <https://tovarnikominy.cz/> (accessed 28 June 2024). Jean Querelle, 'Industrial heritage disappearing from Europe's skyline: 2023 Year of the Factory Chimney', *European Heritage Tribune*, December 7, 2022. <https://heritagetrivue.eu/europe/industrial-heritage-disappearing-from-europes-skyline-2023-year-of-the-factory-chimney/> (accessed 28 June 2024).

<sup>11</sup> Sherry Lee Linkon, *The Half-Life of Deindustrialization: Working-Class Writing about Economic Restructuring* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2018).

<sup>12</sup> Mark Allan Rhodes II, William R. Price, and Amy Walker, 'Introduction: geographies of post-industrial memory, place, and heritage', in *Geographies of Post-Industrial Place, Memory, and Heritage*, ed. by Mark Allan Rhodes II, William R. Price, Amy Walker (London: Routledge, 2021), pp. 1–20. Emphasis by the author.

<sup>13</sup> Steven High, *Deindustrializing Montreal: Entangled Histories of Race, Residence, and Class* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022).

<sup>14</sup> Horacio Capel, 'La Rehabilitación y el Uso del Patrimonio Histórico Industrial [The Rehabilitation and Use of Industrial Heritage]', *Documents d'Anàlisi Metodològica en Geografia* 29 (1996) 19–50 (p. 28). Quote translated by the author.



**Fig. 1.** (Left): Plaça Les Tres Xemeneies, in the Poble-sec neighborhood, named after the three chimneys of the city's first central power plant, a key site of the 1919 general strike leading to the establishment of the 8-h workday in Spain, 2022. Source: Brian Rosa.

shipwrecks in the urban sea, ruin, rubble, and remains of the postindustrial city', suggesting that a reassessment of industrial heritage might help Spanish cities retain a sense of place, solidify public memory, and avoid homogenization.<sup>15</sup> Psychoanalytical analysis would suggest that *totemic* conservation serves as a mechanism of control and place forgetting, skeptical that public memory could be 'a potentially rejuvenating strategy for the city'.<sup>16</sup> However, in Barcelona working-class memory activism often undergirds contemporary social movements, placing memory politics as a key terrain of social struggles. With industrial heritage particularly, calls for conservation and memorialization predominantly come from the political left on cultural, and more recently ecological, grounds. Lone chimneys are often re-cast as *testigos* [witnesses, testaments] to, and symbolic of, working-class struggles, and as quotidian landscape elements alluding to the polluted pasts of historically industrial neighborhoods.



**Fig. 2.** (Right): Parc del Clot, completed in 1986, whose avant-garde design combines a chimney and façades of a former railway workshop with abstract sculptures in the Clot neighborhood, 2021. Source: Brian Rosa.

The built legacy of Barcelona's industrial heritage is difficult to erase, even as the city has given way to mass tourism. For example, working-class institutions of solidarity and mutual aid (trade unions, cooperatives, lyceums, neighborhood associations) continue to play key roles, revived during the late stages of the Francisco Franco dictatorship (1939–1975). While few remember anarcho-syndicalist industrial collectivization during the Second Republic (1931–1939), interpenetrating labor and anti-dictatorship struggles from the late Franco regime remain in living memory. Since the 1990s, often in the same neighborhoods historically defined by mass workers' mobilizations, the traces of these proletarian struggles overlap with relentless gentrification, and monumentalized chimneys become lightning rods for debates around urban restructuring. In this sense, they are not only 'witnesses' to the history of sites and moments, but key elements of slow memory, in which practices of remembrance that are 'multi-sited', 'eventless', and refer to slow-moving phenomena like deindustrialization.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Martí Checa-Artasu, 'Geografías para el Patrimonio Industrial en España: El Caso de Barcelona' [Geographies for Industrial Heritage in Spain: The Case of Barcelona], *Scripta Nova* 245 (2007) 1–18 (p. 1). Quote translated by the author.

<sup>16</sup> Paul Tyner and Mark Crinson, 'Totemic Park: Symbolic Representation in Post-industrial Space', in *Industrial Memory: History and Amnesia in the Modern City*, ed. Mark Crinson (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 99–120.

<sup>17</sup> Yifat Gutman and Jenny Wüstenberg, 'Challenging the meaning of the past from below: A typology for comparative research on memory activists', *Memory Studies* 15 (2022) 1070–1086.



**Fig. 3.** (Left): Can Ricart, a textile mill complex (1853) in Poblenou, remains in ruins since 2006, after a struggle between, tenants, preservationists, and the city government. Clearance and redevelopment were halted mid-demolition with intervention by the Government of Catalonia. The chimney remains the only structure to be stabilized and partially reconstructed, 2019. Source: Brian Rosa.

The conservation of industrial chimneys as monuments — typically following the demolition of factories — reflects a particular brand of deindustrial urbanism (Figs. 3 and 4). From the textile boom (1830s–1930s), the city region became the industrial engine of Spain, followed by a more diversified manufacturing and migratory boom from the 1950s, peaking in 1973.<sup>18</sup> Under Mayor Josep Maria Porcioles (1957–1973), in a clientelist relationship with landowners, the city began pushing manufacturing to peri-urban industrial parks, approving the clearance of sites for redevelopment. Political economic and spatial restructuring were underway in Barcelona's inner periphery as 'the urban space occupied by former industrial plants had become central'.<sup>19</sup> Additional factors driving industrial decentralization included new roadway infrastructure, disinvestment in older plants, land value speculation, offshoring, and community mobilizations against environmental contamination.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless,



**Fig. 4.** (Right): A chemical plant chimney in Poblenou undergoing conservation and partial reconstruction, with cranes poised to construct a new residential development, 2021. Source: Brian Rosa.

industrialization decentralization was predominantly driven by territorial planning, repositioning the proletarian city toward the tertiary service and leisure economy.

Barcelona's morphology changed with the transition to democracy (1975–1979) and the election of a socialist-communist coalition City Hall. Amidst a transnational industrial crisis, industrial decentralization continued, but with a shift in tone and strategy: building upon neighborhood activist pressure, factory sites were dedicated to public spaces and facilities (Fig. 5). Under Catalan Socialist Party (PSC) Mayors Narcís Serra (1979–1982) and Pasqual Maragall (1982–1997), architects were offered the opportunity to overhaul a city regarded as drab and overbuilt, while engaging in public debates about democracy and local identity. Architect Oriol Bohigas, the appointed Director of Urbanism, laid out a vision for the social and aesthetic characteristics of Barcelona's 'Reconstruction', implementing the 1976 General Metropolitan Plan, while creating a new design vocabulary.<sup>21</sup> This laid the groundwork for the 'Barcelona Model' of urban regeneration, through which 'urban acupuncture', the creation of new public spaces, and the serial integration of public art were central to

<sup>18</sup> Mercè Tatjer, *Barcelona, Ciutat de Fabriques* [Barcelona, City of Factories] 2nd ed. (Barcelona: Albertí, 2014).

<sup>19</sup> Joan Busquets, *Barcelona: The Urban Evolution of a Compact City* (Rovereto, Italy: Nicolodi, 2005), p. 334. Emphasis in quote by the author.

<sup>20</sup> Jaume Fabre and Josep Maria Huertas Clavería, *Tots els Barris de Barcelona: Els Barris que Foren Independents* [All the Neighborhoods of Barcelona: The Neighborhoods that Were Independent], Volume 1 (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1976).

<sup>21</sup> Oriol Bohigas, *Reconstrucció de Barcelona* [Reconstruction of Barcelona] (Barcelona: Llibres a l'Abast, 1985).



**Fig. 5.** Jardins de Sant Pau de Camp, containing one of the three remaining chimneys in the El Raval neighborhood, once home to over 300 factories. Protected from demolition in 1980, this may be the first monumentalized chimney in Barcelona, 2021. Source: Brian Rosa.

economic restructuring and postindustrial reimaging.<sup>22</sup> Bohigas emphasized collective memory, influenced by sociologist Maurice Halbwachs and architect Aldo Rossi, while calling for fine-grained interventions to 'cleanse the center,' 'monumentalize the periphery' and create 'new centralities'. While neighborhood activists had victories in fighting for the conversion of some factories into public facilities since the 1970s, the reapportionment of industrial land often did away with pre-existing structures.<sup>23</sup> Bohigas' approach was 'historicism unconcerned with history,' emphasizing high-quality design and representative value as criteria to 'establish unclear equivalency between what he saw as valuable and what was considered sociologically valuable'.<sup>24</sup> Industrial archaeology—the precursor to industrial heritage—remained in its nascent stage, and the 1976 plan did not foresee the reuse of

<sup>22</sup> Mari Paz Balibrea, 'Urbanism, culture, and the post-industrial city: challenging the "Barcelona Model", in *Transforming Barcelona*, ed. by Tim Marshall (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 205–224.

<sup>23</sup> Carlos J. Pardo Abad, *El Patrimonio Industrial en España* [Industrial Heritage in Barcelona] (Madrid: Ediciones Akal, 2016).

<sup>24</sup> Joan Roca, 'Ha Estat Mai Barcelona una Gran Ciutat Industrial?' [Has Barcelona Ever Been a Great Industrial City?] *L'Avenç* 288 (2004) 22–29. Translation by the author.

industrial buildings.<sup>25</sup> In Bohigas' top-down conceptualization of representative value, distaste for industrial architectural heritage, and with few legal safeguards, demolition remained the norm. It was in this context that the first chimneys conserved in public spaces were conceived: more as readymade public art than heritage practice.<sup>26</sup>

Between 1981 and 1987, more than 100 public space projects were completed, with sculptures invariably incorporated as compositional elements, in line with Bohigas' vision.<sup>27</sup> While other Catalan towns pioneered Spanish industrial heritage planning,<sup>28</sup> Barcelona's authorities perceived industrial conservation as a hindrance to modernization. Josep Antoni Acebillo, Bohigas' Director of Urban Projects (1981–1987) and, later, head of territorial planning for the 1992 Olympic Games (1988–1994), spearheaded the conservation of chimneys where factories were scheduled for demolition (Figs. 5 and 6). Sometimes, but not usually, this was due to public pressure, with developers and designers putting up little resistance. To Acebillo

The chimneys are vertical elements that occupy little space. The option to tear down a building or not—completely or partially—is another question. But the option to leave the chimney makes sense because it is *there*. It exists. If it is maintained, it's not going to bother anyone, and it can retain the identity that this was once an industrial space. We decided that, if there was a chimney, we would maintain it and that's it. We thought it was a shame to demolish them. Then we'd have another problem, *we would need a signifying element*. So if I knock down the chimney, I'll have to contract a sculptor. It could be a general on a horse or a chimney, it's all the same. So we decided to maintain them, even if they weren't exquisite monuments or spectacular architecture. We were making a skyline and they provide an enormous visual performance. Why would we knock them down in those years when the economy of design was so important? The chimney is not only a sign of industrial identity, it is the history of Barcelona's modernity.<sup>29</sup>

This approach—of exchanging planning permission for the conservation of chimneys and other 'signifying elements'—explains how a serialized design approach was never formally codified in policy. First on publicly owned land and later on sites earmarked for private redevelopment, this set in motion a process where chimneys were retained as ensembles of idiosyncratic icons, alluding to the past but serving minimal mnemonic function.

Industrial heritage debates became more mainstream during the clearance of the industrial district of Icària in 1987 — the western, waterfront edge of Poblenou — to create the 1992 Olympic Village. Overseen by Acebillo and partially designed by Bohigas' firm, the transformation of the Icària industrial district to the Village implied the largest demolition campaign in Barcelona's history, leaving little more than the Can Folch distillery chimney as

<sup>25</sup> José Corredor-Mattheos and Josep Maria Montaner, *Arquitectura Industrial a Catalunya del 1732 al 1929* [Industrial Archaeology of Catalonia from 1732 to 1929] (Barcelona: Caixa de Barcelona, 1984).

<sup>26</sup> Verónica Gárate Navarrete, 'El Modelo Barcelona de Espacio Público y Diseño Urbano' [The Barcelona Model of Public Space and Urban Design] (unpublished MA Thesis, Universitat de Barcelona, 2011).

<sup>27</sup> Joan Busquets, *Barcelona: The Urban Evolution of a Compact City* (Rovereto, Italy: Nicolodi, 2005), p. 358.

<sup>28</sup> Ajuntament de Terrassa, *Pla Especial de Patrimoni Històric, Arquitectònic i Ambiental* [Special Plan for Historical, Architectural, and Environmental Heritage] (1986).

<sup>29</sup> Personal Interview, 2023. Translation and emphasis by the author.



**Fig. 6.** (Left): The base of the chimney of the Vapor Vell ('Old Steam') in Sants, the city's oldest remaining cotton mill building (1839), expropriated by the city in the 1980s and repurposed as a school and library. The graffiti on the ground reads '19:00, Sants Plaza. Burn the Patriarchy'. In 2023, the plaza containing the chimney was renamed Plaça de les Treballadores del Vapor Vell [Plaza of the Workers (feminine) of the Vapor Vell], 2020. Source: Brian Rosa.

a mute witness (Fig. 7).<sup>30</sup> The towering chimney's symbolic prominence was accentuated as it stood for years upon cleared land. Neighborhood movements and labor unions, though critical of Olympic plans, emphasized that their interests were less architectural conservation than demanding public facilities, job retention, and accessible housing.<sup>31</sup> Scholars and photographers, sometimes involved with the same neighborhood organizations, scrambled to document Icària amidst demolition.<sup>32</sup> As the collective euphoria of the Olympics faded, the Village was not used to re-accommodate residents as promised, becoming an upscale neighborhood. Accordingly, the Can Folch chimney is widely regarded as a symbol of the disregard for the working-class past and, more broadly, of the increasingly neoliberal ideology driving Barcelona's design-driven transformation into a global city, while nearby Poblenou remains in the final phase of creating chimney-monuments (Fig. 8).<sup>33</sup>

Over time, cultural and urbanistic strategies shifted from 'being part of a cultural vernacular with social and political citizenship' to a tool for 'marketing the city's brand', with a 'gradual dilution of bottom-up participatory democracy': the neoliberal shift from the 'Barcelona Model' to the 'Barcelona Brand'.<sup>34</sup> This is most clearly evidenced in post-Olympic Poblenou, a self-consciously post-industrial landscape driven by the creative and knowledge economies. The 22@ Plan, passed in 2000, drove the reclassification of the industrial area surrounding Poblenou as a 200-ha 'innovation

<sup>30</sup> María Gabriela Navas Perrone, 'Journey to the Icària Neighborhood: The Heritage of a Forgotten Industrial Past' *Catalan Journal of Ethnology* 43 (2018) 258–271.

<sup>31</sup> Arxiu Històric del Poblenou, *Nou Viatge a Icària* [New Journey to Icària] (Barcelona, 1990).

<sup>32</sup> Francesc Caballé, 'Desaparece el Barrio Icària, Nace la Vila Olímpica. Barcelona' [The Icària Neighborhood Disappears, the Olympic Village is Born. Barcelona] *Geocritica* 895 (2010), np.

<sup>33</sup> Edgar Illas, *Thinking Barcelona: Ideologies of a Global City*. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012). In the Catalan translation of Illas' book, a photograph of the Can Folch chimney is featured on the first page.

<sup>34</sup> Mónica Degen and Marisol García, 'The Transformation of the "Barcelona Model": An Analysis of Culture, Urban Regeneration and Governance', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 36 (2012) 1022–1038; Jose Mansilla, *Los Años de la Discordia: Del Modelo a la Marca Barcelona* [The Years of Discord: From the Barcelona Model to the Barcelona Brand] (Barcelona: Apostroph, 2023).

district', a contested transformation still underway.<sup>35</sup> In the same year, the city passed its first industrial heritage plan, criticized by conservationists due to its toothlessness. The monumentalization of smokestacks took on a more overtly polemical role: in many cases, chimneys were the only listed elements on historic industrial complexes. According to the architect who edited the 2000 heritage plan, despite their personal desire for more comprehensive conservation, smokestacks were the most that could be retained without impeding redevelopment aspirations under PSC Mayor Joan Clos (1997–2006). As they explain, 'Industrial sites occupy space. Space is money because you convert the factory land into offices or housing. It's a very small surface in relation to the image it can provide. This is why industrial ensembles disappear but they maintain chimneys. Making a plaza and maintaining a vertical element is easier.'<sup>36</sup> This quote confirms the suspicions of many heritage and housing activists: that chimney-monuments were made to quell demands for more comprehensive conservation in favour of a market-led redevelopment approach. Smokestacks became treated as symbols of the what Manuel Delgado has called the superficial 'liar city': industrial totems instrumentalized in reimaging strategies.<sup>37</sup>

Traditionally, built heritage policy and implementation in Spain has been dominated by architects, but heritage communities forming around the industrial past in Barcelona have had geographers and historians as protagonists. To them, conserved chimneys represent an insufficient approach to interpreting and valuing the past.<sup>38</sup> This reflected broader international heritage practices emerging in the 1990s that shifted from emphasizing singular monuments toward protecting entire landscapes. A coalition of scholars, neighborhood activists, and cultural institutions, through studies and campaigns, began directly politicizing lone industrial chimneys in 2003, as a response to the widespread industrial demolition clearing the way for the redevelopment in Poblenou.<sup>39</sup> This group pushed the city to place additional protections on Poblenou's industrial landscape in 2006.<sup>40</sup> Despite divergent conceptions of heritage and memory, debates around the future of industrial uses of these spaces, and appropriate approaches to adaptive reuse, conservationists and cultural theorists alike identify chimney-monuments as idiosyncratic set pieces in the face of state-aided property speculation and gentrification: where past and present social struggles coalesce.

Though geographers, historians, and heritage specialists have most often criticized the presence of chimney-monuments in Barcelona's new cityscape, anthropologist Manuel Delgado has provided the most sustained critique of how the conservation of industrial ruins embodies the city's postindustrial aspirations and

<sup>35</sup> Federico Camerin, 'From "Ribera Plan" to "Diagonal Mar", passing through 1992 "Vila Olímpica". How urban renewal took place as urban regeneration in Poblenou district (Barcelona)' *Land Use Policy* 89 (2019) 1–14; 22@Barcelona: *Un Distrito de Innovación en Disputa* [22@Barcelona: A Disputed Innovation District], ed. by Greig Charnock, Jose Mansilla, and Ramon Ribera-Fumaz (Vilassar de Dalt, Spain: Icaria, 2023).

<sup>36</sup> Personal Interview, 2022, translation by the author.

<sup>37</sup> Manuel Delgado, *La Ciudad Mentirosa: Fraude y Miseria del "modelo Barcelona"* [The Liar City: Fraud and Misery of the 'Barcelona Model'] (Madrid: Libros de la Catarata, 2007).

<sup>38</sup> Merce Tatjer, 'De les Xemeneies als Conjunts Industrials' [From Chimneys to Industrial Complexes], *L'Avenç* 288 (2004) 37–44.

<sup>39</sup> A member of the Grup de Patrimoni Industrial del Fòrum de la Ribera del Besòs [Industrial Heritage Group of the Forum of the Besòs riverfront, or GPI-FRB] places this at a particular moment: a June 2003 meeting with a city hall heritage representative at the former La Escocesa factory. Personal interview, 2021.

<sup>40</sup> GPI-FRB, 'Proposta de Pla Integral de Patrimoni Industrial de Barcelona' [Proposal for a Comprehensive Industrial Heritage Plan for Barcelona], *Biblio* 3W 581 (2005) 742–798.



**Fig. 7.** The Olympic Village, with the Can Folch chimney and the seaside Mapfre Tower in the background, 2021. Source: Brian Rosa.



**Fig. 8.** In Poblenou, a smokestack undergoes monumentalization, 2022. Source: Brian Rosa.

its ambiguous politics of memorialization. Detourning Bohigas' concept of monumentalization, Delgado routinely used factory chimneys as a heuristic to interrogate top-down, designerly strategies of memory, identity formation, and ideology, where memory was 'disciplined' through the 'archaeologization of industrial ruins', amounting to 'strategies of memory and forgetting'. He argues that Barcelona's authorities feverishly set out to make the city imageable and legible through the 'territorial metaphorization' and purification proposed by Bohigas. Through architects' 'overvaluing archaeological elements' in the 'aesthetic axioms of postmodern taste', he argued that the city sought to 'take control of enunciative mechanisms' through which territory could be understood, creating 'objects endowed with symbolic surplus value ... the sites in which ideology or feelings related to social or personal values can be revealed', amounting to a fetishization of place.<sup>41</sup> This was achieved through the city's 'municipal monumentalization policy', 'imposing itself, superimposing its own symbolic productions on those constantly generated by the urban multitude' based on 'ornamental grandiloquence' and 'symbolic legitimacy' while making superficial nods to place-based identity. To Delgado urban

<sup>41</sup> Manuel Delgado, 'Las Estrategias de Memoria y Olvido en la Construcción de la Identidad Urbana: El Caso de Barcelona' [Strategies of Memory and Forgetting in the Construction of Urban Identity: The Case of Barcelona], in *Memoria y Ciudad*, ed. By D. Herrera (Medellín, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1995), p. 97.

design—instrumentally philosophized by Bohigas—served as an identity production policy through urbanism which was at once 'an institutionalization of memory and an equally severe institutionalization of oblivion.' This served two purposes, he argued: 'to make profitable parts of urban memory, seeking to convert *identifiable* places into *identifying* places' and to make the top-down interventions imposed by designers 'understandable and mentally inhabitable', making 'sentimental concessions' to reconcile with the disorientation caused by the imposition of rapid architectonic change.<sup>42</sup> Delgado's nondeductive ideological critique, while highly interpretive, offers an essential counterbalance to more instrumental understandings of what industrial conservation is meant to achieve in the capitalist (re)production of urban space.

**'If I knock down the chimney, I'll have to contract a sculptor. It could be a general on a horse or a chimney, it's all the same': Monumentalizing smokestacks**

By the standards of heritage practice, *tabula rasa* approaches are considered inappropriate, yet remain underway.<sup>43</sup> The material monumentalization of smokestacks — a specialized industry of architects, engineers, brick masons, and steeplejacks — has utilized tools of conservation to achieve something widely perceived as inauthentic. In Barcelona, monumentalization remains a term closely associated with Bohigas' thought. The architect defined the monumentalization of the city as 'organizing it in such a way that underlines signs of collective identity, in which urban consciousness is supported'.<sup>44</sup> In the broader context of the built environment, monumentalization can be understood as a material and symbolic process through which a structure's monumentality is established, or re-shaped, through physical intervention, narration, de- and re-contextualization. The concept expands upon the lexicon of memory and memorialization. In Riegl's century-old term, conserved chimneys are 'historical monuments', as they were not constructed to memorialize.<sup>45</sup> Rather, historical monuments gradually became recognized as such through policies and practices imbuing them with aesthetic and historic values.<sup>46</sup> Delgado, reflecting on Bohigas, argues that 'monumentalizing' conceptions have served to preserve isolated elements of the manufacturing past, before the great dynamics of tertiarization: that of showing the past of cities that were important industrial centers, as something surpassed, left behind. They function as 'an ornament at the service of the new urban scenography' where residents 'find themselves confronted with an ideal image of themselves, the imagination of a new post-industrial city that prides itself on being clean, smoke-free, sanitized'.<sup>47</sup> In the logic of monumentalization, through changing cultural perceptions and representations, through emplacing an object in a different environment or transforming the environment around it, and through conservation, nearly anything could be re-signified as monumental. The coordinator of this process is typically the state through the

<sup>42</sup> Op. Cit. p. 97, emphasis the author's.

<sup>43</sup> Piotr Kisiel, 'Unwanted Inheritance: Industrial Past as the EU Heritage', *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 26 (2020), 652–666.

<sup>44</sup> Oriol Bohigas, *Reconstrucción de Barcelona* [Reconstruction of Barcelona] (Barcelona: Libres a l'Abast, 1985), p 148.

<sup>45</sup> Alois Riegl, 'The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Essence and Its Development', in *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage*, ed. by Nicholas Stanley Price and others (Los Angeles, CA: The Getty Conservation Institute, 1996 [1903]), pp. 69–83.

<sup>46</sup> Françoise Choay, *The Invention of the Historic Monument*, trans. by Lauren M. O'Connell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>47</sup> Manuel Delgado, 'Memoria, Ideología y Lugar en Barcelona; [Memory, Ideology, and Place in Barcelona], *En crucejadas: Revista Crítica de Ciencias Sociales* 2 (2011) 7–10.

creation of Authorized Heritage Discourses, through protective policies and archival practices (listing), requirements for study and material intervention requiring labor and capital (structural surveys, restoration, maintenance) (see Fig. 11).<sup>48</sup> Historical monuments become objects of conservation.<sup>49</sup> Still, what a monument *means* is not self-evident or static, leading to discursive (re)framing. This has increasingly led various heritage, labor, and neighborhood activists, as well as leftist parties, to demand the (re-)narration of former factory sites.

Ideological critiques of Barcelona's design approaches to former industrial sites are powerful in their interpretive probing, though Delgado and others over-emphasize Bohigas' role as an architect-philosopher, molding the city's physiognomy. Indeed, it was Acebillo's pragmatic interpretation of Bohigas' abstract concepts that created the approach of monumentalizing chimneys. Such a theoretical approach leaves little room for the possibility of reclamation. If the city hall has used chimneys as cynical, symbolic palliatives to postindustrial redevelopment, the perpetual lack of explanation or justification for their conservation nevertheless opens these monuments to popular resignification. Working-class memory activism—particularly around deeply interconnected labor, neighborhood, and anti-dictatorship struggles—undergird the narratives of many place-based social movements, and past and present 'wounds of class' remain symbolically potent in Barcelona.<sup>50</sup> The legacy of anarcho-syndicalism, republicanism, and democratic resistance in the face of repression irrepressibly shape the social imaginary of the city, and memory politics represent a key terrain of popular struggles in the city.<sup>51</sup> Efforts to narrate the traces of the industrial past have discursively intermingled—and sometimes clashed—with struggles against residential and commercial gentrification (see Fig. 3).<sup>52</sup> Chimneys are often used in the names and graphics of social movements around housing and labor. In this way, chimneys are also re-cast as witnesses to, and symbolic of, working-class struggles, as quotidian landscape elements of historically industrial neighborhoods linking them to their manufacturing pasts. Therefore, regardless of whether this monumentalization was a form of totemistic 'disciplining of memory', chimney-monuments could be sites to rejuvenate struggles for social justice in the contemporary city.

A key example of contentious memory politics in Barcelona has revolved around the three conserved, 72-m-tall power plant chimneys standing in the *Jardins de les Tres Xemeneies* (Three Chimney Gardens): a park created in 1995 on the former site of the city's first central power plant, and a key symbolic space in anarcho-syndicalist history (see Fig. 1).<sup>53</sup> Key elements of the Barcelona skyline due to their centrality, the Three Chimneys are the most recognizable chimney-monuments, and those that most clearly represent a particular historic event.<sup>54</sup> The event in question

was the 1919 Vaga de la Canadenca (the Canadian Strike), which led to a general strike, and ultimately, the establishment of the 8-h workday throughout Spain. Disputes around the use- and exchange values of the Three Chimney Gardens, as well as struggles around their narration, point to their enduring mnemonic value. The naming of the park and its design—aestheticizing turbines and transformers as sculptural elements—served to obscure the historical significance of the site for what was perhaps the key victory of the Catalan, and Spanish, labor movement.

At various moments since the park's inauguration, political parties have clashed around the Authorized Heritage Discourse of the site. Under the 2012 mayoralty of Xavier Trias, of the center-right Democratic Convergence of Catalonia party, a plaque commemorating the strike was changed to celebrate the industrialist who built the power plant and electricity infrastructure. The radical-left municipalist platform CUP-Capgirem Barcelona pressured the city to return a plaque, holding a demonstration to 'preserve the historical memory of the Catalan working class'.<sup>55</sup> Later, with the centennial celebrations of the Vaga de la Canadenca in 2019, the Three Chimneys were symbolically reinforced in the graphics of various social movements and political posters, with the Gardens becoming a common site of political demonstrations and anti-capitalist murals. In recent years, social struggles have focused on connecting the stigmatized park's redesign with the gentrification of its surrounding neighborhoods, bringing together the working-class past and present of the historically industrial city through activist coalitions like Recuperem les 3 Xemeneies per als Barris (We Reclaim the 3 Chimneys for the Neighborhoods).

Memory politics have also changed within heritage institutions. The current director of the National Museum of Science and Industry of Catalonia (MNACTEC), reflecting on the creation of chimney-monuments, reflects that:

In the long run I think they're alright, but sometimes harmful. It has allowed us to lose entire buildings in exchange for keeping a chimney. This can be acceptable, but not an excuse. Since factory land in Barcelona was reclassified as developable, they succumbed to the brutal pressure of property speculation and redevelopment. I think this model is perverse. At first, I thought 'how great', but for a long time I've thought it's bad, that it's just an excuse to keep skeletons.<sup>56</sup>

They acknowledge that 'like a pin on the map', chimneys signal that there was once industrial activity on a site, potentially playing a role in preventing that memory from disappearing altogether, but that this is insufficient as public history. They, along with three interviewed retired trade unionists involved in local heritage and public memory initiatives, feel that more historiographic and didactic emphasis be placed on the victories of the labor movement under the industrial mode of production. To one retired *metalurgical* worker and volunteer at the Poblenou Historical Archive, 'Here we don't have any industrial heritage! The city only cares about industrial *architectural* heritage'.<sup>57</sup> Another, a former political prisoner under Franco, explains:

We should take care of the industrial past, not just for historical knowledge, but also because of the culture that we come from. There's so much we've lost and it's going to be difficult to

<sup>48</sup> Laurajane Smith, *The Uses of Heritage* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>49</sup> Sian Jones and Thomas Yarrow, *The Object of Conservation: An Ethnography of Heritage Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2022).

<sup>50</sup> Steven High, 'The Wounds of Class': A Historiographical Reflection on the Study of Deindustrialization, 1973–2013', *History Compass* 11 (2013) 994–1007.

<sup>51</sup> Restos y Rastros: *Memorias Obreras, Patrimonio y Nuevo Usos de los Espacios Industriales* [Remains and Traces: Workers' Memories, Heritage, and New Uses of Industrial Spaces], ed. by Javier Tebar Hurtado and Joan Gimeno Igual (Vilassar de Dalt, Spain: El Viejo Topo, 2019).

<sup>52</sup> Isaac Marrero Guillamón, 'The Struggle for Representation: Cultural Artifacts and Political Assemblies in the Conflict of Can Ricart, Barcelona', in *Culture and Agency: Contemporary Culture and Urban Change*, ed. by Monica Degen and Malcolm Miles (Plymouth, University of Plymouth Press, 2010), pp. 96–116.

<sup>53</sup> Brian Rosa, 'In the Shadows of the *Tres Xemeneies*', in *Monumentality: Histories and Ideologies*, ed. by Inderbir Riar and Elizabeth Kassler-Taub (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute, forthcoming).

<sup>54</sup> As identified in the survey associated with the *Industrial Obelisks* exhibition.

<sup>55</sup> Queralt Solé, 'Les Pedres ens Parlen: Espais de l'Obrerisme a Barcelona' [The Stones Speak to Us: Spaces of Workers' Movements in Barcelona], *Barcelona Quaderns d'Història* 266 (p. 208).

<sup>56</sup> Personal interview, 2022. Translation from Spanish by the author.

<sup>57</sup> Personal interview with retired MACOSA factory worker, emphasis theirs, 2023. Translation from Spanish by the author.



**Fig. 9.** The MACOSA memory space in Poblenou, 2021. Source: Brian Rosa.

recover what we have thrown away. We need to make the remaining productive industrial fabric permeable to society, and it is our societal responsibility to younger generations to tell the history of labor struggles. These spaces need to be at the service of public knowledge. Otherwise, no one knows what happened there: it's nice aesthetically, if you are interested in that, but behind those facades are history .... There's still part of that generation of industrial and workers' culture living, and now is the time to recover that past.<sup>58</sup>

After Trias, official remembrance strategies began to shift in Barcelona under the leftist citizen municipalist platform En Comú Podem (ECP), led by Mayor Ada Colau (2015–2023). A key example was the introduction of a 'memory space' at the site of the MACOSA metallurgical plant (closed in 1991), where a water tower was repurposed as a historical archive and a chimney was conserved within a new housing development (Fig. 9). In 2017, retired MACOSA<sup>1</sup> workers, city officials, and members of the Historic Archive of Poblenou inaugurated this exhibit at the base of the chimney, unveiling panels visually and textually narrating the historical significance of the site in relation to the neighborhood, to environmental contamination, and to anti-Francoist labor struggle. City officials committed that redevelopment should be 'compatible with the memory of the past, especially in neighborhoods with a strong industrial and workers' past .... to promote spaces that constitute symbolic elements of the industrial heritage and historical memory'.<sup>59</sup> With ECP having its origins in leftist movements, shifts in tone were palpable, but actions were limited. In some cases, interventions were as simple as adding the singular word 'workers' to online interpretive texts. Nevertheless, there was a newfound emphasis on popular heritage, celebrating local solidarity in the face of transformation. In doing so, ECP narratively enacted an 'agonistic memory regime',



**Fig. 10.** Municipal workers cleaning graffiti off the smokestack of the Can Batlló textile mill complex in the La Bordeta neighborhood. Can Batlló has several industrial spaces run by commissions of the Associació Espai Veínal i Comunitari Autogestionat de Can Batlló [The Self-Managed Neighborhood and Community Space of Can Batlló]. The remainder of the mill complex is currently being transformed by the city government into public spaces and facilities after decades of movement demands, 2021. Source: Brian Rosa.

historicizing the past with links to contemporary social struggles (Fig. 10).<sup>60</sup>

### Industrial Obelisks

To this point, scholars have theorized what chimney-monuments might convey, but without studying public perception. What do these monuments signify to people who live and work in the city, particularly in deindustrializing neighborhoods? Between 2019 and 2022 I attempted to locate and photograph all remaining industrial chimneys in the city, since no such catalog existed.<sup>61</sup> The images were presented as *Obelisks Industrials* (Industrial Obelisks) in 2022, an exhibition at the public Museum of the History of Barcelona (MUHBA), Oliva Artés, located in a converted factory in Poblenou (Fig. 11). Under the advisement of the museum's director, geographer Joan Roca, and through a series of public debates, guided tours, media outreach, and incorporation in the Model architecture festival, the aim was to rekindle debates about industrial memory.<sup>62</sup>

Though Poblenou was the obvious focal point for industrial monumentalization as the setting for the greatest tensions between industrial heritage, redevelopment, and gentrification, the exhibition emphasized that the phenomenon of chimney-monuments 1) did not start in Poblenou, 2) has occurred on former industrial sites throughout the city, and 3) is unique postindustrial heritage worthy of contemplation. This was achieved by a projection of photographs of all the city's smokestacks, similarly composed, emphasizing their seriality. A timelapse map was projected on the floor showing the location of all industrial chimneys and their gradual disappearance since the 1960s. Visitors, including public officials and designers involved in developing this approach, were largely unaware that so many chimney-monuments existed, that this was unique to Barcelona in its scale and breadth, or that this model has been adopted elsewhere. Considering this was widely considered to be a shameful

<sup>58</sup> Personal interview of retired trade union leader and president of the Catalan Association of Ex-Political Prisoners of Franco, 2024.

<sup>59</sup> Ajuntament de Barcelona, 'La Fàbrica Macosa Preserva la Seva Memòria Històrica amb la Inauguració d'un Nou Espai' (The Macosa Factory Preserves its Historic Memory with the Inauguration of a New Space), 2017. [https://www.barcelona.cat/infobarcelona/ca/la-fabrica-macosa-preserva-la-seva-memoria-historica-amb-la-inauguracio-d-un-nou-espai\\_483842.html](https://www.barcelona.cat/infobarcelona/ca/la-fabrica-macosa-preserva-la-seva-memoria-historica-amb-la-inauguracio-d-un-nou-espai_483842.html) (accessed 28 June 2024). Translation by the author.

<sup>60</sup> Anna Cento Bull and Hans Lauge Hansen, 'On Agonistic Memory', *Memory Studies* 9 (2016) 390–404; Stephan Berger, 'Industrial Heritage and the Ambiguities of Nostalgia for an Industrial Past in the Ruhr Valley, Germany', *Labor* 16 (2019) 37–64.

<sup>61</sup> Unwittingly, in creating a new public archive, I was *doing* heritage. See <https://www.catpaisatge.net/ca/novetats/1095-donatiu-de-fotografies-de-brian-rosa-a-larxi-dimatges-de-lobservatori-del-paisatge> (accessed 28 June 2024).

<sup>62</sup> The exhibition is discussed further in Brian Rosa, 'Deindustrialization Without End: Smokestacks as Postindustrial Monuments', *GeoHumanities* 9 (2022) 1–26.



**Fig. 11.** The *Obelisks Industrials* exhibition at MUHBA, Oliva Artés, 2022. Source: Brian Rosa.

approach to heritage by the museum's audience, this caused tension, and some museum staff and visitors expressed concern that the exhibition naively celebrated these monuments (perhaps heightened by my position as a foreigner with a camera). Indeed, as I often reiterated, I was attempting to present a contemporary condition as faithfully as possible. The goal was not to further aestheticize chimneys so much as to use these images to provoke constructive debate around what they signify.

After viewing the images and maps and reading an interpretive text, 123 visitors to the exhibition (in-person or online) completed a survey about their backgrounds, memories of the city's transformation, impressions of what the chimney-monuments represent, and whether/how smokestacks should be used as heuristic tools in public history. Neighboring cities had already completed such educational initiatives.<sup>63</sup> A resident of the Sants neighborhood reflected upon these themes:

The exhibition reinforces working-class memory, but in general, I believe [the chimneys] are so assimilated as elements of public space that they are not processed .... The exhibition has made me realize how we overlook ostensible, physical elements when they don't have a clear function. I believe that the chimneys, by not accompanying them with explanatory texts or memorializing elements, have often been left as empty signifiers.<sup>64</sup>

This comment suggests the predominant attitude of those surveyed: that these smokestacks *could* and *should* be used as spaces to activate public histories of neighborhood transformation and deindustrialization, that they represent historically *working-class* landscapes, labor, and environmental histories, and that they should be utilized to narrate socio-economic and material transformation through interpretive texts. Nevertheless, debates between heritage and anti-gentrification activists about the future of factory sites suggest that there remain important debates around historical value, use value, and the ongoing concerns of the working-class present.

Referring to the religious parallels between smokestacks and steeples intimated by Delgado and others, a former city official referred to solitary chimneys as 'penance' in the face of change. A museum director suggested that industrial heritage is undervalued because 'no one would ever propose demolishing a church and

leaving a steeple'.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, the competition between the church steeple and the factory chimney as beacons of moral hegemony has been a staple of political imagery in Catalonia since the Industrial Revolution.<sup>66</sup> Interviewees often likened factories and warehouses to workers' cathedrals. If we take this parallel of landscape iconography, repentance, and capitalist redevelopment further, Barcelona's chimney-monuments have much in common with other examples of monumentalization in the face of neoliberal urban redevelopment, such as solitary minarets in Turkish cities.<sup>67</sup>

Along with criticism of the lack of historical narration, a common sentiment was that the chimneys were decontextualized through their physical isolation, standing as wayfaring landmarks, but little more. If, as suggested by the earlier quote, these photographs depicted empty signifiers, that does not mean that the images, or the monuments they depict, are inherently meaningless: rather, their meanings are mutable, contingent, and contested. The exhibition did not celebrate nor overtly politicize chimney-monuments, but cast viewers' gaze toward them, emphasizing that they convey culturally (re)constructed meanings.

Chimney-monuments emerged outside of any Authorized Heritage Discourse: there was no policy promoting their conservation until 2000, by which point they were assimilated into the city's landscape.<sup>68</sup> Regarding the institutionalization of working-class memory activism under Colau's mayoralty, there was little impact beyond rhetoric, which was driven by popular pressure. While there was a common sentiment among exhibition survey respondents that industrial heritage was something that should be emphasized for the local community to better understand its history, the only City Hall office requesting information on the exhibition was one focused on tourism. This illustrates ongoing tension about memorialization, landscape consumption, and touristification. Who is the city's past, present, and future for? How is this embodied in the built environment and its monuments? This leads to a key question: could historical social struggles be mobilized by a coalition of memory activists and contemporary working-class movements in (re)signifying these monuments, 'animating the inanimate'? Could, as Ferretti suggests, historical geography be mobilized to memorialize anarchist workers' struggles in debates around the significance and future of public spaces?<sup>69</sup> How, and through which institutions, might these pasts be narrated?<sup>70</sup> This could be conceptualized as what Novoa calls *insurgent heritage*, through which 'the preservation of knowledge and actions ... emerge from the collective life of people to address inequalities, oblivion, and exclusions in the production of the built environment'.<sup>71</sup> A historical window under En Comú Podem suggested the possibility for an agonistic memory regime, but its ultimate

<sup>65</sup> Personal interview with director of MACTEC, 2022. Translation from Spanish by the author.

<sup>66</sup> Félix Sardà y Salvany, *La Chimenea y El Campanario* [The Chimney and the Belfry] (Sabadell, Spain: Departamento Sindical de Prensa y Propaganda, 1941 [1879]). In the case of the Catalonian industrial city of Sabadell, conservative Catholic priest Sardà y Salvany's treatise against secular labor militancy was revived as a core element of Francoist propaganda under the state-sanctioned Vertical Union.

<sup>67</sup> Bülent Batuman, 'Minarets without Mosques: Limits to the Urban Politics of Neo-liberal Islamism', *Urban Studies* 50 (2013) 1097-1113.

<sup>68</sup> Laurajane Smith, *The Uses of Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>69</sup> Federico Ferretti, 'Statues that must stand not fall: The material agency of anarchism in the marble monuments of Carrara, Italy', *Journal of Historical Geography* 80 (2023) 94-105.

<sup>70</sup> Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London, Verso, 1994).

<sup>71</sup> Magdalena Novoa, 'Insurgent Heritage: Mobilizing Memory, Place-based Care and Cultural Citizenship', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 46 (2022), 1016.

<sup>63</sup> Genís Ribé, *Xemeneies de Sabadell. Un Recorregut Històric* [Chimneys of Sabadell, A Historic Tour] (Museus Municipals de Sabadell, 2010).

<sup>64</sup> Open-ended response to research survey (2022). Translated by the author.

foreclosure under the current mayoralty of the centrist PSC under Jaume Collboni (2023-present) suggests that such politicization of the working-class past must belong to social struggles and outside of institutional recognition or legitimization. If this is to happen, Barcelona's smokestack-monuments will continue to be ambivalent but potent symbols of the city's relationship to its industrial past as it plays out in current and future redevelopment.

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