

MISCELLANEOUS



Air-raid shelters: civil war heritage in Valencia city

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ABSTRACT

Memorial sites are an interesting part of the wide range of Spanish Civil War heritage. The city of Valencia preserves a large number of vestiges of that time, among them, more than three hundred air-raid shelters. In this article we consider these bomb shelters, taking into account the new circumstances relating to this heritage, starting in 2017, when new legislative and management scenarios were set in motion. The approval of the Valencian Autonomous Community Law for Democratic Memory and Coexistence, a recent modification of the Valencian Cultural Heritage Act which expressly highlights civil war heritage, as well as unprecedented activity by the Valencia City Council regarding its preservation and restoration, offers us a framework for reflection which allows us to objectively assess the patrimonial value of air-raid shelters, as well as the difficulties involved in their management.

Keywords: air-raid shelter, heritage, memory, Spanish Civil War.

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INTRODUCTION

The year 2017 is, without doubt, a milestone to keep in mind when we talk about Spanish Civil War heritage in the Valencian territory. This is the year that has witnessed the start of the process to approve the *Ley de la Generalitat Memoria Democrática y por la Convivencia de la Comunidad Valenciana* (Valencian Autonomous Community Law for Democratic Memory and Coexistence), and also marks a new amendment of the *Ley de Patrimonio Cultural Valenciano* (Valencian Cultural Heritage Act), which explicitly mentions the vestiges of the Civil War. Likewise, together with these new legislative measures taken by the Valencian government, there is also news of the creation of

public subsidies by the *Diputación de Valencia* and the *Generalitat Valenciana* to preserve historical or collective memory.

Furthermore, in addition to the scenarios unfurling within this new legislative context, we should also highlight an unprecedented praxis in the city of Valencia: the study, rehabilitation, conservation, and musealisation of the air-raid shelter located in the City Hall, which has been open to the public since April 2017 (Moreno, 2017; Figure 1). However, it seems that this will not be a unique event because another shelter located at the intersection of *Carrer* (street) dels Serrans and *Carrer de Palomino* will soon be opened as part of another

municipal project (Levante-EMV, 04/06/2016) as will the Bombas Gens factory shelter, thanks to a private initiative (Culturplaza, 17/01/2017). In addition, *Les Corts Valencianes* (the main legislative body of the Generalitat Valenciana) has also made public its interest in recovering the shelter located in the basement of Benicarló Palace, the current headquarters of Les Corts, which hosted the presidency of the Government of the II Republic between November 1936 and October 1937 (Diari La Veu, 06/06/2017).

However, if we look at these activities from another perspective and with a critical eye, we will soon realise that they are the result of a new situation. Valencia city—capital of the Republic 80 years ago—had also remained lagging behind regarding its appreciation and dissemination of a singular part of its war heritage—its air-raid shelters. Cartagena was at the vanguard in terms of the opening and musealisation of

shelters in the Spanish state, with its pioneering project back in 2004. Since then, Valencia city has looked on while other cities (e.g., Almería, Jaén, Albacete, and Barcelona) and even Valencian villages (Cullera, Alcoi, or La Pobla del Duc, among others) have started to restore and open their shelters to the public, as centres and elements of heritage and collective memory of our recent past (Besolí, 2004; Besolí and Peinado, 2008; Jaén, 2016; Pujadó, 2006). So, with 13 years' delay, it seems that the time has finally come to remember these forgotten shelters and materialise the recognition voiced by citizens' collectives, memorial associations, left-wing parliamentary groups, and professionals and scholars for the last two decades.

The article is structured in three sections. In the first section, we approach the transformation of Valencia as the capital of the Republican rearguard, helping us to delve into the historical context in which the

Figure 1



Restored and musealised interior of the school shelter located in Valencia City Hall. Photographs by Hèctor Juan (Valencia, June 2017).

urban air-raid shelters emerged. In the second, we discuss how these unique constructions appeared as an innovative reaction to defend the civilian population and the Republican administration against the attacks of fascist aviation. Finally, we briefly explain the new situations that have opened and the issues surrounding the patrimonial management of the air-raid shelters in Valencia city at a time when we seem to have overcome the phase of censorship and administrative blockade that we had lived thus far. The time has come for reflection and, perhaps, to build claims, needs, demands and *ex novo* projects.

VALENCIA 1936–1939: CAPITAL OF THE REARGUARD

The city of Valencia was a symbol and a key metropolis of the Republican rearguard. In addition to hosting the state governmental capital for a year, it also embodied the state of mind of the Second Republic and the development of the conflict, perhaps, like no other city of the rearguard (Girona and Navarro, 2007; Navarro and Valero, 2016 and 2017). Moreover, the city underwent a change, both physically and emotionally, that helps us clearly analyse the stages and milestones of the war. Thus, at first, with the coup d'état and the beginning of the struggle it remained a hyperactive city, in the most extensive sense of the word (Aznar, 2007a and 2007b; Bordería, 2007; Calzado and Navarro, 2007). However, by early 1937, with the first bombings, the city, public safety, and everyday life were transformed. Valencia saw how the fronts were advancing and approaching, and how air-planes and bombs were becoming an increasingly constant threat to city life. Valencia, the so-called happy Levante, was transformed into a city awaiting the communiqués of war, sirens, and historic cries like *¡Que viene la Pava!* (Here comes the Pava!).¹

¹ *La Pava* was a slow-speed German two-seater (Heinkel HE-46) fighter plane that the rebels used to undertake aerial reconnaissance missions (because it was equipped with a camera that could record future targets), as well as aerial campaigns (Mainar, 2007a, p. 85). For the population, however, their presence heralded bombs, as this was the first aircraft to fly over the bomber's targets.

When we analyse the oral testimonies of war children from this era, we realise that one of the things that marked them most were the bombings, the states of alarm, and the planes (Aragó et al., 2007; Santamarina, 2009; Moreno and Olmos, 2015a; Museu de la Paraula²). They used onomatopoeia to parrot the sounds of the droning plane engines, whistling projectiles, blasting bombs, as well as the wailing sirens and the cries of *¡Al refugio!* (To the shelter!). This reminds us of the effectiveness of the strategy pursued by Franco and his Nazi and fascist allies, which was to frighten, punish, and undermine morale by bombing cities and civilian targets, and, of course, this strategy left its print on the life and memory of generations of Valencian people who suffered an incessant and inhumane rain of bombs for over three years (Infesta, 1998, p. 70; Aracil and Villarroya, 2010, p. 21; Azkarraga et al., 2017)

AIR-RAID SHELTERS AND THE JUNTA DE DEFENSA PASIVA (PASSIVE DEFENCE BOARD)

When we talk about air-raid shelters, we indirectly refer to the nefarious honour bestowed on our Civil War for being one of the first global conflicts where the rearguard and populated nuclei were targets of massive bombing campaigns. From this analysis we can see interpretations that recount pioneering military methods and techniques, experimentation campaigns with new armaments and tactics, and a novel way of waging war that transcended all that known to man so far. Thus, we are contemplating a conflict that ushered in 'modern war', a 'total war', which was to embody the Second World War to a superlative degree (Sánchez, 2007, pp. 45–77; Hobsbawm, 2012, pp. 52–61).

When we talk about the city's air-raid shelters, not only do we speak of war, bombs, and attack and defence tactics, but also of civilian populations, of

² Museu de la Paraula. Archive of Valencian Oral Memory, at the Museu Valencià d'Etnologia (the Valencian Museum of Ethnology), Diputació de València: www.museudelapaula.es

people like us who did not fight on the fronts, who were not soldiers of an army, but women and men, young and old, who saw how their life in the city had become a priority target of the rebel army. This new way of waging war brought with it new defence strategies and, in particular, new ways to protect the civilian population threatened by air strikes. Precisely, this social and civil component of shelters marks them as distinct, a singular element of war's heritage. The shelter is not a mere construction, nor a place of attack or of active defence by a military body, but rather, it is a space and an architecture that arises from the implementation of citizen protection measures and of civilian targets by means of *Defensa Pasiva Organizada* (DPO—organised passive defence).

The fortification of Valencia and its environs began early, in September 1936, before the city had been bombed. The construction of shelters and creation of the DPO were some of the measures taken by the government of the Republic to protect the population³, who would see the enemy bombings arrive by sea and by air, bringing the bitter taste of the war in their wake.

Organised passive defence in the city of Valencia

Once the government became settled in the city, and as the war became more intense, so the protection efforts increased. Both construction and propagandistic activities were constant and intense, lasting from the end of 1936 until the end of the war, in March 1939. On June 28, 1937, the Ministry of National Defence, chaired by Indalecio Prieto, decreed the amendment of the previous ordinances on the DPO of the II Republic with the purpose of unifying

and standardising procedures. The new decree of 1937 established the compulsory organisation of the DPO throughout the territory loyal to the Republic and established that the *Dirección de la Defensa Especial contra Aeronaves* (DECA—the Directorate for Special Defence against Aircraft) would be in charge of creating the general rules relating to the organisation, the preparation and implementation of the DPO (*Gaceta de la República*, 29/06/1937). In order to implement DPO measures, provincial and local committees and managers were constituted to implement or coordinate these measures.⁴ Implementation of the DPO in each locality or province involved the formation of teams of specialists, health workers, and other workers, who were not subject to military mobilisation (Moreno and Olmos, 2015a, p. 97).

On July 28, 1937, a new decree ordered the creation of the *Junta de Defensa Pasiva* (or JDP—the Board of Passive Defence) of Valencia, which was directed by the city mayor, Domingo Torres (Vera and Vera, 2000, p. 214). Its activities included the installation of 25 sirens, creating blood banks and armoured operating theatres, protecting rescue shelters, constructing anti-aircraft shelters, and establishing debris-clearing brigades and stretcher bearers. However, besides this construction and logistics management, the JDP was also responsible for the dissemination and literacy of the population in DPO-related issues (Girona, 1986, p. 340). Through the press and the radio, citizens were constantly reminded of how to act in the event a bombing: the sirens would announce the sighting of planes and the need to head directly to the shelters. Blackouts were also compulsory after nine o'clock at night, although this measure was not always respected (Safón and Simón, 1986; Abad, 1987).

³ Lines of trenches were also built to defend the area of Valencia (XYZ, Palancia I, Puig-Carasols), fortifications of various types (bunkers, like those located in Saler, blockades, casemates, and machine-gun nests), and anti-aircraft defences with heavy and artillery, batteries, reflectors for the nocturnal location of the air-planes, etc., were installed in the port, Saler, and other spots along the coast (Gil and Galdón, 2007, pp. 33-53).

⁴ The provincial committees comprised the chief of the DECA as President, a delegate of the civil governor, a doctor, a specialist in war gases (doctor, pharmacist, or chemist), an architect or municipal engineer, a representative of the press, and a Secretary. Likewise, the local committees had a similar structure, but the presidency could be passed onto the Mayor in the absence of a more superior DECA member.

Throughout the year, press releases, booklets, and catalogues were published by the JDP to inform and educate the citizens on how to react and to handle hazardous situations. Catalonia published a book in early 1937 that inspired the libretto that the JDP in Valencia later published in June (DPV, 1937). The document is highly educational and explains the consequences of the bombings, the types of bombs and their effects, and lists 17 preventive measures that the citizenry should keep mind to survive the bombs. Some preventive measures listed were:

All lights that shine outside buildings, in skylights or inner areas that face outward must be switched off or painted blue. The same goes for the glass covering skylights and similar structures [...] while the headlights of mechanically-driven vehicles (cars, trucks, motorcycles...) must use dipped beam or green-blue headlamps, in order to travel safely through built-up areas and outskirts.

Neither headlights nor road illumination can be lit up in a minimum radius of 5 km from the city [...] The glazing of balconies, windows, shop-windows and doors, shall be protected by sticky-paper tape, starting with its placement on door frames [...] The public must observe the preference of women, children, the old and the infirm to stay in the shelters, with other people being permitted whenever the space or room permits [...] Do not remain on the street once an attack has broken out, and those who are in the public thoroughfare must quickly seek shelter in the doorways of houses or in the nearest shelter (Moreno and Olmos, 2015b, pp. 354–355).

During the summer of 1938 the bombardments took place almost daily. The war front was approaching the city and living conditions worsened rapidly. On December 9, 1938 a decree by the Minister of

Figure 2



War poster from the Valencia Provincial Council/Ministry of Propaganda and Press: "Building fortifications and shelters will avoid a lot of pain and make us stronger".

Author: M. Gallur Latorre (1938)
SOURCE: Biblioteca Històrica Universitat de València (BH Cart. 01/002).

War poster: "Comrades of the rearguard. More shelters will avoid new victims".

Ahonor: A. Parrilla (1938)
SOURCE: Fundación Pablo Iglesias, Madrid.

Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas (JSU) war poster. "Valencia cannot fall into the clutches of fascism. We must fortify it!".

Author: V. Vila Gimeno, (1937)
SOURCE: Biblioteca Històrica Universitat de València (BH Cart. 01/0163).

Defence, Juan Negrín, restated the compulsory passive defence and—to make it more effective—decreed the general mobilisation of citizens to cope with the air attacks (Figure 2). Based on a proposal by the Ministry of Defence, a National Board for Passive Defence was established under inter-ministerial coordination. The role of this coordinating board was to inform, advise, and propose everything concerning the general regulations and legislation regarding the DPO. Days later, Negrín's Ministry signed an order establishing that all the bodies, centres, and entities in charge of DPO services would continue to implement their tasks as they had done up until that time (*Gaceta de la República*, 27/12/1938). In addition, it communicated the urgent reorganisation of the services listed under Decree 151 (*Gaceta de la República*, 03/12/1938).

Thus, if in the summer of 1936 the anti-aircraft defence had only eight cannons, some defence spots on the coast, and 18 officers, in 1938 the organisation became more complex with fixed groups of gunners in the city, manoeuvre groupings, and brigades on the fronts, interception networks and provincial and local DPO committees, etc.: Valencia had become the headquarters of the DECA general staff (Vera, 2008, pp. 75-99; Aracil and Villarroya, 2010, pp. 54-57). As for the shelters, their numbers increased exponentially from an initial 10 or so, to several hundred by the end of the war (Peinado, 2015; Taberner, 2016; Azkárraga and Peinado, 2017).

Air-raid shelters in Valencia city

At present, there is an interesting corpus of publications cited throughout this article explaining, in detail, the construction and singularities of the shelters constructed in the city of Valencia. To avoid reiterations, we will summarise some of their characteristics in order to assess their historical and patrimonial value.

As already stated, the tasks of the JDP in Valencia and the construction of shelters was not spontaneous. Rather, they were the result of a planned strategy with a hierarchical structure of management, supervision,

and implementation agencies. In fact, in order to achieve optimum safety and habitability, the construction of shelters responded to a series of very specific architectural and technical requirements, such as the elaboration of a technical project and the payment of taxes (Moreno and Muñoz, 2011; Peinado, 2015).

A distinctive feature was the building materials and the structure of the anti-bomb constructions that were to be built. As an alternative evacuation measure, the shelters had at least two access points that were located at opposite ends or, at least, very far from each other (Galdón, 2006, p. 88). In addition, the descent by ramp or by staircase was followed by a zigzag or elbow-shaped hallway to avoid shrapnel from penetrating and to reduce the effects of a possible shockwave. In the city of Valencia the new shelters were built mainly with concrete, iron, and sand, materials designed to withstand the impacts of explosions. The interior was compartmentalised mostly in galleries and often had folding benches attached to the walls; some even had latrines. They were mostly subterranean, with vaulted galleries in an inverted U-section. However, there are also examples of shelters in the shape of a quadrangular room with columns or shelters on the surface with pyramidal or sloping roofs (Azkárraga and Peinado, 2017, p. 81). The electrical and ventilation systems were also key elements, because, being underground constructions, as they needed a complete ventilation and lighting system. In addition, in the city of Valencia, their construction also had to take into account the groundwater level (between three and four meters deep in the centre, and much less in the port area), which meant that some shelters were semi-subterranean, leaving the protection area placement mainly at the street level (Peinado, 2015, p. 123; Taberner, 2016).

Inside, the walls also had signs, usually written in blue paint, which indicated the rules of coexistence and safety. The message often depended on the population sector harboured by the shelter. Thus, in

Figure 3



Façade of the air-raid shelter at the intersection of *Carrer* (street) dels Serrans and Carrer de Palomino with its characteristic Art Deco lettering, taken during its restoration process. Photo by José M^a Azkárraga (Valencia, May 2017).

some factories like that of Bombas Gens the messages “No smoking or spitting” or “For the sake of hygiene, please do not throw filth of any kind” have been conserved. In shelters frequented by schoolchildren, such as Grupo Balmes, the signs indicate “Capacity 1000 children” or “Keep one metre away from this door to facilitate the entry of air”. In this respect, the existence of decorative elements on the walls has also been documented in some school shelters, such as the Mickey Mouse painted in the shelter located in carrer de Ruaya (Azkárraga and Peinado, 2017, p. 82) or the use of blue and terracotta red pigments in the City Hall Shelter (Moreno, 2017). Even so, the real icon of the city’s shelters is the painted relief lettering with horizontal placement which, often accompanied by arrows, indicated the shelter access

points, especially to the public, to help favour their quick identification in the event of siren warnings (Figure 3).⁵

However, despite the existence of these common and defining elements of shelters, there are different architectural typologies that do not correspond to only one classification type (Table 1). Thus, according

⁵ We should not forget that this typography, in itself, would have to be valued as part of our artistic and cultural heritage, since it not only evokes the functionality of shelters, but is also representative of the aesthetics and artistic tendencies of this recent past. In addition, this symbol has become part of the collective imagination of the city and is an icon for other types of more current demands.

Table 1. Type of shelters in the city of Valencia according to their origin and their users

PUBLIC OR DISTRICT SHELTERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located in the central neighbourhoods; they were aimed mainly towards the resident neighbours and to pedestrians. • Built by the JDP of the city. • Semi-underground; they had an exterior sign saying <i>REFUGIO</i> (meaning 'shelter'). • The construction of a hundred public shelters was anticipated, but low levels of collaboration by the city and the neighbours led to a reduction in this figure to less than half: 41. • Examples: Intersections between <i>Carrer</i> (street) dels Serrans–Palomino, Carrer Dalt–Ripalda, Carrer de l'Espasa, Plaça del Carmen, Carrer de la Universidad (Plaça del Col·legi del Patriarca), Gran Vía de les Germanies, and Gran Vía de Marqués del Turia.
SHELTERS IN THE BASEMENTS OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapted for use by the JDP of the city. • Examples: the Galerías Avenida building (Avinguda de l'Oest), the Ateneo Popular (with a capacity for 1,500 people), or the train stations (Norte, Aragón, Pont de Fusta, and Jesús).
SCHOOL SHELTERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located in the courtyard or in the school gardens, or in annexed spaces, they were mainly aimed at the educational community and could house between 800 and 1,000 students. • Built by the JDP of the city and co-financed (50%) by the city Council of Valencia and by the Ministry of Public Instruction. • Examples: Cervantes, Octubre, Lluís Vives, Balmes, Mirasol, Blasco Ibáñez (renamed, Jesús María), and Félix Bárcenas schools, or the <i>Grupo Escolar</i> housed in the City Hall (<i>Ayuntamiento</i>) building.
FACTORY AND WORKSHOP SHELTERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built within work centres to protect workers. Especially in companies which supplied war materials, provided storage, or produced energy. • Examples: Bombas Gens, Macosa, or the extinct factory in Carrer Marqués de Caro.
GOVERNMENT SHELTERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built within institutional buildings to protect public officers and workers belonging to the Republic Government. • Examples: Shelter located in the basement of the Palau de Benicarló, the current headquarters of the Corts Valencianes, which hosted the headquarters of the presidency of the II Republic Government between November 1936 and October 1937.
PRIVATE SHELTERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built by private initiatives in the basements or backyards of houses or other dwellings, in order to guarantee the safety of the members of the family or the community of neighbours in a given building. • These are very diverse structures, but are usually medium or small, because they were normally adapted from spaces already existing in the building. • Their location in private properties makes access difficult and often even the owners are not aware of their existence. • Examples: in Carrer de l'Alguer, 19; Carrer del Comte d'Altea, 54; and Carrer del Dr. Zamenhof, 3–5, among others. Only a few remain from over 100 known to have existed, many of which have been closed up.

SOURCE: Elaborated by the authors based on Peinado, 2015 and Azkárraga and Peinado, 2017.

to their nature or their ownership, they could be considered public or private shelters. If we consider the end user, we can classify them into district or neighbourhood shelters catering to schools, factories, commercial, official and governmental buildings, and private or neighbourhood communities. With respect to the formal and technical categories, we can differentiate between those that have vaulted or lintelled ceilings and those with the shape of a room, a mine, or elements of both. In addition, depending on their location or depth, we can classify them into underground, semi-underground, surface constructions, or street-level.

Another recurring issue in addressing the city's air-raid shelters is calculating how many were built and how many of these still survive. It is now a difficult task to know exactly how many there were and their location, because, among other things, there are no official inventories cataloguing them in detail. In addition, the different primary information sources from that period, official records and press releases, provide contrasting data. We must add here that the war prevented the proper preservation of the documentation and that subsequent changes in street names and the numbers of buildings may also have hindered their follow-up. The most exhaustive current estimates are, on the one hand, that compiled by Taberner (2016), which, with documentation from the Municipal Archives of Valencia (the *Archivo Municipal de Valencia*) and field work, indicate that approximately 270 shelters were built; on the other hand, in his doctoral thesis Peinado (2015) presents the most complete list so far, documenting as many as 330 anti-aircraft shelters in the city of Valencia. However, today, the most important issue is not the quantitative analysis of shelters, but their qualitative status. Despite all this, some of these air-raid shelters are still in relatively good condition. However, it should be noted that the passage of time has deteriorated many of them, and the carelessness of administrations over the decades has contributed to allowing many others to disappear or has altered their nature and essence as items which form part of Spanish historical heritage.

AIR-RAID SHELTERS: HERITAGE AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY THAT SHOULD BE RETRIEVED

To live without memory is very difficult; indeed, without memories, we are not ourselves. Joël Candau, in his famous work *Antropología de la memoria* (2002, p. 5) states that without memory, the subject is lost, living only in the present, they are bereft of conceptual and cognitive capacities. Their world shatters and their identity fades. But what do we remember and what do we forget? Anthropologist Jose María Valcuende (2007, p. 21) points out that there are three aspects we remember. First, we remember things that, in our context, we require to cover our needs. Second, we remember what is useful for us to be able to interpret what is happening in our surroundings. Finally, we keep memories that help us to define ourselves.

Every society needs a shared reference, because what it remembers or what it forgets sheds light on its organisation, its mechanisms of repression, and its hierarchy, among other things. Therefore, memory is an ideological field of struggle. At every historical moment, the social group that wields power will want to impose its interpretation of reality and, inevitably, it will manipulate memory, either by enhancing certain historical memories or erasing others. This is what Francoism did for four decades to justify the military coup, the war, and the brutal repression that ensued. To accomplish this, he launched a propaganda campaign in which he glorified his military *victory* through the cartographic design of memory, building the *Valle de los Caídos* (Valley of the Fallen), placing engraved plates in many churches to commemorate the “Martyrs felled by God” for the sake of Spain, as well as the change of toponymy (Escudero, 2011, p. 30).

Today's problem stems from the time, after Franco's death, when the Francoist dictatorship was reconverted into a democracy under an enforced “vow of silence” (Espinosa, 2007, p. 46). It was a tactical agreement between certain political forces whereby Franco's dictatorship enjoyed a historical truce, as if nothing had happened between 1931 and 1977. For 20 years the premise was to “not look back so as

not to open wounds” (Espinosa, 2007, p. 46). But this cycle of collective memory redaction policies came to an end with the start of the new millennium. At this point, civil society sparked a memorial movement which, together with the most left-wing political forces, managed to break this pact and to promote initiatives to recover historical memory.

In this new context, the air-raid shelters from the Civil War resurfaced as heritage sites associated with the politics of collective memory and occupied a preferential place between what Pierre Nova (1984–1993) calls *lieux de mémoire* (places of memory). These are places where memory has been selectively embodied and which, by the will of humanity or the work of time, have remained its most luminous symbols. These are sites in which the collective memory lives on emotionally and that, despite having been forgotten for a long time, they preserve the past and have the capacity to transport collective memories to current generations. Therefore, they are places associated with memory policies (Calzado, 2006, p. 10).

In the city of Valencia, to address the management and dissemination of such collective memorial sites—of air-raid shelters—implies becoming aware of certain factors that conditioned the implementation of any work proposal up until a few months ago. First of all, we should mention the lack of interest in this topic shown by public administrations for decades, which has manifested itself as repeated policies of inaction by the government and Valencian institutions as well as in the Manichaean concept and blocking the initiatives of other parliamentary groups and citizens’ collectives. Not even reports by the *Consell Valencià de Cultura* (CVC—the Valencian Culture Advisory Board)⁶, which demanded more administrative protection for shelters

as well as the implementation of activities promoting their social interest and enjoyment, were heeded. The years have passed and, with the change of government, it seems that public initiatives are being promoted in the city of Valencia, with the local government now showing interest in Civil War heritage: exhibitions, publications, commemorative acts, opening shelters to the public, and signposting places of special interest (Figure 4). It seems that there is a new perspective on how to interpret memorials linked to the Civil War as heritage sites that should be located, studied, recovered, preserved, disseminated and, above all, dignified. Our past and our history have always been there; we just have to devote time to them, watch over them with care, and want to make them part of our collective memory.

Secondly, the non-implementation of the Spanish state law regarding historical memory, the Ley 52/2007 de Memoria Histórica (the ‘Historical Memory Law’), and the lack of specific legislation on how to deal with our war heritage have also hampered the development of projects in favour of recovering our collective historical memory and studying our heritage from the Second Republic and the Civil War. In retrospect, we can see how the legislative framework regarding the Civil War heritage has been adapting very slowly. Thus, corresponding legislation passed in 1985 (Law 16/1985, *de Patrimonio Histórico Español*—on Spanish Historical Heritage) neither envisaged nor protected it explicitly, although it did mention war-related heritage from other eras (castles, ramparts, or fortifications). Even so, state law did provide for air-raid shelters to be included within archaeological heritage because they are often found underground and archaeological methodology is required to study them (González, 2008, p. 15; Moreno and Muñoz, 2011, p. 185). Besides this, air-raid shelters have not been contemplated in Valencian legislation until now, which had caused these remnants of architecture and war engineering from our most recent past to have remained in total obscurity (Álvarez, 2010, p. 182). However, this legislative panorama has undergone a series of transformations in recent years that have already been highlighted in the introduction of this article. Several events have

⁶ The relevant CVC reports are: The preservation of the military historical heritage of the Civil War (1936–1939; December 20, 2004); Report on Civil War shelters, with particular mention of those in the City of Valencia (July 23, 2007); Report on the Civil war shelters in the Gran Vía de Valencia (June 27, 2011); and, Report on air-raid shelters in the Comunidad Valenciana, namely the lands encompassing Castellón, Valencia and Alicante provinces (January 25, 2016).

Figure 4



València en la Memòria is a route created by the City Council of Valencia to signpost buildings and monuments of the Valencia of the Second Republic. Photos by Tatiana Sapena (Valencia, June 2017).

occurred which denote a paradigm shift in the treatment of this heritage in the Valencian territory. Particularly remarkable was the 2017 modification of a 1998 law on cultural heritage (Law 4/1998 *del Patrimoni Cultural Valencià*—on Valencian Cultural Heritage modified by Law 9/2017), which highlights the heritage value of civil and military constructions from the Civil War as notable examples of military engineering and as privileged spaces conserving the memory of war. In addition to mentioning air-raid shelters, it also highlights the historical and cultural importance of aerodromes, trenches, parapets, powder kegs, armoured elements of resistance (machine-gun nests, sniper sites, casemates, bunkers, or forts), and a long list of constructive elements related to the military architecture of this time, considering them to be worthy of protection. The law states that, with its entry into force, the historical and military archaeological and civilian heritage of the Civil War present in the Valencian Community prior to 1940 will be considered *Bienes de Relevancia Local* (BRL—Assets of Local Relevance).

This new legal framework also establishes the obligation to draw up an inventory of these assets, differentiating between protected assets and those that should simply be documented, depending on their relative heritage value. The same will happen with the collective memorial sites, which are to be documented according to their historical importance. Even so, without detracting from the importance of these measures, since cataloguing assets is a basic task required for their proper management, this generates a debate surrounding generic statements about assets, and regarding which criteria should be followed to assess ‘relative heritage value’, leading to their classification into those deserving protection as opposed to simply being documented. To date, and before this legislation was passed, in the city of Valencia twelve shelters had already been classified as BRLs (September 2010) in the General Inventory of Valencian Cultural Heritage (Table 2). Sadly, we have found that this mere declaration does not ensure their adequate conservation (Figure 5).

Table 2. City of Valencia air-raid shelters classified as BRL (Assets of Local Relevance)

	SHELTERS	ADDRESS
1	Refugio Serranos–Palomino	Intersection of <i>Carrer</i> (street) dels Serrans, 25 and Carrer de Palomino.
2	Refugio Alta–Ripalda	Intersection of Carrer de Dalt, 33 and Carrer de Ripalda.
3	Gran Asociación School Refugio	Intersection of Carrer de la Blanqueria, 12 and Carrer del Pare d'Orfens, 3–5.
4	Refugio Espada	Carrer de l'Espasa, 22.
5	Lluís Vives School Refugio	Carrer de Sant Pau, 4.
6	Refugios in Av. Germanías and Av. Marqués del Turia	Intersection of Gran Via de les Germanies and Gran Via de Marqués del Turia.
7	Jaime Balmes School Refugio	Carrer del Mestre Aguilar, 15
8	Refugio Grupo Escolar Blasco Ibáñez (now colegio Jesús María secondary school)	Gran Via de Ferran el Catòlic, 37
9	Refugio Ruaya	Carrer de Ruaya, in front of Carrer de Pepita
10	Refugio Grupo Escolar Libertad (now Trinitarias secondary school)	Carrer de la Visitació, 13
11	Real Monasterio de la Trinidad Refugio	Carrer de la Trinitat, 13
12	El Grao Secondary School Refugio	Carrer d'Escalante, 9

SOURCE: Elaborated by the authors with data from the heritage inventory (*Inventario General del Patrimonio Cultural Valenciano*).

Figure 5

Sign and arrow on the façade of the shelter located at the intersection of Carrer de Dalt, 33 and Carrer de Ripalda.

Photographs by Hèctor Juan (Valencia, June 2017).

Façade and sign of the shelter located at Carrer de l'Espasa, 22, in a bad state of conservation despite being a BRL.

Photographs by Hèctor Juan (Valencia, June 2017).

Furthermore, besides this growth in legislation regarding heritage, we must also mention the bill passed by the Valencian government regarding the Valencian Autonomous Community Law for Democratic Memory and Coexistence which is currently the subject of parliamentary proceedings.⁷ This law entails an extension of the rights recognised by the Spanish state Law 52/2007—the Historical Memory Law—, with the creation of the Instituto Valenciano de la Memoria Democrática, los Derechos Humanos y las Libertades Públicas (the Valencian Institute for Democratic Memory, Human Rights and Public Liberties), responsible for creating, managing, and disseminating the catalogue of places and itineraries constituting the democratic memory of the Comunidad Valenciana.

In this respect, the law for Valencian collective memory (*Ley de Memoria Valenciana*) defines ‘democratic memorial sites’ as buildings, or places of interest where events of singular relevance occurred, which have a historical or symbolic significance, or have had an impact on the collective memory of the Valencian people’s struggle for their rights and democratic freedom in the period from April 14, 1931 to July 10, 1982 (Title III. Chap. 2, Art. 20). Therefore, we understand that the anti-aircraft shelters, as icons of the rearguard resistance and with a clear link to the daily life of the Valencian population, have a double meaning as places of war and places in our collective memory. Their historical, architectonic, social, and even symbolic value also means shelters can form part of the “itineraries of democratic memory” that the law describes in article 20. Moreno and Muñoz

(2011, p. 184) raised the point that the value of the air-raid shelters is not related to artistic or aesthetic preferences, nor do they even have a monumental interest that labels them as works of art; part of their importance lies in the fact that this war heritage does not exclusively speak of war and history, but also of people’s *histories* and their day-to-day and, therefore, they represent a source and manifestation of heritage, implicitly harbouring their collective memory.

This legislative framework has certainly heralded a new era for the Civil War heritage. However, heritage, in addition to legislation favouring its protection and cataloguing, also needs budgetary provision to take global management projects forward, tasks including documentation, study-analysis, intervention, conservation, and dissemination.

As we have seen, the first two factors we considered for the management and dissemination of war heritage (i.e., the lack of interest shown by the central administration and lack of legislation) seem to have been overcome. Currently, the same cannot be said for the third factor—one which strongly influences to be taken into account, any work undertaken in this field—the politicisation of proposals and activities endeavouring to raise awareness of the value of our collective memory and the heritage of our most recent past. In this respect, there is still much to be done. A good example of this is the debate that generated, in Valencia City Council and in other Spanish cities, by the change of street names. Presenting and explaining what is, and what should be, the historical memory of our recent past in a way that it is understood and accepted as heritage by the majority of citizens is very challenging, and goes beyond speeches associated with political parties. The great challenge is, therefore, to attain sufficient democratic maturity to understand and make understood that historical or collective memory must be put into practice and be a vindication of the whole of democratic society. The recovery of our heritage has to help raise a democratic alternative to Francoist discourse which censored the scientific, rigorous, and global understanding and dissemination of the conflict and the coup d’etat for forty years. It is therefore now our task to disseminate

⁷ Thus, we follow the path already initiated by other autonomous regions: Law of Catalonia 13/2007, October 31, on Democratic Memorial; Law of Catalonia 10/2009, 30 June, on the location and identification of people who disappeared during the Civil War and Franco’s dictatorship, and dignification of mass graves; Foral Law of Navarra 33/2013, 26 November, for the recognition and moral compensation of murdered Navarrese citizens and victims of the repression following the military coup of 1936; Law of the Basque Country 4/2014, 27 November, on the creation of the *Instituto de la Memoria, la Convivencia y los Derechos Humanos* (Institution for Memory, Coexistence and Human Rights); Law of the Balearic Islands 10/2016, 13 June, for the recovery of missing persons from the Civil War and Franco’s dictatorship. Collective memory laws are also underway in other autonomous communities, such as Andalusia and Aragon.

a historical approach that addresses both patrimonial and social perspectives from an inclusive, democratic, and intergenerational approach.

Despite all this, we must also be aware that when we work with Civil War heritage we are also working against certain preconceptions of citizenship and with a scant perception of these elements as a heritage to be safeguarded. Undoubtedly, the aforementioned factors and the same evolution and idiosyncrasy of society and the Valencian and Spanish democracy have also helped to encourage certain prejudices and a negative perception of the Second Republic and the Civil War among the citizenry. These preconceptions obviously affect this heritage, which is mostly perceived as something irrelevant.

It is both intriguing and paradoxical that our air-raid shelters, despite being collective memorial sites, have also been victims of oblivion by much of the citizenship and the government. Regarding those we have mentioned here, they are also urban elements that, despite being within the city, remain in exile, outside the daily routes and the mental maps of the neighbourhood's dwellers. This happens even though some of them still have the Art Deco style lettering and signs on their façades, a distinctive feature that makes them so recognisable and original. But citizens cannot be blamed for this ignorance since, until now, public authorities have not had any strategies for promoting a comprehensive project to rescue these war heritage assets. People know—or at least have heard—that in the subsoil of Valencia there are Roman remains, and that they can visit Museu de l'Almoïna archaeological site. We are also aware of our medieval history, with a wide selection of monuments and museums that recount this historical aspect of the city. We can even contemplate the remains of the late 19th and early 20th century Valencia with its modernist constructions, historical bullring, emblematic train station (Estación del Norte), and a long list of other buildings and places. Still, despite the outstanding role played by Valencia in the Republican rearguard, the visibility of this recent stage of history remains but anecdotal in the city.

The causes of the lack of popularisation and visibility of war heritage and the city's shelters can probably also be traced back to the post-war period and early Francoism, when the authorities initiated processes to dismantle and fill in many of these structures. Without doubt, Francoist dictate had no intention of allowing remnants of the war to remain visible in the city and, less so, constructions that paid witness to the resistance of the Republican rearguard. Thus, as of the 1950s especially, many of the city's shelters began to be demolished, albeit often only partially. Thus, many were *decapitated*, that is to say, the most visible upper parts, at street level, were demolished and their accesses were walled up. They then became hidden underground (Figure 6).⁸ The effectiveness of their silencing was such that, decades later, we have rediscovered shelters that had lain tarmacked over and hidden under squares, gardens, or avenues. This is what happened to the shelters at Plaça del Carmen, Plaça del Col·legi del Patriarca, Gran Via de les Germanies, and Gran Via de Marqués del Turia, among others.

After this premeditated Francoist strategy, the shelters continued to lose their place in the city and were, therefore, erased from the collective imagination of its citizens. This was mainly a consequence of the disastrous governmental policies which, instead of favouring their conservation and dissemination, silenced and undermined their essence and heritage value. Proof of this failure is the highly symptomatic fact that the shelters pass unnoticed by most Valencians, who know neither their significance nor their innermost history. In this respect, a negative influence has also been exerted by certain policies aiming to disseminate and define a largely reductionist heritage, focusing on monumentality, antiquity, aesthetics, and *Valencian-ness*. Criteria that are often not identified with heritage assets, like those we deal with here.

⁸ The occupation and use of some shelters as substandard dwellings, especially in the port area, known as Poblats Marítims (Azkarraga et al., 2017, p. 61), also provided an excuse to seal up many shelters during the post-war period and during the early years of Francoism (Figure 7).

Figure 6



Process of dismantling of the shelter in the garden of the Palau de la Generalitat, Plaça de la Mare de Déu.
 Photograph: Unknown author (Valencia, 1945).

That is why part of our task as professionals is to promote understanding of the heterogeneity and richness of our heritage, to show citizens the cultural value of the shelters scattered around our cities and towns, as well as other constructions, objects, and features that pay witness to our most recent past. Moreover, far from the definitions of Civil War heritage as something material, comprising movable and immovable, military and civil, Republican and Francoist artefacts (Besolí, 2003, p. 119), we also want to showcase the singularity of this heritage, which still has direct links to primary oral sources. These testimonies are essential to understanding the accounts and life histories of those with a first-hand link to our Civil War heritage, and thus, provide alternative and complimentary narratives to the graphic and written documents.

We are optimistic, and we understand that this new scenario must be the starting point of an ambitious, comprehensive, and coordinated programme that recovers the collective memorial sites of the city and which should be extended to the rest of the Valencian territory. We consider this to be an enriching, accessible, intergenerational, and integrative project that deals with transversal, historical, social, cultural, and patrimonial issues, both locally and globally, through the different typologies and locations of the shelters and other heritage elements of the Civil War. We need outreach policies and strategies that help raise critical awareness of our heritage and our history. In appreciating the value of shelters—signposting heritage elements and opening them to the public—we must also contemplate complementary

projects and museography (Moreno, 2017). We have only just begun, and there is still a lot to do: we must now go beyond merely opening shelters to the public. The time has come to tackle the challenge of designing museums and interpretation centres that directly deal with the war. On the one hand, we recognise the great potential that war heritage has as a tourist resource, but on the other, we also understand that, because of their historical, social, cultural, and heritage value, shelters should not be mere points on a sightseer's map, but rather spaces that pose issues and questions to the citizens regarding both the past and the present.

This is why part of our task, as professionals, is to promote the management and the preservation of the heritage represented by the city's air-raid shelters calls for exhaustive cataloguing by the administration, accompanied by a serious study of their historical contextualisation. All this should be followed by measures to raise awareness and dissemination of this

information, including the creation of geo-referenced digital cartography and its online distribution (Moreno and Muñoz, 2011, p. 187). This would generate a virtual space in which all the recovered memorial sites could be catalogued and publicly communicated, including drawing up tour routes or itineraries which could even serve as a central meeting point for gathering information and spreading the word about activities relating to Civil War heritage and the recovery of democratic memory.

Without a doubt, the policy of denial and silence regarding the recovery of our collective historical memory has generated strong prejudices over many decades, hindering the recognition of these elements as part of our heritage. However, it seems that there is renewed interest and concern in reviving places that pay tribute to our collective memory, and in helping them make the return journey from underground oblivion to resurface and recover their visibility, and gain the appreciation of the citizenry.

Figure 7



Shelter in the Poblat Marítims (Valencia) reconverted into housing during the post-war period. Archive of José Huguet, Nicolau Primitiu Valencian Library, (~1940s) Published in Azkárrega, et al., 2017, p. 61.

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