Uncovering the Role of Bioarchaeology: Mass Graves and Modernity in Catalunya

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Red dots, Yellow dots, Green dots

If you go to the website of the Spanish Ministry of Justice you can find an interactive map. The map is covered in dots - so many dots that it is hard to see the names of cities or even the shape of the country beneath all of the dots. Each of the dots represents a site where human remains have been found and exhumed, or are known to be buried. The people buried in these places are some of the over 1 million casualties of the three-year long Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and subsequent dictatorship of Francisco Franco (Aguilar 2002). The “map of graves,” on the Ministry of Justice website was created as one of the conditions of a law passed by the Spanish legislature in 2007. As part of the Law of Historical Memory (as it is commonly referred to) the Spanish government was charged with the task of creating a map of the national territory showing “the areas where the remains of people who disappeared under violent circumstances during the Civil War and the subsequent political repression have been found” (Article 2.2 Law 52/2007, 6 December). The map is connected to a searchable database, with the names of each site as well as the names of any individuals that
have been identified. The website also has a form for citizens to provide any information or testimonies they might have, related to existing or as-yet unidentified sites.

Many of the dots on the map are red, indicating that the site has been partially or fully-excavated, the bodies repatriated to their families (if possible) or reburied. Yellow dots show sites where the bodies of combatants were transferred to the national cemetery at the Valle de Los Caídos (Valley of the Fallen), a controversial monument constructed in part by prison labor, under the direction of Franco. Green dots identify burials that have not been even partially excavated - only located. If you look at the northeast corner of the country you will notice an area with a large number of green dots, and only three red dots. This region is Catalunya, one of Spain’s 17 Autonomous Communities, and a region with an especially contentious history in relation to the Spanish state. This paper will explore the politics of Civil War exhumations in this particular region of Spain, attempting to answer or at least try to understand why there are so few red dots and what that might mean, in terms of what role the dead have in contemporary Spanish politics and what role bioarchaeologists might play in such politically charged contexts.

Background

In July of 1936 a military coup was initiated. A cadre of Army officers, opposed to the secular and liberalizing change of Spain’s newly-established Second Republic, led a revolt that began in the Spanish colony of Morocco but spread from Army garrisons throughout Spain'. In urban centers – like Madrid, Barcelona and Bilbao - militias composed of police and workers sympathetic to the Republican cause were able to hold off the military insurrection. However, the backing of mostly-conservative rural populations in the South and the West, as well as the support of the Catholic Church, bolstered the rebels’ cause and divided the country. The coup grew into a protracted Civil War that lasted three years and left

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Graham 2005 provides an excellent introduction and overview of the events of the Spanish Civil War.
a deeply fractured society in its wake. The conflict was protracted in part because of aid coming from outside. Both sides received material support: the Republicans from the USSR and the rebels from Italy and Nazi Germany, as Spain became a proxy battleground for the competing ideologies of Socialism and Fascism. Despite fierce resistance, the more cohesive, conservative rebel army, led by Francisco Franco, was ultimately successful in subduing the politically diverse, Republican side and imposing totalitarian control over the country. Dissent was suppressed and the defeated were unable to even mourn their dead.

In 1975, after decades of rule, Francisco Franco died and power was transferred to the Spanish monarchy under King Juan Carlos, whom Franco had designated as his successor. The transition out of dictatorship was fraught with anxiety. Spain was emerging from decades of authoritarian rule, and tempering the hopefulness of many was the fear of a return to open violence. The dictatorship had suppressed any outwards displays of Republican loyalty, but it had not succeeded in eradicating resistance. Political parties, labor unions and civil society groups, banned under Franco’s rule, re-emerged. Political refugees, who had fled from Spain to France, other parts of Europe and Latin America, looked back with uncertainty. An Amnesty Law was put into force in 1977, prohibiting the prosecution of crimes committed during the dictatorship and members of the ruling apparatus remained in positions of power. Conservative forces, especially the Army, were wary of rapid change - a failed coup, led by army officers in 1981, helped to keep the fear of a return to dictatorship alive. King Juan Carlos, who called for the officers to desist, was credit by many as playing a significant role in maintaining the stability of the country as a new constitutional government was consolidated. Appealing to the conservative desires to see the *Patria* remain strong, he also supported the move towards democratization and the reintegration of the “two Spains” the war had produced: those loyal to the memory of the dictatorship and that of the defeated Republic (Aguilar 2002).
Further complicating this political landscape was the desire for independence held by groups in several regions of Spain. Euskadi (known as the Basque Country) and Catalunya, both of which had been sovereign powers before the consolidation of the Spanish kingdom, were especially vocal in this regard. Both regions had maintained distinct languages and cultural practices despite hundreds of years of persecution and groups within each saw the end of the dictatorship as a potential window for asserting their autonomy from the Spanish state. In the case of Euskadi, the spectacular violence of separatist groups such as ETA was met with equal brutality by paramilitary organizations, notably the GAL, “the death squads” whose kidnapping and disappearances in a “dirty war” against Basque activists were supported by members of the Spanish government. As Aretxaga argues, this transgression by the state into terrorism was not an aberration from the rule of law but an extension of it, it “represents not so much a reaction to a painful past as a projection into the future; a future that is fantasized as a ticket to a European modernity” (Aretxaga 2000: 61). The suppression of dissent continued into the transition as voices from many sides – those hoping to escape reprisal for their participation in the dictatorship, as well as many simply tired of violence – called for moderation and consensus. Many hoped that by focusing on the future of the country, they could escape the dangerous entanglements of the past. This “pacto del olvido” (“pact of forgetting”) as it has since been called, was codified in the Amnesty Law of 1977, but diffused outwards into everyday life in which the crimes of the war and the period of the dictatorship were rendered unspeakable (Davis 2005). That is, until recently.

Civil Society Breaks the Silence
As a result of the pacto del olvido and fear of upsetting what was
seen as a tenuous consensus, the exhumation of Civil War dead remained politically unviable – too risky for politicians to pursue without upsetting large segments of society or challenging the Amnesty Law. From out of this culture of silence emerged a new generation, those who were born during or after the transition and had not experienced the smothering fear of the dictatorship directly. Members of this generation became increasingly vocal in their desires to find out what had happened - especially those who had lost family members. Civil society groups pushed forward, into territory where politicians had feared to tread. One of the galvanizing factors for revisiting the Civil War was the attempt by the Spanish judge Baltasar Garzón to prosecute Augusto Pinochet, the former dictator of Chile, under international jurisdiction. Pinochet was arrested in 1998 in London, but was released to Chile for trial in 2000. While the Spanish trial against Pinochet was unsuccessful, the attempt and the media surrounding it, served to re-animate discussion about Spain’s own dictatorship and unresolved past.

Of the groups that have emerged, the most successful and most visible has been the Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (ARMH). The association was created in 2000 as a means to gather the resources to exhume the grandfather of the association’s president, Emilio Silva, along with 12 other individuals buried in a mass grave at Priaranza del Bierzo, in the northwest of the country. Since 2000, local chapters of volunteers – mostly family members of missing casualties – have financially supported and participated in 149 exhumations across Spain, recovering the remains of 1311 individuals with the assistance of archaeologists, forensic scientists and documentarians. In addition to the immediate success of these exhumations in bringing relief to hundreds of families, civil society groups like ARMH have been credited with getting “Historical Memory” onto the national political agenda. In 2007, the Spanish legislature approved the Law of Historical Memory, denouncing the crimes of the dictatorship, providing compensation for some

5 ARMH map and data source: http://www.memoriahistorica.org.es/
victims, and finally allowing for limited state assistance to exhumation efforts - as well as the aforementioned mapping project (Lerma 2011). But civil society efforts, while moving much more rapidly than the state, have not had the same level of success throughout all of Spain. If we look at the map of the ARMH’s exhumation projects we can see a similar trend as the map of the Ministry of Justice. Unlike various other regions in Spain, Catalunya, in the northeast, has only one exhumation listed. This is not for a lack of graves. Catalunya was one of the Republican regions that held out the longest during the war, and as a result, suffered especially under the rule of Franco. From the Ministry of Justice map we can see a 152 mass graves that are known but remain unopened. And so the question persists, why is Catalunya different? Why have so few exhumations gone forward in this part of Spain?

In 2003, 4 years before the Spanish government passed the Law of Historical Memory, the Catalan regional government - the Generalitat - passed its own version, the Law of Democratic Memory. Containing similar provisions, the law established an office of Democratic Memory charged with locating the graves of victims of the war and retaliation under the dictatorship. This project also included an online mapping feature. But even before the Law of Democratic Memory, the Generalitat has been, since the year 2000, compensating individuals who were imprisoned during the war (Martin 2010). When the Law of Historic Memory came before the Spanish legislature, several Catalan parties objected that it did not go far enough in countering Franco’s legacy or doing justice to the victims. The United Left-Initiative for Catalonia Greens and the Convergence and Union parties contributed modifications before voting for it. The Republican Left of Catalunya (ERC) voted against it in toto (Lerma 2011). But as we have seen, this progressive stance towards historical memory legislation has not translated into the actual exhumation of burials. To better understand why, we will now turn to a case study, one of the few documented exhumation projects conducted in Catalunya.

6 http://fossesirepressio.cat/
“Protocol of Respect”

Of the three exhumed or partially exhumed sites in Catalunya that are listed on the Spanish Ministry of Justice’s website, in only one case have individuals been identified and repatriated to their families. The other two sites have either only been partially excavated, such as Montcada i Reixac, which has no positive identifications listed; or, excavations have been conducted, but only identifications of “civilian” or “soldier” status inferred, based on clothing, such as at Prat de Llucanes (critiqued as doing “more harm than good” in Ballbe and Steadman 2008: 437). The remaining, fully exhumed site at Gurb will be the subject of this section.

In June of 2008, excavation began at a mass grave located near Gurb, a small town north of Barcelona. From prior archival research, it was expected that four Republican soldiers from the city of Gavà were among the soldiers who had been killed and buried in a common grave on February 2nd of 1939, at what was then the front of the battle. The families of the known soldiers petitioned the Generalitat of Catalunya to support the excavation. The Generalitat approved the project and appointed a team led by physical anthropologist Assumpció Malgosa and composed of four other physical anthropologists, four archaeologists (all from the Autonomous University of Barcelona: UAB) – as well as two forensic medics from the Institute of Legal Medicine of Catalunya (IMLC).

In their 2010 article, published in Cuadernos de Medicina Forense, Malgosa et al. provide a detailed, descriptive account of the excavation and laboratory analysis of the bodies exhumed at Gurb. The remains of the 13 individuals recovered from the site were analyzed for their sex, relative age and physical description. Researchers determined that all were adult men. Two were estimated to be between 20-30 years old, 5 = 25 to 35, 2 = 30 to 40, 3 = 35 to 45, and 1 = 40 to 50. All of the remains had evidence of at least 1, and up to 7 perimortem...
injuries likely resulting from the impact of a firearm. Due to the location of the trauma, the researchers consider that these wounds likely occurred during battle. Testing against mitochondrial DNA samples collected from the surviving family members, 4 of the 13 individuals were identified as being the 4 soldiers from Gavà. These remains were returned to the families of the individuals, and the remaining 9 “who could not be identified” were each separately reburied in Gurb (Malgosa et al. 2010).

As Malgosa et al. state - and as multiple media reports and press release from the Generalitat confirm⁸ - the excavation and identification project at Gurb was intended to be, and has since been presented as, a “prueba piloto” (a pilot test) and a model to establish a “protocol of respect” for how exhumations are to be conducted in Catalunya. One year following the beginning of the excavation, the Catalan parliament passed the “Law on Mass Graves” in June of 2009. The law establishes the procedure and requirements for applying to the Generalitat to have a grave exhumed. It also outlines technical protocols for the exhumation itself, including: the collection of human remains using “both archaeological and anthropological” methodologies; the use of historical research and, if possible DNA analysis to identify remains; and the installation of signs conferring dignity and recognition at the place of inhumation. The law also provides that:

…Activities related to recovering and identifying the disappeared persons shall be undertaken on initiative of the public department responsible for democratic memory, taking into account the results of actions carried out to locate said disappeared persons and the technical and financial viability of the activities (Martin 2010).

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⁸ “Identificados cuatro soldados republicanos en una fosa común de Barcelona” Publico 20 February 2009
http://www.publico.es/espana/202580/identificados-cuatro-soldados-republicanos-en-una-fosa-comun-de-barcelona

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The excavation at Gurb, defined as establishing a protocol for future exhumations by the Generalitat, thus provides us with a glimpse into how exhumations are imagined, what priorities are placed on researchers working within this context, and how, in this context, the living talk about the dead.

Several aspects of the excavation and subsequent law seem especially pertinent for trying to answer our question of why Catalunya is so different in terms of the recovery of Civil War victims. Unlike the broader Spanish context, in Catalunya, the regional government has claimed responsibility for providing the “material and financial” resources to conduct excavations, through the Law on Mass Graves. For the families of those individuals recovered at Gurb, the assistance of the Generalitat was extensive - as several newspapers note, the Gurb project by its completion had employed 30 researchers, including additional lab work at the University of Barcelona and Pampeu Fabra University, at a total cost of 60,000 euros. However this support, by law, is conditional on the “financial viability” of the proposed excavation. In the context of Europe’s ongoing financial crisis and trends toward government austerity, the “viability” of any excavation is an increasingly difficult case to make.

Some anthropologists working in Catalunya have interpreted this combination - of regulation and dis-investment - as an intentional effort by elements within the Spanish political system to stifle human rights investigations, creating a “climate of antagonism,” as a holdover from the pacto del olvido (Ballbe and Steadman 2008: 437). This may be true. However, this critique does not explain the investment, financial and political, in the Gurb project. Nor does it account for the progressive legislation through which the Catalan government has recognized and compensated victims of the war and dictatorship since 2000. If we take the Law of Mass Graves at its word, and accept the intentions conveyed by the Generalitat, we might gain a more complete view of the multiple and complex reasons why exhumations are so much more regulated in Catalunya than elsewhere, and why there are so
few red dots on that corner of the map. The remainder of this paper will take up a more interpretive tack, looking at the issue of mass graves within the context of broader political trajectories in Catalunya, how archaeologists are being fit into this picture, and what role a more critical bioarchaeology could play.

Conscripting the Dead

The politicization of the dead through the use of political and sociocultural violence is designed to create a spectacle or statement. Through the display of the remains, the victors can demonstrate the power and strength of their military while signifying the vanquished group’s mortality. By killing young and old alike and reducing them to an unrecognizable mass, the aggressors create a substantial psychological impact on the regional interaction sphere in which they are operating. (Perez 2012)

In the case of Civil War mass graves in Spain (as in other places, such as Argentina, Chile and the former Yugoslavia) not only are the dead politicized by the victors, but also by the vanquished. Post-conflict, the brutality of the killing and the treatment of the dead are brought to light as evidence of the illegitimacy of the responsible regime. In exposing the violence of the Franco dictatorship, excavations further delegitimize the regime, and anything associated with that period of rule. Beyond that, the common position of subjugation creates a community of living mourners, linked together like the “unrecognizable mass” of victims left below the Spanish soil. As long as their relatives remain buried, the survivors too remain bound together in unresolved conflict.

Based on her work in post-Yugoslavia, Verdery notes that that process of exhumations “involved much more… than establishing blame: it involved creating certain kinds of social actors. To determine accountability necessarily entails identifying the guilty and the victims” (Verdery 2009: 111). For historically autonomous communities in Spain, the exhumation of burials carries with it a different valence. In the case of Catalunya, the relationship between bodies and the nation-state is especially significant. Following Verdery’s understanding of the relationship between ancestors, graves and nation-states, mass graves reconfigure space in two ways: saturating space with “emotion that blends the personal grief of kin with rage against the enemy, nationally-conceived” and in laying out a
“geography of territorial claims” (Verdery 1999: 110). The requirement that burials go through the Catalan government centralizes the process of exhumation. As a result, the recovery of family members is channeled through the collective, unlike other parts of Spain, where civil associations have more room to operate on their own initiative. Part of the protocol outlined within the Law of Mass Graves also requires that sites of inhumation be marked, both those that have been excavated and those that have not. Thus, while few excavations have taken place, the landscape of Catalunya is flagged with “territorial claims” of the Catalan nation’s dead.

What does it mean then, that so many bodies remain below the ground, and so few have been recovered? Spanish anthropologist Francisco Ferrandiz argues that:

The sudden institutional interest in the recovery of memories of Civil War defeat in autonomous regions such as Catalonia or the Basque Country is no doubt linked to an ongoing political debate over the meaning of the term ‘nation’, to demands for the establishment of new autonomy statutes regulating their relation to ‘Spain’, as well as to complex identity politics, including the politics of victimization” (Ferrandiz 2005: 10)

If we look at two of the cases in which exhumations have been conducted – at Gurb and at Prat de Llucanes – we might be able to glean an understanding of the motivations that animate these projects. In both cases, emphasis was placed on identifying soldiers. Even in the more detailed investigation at Gurb, the analysis of the bodies centered on the deaths of the individuals in combat. Little interest was paid in the lives that these individuals lead before their involvement in the Civil War, such as markers of childhood stress, activity or nutrition. Their exhumations become meaningful only in the context of conflict: how they fought and how they died. The convergence of these factors is not insignificant I would argue. The process in which the dead return from oblivion: through the intervention of an autonomous regional government and emerge as active combatants, carries with it a highly-charged potential, especially in a political situation which has been portrayed by Catalan pro-independence groups as an ongoing, primordial conflict - between the overarching Spanish
state and those regions, including Catalunya, that were historically independent. Here, comparison with other contexts might become help to bring the specificities of this case into relief.

In the cases of Argentina and Chile, unlike Spain, truth commissions were established directly following the end of dictatorship. The process of designating and isolating guilty parties from the political establishment (whether prosecuted or not) was seen as crucial to the process of transition. Additionally, in the cases of Argentina and Chile, the territorial integrity of the nation was not called into question following the end of their dictatorships. This was a very different situation from Spain, where pro-independence elements in the regions of Catalunya and Euskadi made claims against the idea of a unified Spanish nation. This resulted in the invention of the concept of “Autonomous Communities” codified by the Constitution of 1978. As Aguilar notes:

Even though most of the problems that had contributed to destabilizing the Republic had been resolved (agrarian, labour and religious issues), one conflict inherited from the Republican era not only survived Francoism, but worsened throughout the Franco period: the issue of the territorial organization of the State. (Aguilar 2002: 159).

By defining these regions as Autonomous Communities, the drafters of the constitution sought to balance the desires of the regions to maintain a level of self-determination with the desires of conservative Spaniards to maintain the integrity of the Patria – a compromise which has in some sense, only frozen this conflict. The specific situation of mass graves in Catalunya articulates with this tense political dynamic in several ways. As with the conflict of territory, the bodies of many Catalan war casualties remain fixed in place, as if the War and the dictatorship had never ended. Their families are likewise drawn into this unresolved conflict, reminded by locations on new maps and records of where and when atrocities were committed, but given no closure. The families are not the only actors conscripted to this conflict. Researchers, and anthropologists and archaeologists specifically, have also been called upon to play a specific function, one that will be explored in the next section.
**Conscripting Science**

The more progressive legalization of the exhumation process in Catalunya accords well with a broader trope: the idea of Catalan modernity, which has persisted in the discourse of Catalan nationalism. Writing in 1971, Pi-Sunyer argues that “any appraisal of Catalan society must take into account the fact that the region is something of a developed enclave within a largely semi developed country” (Pi-Sunyer 1971). The idea of Catalunya as being more developed and more modern than the rest of Spain has been present since at least the time of the industrial revolution. The site of the Iberian Peninsula’s first railroad, Catalunya, by the 1850s, became known as the “Lancashire of Spain” for having the 3rd most productive textile industry in Europe, after that of England and France (Eaude 2008). By contrast, mostly-agricultural Spain and its ailing global empire were receding into the periphery of Europe, its colonial ambitions receiving their death knell with the Spanish American War in 1898. The “Iberian Modernity” of Spain and Portugal’s early colonizing projects were replaced by the “Modernity of Central Europe” to which Catalunya remained better-integrated by virtue of its trade proximity and historical ties to continental Europe (de Sousa Santos 2009: 13). Associated with early industrialization and urbanism, Catalan nationalists have highlighted the region’s unique status as a long-time receiver of migrants from other parts of Spain. During the later part of the Franco dictatorship and into the Transition, over 1.5 million migrants arrived in Catalunya (Cardús i Ros 2005). As Andrew Davis points out in regard to migration policy:

Catalan activists (during the days of Franco) and later Catalan politicians (after the transition to democracy) were problematising immigration decades before this was done at the state level. And even with regard to early in-migration to Spain as a whole in the 1990s, the first Catalan integration plan was published in 1993, a year before the first Spanish central government plan was created. (Davis 2009: 435)

This dynamic, of Catalunya leading Spain in crafting progressive policies, has been made possible by the 1978 Constitution which devolved some legislative rights to the different
Autonomous Communities. Catalunya’s precocity in this regard has also extended into the realm of historical memory and exhumations, as we have seen in the passing of the Law of Democratic Memory and the Law of Mass Graves. Especially relevant to the subject of this paper is the way in which archaeologists and anthropologists have, through the Law of Mass Graves, been brought into the project of Catalan modernity as well.

Entrusted as technical experts, a team of 30 researchers: archaeologists, anthropologists and forensic specialists, were put to work on the Gurb project. With a ratio of more than two researchers per recovered individual, the amount of skill, time and energy brought to bear on this project was substantial. The archival research expected by the Generalitat before the excavation could begin was also extensive, and the excavation and osteological analysis, corroborated with DNA analysis, were seen as highly effective - an ideal case study for what a dig should look like. Contrast this scene with that of the hundreds of exhumations that have taken place in other parts of Spain, where anthropologists and archaeologists are involved, but with limited funding or on a voluntary basis. “A pertinent fact in this emerging debate about Spain’s traumatic past” Ferrandiz points out, “is that a majority of the people involved in the exhumation movement are not historians or academics but rather relatives – mainly grandchildren – of people buried in the graves, together with left-leaning political activists who still feel they were painfully defeated in the war and then hunted like rabbits during the post-war years” (Ferrandiz 2005: 12). These excavations are still laden with emotional and political weight, but lack the technical and nationalistic inflections of the Gurb excavation. Important to note is that the written report of the anthropologists and archaeologists involved in the Gurb excavation is highly focused on confirming the archival evidence already collected. There is little discussion of broader issues, let alone a critical analysis of the exhumation process and the surrounding politics. Within this exemplar of the Catalan historical memory context, archaeologists and anthropologists have been interpellated as technical experts whose function is to produce
reliable data, but not critical questions. As two other teams of anthropologists, working in Catalunya but outside of such well-supported projects, have shown, getting away from this circumscribed role might require researchers to play a more active role in supporting the civil society groups that have made the exhumations of Civil War graves possible in the first place.

The study of mass graves, and the discussion of the researchers’ role therein, has focused mainly on contexts such as the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Iraq, where “the potential for political manipulation of site investigation is considerable and worrisome” (Skinner and Sterenberg 2005: 222). Reliance on detached expertise has been proposed as a counterweight to the kinds of conflict that sometimes erupt alongside the exhumation of the dead. And yet, as hopefully the case of Catalunya has shown, expertise is not politically neutral. The way in which researchers themselves may be conscripted for political projects and the ways in which expertise is mobilized are issues that demand consideration. Congram and Steadman, and Ballbe and Steadman (same Steadman) have worked as teams on different projects in Catalunya. They have attempted to conduct exhumations, collaborating with the Generalitat as well as with smaller, municipal governments, with limited success. On both accounts, the researchers have come to the conclusion that conducting successful excavations requires an active relationship with civil society groups, and not reliance on the authority and cooperation of the state. They write:

Given the current lack of legal outcomes, most teams recognize that the Civil Society, not the state directs the process of recovering historical memory, such that public education and family involvement are among the primary objectives. As a reflection of this, the UAB (Autonomous University of Barcelona) / Binghamton University team recently established a protocol whereby reports on exhumations and identifications go first to the families who can ask questions of the experts and express concerns prior to releasing the findings to the public. (Congram and Steadman 2008: 167)

The process of the recovery of memory of the Spanish Civil War has been driven from sociopolitical movements within Civil Society rather than any government initiatives. Governmental action, from monument building or deconstruction to official recognition of atrocities to a superficial Act on Historic Memory, have only
come after social organizations have applied protracted political pressure to force change. This situation can only be resolved by continuing to mount public pressure on politicians to act beyond their own interests, educating sympathetic politicians on scientific practices, continuing to demand investigations by internal social and scientific organizations, exerting pressures from the international community, supporting families who wish to pursue scientific investigations, and by facilitating local capacity building of the Spanish archaeological and forensic communities. (Ballbe and Steadman 2008: 441)

What is missing is the kind of bioarchaeology that is attuned to multiple scales of context, both historical and present. Bodies continue to have social lives after death, even (or especially) when they remain below the ground. In the United States, legislation like NAGPRA and situations like the African Burial Ground project have prompted bioarchaeologists to pause and to take the concerns of descendent communities into account as they conduct their research. In Spain, political inertia has created a different situation, in which a socially active bioarchaeology is needed to help push excavations forward from the place where they have stalled. The complex political landscape of Spain, especially now in this moment of crisis, requires critical reflection and greater community engagement. By putting the time and care into establishing relationships with surviving families and historical memory associations, researchers stand a better chance of accessing the resources and knowledge that are required to do good scholarship and to pursue research that addresses the questions and issues that families find important. This finally, may be what is required to change more green dots into red dots.

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