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The works of Antoni Gaudí in the World Heritage list. Management, tourism and new opportunities.

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In 1984 Spain inscribed its first properties on the World Heritage List since it ratified the World Heritage Convention two years earlier. Accompanying the historical monuments such as the Alhambra de Granada, Monastery of the Escorial, and Burgos Cathedral, are three “young” sites: Casa Milà, Park Güell and Palau Güell, designed and built by the Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí, less than a hundred years ago. Because of this inscription, a new kind of property started to be protected and recognized by the international community: Modern Heritage. Later on in 2005, four more sites were added to the list: Casa Batlló, Crypt and Nativity façade of the Sagrada Família, Casa Vicens and Crypt in Colonia Güell.

The criteria for the inscription were the (i), (ii) and (iv). That is to say, these sites are considered as masterpieces of human creativity. Besides, they exhibit an important interchange of human values on developments in architecture as well as represent an outstanding example of a type of building which illustrates a significant stage in human history. Works of Gaudí belong to the so-called Modern period (In Catalan: Modernisme) in Catalan architecture.

Brief description of the properties:

Casa Milà. This building was finished in 1912 and had a particular façade made of limestone, which has no structural function due to its internal iron structure. It also has an underground parking area, which was a completely new concept at that time in Barcelona.

Park Güell. Originally it was conceived as a Garden City with big houses and open air places, far from the noisy city and in proximity to nature. Gaudí and his team built corridors, a market place, fences and walls, which encircled the extensive property. However, due to financial challenges the project was unsuccessful and afterwards it was purchased by the municipality of Barcelona and was opened as a public park in 1926.

Palau Güell. It was completed in 1890 and consists of an elaborate palace for his patron Eusebi Güell. He combined Catalan tradition and symbology, technical innovation, fine arts and functionality in the property, located in a popular district of the city.

Casa Batlló. The building was a radical remodeling of a former building from the 19th Century. Finished in 1906, it is the most colourful of all Gaudí's works. Some authors consider this to be a masterpiece of light and colour. Many decorative arts were used and also the furniture was designed by Gaudi himself.

Crypt and Nativity façade of the Sagrada Família. This was his most ambitious project, which consumed practically his entire life. When Gaudí died in 1926, just one façade and the crypt were finished. This church is still under construction and just the part built by Gaudí is inscribed on the World Heritage list.

Casa Vicens. This house was built in the 19th Century and was the home of the Vicens family from that time until 2014. Gaudí created a full piece of art throughout the house, which is also the only one of the seven sites that is not open to the public. However, this situation will change in 2016 as its new owner plans to provide public access.

Crypt in Colonia Güell. This was Gaudí's lab where he experimented with the technology that was later applied to the Sagrada Família. It was part of an industrial colony, and despite that it is unfinished, visitors can still see the original work which allows them to learn about the site and its owner's life.

Works of Gaudí and the tourism

After the then Modern style of architecture fell out of fashion in Barcelona, some buildings were abandoned and slowly they deteriorated; others were destroyed to make space for new constructions. In the case of Gaudí, something similar occurred. Many of the Gaudi houses' former owners either sold the buildings or changed their original function. At that time Gaudí's work was considered of less value for the city. But after the second half of the 20th century, foreign architects began to write about his innovation, creativity, technical contribution and design. These architects were the first tourists to the Gaudi heritage and their publications, especially in Japan and North America, raised the interest of the others. The inscription of some of Gaudí's works on the World Heritage List in 1984 consolidated international acknowledgement of his achievement. Likewise, the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona lent the spotlight to these important heritage sites. However, it was the International Year of Gaudí in 2002 that incited the enormous influx of tourism for Gaudí's work, which further strengthened the association between Barcelona and the architect. After this celebration, a group of site managers, along with the authorities, made an effort to inscribe fifteen more of Gaudi's buildings on the World Heritage List. Of them four were accepted by the World Heritage Committee.

The success of tourism in Barcelona is undoubtedly linked to this architect. Millions of people visiting the city spend hours exploring the highlighted buildings and many of them are linked to Gaudí and his life. Local residents in some areas of the city have seen how their urban landscape has evolved due to the

infrastructure and services that were catered to tourists. Perhaps the most dramatic case is the Güell Park, a former public park from 1920s, which began to charge an entry fee for visitors as of October 2013. The surrounding neighbors expressed their discontent but their demonstrations did not stop the city government's decision. Now they have to use a personalized card to visit this space. Other residents of Barcelona who do not live in the area must request online a special pass and book in advance for a specific time slot to visit the central part of the park. Also, the request can only be made once daily, and depends on the level of capacity.

Management system

In 2013 we carried out a study of the management of the inscribed Gaudi buildings, and we realised that even if they share the same Outstanding Universal Value, each place manages and communicates its values in a different way. Due to the wide diversity of the institutions, owners and policies involved, there was no coordination work to manage the inscription as a whole.

Casa Milà is managed by a Social Foundation with an educational program. Sagrada Familia is managed by another foundation with a religious profile and its benefits are mainly used for the completion of the Basilica (expected in 2026). Park Güell's owner is the Municipality of Barcelona and therefore, its management system has been influenced by political issues. Palau Güell is managed by the Deputation of Barcelona, which has been working on a management plan that intends to place more emphasis on its social value instead of its political or economic ones (as a result the site has more 'open door' days in a year). Crypt in Colonia Güell is managed by a Council of municipalities and highlights many diverse issues of the region that are not limited strictly to heritage. Casa Batlló is run by a private company which has a very effective management plan in terms of self-sufficiency, Casa Vicens is still closed to the public but it is owned by a foreign bank and it is not yet known what management model it will have.

Despite their differences, some initial steps have been taken in order to create a Council of the Work of Gaudí, which will include all the World Heritage sites plus the ones excluded from the list, such as the Bellesguard Tower, Las Teresianas School and Montserrat Monastery. This initiative effort started in 2013 through a framework called Statement of Mataró, signed in the 125th anniversary of the first work of Gaudí. In that occasion more than 20 institutions agreed to disseminate the values and contributions of Gaudí. After that, two more meetings were held, one in 2014 and the other in 2015, in order to continue with this project. The coordinated cooperation was not easy to achieve but many site managers are working towards this goal. It is easy to understand their hesitation about the benefits of a system where they would lose some of their independence, when they have been increasing in number of visitors and income with out it.

Perspective

As we have discussed before, Works of Gaudí have been a great success in terms of the recognition of modern heritage. Since then, more than 30 sites have joined the list. From tourism perspective, the six buildings inscribed on the list and open to the public were visited by over 6 million people in 2013, a number that has likely increased in 2014. This situation has many benefits. For instance, the revenue generated helps to finance the conservation. Those who do not enter the sites can still appreciate them by admiring their remarkable outside appearance (innumerable amount of people merely appreciate the façades of the buildings from outside without spending over a hundred euro to visit them all). The recent rapprochement of site managers and stake holders, motivated by the creation of the Council of Gaudí and the second Periodic report for UNESCO (completed in 2014), developed important agreements and they encourage to continue networking.

In addition to this touristic phenomenon, since the 1990s, a religious NGO has been working on the designation from the Pope of Gaudí as a Saint of the architects, for his life-long piety and dedication to God. This is expected to happen in 2015, and if it does, will certainly attract a considerable number of tourists to Barcelona for religious purpose. With an already impressive tourist industry owing to its

pleasant weather, its diversity of activities and its historic and religious sites, Barcelona has the opportunity to position itself as an emblematic city that knows the outstanding universal value present by Gaudí's work. All these elements could be an example of beneficial collaboration that shows the values of the World Heritage Convention.

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