

Article

Local History and the Development of Heritage Bonds: A Primary Education Intervention

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Abstract: The Roman Baths of Valduno (Spain) possess significant educational potential, as recognized by visitors in a previous study, even though the facilities have not been maintained properly or have not been given enough publicity, which has resulted in their neglect. Through participation in a school project, a specific intervention is planned, following the ideas of community archaeology, regarding the study and dissemination of the Baths by following the ideas of community archaeology throughout. This study aims to analyse the impact this intervention has on 16 students regarding their knowledge of heritage and the bonds forged and reinforced concerning the site, as well as to identify the difference in historical knowledge acquired after a classroom explanation of the Baths and an open guided tour focused on the interests of the students. A case study was designed following the educational ethnography method, as it facilitates daily attendance as well as close observation of the case in question. The instruments developed (a register for participant observation and a semi-structured interview) reveal that symbolic appropriation of the site occurs as interaction and related knowledge increase. Furthermore, open guided tours facilitate greater significant learning in contrast to a classroom explanation on a heritage site. Educational experiences that embrace experimental, transdisciplinary, and participative methodologies contribute to a holistic understanding of heritage.

Keywords: cultural heritage; heritage education; teaching history; primary education; qualitative research



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1. Introduction

1.1. What Is Heritage?

The meaning assigned to the different heritage elements varies from one individual to another, in terms of ownership, belonging and identity [1]. Heritage is considered a social construct closely linked to the territory [2,3] at a particular time and it also reflects the values of the populations, their culture, identity, symbology, emotions, and sensitivity [4], represented in its material and/or immaterial elements [5]. As explained by this author, tangible and intangible expressions add to the understanding of culture and society, as the first is shaped through humans' interaction with the physical environment, while the latter is the result of social interaction between individuals and/or groups.

Heritage is conditioned by regulations, administration, or economy [6], which tend to highlight its touristic and cultural value [7,8] following the ideas put forward by experts in archaeology or architecture [9]. Thus, there is a predominance understanding of heritage in its material form as opposed to the immaterial by appreciating its innate essence or its aesthetic characteristics over the meanings that the population assigns to it, in what Smith refers to as authorized heritage discourse [10].

This vertical conceptualization of heritage can be reversed, moving away from the romantic glorification of the past that pursues only its protection and collection [11]. "Heritage, as a social construct, can no longer be considered as a container in which different manifestations (identity or otherwise) are collected but must be protected" [12] (p. 153). In

fact, it can be used as a mechanism to promote the participation of citizens in their culture and society, endorsing critical thinking [13].

Heritage understood as a communicative act for cultural production requires the active participation of citizens in the reassignment of memory, identity, and emotional and personal understanding of the environment. This also allows citizens to understand current cultural and social changes, such as socioeconomic frictions, the personal desires of individuals and groups, or even the consequences, changes, and temporal continuities, through the analysis of the past, thus forming part of the creation of meaning [14].

1.2. Community Heritage

This research aims to find a suitable way to bring the community closer to a local cultural site, attending to the needs of the local population by making it more accessible and surpassing contextual, physical, and cognitive barriers. The approach resembles that of community archaeology [15], seeking a democratic approach in the intervention and implication of the community on the selected site: the Roman Baths of Valduno (Las Regueras, Asturias, Spain).

In the same way, a bidirectional dialogue is generated between the expert groups and the community [16], in which participants take over and shape the values related to their heritage [17], in order to strengthen the archaeological and community heritage from the current perspective taken by the community [18].

At the same time, formal and informal learning is developed, which is more accessible to the population. The project “The School Adopts a Monument”, carried out in countries such as Italy and England, and to a lesser extent, Spain [19,20], focuses on linking educational centres to heritage elements of reference, through activities that promote knowledge, value, and conservation of these elements, also involving the different educational agents. It positions itself as a tool that seeks to reinforce the feeling of community in the centres while acting as a link with their neighbourhood.

This type of initiative, which revolves around a heritage element, is a practice for the construction of memory, as it creates connections between the past, present, and future, as well as continuities or ruptures in time. These are mainly historical research practices which, by encouraging the analysis of the past, help people to understand social mechanisms and relations in greater depth. In this case, it is Habermas’ [21] communicative action that takes on a stronger role in the intervention, as it focuses on the group of participants, members of the community, who, through a horizontal dialogue among themselves and the research team, take responsibility for the process of constructing the cultural discourse.

At the same time, facilitating dialogue around local heritage, where the community’s beliefs and opinions are considered, fosters the group’s well-being. It strengthens the bonds between individuals and their familiar environments, leading to feelings of comfort and security [22–24]. Personal attachment therefore implies a sense of belonging and direction [25] and, therefore, requires engagement with the local heritage manifestations.

1.3. The Process of Heritage Bond Creation and the Roman Baths of Valduno

The Roman Baths of Valduno were discovered in 2004, following the construction of a road in the area. Provisionally dated to the 1st century AD [26], they are one of the most important historical sites in the borough of Las Regueras (Asturias) and were declared a Bien de Interés Cultural in 2023. On its remains stands the church of Santa Eulalia de Valduno, which incorporates part of the Roman construction. Adjacent to the church is a private house built and lived in by a parish priest, during the second half of the 20th century, whose structure also stands on the remains of the Roman Baths. In the 1940s, a funerary stele was also found in the vicinity, dated to the end of the 1st or beginning of the 2nd century AD [27]. It is of large dimensions and considered one of the most outstanding examples in the north of the Iberian Peninsula.

However, recent studies [8–28] have shown that historical relevance does not necessarily translate into social relevance or the development of links between citizens and

their heritage. In this regard, the lack of knowledge about the history of the place itself adds to the assumption of technical criteria that support the value of heritage in terms of antiquity, aesthetics, or uniqueness, far removed from a holistic vision that, apart from these criteria, is also nourished by the emotional level and personal experiences [29,30]. This limits the possibility of this heritage being considered as something on its own, beyond being a cultural icon with the capacity to attract tourism.

For symbolic appropriation to take place, the group of participants must identify themselves in these different heritage elements, recognize them as useful, consider them their own, and they must evoke a sentimental and sensory awakening. In other words, they attribute to them meanings of ownership, identity, belonging, or emotion [4]. Additionally, in some way, it becomes the meeting point of the community, generating a space for coexistence and knowledge, and shapes a local history and its sign of identity [19]. Consequently, it can be said that cultural heritage is truly constructed, even on a local scale, through the processes of symbolic appropriation by a collective [17], becoming relative to its community and the environment in which it is given meaning [31].

Regarding the thermal complex, an educational intervention is being carried out, which in turn also involves the community. Based on a pilot study of the site, numerous needs have been detected in relation to the complex, such as the lack of conditioning and maintenance, as well as the scarcity of information provided in the information panels. Therefore, even though the public recognises the site's high educational potential, it goes unnoticed by the population [28]. Therefore, the following study is carried out to revitalise the site, while enhancing knowledge acquisition and reinforcing the sense of community among students, teachers, families, visitors to the site, and the different members of the Las Regueras borough.

Following Johari's window theory, adapted to the heritage planning process, conceptualizing the different layers of knowledge to facilitate some guidelines in the assessment of heritage to maintain an adequate level of representation will affect people's perception and valuation of heritage. Thus, any intervention regarding a cultural site, such as the Roman Baths complex, must take into consideration the community's beliefs and interests in the planning process led by experts [24]. In this sense, it also allows for the values that were once put on the site by the population and archaeology and history experts when discovered in the early 2000s to be reconsidered as the planned intervention fosters an inclusive dialogue between community members and experts.

This intervention is carried out in a group that starts in the 5th grade of primary school, which means the Asturian Primary Education curriculum [32] must be taken into consideration when addressing these students. This study follows the pedagogical basis of fostering significant learning and positive outcomes as it promotes autonomy and experimental methodologies. Furthermore, it also focuses on the curricular objective of promoting civic education as it gives students a sense of direction and fulfilment when they see tangible results on the site.

Thus, two areas of the curriculum are mainly promoted through the present study: Social Science and Civic Education. Its focus is on the valuation, conservation, and learning of heritage while also learning about human intervention in a territory over the years, and how changes and continuities can explain such phenomenon through the living example of Valduno's Roman Baths. At the same time, it promotes critical thinking when involving students in the conservation and dissemination of the site in a sustainable manner as human action has been a key aspect of the Baths complex conservation and destruction and, therefore, must be carefully considered. Lastly, it must be mentioned that, while the Ancient Era is not included in the "basic learnings" established by the curriculum, this study is embedded in a "learning situation" coordinated by the school council in which all historical eras were meant to be studied along the course of two school years. Still, the focus of this present study allows the school group to see how a historical site is affected today, in the Contemporary Era, which is included in the 5th and 6th school levels.

The proposed objectives are as follows: design, analyse, and evaluate an educational intervention centred around community heritage, investigate what types of bonds are formed and reinforced around it, and determine the knowledge acquired about heritage. Additionally, we observe the difference in historical knowledge after a classroom explanation of the site and conduct an open guided tour concerning the interests and curiosities of the group.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Methodological Design

The analysis and understanding of the formation of knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs, as regards a heritage element by a group of people, is a complex process. The focus is on the different experiences that each person lives and shares. Mixed research, with its strong qualitative nature, allows for the utilization of various designs and instruments, delving into an exploration of individual experiences from people's perspective. It pays attention to the significance attributed to their environment, reflected in the expressiveness of their feelings, behaviours, ideas, or beliefs [33].

A case study is designed to observe the specific phenomenon of an educational intervention around an archaeological site involving 16 students and, indirectly, the rest of the community [34].

The method used is educational ethnography, as it facilitates a deeper understanding of the reality of each subject through continuous and daily attendance at the school centre for two school years [35–37].

The emergent nature of the design, based on previous situations, facilitates adaptation to new input or events, which is in line with the daily life of the school. In addition, the different instruments used for data collection and the recording of rich data facilitate the testing and validation of the study.

2.2. Sample

The sample was purposive and convenient [38], facilitated through a relationship with a rural school in Asturias, in the central area of the province. This arrangement facilitated the intervention in one of its groups over two school years. The sample consisted of a total of 16 students who were in the 5th grade of primary school at the beginning of the intervention. Fieldwork began after having received signed consent from the teachers' body and students' legal guardians about participating in the present investigation.

2.3. Instruments

For this study, two specific instruments were designed (a register for participant observation and a semi-structured interview script based on several significant images) to gather the students' conceptions of the site and the methodology used in the developed intervention.

The participating students carried out the interviews, after the classroom explanation about the site, and at the end of the intervention, after the process of creating new information panels for the Roman Baths. The mentioned interviews were recorded for subsequent transcription and analysis. Images (Figure 1) were used as visual aids for students to describe and interpret as the drawings and photographs depict an idealized model of Roman Baths, the funerary stele of Valduno, and the Roman Baths of Valduno. Questions were posed regarding these images about the identification of different elements, the conceptual knowledge, and the importance of historical aspects and local heritage elements.



Figure 1. Images that were used as visual support during the interviews.

For direct and participant observation, information is recorded in field notes for the description of the process followed in both the classroom intervention and the site. Thus, the methodologies followed, times, activities, comments, doubts, and interests of the participants were recorded in order to analyse the impact of the intervention. Similarly, direct and participant observation was used to analyse the visits to the site by the public.

2.4. Project Description

This intervention is part of a school educational project in which the different stages of history are worked on through local heritage elements of the borough in a multidisciplinary way. It is more specifically contextualised in the study of the Roman Empire in the Ancient Ages, which began in the 2nd term of the 2021–2022 school year. However, the intervention is still in process, extending into the end of the 2022–2023 school year and the assigned time for classroom work.

For the introduction of the Ancient Age, a local Roman element is shown—a funerary stele found in the village of Valduno, which initiates the process of investigation by the students of the different remains of Roman origin in the borough. This is the moment when the Roman Baths of Valduno are introduced, linking them to the stele found in the same village by using a group exercise in which certain data is given, which helps to construct a cooperative discourse formulated through the establishment of hypotheses, debates, and known facts. Issues are raised about what is known and what remains to be known—how they were discovered and by whom, the excavations carried out, the excavated area, found and expected spaces, their dating, etc. Additionally, questions are raised about their value, their state of conservation, or the dissemination carried out. It is when discussing such issues, that the first signs of students' symbolic appropriation towards the Roman Baths become apparent as they become curious and concerned about

the site's state and condition. While the site was widely known to most of the groups, it had previously evoked indifference.

This is when the possibility of carrying out an intervention on the site to change its current state is introduced—an idea that generates enthusiasm among the students, who propose different actions to be implemented. As a result, different activities begin to be carried out to delve deeper into the aspects in which intervention is possible, such as the modification of the information panels of the site, which were built by the students later.

Thus, multiple visits were made to the thermal complex to carry out different tasks, such as the critical analysis of the panels, the observation of the different constructive elements, or the taking of measurements for the creation of a plan and a model, in which the 3rd year primary pupils take part (Figure 2). In addition, different materials are prepared that serve as visual support to use in the making of the new panels, such as the labels for the titles or subtitles, the making of images of the funerary stele or its discoverer, of the parts of the Roman Baths, the map of the borough, etc.



Figure 2. Model information board designed by the participating pupils.

The information panels (Figure 2) and guided tours require the planning of the content, as well as the format in which they are to be presented, which is why they require ample duration in their design and production. Additionally, while the whole class is involved in the making of the panels, the guided tours are carried out by a group of seven volunteers who work together according to their availability. These students are also the ones who, once the panels prepared by their peers have been finalised, lay them out according to these previous designs, as well as to the different needs that arise, such as including new images or information. This phase of the process is still under development, with several pilot tests being carried out to check its execution and effectiveness.

3. Results

3.1. Initial Interviews

The results of the interviews are structured according to the topics dealt with (Roman Baths, funerary stele, and Roman Baths of Valduno) in order to study the assigned categories of analysis in an interconnected manner (Table 1). In the case of the initial interviews, they

were conducted after an explanation in the classroom about the site and its most important elements using the selected drawings and photographs (Figure 1).

Table 1. Results of the initial interviews.

Dimensions	Categories and Highlighted Ideas
1. Recognition. It involves the evocation of the displayed elements, knowing what they are from a general or abstract view or the identification of single elements.	1.1. Roman baths. Antiquity, Roman elements (paintings, columns, villas, clothing, etc.), use/function as a bath, rooms, heating system, etc. 1.2. Funerary stele. Recognisable; size and period are vaguely indicated. 1.3. Roman baths of Valduno. The site is recognised, but not the elements that appear.
2. Relationship. It shows the link between selected drawings and Roman Baths knowledge.	Roman baths. Use/function as a bath, rooms, heating system, era, etc.
3. Identification. Collects element-specific information.	3.1. Funerary stele. Use/function, characteristics (dating, size, message, Latin language), current location. To a lesser extent, data on its discovery. 3.2. Roman baths of Valduno. The most important visible parts (<i>caldarium</i> ¹ , semicircular bath, hypocaust) are highlighted.
4. Value. Identifies the value towards local heritage based on emotional, historical, and social factors.	4.1. Funerary stele. Antiquity, potential to know more, but not specified. 4.2. Roman baths of Valduno. Antiquity, uniqueness, desire for further excavation; potential new knowledge unspecified; negative assessment of the church due to effects on the site. Implicit and general intrinsic valuation, arguments with little conviction and doubts. Only one case of explicit and categorical extrinsic valuation. Implicit value through the curiosity shown towards the site in the desire to continue excavations to avoid possible damage is also justified by the de facto value assigned by the community.

¹ Cursive is used for uncommon foreign words and also to emphasise the student's knowledge of Latin words.

3.1.1. Roman Baths: Recognition and Relationship

When shown the images, most of the students recognised that these are Roman Baths, although they were unsure of their answers, even confusing them with Roman villas, a concept that has a greater presence in the media or textbooks. There were only two students who did not recognise the space shown in the images, despite recognising the different elements that make up Roman Baths.

More than half of the sample could identify what Roman Baths are due to their use as baths in Roman civilisation, although there were still doubts as to its conceptualization. Generally, this is in turn related to the heating system of the rooms, which is linked to the existence of the furnace or hypocaust, although they show difficulties in explaining how they work.

Only two students demonstrated a deeper knowledge of the characteristics of Roman Baths, recognising the existence of three rooms differentiated by temperature and indicating how the heating system did not only affect the temperature of the swimming pools but also the temperature of the floors.

3.1.2. Funerary Stele: Recognition, Identification, and Value

The entire class identified the stele as a tombstone, except for one person who confused it with an "ancient bench", since, before its discovery and study, people used to use it as a place to rest [39]. As for the period to which it belonged, half of the participants were unsure about it and, in general, only placed it generically in the Ancient Age or during the conquest of the Roman Empire.

Most students did remember where it was found—the village of Valduno or the borough of Las Regueras—but there were fewer details about its discovery, such as its proximity to the Roman Baths or the church, its discoverer (a historian from the borough), or the content of the inscription.

As far as the value of the stele is concerned, the pupils mainly claimed that it is ancient remains and, therefore, valuable. Only one student referred to the fact that its importance derives from the fact that it is “a unique remnant”. Other subjects identified the power of this element to extract historical and social knowledge.

3.1.3. Baths of Valduno: Recognition, Identification, and Value

The entire group of students recognised the Roman Baths of Valduno, including some of the students who, at the time of the interview, had not yet visited them.

Imprecision in language and content was recognised, obtaining answers based on the images shown and not on the adequate conceptualisation of the space. Basic errors were also observed, although some students showed a deeper knowledge. This occurred with the dating of the Baths (the general expression “from Roman times” is repeated and one case indicates “from the Middle Ages”), the process of discovery (the date of discovery is not known) and the elements exhibited at the site, where contradictions and different errors stand out, possibly caused by the lack of a clear idea of how the space is shaped, organised and structured, such as the possible existence of pools of different temperatures located next to the oven. Another point that also generated difficulties was the entire structure of the thermal complex, erroneously situating walls, swimming pools and ceilings, or baths on the outside, and not recognising the possible existence of other rooms, beyond the pools.

As for assessing the value of the Roman Baths of Valduno, once again, antiquity is a relevant factor, standing out less than others such as belonging to the Roman world or the knowledge it contains, which are closely linked to each other. The majority of the group understood that it is a reflection of Roman civilisation, although very few subjects explained its impact on the area, languages, and economy. To a lesser extent, the architectural aspect of the thermal baths was valued, but without a clear definition of the relationship between the two ideas (“they are important because they were very well built and that is why they have endured”).

Several students assumed that the Baths have a personal value, although they found it difficult to explain adequately, generally expressing it through their desire to continue with research and excavations. Perhaps it could be linked more to mere curiosity (which is undoubtedly interesting) or to the inertia of what is socially acceptable, than to a personal value or a well-formed emotional bond. It stands out that the same thing happened with some of the students who, albeit not recognising any personal value towards the space, defended the idea of excavating and protecting it.

3.2. Final Interviews

The final interviews were carried out once the entire intervention had been developed, a year and a half after the first interview. Throughout this process, as mentioned above, the students made several trips to the site to observe in situ the different elements that form its structure, talk about its history and the problems linked to the information on the panels, as well as research tasks following the design, and creation of new information panels and guided tours.

The results (Table 2) show greater confidence in recognizing and identifying the different topics covered and in explaining the basic contents seen in the initial phase. While moments of confusion or errors occasionally arose, students could relate the theoretical contents to the practical ones, explaining complex concepts such as the workings of the heating or drainage systems while linking them to the different elements displayed in the images (Figure 1).

In addition, greater development of ideas was observed, relying on data, technical explanations, comparisons, personal experiences and a more specialized and complex language to explain the personal value and the contents developed.

Table 2. Results of the final interviews.

Dimensions	Categories and Highlighted Ideas
1. Recognition. It involves the evocation of the displayed elements, knowing what they are from a general or abstract view or the identification of single elements.	<p>Differences between the seven volunteers on guided tours and the rest of the group. Basic knowledge acquired as well as other, more specific, knowledge.</p> <p>1.1. Roman Baths. There is no doubt. Elements to support the argument, such as the style of dress or dating it as ancient, disappear and more specific elements are used.</p> <p>1.2. Funerary stele. The Latin message is identified; the meaning of the inscription and the relevance of the names on it are recognised.</p>
2. Relationship. It shows the link between selected drawings and Roman Baths knowledge.	<p>2.1. Differences between the seven volunteers on guided tours and the rest of the group. Basic knowledge acquired, and other more specific knowledge.</p> <p>2.1. Roman Baths. Definition, Roman culture, use/function as bathing and other activities (leisure, rest, sport, or business); main rooms (<i>caldarium</i>, <i>tepidarium</i> and <i>frigidarium</i>), other rooms (massage parlour, gymnasium, changing room) and other elements (arches); functioning of the heating system of rooms, swimming pools, floors and walls; possible ownership (public or private) based on well-founded arguments, decorations such as paintings, tiles, or mosaics; differentiated time of day for men and women or lack of use of bathing clothes. There are no doubts; vocabulary and technical descriptions, Latin names and their definitions (<i>hypocaust</i>, <i>frigidarium</i>, <i>tepidarium</i>, <i>alveus</i>, etc.) and new information appear. Identification of the hot-water room.</p>
3. Identification. Collects element-specific information.	<p>Differences between the seven volunteers on guided tours and the rest of the group. Basic knowledge acquired, and other more specific knowledge.</p> <p>3.1. Funerary stele. Use/function, characteristics (2nd c. AD, size, Latin inscription), current location, discovery (discoverer, place, date, location, or previous use), Sestio (Astur, <i>Libertus</i>, Roman name, military, importance), link with thermal baths (period, previous indication). Visit to the Archaeological Museum of Asturias. A key element for the discovery of the Baths.</p> <p>3.2. Roman Baths of Valduno. Previous visit, heating and drainage system, visible parts (semicircular hot bath, bench, hypocaust, drainage, chimney, sewer, window, second bath, etc.), non-visible parts (furnace, walls, roof, arches, windows, other rooms, such as massage parlour, gymnasium, etc.), estimated and excavated actual size, discovery and excavation (date, previous findings that served as clues, church and cemetery, excavation process and data research, etc.), nearby Roman elements (road, roundhouses, etc.), conservation, opinion, curiosity and doubts; cemetery and church (construction period and end of cemetery use, use of the Roman baths infrastructure for construction or possible use, as a way of erasing previous cultures, anecdotal elements); remains found in the Archaeological Museum of Asturias, hypotheses about public or private ownership. Technical language appears (<i>opus signinum</i>, speleological works, dating studies, etc.).</p>
4. Value. Identifies the value towards local heritage based on emotional, historical, and social factors.	<p>Differences between the seven volunteers on guided tours and the rest of the group.</p> <p>4.1. Funerary stele. Antiquity, Roman times, ways of life, dimensions (local, provincial, and human heritage); historical learning and possible new knowledge about the territory or people, impact on current life. Anger pointing out its location in another borough.</p> <p>4.2. Roman Baths of Valduno. Representative antiquity of the Roman world. Local heritage. Technological, local history, social aspects of the council: uniqueness, remembrance of past lives/legacy and learning about the passage of the Roman Empire (mosaics, causeways, pre and/or Roman roundhouses, etc.) or human evolution; current physical, cognitive, and emotional accessibility and changes through intervention such as the creation of information panels or guided tours; desire for further excavation, conservation and dissemination; theories for better conservation and exhibition related to community action and as a pressure mechanism on the administration; need for community involvement in conservation, research, learning, and enjoyment for future generations; potential new knowledge (research of the church, cemetery or site could be a further example of the pattern established in Vitruvius' <i>De Architectura</i>), positive evaluation of the church and cemetery as a way of obtaining new information, despite anger at the neglect of the site.</p> <p>Explicit and general positive extrinsic value of the space: affection, memories, curiosity, enjoyment of learning, desire for protection and conservation based on personal interest; appropriation of the space, belonging to a territory, part of the individual and local identity. Establishment of a link between the lack of accessibility with lack of knowledge, which affects its valorisation; assuming the value of the Roman Baths is not given de facto by the community.</p>

3.2.1. Roman Baths: Recognition and Relationship

The students distinguished and defined the two images as Roman Baths and the hot water room. Except for one person, the group distinguished the three main rooms of a Roman bath (*caldarium*, *tepidarium*, and *frigidarium*), as well as others: the massage parlour, the gymnasium, or changing rooms, to explain their use as a space for bathing and other activities related to leisure, rest, sport, or business.

The group correctly delved into the heating system and composition of the thermal baths, using historical and architectural data and technical language to support the explanations, for example, pointing out the size and extent of the hypocaust indicating the attainment of the warm and cold water rooms.

Likewise, several students demonstrated greater knowledge by dealing with certain topics in depth, formulating hypotheses about the possible ownership of the Roman Baths shown in the image, taking into account their proximity to a busy road, quantity and quality of decorations, number of users, and size of the thermal complex. Among the most surprising data is the fact that 10 of the 16 students mentioned Vitruvius and his book *De Architectura*, to talk about the layout of the different spaces. In this sense, the idea that “the Romans did everything the same, following the book” seems to have had a notable impact on the students, considering that it is a complex idea. New themes also arise spontaneously, such as the heating of the floor, the difference in schedules between men and women, and the lack of clothing during bathing, even though more errors or lack of knowledge were observed compared to the previously mentioned basic topics.

3.2.2. Funerary Stele: Recognition, Identification, and Value

There is a clear difference between the explanations given by the seven volunteers on the guided tours and the rest of the group since the former had the opportunity to go to the Archaeological Museum of Asturias and observe the stele along with other findings from the area.

On the one hand, most of the group focused on the previously mentioned elements: its use as a tombstone during the Roman Empire, it being large despite being broken, and the Latin inscription.

On the other hand, the seven volunteers, in general, could specify the approximate date of construction and its discovery—linking it with that of the Baths—details about the content of the inscription, the man to whom it is dedicated, or its location, which is currently in the Archaeological Museum of Asturias.

Regarding the value associated with the stele, antiquity continues to predominate as a factor, related to the historical aspect or the Roman world. Nevertheless, occasionally, new ones appear, such as the dimensions of the stele, knowing the ways of life or the educational potential. In the same way, it is categorized as local, provincial, and humanities heritage. One participant stood out as she, angrily, indicated that it should be located in the same borough and not in the Museum, which, regardless of other considerations, indicated the development of a personal bond and a sense of belonging much more developed than in the initial interview.

3.2.3. Baths of Valduno: Recognition, Identification, and Value

It was observed that the students recognized and identified the different elements of the site, including those that cannot be seen, such as the underground structure of the thermal complex. In addition, they knew the history related to its discovery, excavation, the estimated dimensions of the site and other basic contents covered in the initial phase. That is to say, while specific errors were observed, the knowledge went deeper into the architectural, technological, historical, social and economic aspects.

New information about the discovery of the Baths was widely developed (date, previous Roman findings, research carried out, etc.), and the hypothesis about the ownership of the thermal complex was explained, with a smaller number of students doing so with a well-founded and multi-causal argument. Incidentally, the students explained the processes

that affected the terrain, the conservation of the Baths, or the impact of the construction of a church on the previous site.

In the case of the student volunteers, they showed a greater knowledge of the Baths or what is related to them (displayed room, infrastructure, nearby elements, discovery and excavation, etc.). These volunteers pointed out the elements exhibited in the Archaeological Museum of Asturias and their relation to the Roman Baths, having visited it. They also delved into the scientific research processes carried out during the excavation and study of the archaeological site: they pointed out the speleological work at the Baths and the forensic study of the human remains found at the site that belonged to the old cemetery, as well as the possibilities for continuing new studies. They also used more technical language, having learned Latin names and their meaning. However, it must be mentioned that other students also acquired that same knowledge, although to a lesser extent.

As for the value of the Baths, it is still linked to their antiquity and uniqueness, but it is important to consider them a manifestation of the Roman world and its historical, technological, or social impact at a local level. However, when asked about its value, the problems and solutions regarding the accessibility of the site and its information panels were further delved into, consequently affecting the educational potential and enjoyment of the visit.

A clear extrinsic valorisation of the Roman site was observed in the language in which students addressed it, as a subconscious or unconscious act of appropriation—several students referred to them as “our Roman Baths”—linking it to the territory and their experiences, making explicit the affection, memories, curiosity, or desire to continue discovering them with more formulated explanations. The desire for its dissemination is also replicated, this having materialized in the guided tours that the seven volunteers are currently undertaking. Likewise, its potential and its effect on the community and administration were explained. That is, the formation of new bonds to the Baths and the reinforcement of existing ones throughout the educational intervention is recognized as proof of symbolic appropriation of the space, highlighted mainly in the volunteer students.

4. Discussion

This study continues in its development to collect data and increase the sample and thus be able to present future studies. However, it is considered that the objectives have been achieved, being able to present some preliminary results on the links and heritage knowledge by a group of students, who have been participants in an educational project based on the intervention in an archaeological site. The impact on the public of the different types of visits was also observed, including the work carried out by the class group to promote its educational potential and impact on the community.

Regarding the first objective, it is shown how this educational intervention that revolves around the socialization of a Roman archaeological site facilitated the students' acquisition of historical, architectural, technological, and social knowledge, connecting that moment in history with the present. Similarly, different public archaeology projects state the increase of participants' knowledge, such as “The School Adopts a Monument”, as they immersed themselves in their local heritage [19,20] although the following studies show a more specific example of knowledge acquisition.

In the workshops focused on experimental archaeology in the study by López-Castilla et al. [2], it is observed how students learn about the main human activities of Prehistory, the tools and materials they used, and their connection with cultural, social, and economic evolution, being able to use the inductive and deductive method. In the same way, Besse et al. [40] prove that in addition to achieving an increase in knowledge, there is also a better interpretation of the passage of time and its changes both in the short and long term, as is also replicated in the present work by observing how the students point out multi-causal historical and social changes around the Roman Baths of Valduno and the area where it is located at different historical moments.

The acquisition of a more technical and complex language is observed to explain concepts and ideas, similar to other studied results [41]. As stated by García and Camacho [42], who appreciate an improvement in historical writing and content production in the results of their pedagogical proposal Arqueowiki carried out with Secondary School students.

It is also observed how in the initial phase, the images used in the interviews served to understand inductively the workings of the Roman Baths, but not their correct conceptualization. Consequently, they are positioned as a key tool for teaching, accompanied by visits to the site and the use of other strategies. Keeping an open catalogue of images and photographs, as suggested in community archaeology, is key for collecting information that students may use [15].

Different studies indicate that students have some difficulty in pointing out the interdisciplinary nature of archaeology [40–42]. Despite this, the present results demonstrate that students recognize different ways of approaching an archaeological excavation, requiring different equipment and professionals from archaeology, historiography, and speleology in order to reach conclusive results [16].

Regarding the valorisation of the site and cultural heritage observed, not to mention the bonds generated, a positive development is also observed. On the one hand, there is a predominant appreciation of the treated heritage elements (stele, Roman Baths of Valduno, cemetery, etc.) due to their antiquity and historical value, as they represent Roman culture. Their technological, architectural, and social value is also highlighted. Over time, students consider to a greater extent the historical factor and their link to the territory compared to others, linking it to the pedagogical possibilities that it offers or may offer in the future, and to the enjoyment of visitors to the site [16–19]. These elements are also beginning to be considered to achieve better accessibility, valorisation, dissemination, and conservation of the heritage element, facilitating its access to the general public. This would be explained by the participation gradual system [17], where students may go from *passive* participation to *active*, *collaborative* and, finally, *initiative*, as they end up recognising that they are in a safe environment where they can share proposals of intervention in the Roman Baths and, subsequently, in the community.

The mobilization of the class group to participate in the project came from a starting point of lack of maintenance, as well as different poor practices throughout the history of Valduno's Roman Baths. From the moment the symbolic appropriation of the element began to be noticed, a notable change was observed in the processes of ownership, belonging, and identity [30], which strengthened the bonds of the site with the territory and the community [16]. Thus, the students understand the importance of the community in the valorisation, conservation, and dissemination of the Baths, which is why they commit to sharing the knowledge developed during the educational intervention with the confidence of achieving a real and profound impact on management regarding the Baths [41–46]. The question remains open as to whether the appearance of antagonists and obstacles in the protection of the site could represent an element of engagement and motivation in the students.

Moreover, the students pointed out that these types of experiences, which allow them to leave the school grounds, and carry out experiential activities with an impact on the community, can be pleasant and enjoyable moments [40,41]; recognizing, in our case, that it involves both effort and responsibility.

A sense of community is forged during the process as it requires students to take action in their local environment and link other community members to their learning experience. As decision making and, debating and investigating about social issues unfold, a multidirectional dialogue is formed concerning social and cultural development. This fosters students' sense of identity as well as others in the territory, which may lead to improving the well-being of its people as they engage and share values on the conservation and dissemination of their local heritage [23–45].

It seems that public archaeology offers an array of options for students to create their discourse about the site as they partake in different tasks or activities through active

methodologies. Investigations using diverse sources of information, such as the internet, visiting the Roman Baths or the museum, or talking to experts, and being able to make a change at the site are the guidelines followed to promote an inclusive education based on the use of multiple competencies and capabilities among students. Therefore, most students gained a holistic conception of the site, including historical, social, and architectural knowledge [20] as they grasped historical time concepts, such as ruptures and continuities [14–21]. This personal discourse is constructed not only through exploration, investigation and debate but also through creating experiences that allow students to partake in the reassignment of the memory, identity and emotion of their territory [13] rather than through an exposition class.

As a result, through this perspective of community archaeology, the students' involvement in the site showcases the promotion of a dialogue between experts and other members of the community, which can help link the school centre, and more specifically, a class group, to a referential heritage element [19,20].

5. Conclusions

The use of an archaeological site as the core for intervention is proven as a formula to bring history closer to the educational centre, moving away from traditional methodologies, and approaching interdisciplinarity, experimentation, participation and in situ experiences [16–41]. In turn, the intervention, of an emergent nature, produced attractive and practical proposals as a result of the dialogue between the University, the educational centre, and the community [29], which could be extrapolated to different educational interventions carried out with other heritage elements of reference. The results show that through such practices students acquire new social, historical, architectural, and technical knowledge while expanding on the concept of heritage and forming bonds with the selected archaeological site, the territory, and the community [41–45].

Henderson and Levstik [46] point out that this type of in situ intervention related to the teaching of archaeology facilitates the public's understanding of history and human experiences by providing material remains that demonstrate their activities and behaviours, serving as a bridge between past and present.

The multidisciplinary treatment given to the intervention has made it easier to approach the conceptualization of a holistic heritage—even though when referring to Roman Baths the students showed a prioritization of the historical, social, and educational aspects. This explains that by understanding the impact of the site on the territory at a social and community level, together with the emotional components, committed, active, and critical attitudes towards the heritage are encouraged [19–47]. These authors indicate the need to understand civic education as the end of the teaching–learning process, placing heritage as a means to achieve said objective, not being the same. However, this intervention seeks both the promotion of the site to achieve its educational potential to an open public and the improvement in the personal education of the participating students, linking cultural identity, territory, sensitivities, and emotions [41–45].

To achieve these results, collaboration with teachers was sought at the different moments of designing the intervention to achieve adequate application and treatment that meets the different needs of the students [18–41].

However, there are still several challenges to overcome. The research is still in progress, and it is hoped that the sample can be expanded with different types of visits to the site (open visits using the panels designed by the students, and guided tours by student volunteers, etc.). Thus, it is hoped that, in the future, we will be able to answer the questions that arise about how to achieve a lasting commitment to heritage or avoid superficial ones [48]. Therefore, further developing higher involvement in the community and local heritage [41–45] is crucial, as studies have showed that these local heritage interventions increase interest in history learning, a sense of identity and place, and civic attitudes towards cultural heritage [46].

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