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GLAMMONS

THE ROLE OF HERITAGE-MAKING IN WELL-BEING & EFFECTIVE WAYS TO CO-CURATE IT

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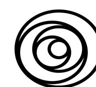
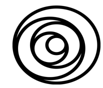


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

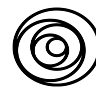
The purpose of this working paper is to examine the role of heritage-making processes that emerge ‘from below’ in times of crisis and in particular, during the recent COVID-19 pandemic. People’s walking routines, as developed in response to the strict lockdown measures of that time, are used as a prompt to explore the limited yet daily interactions of EU citizens with the cityscape across different parts of Europe (Belgium, Greece, the Netherlands and the UK). In doing so, we record the collective memory and historical significance of COVID-19, emerging as a new ‘layer’ to the cultural landscape of the city, while exploring qualitatively the effects of heritage and heritage-making on participants’ well-being.

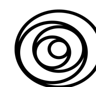
In particular, framed by the Husserlian concept of ‘epoché’ and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), our research invited participants to revive their lockdown ‘routine walks’ and discuss their experience of social distancing and meaning-making during the crisis. Data were collected through a series of ‘walk and talk’ interviews in various cities (including Ghent, Athens, Rotterdam, and others), using RESCAPER, a digital tracker mobile application tool, to record participants’ daily routes on the map and pinpoint their thoughts, feelings and sites of interest that triggered their memory. This allowed us to map, for the first time, both literally and perceptually, the qualities and meanings of the unprecedented pan-European lockdown regime, encouraging participants’ retrospective assessment of the COVID-19 experience.

Our analysis shows that amid the wide closure of GLAMs and heritage sites, lockdown walks emerged as a new type of cultural practice for maintaining sanity. Their memories emerge as collectives of



tangible and intangible marks, which spread across the cityscape, witnessing a convoluted process of heritage-making and co-curation of recent past. The new and convoluted ‘heritage layer’ of COVID-19 manifests its presence through diverse narratives that ultimately converge on common themes across participants. These are organised and presented here within a four-dimensional frame that comprises time, memory, space and materiality. This frame helps us to assemble some key elements of the pandemic legacy in order to inform its future curation by GLAM.





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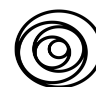

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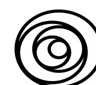

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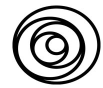

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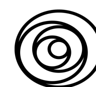
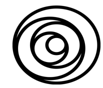


ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACRONYM	DESCRIPTION
CoE	Council of Europe
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
PHEIC	Public Health Emergency of International Concern
WHO	World Health Organisation
W&T	Walk and Talk interview



1. INTRODUCTION

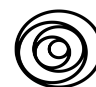
1.1. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this working paper is to examine the role of heritage-making processes that emerge ‘from below’ in times of crisis and in particular, during the recent COVID-19 pandemic. By **using as proxy people’s walking routines, developed in response to the strict lockdown measures** of that time, we **explore the limited yet daily interactions of EU citizens with urban and peri-urban landscapes**. In doing so, we record the collective memories and historical significance of COVID-19, **emerging as a new ‘layer’ to the palimpsest of cityscapes.**

Our definition of ‘heritage’ reflects the theoretical developments in the field of Heritage Studies, conceiving it as dynamic, multi-collective and always in motion (see *inter alia,* Smith, 2006; Fouseki & Cassar, 2015; Silverman et al. 2017; Harvey & Wilkinson, 2018). Furthermore, in line with the Council of Europe (see Florence Convention, 2000), we view landscape as a system of cultural and natural resources and supporting networks of interaction, leveraged by everyday practice of surrounding communities; ‘a space lived and interpreted by people in the present’ (Lekakis & Dragouni, 2020: 85). Grounded in this ontology, **we approach the pandemic legacy and its lived experience as part of a continuous practice of ‘heritage-making’ and landscape re-interpretation ‘from below’**. This encourages us to further reflect on the effects of this ‘heritage’ on well-being (as perceived by European citizens at that time and retrospectively), ultimately, reflecting on its incorporation into GLAM work and its co-curation, as shared memory under negotiation and collective processing.

Our methodology is based on phenomenology and in particular, on the Husserlian concept of ‘epoché’ and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), allowing us to observe how individuals make sense of their pandemic experiences and identify any emerging common themes across their narrations. To collect our data, we invited various participants living in major European cities during the crisis (including, Ghent, Rotterdam, Newcastle, Athens and others) to revive their lockdown ‘routine walks’ with the view to prompt them to discuss their experience of self-isolation during the pandemic. More specifically, we conducted a series of ‘walk and talk’ interviews, from March to July 2024, using the RESCAPER tracker mobile application to map participants’ casual routes across the city, while recording their thoughts, feelings and sites that triggered their memory.

By analysing these data, we aim to document and deepen our understanding of alternative heritagisation processes of non-monumental and palimpsestic character. We are also



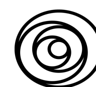
interested in exploring their effect on well-being and reflect on the effective management of related resources in the post-pandemic era that can deliver social value through GLAM work.

1.2. Contribution to other Deliverables

The present deliverable contributes to Deliverable D3.5 which explores processes, tools and protocols of researching areas of ‘dark heritage’. Admittedly, the shocking experience of the pandemic and by extension, its memory and legacy, bear several ‘dark’ aspects and qualities that inform the analysis of the said working paper. Moreover, both the analytical framework (phenomenology) and the research methods (walk and talk interviews) used here can be used complementary to the framework proposed in D3.5. In addition, the research conducted as part of this deliverable employed the ‘RESCAPER’ tracker application for data collection, performing in effect, some further testing of the tool’s usability in the field. Therefore, the work presented here contributes to Task 4.3 of the GLAMMONS project, which features the assessment and upgrading of the application to ‘RESCAPER+’ (Deliverable 4.5).

1.3. Structure of the Document

The rest of this working paper is organised around five sections. The purpose of the first two sections (Sections 2-3) is to guide the readers through our conceptual framework while defining some key terms, such as ‘heritage’ and ‘landscape’. This is followed by a supplementary section (‘Heritage, well-being and co-curation’), which provides readers with a concise literature review of the impact of cultural heritage on health and life satisfaction and the arguments for more participatory and democratic approaches to co-curating the past and its resources. Together, these two pieces help us to unfold the rationale of this research and provide our readers with a comprehensive justification of why we set out to explore ‘heritage-making’ during the pandemic lockdown regimes across Europe. Next, we move on to present our methodological framework (Section 4), presenting a thorough account of IPA, our tools for producing data, our data collection strategy and our approach to analysis. In what follows, we proceed with the empirical part (Section 5), where we exhibit the themes and narratives of pandemic ‘heritage’ as organised across four analytical categories (time, memory, space, materiality). Finally, we conclude this working paper (Section 6) with some reflection on pandemic heritage as our recent common past and potential ways to co-curate it.

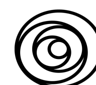


2. SETTING THE FRAME: HERITAGE, WELL-BEING AND CO-CURATION

In this section, we provide definitions of key concepts that frame our analysis. We start with the concept of 'heritage', seen as a dynamic and collective process. We then continue with a short literature review of the concept of 'well-being' as it has been developed by recent policy in Europe and linked to heritage consumption and engagement. Next, we navigate readers through the notion of 'landscape' as a system of interacting cultural and natural resources that we experience and interpret during our everyday practice. As we argue, approaching heritage through the lens of landscape exposes the subjectivity by which we may understand what it is (i.e. what resources, monuments, sites make it up) and what makes it significant (i.e. what meanings, memories and values we ascribe to it). **This view of heritage/ heritage landscape as an associative domain (Waterton, 2005), transforms 'non-expert' citizens into active agents, whose daily experience in the cityscape, creates palimpsests, namely overlays of uses and meaning that determines what can be ratified as heritage and its surrounding space (Lekakis & Dragouni, 2020).** This line of thinking leads us to discuss 'co-curation', as rooted in broader demands and aspirations for participatory approaches to heritage management theory and practice as well as, in the heart and daily functioning of commons' systems. Providing a definition of the term is critical for avoiding conceptual ambiguity. Finally, we elaborate on the idea of 'mnemeiosis' as a counter process of heritage designation, which guides us to approach the pandemic legacy and its lived experience as part of a continuous practice of 'heritage-making' and re-interpretation of landscape 'from below'.

2.1. The evolution of 'heritage'

Postmodernity has seen a vast transformation of the (modern) concept and content of 'cultural heritage', broadening our understanding of how the remnants of the past are valued in the present. Traditionally, monuments and their management have been (and largely remain) closely tied to power structures and mechanisms of controlling the past, processes of nation-building or acts of otherwise exerting ideological and scientific authority over heritage designation (what is recognised as 'cultural heritage'), its interpretation (what is its meaning) and its promotion (how it is communicated to the public). During the past decades, scholarly waves of debate across Cultural Studies, Post-processual Archaeology, New Museology, Heritage Studies and other fields of critical scholarship have paved the way towards **a shift away from hegemonic/static narratives towards more dynamic reconceptualisations of heritage**. By leaving aside the ideas of 'monumentality', 'exceptionalism' and 'universalism', some vital space was created for the emergence of 'heterodox' but socially-significant heritage categories, such as 'intangible heritage', 'indigenous' or 'community heritage', 'industrial heritage', and the like.



Today, **'heritage' is anything but a crystallised term as its content is constantly transformed, extended and evolving** (Pantzou, 2021). As Carman and Sørensen (2009: 10-3) comment, we may continue viewing heritage as a passive legacy of physical substance to be passed onto future generations, or alternatively we can set out to perceive it as **a dynamic entity, a set of practices or even a way of interacting with the world.** In any case, 'insisting on a clear-cut definition risks constraining and delimiting both analytical efforts and the recognition of particular social scenarios' and therefore, although definitions and commonly-agreed terminologies normally help us to understand each other, they also censor the field and restrict our imagination (ibid: 12-3). Therefore, in the context of this paper, we regard ***heritage as a process***; namely a broad and supple relationship with the past that is being continuously produced by people according to their contemporary needs and concerns, hence largely subjective and filtered with reference to the present (Harvey, 2001: 327; see also GLAMMONS Deliverable 3.5, Section 2.1.1 'What is Heritage').

2.2. Heritage and well-being

Well-being can be understood as 'how people feel and how they function, both on a personal and a social level, and how they evaluate their lives as a whole' (New Economics Foundation, 2012: 6). In recent years, well-being has been introduced to academic and policy literature of the heritage sector, exploring its relationship with visiting or engaging in heritage sites and GLAMs. In the related body of work, well-being is seen as a broad measure of health (e.g., mental health) or an indicator of personal happiness. According to Fujiwara et al. (2014: 4), the 'primary benefits' of heritage represent 'the direct benefits for the individual's quality of life or well-being from visiting or participating in heritage'. Thus, well-being normally refers to either mental well-being, i.e., 'the cognitive and emotional state of the participant which is brought about by positive affect, negative affect and life satisfaction' (Binnie, 2010: 192) or more generally, to one's personal sense of wellness and quality of life. In both cases, we are mostly dealing with self-reported (subjective) evaluations at individual level, whereas more recently, there have also been some attempts to incorporate community and social aspects to the concept (Gallou, 2022).

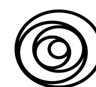
Researchers have employed qualitative methods, such as surveys and focus groups, to understand the value of heritage for audiences and its impact on health. For instance, studies focusing on hospital patients and care home residents have found that experiencing art or handling museum objects were improving their health status (Berleant, 1990; De Tommaso et al., 2008; Chatterjee et al., 2009; Vogelpoel et al., 2013). Another body of the literature took interest in general audiences, reporting, among others, that museum exhibitions enabled visitors to recovering their cognitive and emotional effectiveness by transmitting them a sense of peace and calm (Kaplan et al., 1993), thus lowering their levels of anxiety after enjoying museum art (Binnie, 2010). Furthermore, at community level, some evidence suggested that collective conservation initiatives of local heritage improved participants' social well-being and social learning (Power & Smyth, 2016).

The concept of well-being was also popularised by economics-based policy evaluation studies seeking to assess whether policy plans (e.g., a heritage project) or more generally, public investment in the sector 'pays off' by impacting positively on individuals' subjective well-being. Most notably, Fujiwara (2013) observed the impact of museum-going on well-being, providing statistical evidence that visiting museums and attending cultural events had a significantly positive impact on people's happiness and self-reported health. Across the same lines, Fujiwara et al. (2014) employed 'life satisfaction' as an indicator of (self-reported) well-being to measure the effect of visiting heritage sites, such as monuments and historic places, observing their causal relationships through statistical methods. Although these studies find that visiting heritage sites is positively associated with life satisfaction, they both highlight that results need to be treated with caution, due to uncontrolled variables, reverse causality and other biases.

The impact of deprived access to heritage sites on the public's well-being as the result of pandemic closures had also attracted some attention. Sofaer et al. (2021: 1117) proposed that 'the rawness of routines and access having been disrupted and then regained' led to a greater acknowledgement of the 'use value' of heritage sites across visitors, contributing to the fulfilment of psychological needs and reducing anxiety. More broadly, Samuelsson et al. (2020) examined the effects of natural habitats on the well-being of urban populations, suggesting **that urban nature had the capacity to enhance people's resilience by offering an escape from household confinement and a sense of connection with the outside world.** Interestingly, they see **the landscape as key for understanding further how different environments increase resilience in light of disturbance regimes,** proposing the employment of public participatory GIS methods that can generate context-sensitive place-based data through public-led geographical mapping (ibid).

2.3. Heritage in/through landscape

Similar to heritage, the concept of 'landscape' has also expanded greatly from its original territorial and scenic meanings (Fairclough, 2019). As Fairclough (ibid: 1151) observes, contrary to previous understandings focused on 'the externality of landscape', new notions have emerged that 'share a fundamental view of landscape's 'internality', of landscape as something which people inhabit and embody, not merely something which people observed from outside'. This is reflected in the European Landscape Convention (CoE, 2000), where landscape is conceptualised as co-made by the interaction of natural and human forces, **a key component of heritage** and a contributor to human well-being. This holistic view promotes landscapes to integrated systems of cultural and natural resources, physical and intangible, comprising all types of places (e.g., urban, peri-urban, rural) and qualities (Turner et al., 2020). Furthermore, **as spaces experienced by people in the present, landscapes become embedded in the social and personal times of memory** (Tilley, 1994). For Tilley (ibid: 26), a landscape 'has ontological import because it is lived in and through, mediated, worked on and altered, replete with cultural meaning and symbolism – and not just something looked at

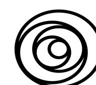


or thought about'. Thus, landscapes can be thought about in terms of 'people's very different understandings and engagements with the world' (Bender, 1998: 4).

As landscape is co-produced by cultural factors; our aspirations, needs, actions and inactions, **the convergence of 'landscape' and 'heritage' provides an effective framework for research and analysis** (Fairclough, 2019). Exploring heritage through the prism of landscape allows us to surpass the distinction between 'natural' and 'cultural' heritage while also acknowledging the subjectivity and fluidity of human perception, interpretation and valuation (Lekakis & Dragouni, 2020). Moreover, in a conjoint 'heritage' and 'landscape' approach, citizens and non-expert communities are no longer viewed as passive recipients of heritage, but rather they are recognised as **active agents who create palimpsests, namely overlays of uses and meanings that impact dynamically on monuments and their surrounding space.** In turn, what can be deemed as 'heritage' is not an exclusive (and exclusionary) act of expert judgement and/or power exercise but an open, continuous and democratic process in a highly associative domain (Waterton, 2005). The 'end product', namely the 'heritage landscape', encapsulates these processes along with acting communities (Lekakis, 2019). At the same time, the landscape retains its own agency and 'regulates activity, as a canvas of cultural representation that is inscribed in the physical and mental existence of communities that surround it' (Lekakis & Dragouni, 2020: 85). It is this mutual relationship that renders heritage landscape a transient vessel of social and cultural practices, constantly changing itself and its inhabitants. This approach fits well with on-going developments in the field of heritage theory and practice, advocating for more participatory approaches to the study and 'making' of the past while promoting heritage-making to an act of 'commoning'.

2.4. Heritage and its co-curation

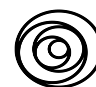
Both academic scholarship and cultural policy have long advocated for **a shift towards more democratic and participatory practices across the heritage and GLAM sector** (for a detailed account, see GLAMMONS Deliverable 1.6: 'Conceptualising GLAMs as commons', Section 2, pp. 12-23). The participatory ideal was initially promoted by new social movements, as a claim for collective action and for citizens having a say in issues of public interest (Robertson & Simonsen, 2013). As heritage scholarship began to burgeon in the second half of the 1980s, ideas for an alternative participatory paradigm have entered theoretical debates that questioned traditional top-down approaches to the management of the past, critiquing them for reproducing intrinsic, static and western upper-class values and aesthetics, while concentrating power in the hands of state-appointed heritage professionals (Gentry and Smith, 2019; Gibson et al., 2019). This led to the emergence of new theoretical movements in the field, supporting a more democratic approach to professional practice that **promotes the empowerment of the public and opens up to local knowledge, popular memory and cultural diversity** (Hooper-Greenhill, 1999; Fu et al., 2017; Dragouni & Lekakis, 2023).



In turn, as Beeksma and De Cesari (2019) observe, the late 1990s marked the 'age of participation' in heritage policy. Corroboration of the idea of participation as 'good practice' is well documented by normative documents of the time. Indicatively, the Burra Charter (Australia ICOMOS, 1999) suggests that 'conservation, interpretation and management of a place should provide for the participation of people for whom the place has special associations and meanings, or who have social, spiritual or other cultural responsibilities for the place' (article 12). UNESCO's (2003) Convention for Intangible Heritage supports 'the widest possible participation of communities, groups, and where appropriate, individuals that create, maintain and transit such heritage, and to involve them actively in its management' (article 15). In addition, the Faro Convention (Council of Europe, 2005) highlights that 'people identify [cultural heritage] as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions' (article 2a), encouraging everyone to participate 'in the process of identification, study, interpretation, protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural heritage' (article 7a), prescribing tools for such processes (ICOMOS, 2011). These texts support a greater appreciation of the role of communities and the integration of participatory approaches to heritage identification, interpretation and management (Deacon & Smeets, 2013).

Participation and its diverse applications to managing heritage resources (e.g., co-curation) have significantly affected academic research and professional practice across the world. It is now perceived as a challenging but effective way to aligning heritage work with local needs and aspirations, resolving conflicts, increasing representation, harnessing local knowledge and promoting empowerment of citizens and marginalised social groups (Chirikure et al., 2010; Fu et al., 2017; Gibson et al., 2019; Simakole et al., 2019). A bottom-up approach to heritage management is also understood as an avenue for encouraging local communities to claim their rights to heritage, build their capacity and pursue a shared vision for future development that positions community meanings at the centre of conservation efforts (Stephens and Tiwari, 2015). Furthermore, participatory approaches are valuable to research, where the involvement of 'non-expert' publics in the co-creation of data holds transformative potential for epistemic practices and knowledge-making (Hetland et al., 2020).

While heritage participation has been interpreted in many ways, producing a spectrum of applications with various grades of width and depth, in the context of this paper we consider purposeful to **focus on participation as a mode of 'co-curation' of memory and its traces across landscape**. Admittedly, community involvement is often equated with public engagement and awareness raising, which normally do not allow participants equal opportunity for debate and substantive authority over decision-making (Schiele, 2020). Yet, in principle, participation is not merely about engagement but a process whereby 'non-expert' groups of citizens shall assume power in all aspects of heritage work, including co-curation of their cultural resources (Chirikure et al., 2010). **Participatory heritage research enables us to observe how the past unfolds across the landscape**; namely, how it is understood, experienced and embedded in social fabric (Dragouni & Lekakis, 2023). Exploring further effective ways to co-curation seems appropriate and necessary for managing the products of



a counter process of heritage designation (*mnemeiosis*), which was driven by collective and communal memory (see also Section 2.5).

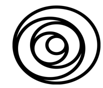
Participation, co-curation and indeed 'mnemeiosis' are prime examples of our framing of heritage as commons (see GLAMMONS Deliverable 1.6: 'Conceptualising GLAMs as commons'). Such activities are all expressions of **'commoning'** (namely, the present and aspired governance arrangements along with the products in the process), performed by interested '**communities'** (local and distant stakeholders surrounding the resources, the public in a plural and diverse form, e.g. archaeologists, administrative bodies, locals, tourists etc.) to protect and manage the **'resource'**, i.e. the tangible and intangible material (for example, a cultural landscape or a historic building and the social/traditional knowledge or local practices and visions surrounding them) (Avdikos et al., 2024; Lekakis, 2024).

2.5. Heritage-making and its 'mnemeiosis'

As we discussed earlier in this chapter, over the past years, 'heritage' has come to refer not only to the objects but also to practices and **the process of 'doing' heritage,** through actions of remembering and forgetting, producing and adapting, practising and performing (Silverman et al., 2017). As Fairclough (2019: 1152) points, 'heritage becomes a verb not a noun, an everyday, democratic process as a transmission to the future as well as an inheritance from the past'. Thus, **'heritage-making' is a phenomenon that takes place in the present** as people (scientists, scholars, professionals and also other social groups, communities and individuals) **select their legacies from the past for current use** and decide **what should be protected, enhanced and passed on** to our descendants (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996; Harvey, 2001; Smith, 2006).

This exegesis has expanded greatly our perception of **what can be accounted as 'heritage', given that non-monumental 'ordinary' sites, objects and processes are often found to hold great personal and collective value** by their surrounding communities (Graves-Brown et al., 2013, Harvey & Wilkinson, 2018, Parkinson & Pendlebury, 2019). After all, there is no heritage before somebody assigns its significance (Fouseki & Cassar, 2015). **Such new, uncharted manifestations of heritage are extended even further through the landscape perspective, surpassing commonplace notions of a 'monument'** as 'an object, especially large and made of stone, built to remember and show respect for a person or group of people, or a special place made for this purpose'[1]. Rather, treating heritage as a dynamic process that is performed across the landscape allows us to observe how **non-monumental, palimpsestic and resilient 'monuments' emerged as active connectors to people's memory and experience and assigned with social and cultural significance.** For Tilley (1994: 27),

[1] The definition of 'monument' as found in the Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary (Cambridge University Press, 2008). Available at https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/monument# (last access 13 July 2024).

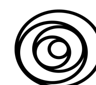


human activities are inscribed within a landscape as ‘daily passages through the landscape become biographic encounters for individuals, recalling traces of past activities and previous events and the readings of signs’.

Obviously, the process described here is distinct from official acts of ‘monumentalisation’ and top-down ‘heritagisation’, which follow specific legal and bureaucratic procedures, invite specialists to document their historic significance, designate a ‘heritage’ label and enclose, signpost and promote resources as tourism attractions (Macdonald, 2013; Lekakis & Dragouni, 2020). This allows ‘the Heritage people’ to freeze time and space and ‘monuments in it to be packaged, presented, and turned into museum exhibits’ (Bender, 1998: 26). Here, **we are not interested in creating normative heritage landscapes but rather, we would like to consider different ways of understanding landscape and heritage at a particular time (that of the pandemic crisis) and place (the cityscape of the European city), through the lenses of the people that experienced it**.

For this, we consider ‘mnemeiosis’ as an appropriate ‘label’ to describe the scope of our work. As we have argued before (Lekakis & Dragouni, 2019; 2020; 2023), **‘mnemeiosis’** (< *μνημείωση*), a derivative of the Greek etymon ‘mneme’ (< *μνήμη*), meaning ‘memory’ signifies **a counter process of heritage designation at a grassroots level**. Acts of mnemeiosis are distinguished from the national, abstract and often authoritative accounts of the past. They make up what we see as **a dynamic and subjective form of heritage-making that is embedded in the landscape, is powered by collective/communal memory**, **is often realised through subconscious and/or spontaneous inscription of value and significance to ‘things’ (or places, practices and so on), yet remains largely unsettled.**

Mnemeiosis was originally coined as a term in researching the rural landscape, its value and position in collective consciousness and imagination across the Cycladic islands in Greece. The concept has its roots in phenomenological approaches (see for instance, Tilley, 1994) while also bearing some common traits with Raymond Williams’s (1961) ‘structure of feeling’, as **a different way of emotively responding and thinking about monuments and heritage(s)** at a particular time, that rest beyond official discourses, their popular responses and their appropriations in cultural texts, and **where the stakes are not yet fully articulated and consciously elaborated**. In this light, exposing acts of mnemeiosis across the cityscape can be also regarded as a way to understanding public reception and structure of feeling during the recent pandemic crisis.



3. HERITAGE-MAKING IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD

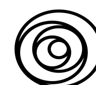
3.1. The COVID-19 pandemic

In early 2020, European media broke the news of a novel coronavirus that had caused a disease outbreak in China. In the preceding December, Chinese authorities had reported to the World Health Organisation (WHO) that a group of patients in the city of Wuhan had experienced the symptoms of an atypical pneumonia-like illness that did not respond well to standard treatments (WHO, 05-01-2020). As it became evident soon, **the humanity was dealing with a highly infectious disease, which was causing a cluster of respiratory infections, could be transmitted easily through close contact and was threatening practically to all**; everyone could become seriously ill, require medical treatment or even die (especially if suffering from a prior medical condition or ageing over 60).

Quite expectedly, our globalised world was about to witness the spread of the virus at the speed of the light. Indeed, as quickly as 24th January 2020, Europe reported its first confirmed case in Bordeaux, France, followed by the coronavirus dissemination across the continent (Stoecklin et al., 2020). On 30th January, WHO declared that the outbreak constituted a ‘public health emergency of international concern’ (PHEIC) (WHO, 2020a), whereas **in mid-March 2020, Europe became officially the ‘epicentre’ of the pandemic** (BBC, 14-03-2020). Our fears of a health crisis had materialised, sinking the whole continent to **an abnormal reality of national lockdowns, encompassing stay-at-home orders, curfews, quarantines, sanitary cordons and other societal restrictions,** under the threat of a deadly virus and as prevention to overburdening national healthcare systems.

The unprecedented scale of disease control measures led to heavy social and economic disruption. Economic activity was limited or temporarily halted for a vast array of businesses and sectors (e.g. GLAMs were amongst the most affected; see Deliverable 1.5: ‘Pandemic-driven shifts of GLAMs finances and participatory practices’), fear of supply shortages caused panic-buying phenomena, telework became the new ‘canon’ for white-collar employment while many blue-collar work sectors experienced down-sizing and income losses, public and cultural spaces were partially or fully closed for lengthy time periods and educational institutions transitioned to online learning. Even countries that started with more light ‘intelligent’ lockdown strategies, such as the Netherlands, eventually turned to heavier measures as applied to the rest of the EU (van Dullemen & de Bruijn, 2022).

Parallel to these, the circulation of false information through social and mass media about the origin, prevention and treatment of the disease added to **a general feeling of uncertainty, anxiety and socio-political tension.** The speedy development and distribution of anti-virus vaccines in just a few months’ time was a huge achievement of research and global collaboration, but also brought to the surface further polarisation across society, regarding



state policies, health equity or even anti-vax conspiracy narratives[2]. The whole crisis management through the implementation of blanket public health measures has also raised concerns over the violation of individual rights and civil liberties (especially of vulnerable social groups[3]) by government use of emergency powers to curb freedom of assembly and movement, including **school closures, border closures, quarantine and isolation, household confinement and limiting gatherings** (Zweig et al., 2021).

The pandemic crisis continued over a prolonged period of time (or 'non-time'), where 'the emergence of ever-new variants and waves of the disease may have drawn us into resignation, depression, and despair, or evoked incomprehension, anger, and outrage' (Tietjen, 2022: 1282). Naturally, limited ability to predict the course of events and to control the situation **nurtured a general sentiment of uncertainty and distress** across the population (Wagener et al., 2022). Eventually, in the beginning of May 2023, WHO ended the PHEIC for the coronavirus, stating that COVID-19 was 'an established and ongoing health issue which no longer constitutes a public health emergency of international concern' (WHO, 05-05-2023). As of the latest available data (WHO, 07-07-2024), the death toll of the coronavirus is estimated to exceed 7 million people globally and 2.3 million in Europe.

3.2. Social isolation and its impact on well-being

The pandemic crisis has affected all Europeans in numerous ways. As Tietjen (2022: 1281-2) recounts eloquently, 'we may have experienced the virus as a threat to our health and life, especially when particularly vulnerable, and felt helpless or upset when seeing people exhausted, suffering, dying. Those who lost their jobs and income but also those working in draining and underpaid jobs in the health care system may have felt left alone, angry, desperate (Samikou et al., 2023). As privileged academics, we have been forced to abandon our trips abroad and to cancel or postpone our travel plans to an uncertain future. Enforced collective travel bans have brought rest into our hectic lives. But they also have deprived us of the possibility to meet our colleagues, friends, and family members in person and disrupted our habitual ways of social interaction. For those of us living alone, the enforced social distancing may have brought solitude or loneliness. For those living with others, especially with young children, it may have been a time of cosy intimacy but also of an overburdening load of childcare and work obligations (Ktenas, 2023).

[2] See indicatively, ISD (2022) 'Anti-vaccination conspiracies' at https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Anti-vaccination-conspiracies-External-October-2022.pdf (last access 24 July 2024).

[3] Vulnerability could be based on factors such as gender (e.g. women), economic conditions (e.g. unemployed), health status (e.g. elderly or disabled), ethnic minorities, refugees and asylum seekers. See Zweig et al. (2021: 175) for more details

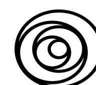
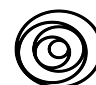


Table 1 Pandemic lockdowns in countries under study

	First lockdown		
Country	Start	End	Duration
Belgium	18/03/2020	04/05/2020	47 days
Greece	23/03/2020	04/05/2020	42 days
Netherlands	15/03/2020	06/04/2020	22 days
UK (England)	23/03/2020	04/07/2020	103 days
	Second lockdown		
Country	Start	End	Duration
Belgium	02/11/2020	14/12/2020	42 days
Greece	07/11/2020	22/03/2021	135 days
Netherlands	15/12/2020	05/06/2021	172 days
UK (England)	05/11/2020	02/12/2020	27 days
	Third lockdown		
Country	Start	End	Duration
Belgium	27/03/2021	26/04/2021	30 days
Greece	-	-	-
Netherlands	19/12/2021	14/01/2022	26 days
UK (England)	05/01/2021	28/03/2021	83 days

* Notes: Data concerns only lockdowns as imposed by state authorities and no other restrictive measures. See also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/COVID-19_lockdowns (last accessed 22 July 2024).

Studies on population's social behaviour provide evidence of **broad adherence to COVID-19 containment measures, with people avoiding social gatherings, keeping distance from other people and staying at home** (Hensel et al., 2021). Contrary to voluntary isolation, **lockdowns were amongst the most stringent** non-pharmaceutical interventions to curb the spread of the pandemic **through mandatory confinement**. By April 2020, **millions of European citizens had been *ordered* by their governments to stay at home by enforcing the lockdown measure** (Sandford, 02/04/2020). Table 1 presents in detail the lockdowns enforced across our sample countries (Belgium, Greece, the Netherlands and the UK). During

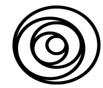


these extended lockdown periods, outdoor activities were restricted to essential jobs, such as grocery shopping, errands, medical care, dog walking and exercising. Behaviour in public space was monitored by law-enforcement and violations were punished with financial penalties.

It goes without saying that those who experienced the crisis most brutally were the ones that either fell ill at the onset of the pandemic or lost someone beloved. Yet, admittedly, the pandemic created a massive global shock that permeated population as a whole 'marking a before and an after, a temporal rift that separated the time of the pandemic from the time that preceded it' (Velasco et al., 2022). The lockdowns in particular, imposed on EU citizens indiscriminately, had multiple effects on their everyday lives, including emotional and psychological. For example, a UK survey by the Office for National Statistics (2020), reported that half of adult participants felt their well-being was being affected by the pandemic since the first two weeks of April 2020 and that **levels of anxiety increased sharply with the introduction of lockdown**. Similarly in Belgium, a citizens' survey during the first lockdown found that individuals **experienced high levels of negative emotions, such as anger, fear and sadness** (Wagener et al., 2022). In Greece, a survey by the University of Aegean during the same period (April 2020) found that citizens experienced **uncertainty, fear and insecurity mostly due to the economic repercussions of the pandemic, described as a 'social trauma'** that extended further the socio-economic troubles of the recent debt crisis (Chtouris & Zissi, 2020; Ktenas, 2023). In contrast, the Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (n.d.) suggested that the pandemic itself did not have such a significantly negative psychological impact as 'in 2019 (before the coronavirus crisis), nine percent of the Dutch population aged 15 and over experienced a strong sense of social and/or emotional isolation; 26 percent of the population sometimes experienced loneliness'[4].

As this preliminary evidence implies, although social distancing measures were considered appropriate for controlling the transmission of the disease, they **had severe repercussions for psychological well-being** (WHOb, 2020). In fact, feelings of stress and anxiety at the time were not solely connected to health issues but also arose from the pandemic-induced economic recession, its toll on income, jobs and sense of financial security, as well as, from household confinement and domestic conflict (Samuelsson et al., 2020; WHOc, 2020). Moreover, **social distancing and isolation was observed to induce feelings of loneliness and depression** during the crisis, creating fear for post-traumatic stress symptoms, confusion and anger (Brooks et al., 2020). As WHO (2022: 3) reported, 'longitudinal studies indicate that prevalence of **mental distress and mental health conditions increased following COVID-19 outbreaks and the introduction of public health containment measures**, but then reduced during reopening phases'. Still, since lockdowns and other restrictive pandemic measures had admittedly **a lasting psychological effect** (Velasco et al., 2022), they deserve

[4] See CBS (Statistics Netherlands), 'Social impact of COVID-19', available at https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/dossier/coronavirus-crisis-cbs-figures/social-impact-of-covid-19 (last access 24 July 2024).

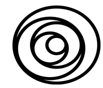


further attention to inform our future response and management of the pandemic 'legacy'.

3.3. A pandemic heritage?

Figure 1 *'This is where I stopped and looked at the sea'*: Pilot walk and talk interview at Newcastle, UK reviving lockdown walks during the pandemic (April 2024).

As discussed in Section 2, heritage is dynamic, ever-changing and expanding and it is thus, of no surprise that there is already a recent - although still niche - strand of the literature that has taken interest in the emergent 'heritage' of the pandemic. Researchers have set out to explore heritage 'in difficult times' by investigating how the COVID-19 crisis has affected the engagement of memory institutions with their audiences (Samaroudi et al., 2020; Magliacani & Sorrentino, 2021) or how digitally-mediated community practices of sharing heritage resources have mobilised the co-creation of heritage value (Ginzarly & Srour, 2022). At the same time, several prominent heritage scholars (see, *inter alia*, Hortorf, 2022 and the edited volume of Shepard, 2023) have visualised 'pandemic heritage' as a driver for change across institutional and social practice in the post-crisis era and amid anthropogenic climate change. **New pandemic modes of social interaction, such as distanced relationships (Högberg & Holtorf, 2021), forced intimacy in confined spaces (Bezerra, 2023), touchless**



greetings (Butler, 2023) have been proposed to contribute to their very own 'heritage in the making'. Furthermore, from a practical angle, Spennemann (2023), in what seems more like a hypothetical scenario, employed ChatGPT to develop a museum exhibition for COVID-19, framing the idea of the 'cultural heritage of the COVID-19 pandemic' (ibid: 5732); an exercise that produced some 'pandemic heritage' by drawing on related objects (e.g. protective equipment, vaccine-related artefacts), discursive traces (e.g. media coverage) and places (e.g. research labs and vaccination centres) identified as relevant (by AI) but not necessarily socially-significant.

In this working paper, we move a step further; **our interest is not confined to assembling the 'cultural heritage of the pandemic' as a series of artefacts or to treating it as a new typological heritage category.** Rather, we explore COVID-19 as an unprecedented personal yet collective experience that adds a new and still indiscernible 'layer' to landscape. In doing so, **we treat the pandemic heritage as a historical and social phenomenon.** In this context, lockdown walks are considered as transgressive acts of day-by-day transformations, incarnating experiences and aspirations of people in a state of exemption. A performative event whereby temporarily yet systematically, urban dwellers have been occupying public space and reclaiming the familiar landscape in the course of an unfamiliar (confined) 'closed-off' city. These practices, performed during a period which was broadly experienced as depressing (or even oppressive), compose a meshwork of paths and lines made by humans, forming new, diversifying in-between spaces to named places and saturating them with extra layers of (personal/communal) significance and historical meaning.

4. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

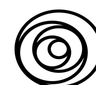
In this section, we explain our broader methodology and the specific tools that we employed during our fieldwork. In general, we hold that qualitative survey techniques are mostly suitable for shedding light on different aspects of a positive or negative experience and its outcomes. Here, we employ Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), a qualitative and experiential research approach, to study the pandemic and self-isolation as a phenomenon that affected our lives universally, although experienced in different ways and subjectively by each one of us.

4.1. A parenthesis within a parenthesis

Phenomenology is the philosophical tradition that studies the structures of consciousness. A systematic reflection to determine the essential properties and structures of experience or in other words, the most basic elements of what it means to be aware in the world. As Butler (2022: 3) explains, the world is brought together by phenomena, of which the 'appearances allow us to develop a sense of belonging to a world or a sense of the world itself as a site of belonging'. This can be considered as an active process that prompts us to consider how the world in its 'givenness' takes shape in ways that are valid and understood (Butler, 2022: 21). Phenomenology thus engages in a deliberate exploration of our acts of perception and our constitution of the perceived world. In this light, to objectify heritage-making would oppose the inherently subjective, iterative and ever-changing nature of heritage. Rather, by 'peering back through the lens of our own subjectivities, we continue to try to create, not *the* past, but *our* past' (Bender, 1998: 7).

IPA is a direct descendant of the philosophical approach and epistemology of phenomenology. As Smith et al. (2008: 34) suggest, **IPA is an interpretative process that deals with the detailed exploration of human lived experience.** Furthermore, IPA situates its subjects in their particular contexts, taking interest in their personal perspectives, and examining each individual case carefully before attempting any generalisations (ibid.). As IPA analysis relies on interpretation it involves a 'double hermeneutic', as the researcher 'is making sense of the participant, who is making sense of *x*' (Smith et al., 2008: 37), where *x* could represent in our case the pandemic/lockdown condition and its repercussions.

Still, we are dealing here with a 'crisis' phenomenon; as COVID-19 and its rapid spread across the globe emerged violently and disruptively, it temporarily put on hold the world as we knew it. It kind of created what Husserl (1927) saw as a 'bracket' or 'parenthesis' by claiming its existence in absoluteness although perceived, remembered and judged based on the world as given. Through this lens, we may examine **the pandemic heritage as a parenthesis within a parenthesis, understanding and objectifying heritage meaning and heritage-making as processes taking place in a suspended world.** In phenomenological research, this



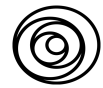
approach - defined as 'epoché', 'bracketing' or 'abstention', prompts us to leave aside our suppositions and conceptual 'baggage' with the view to concentrate on the phenomenon at the heart of its experience. Parenthesising ordinary beliefs about reality, causality, perception and judgement calls for silencing the 'natural attitude' and normal positing (based on previous knowledge, experiences and worldviews), seeking instead to **analyse the lived experience of the pandemic and their lockdowns as a system of inherent meaning**. This can become possible by attending deeply to our participants and paying attention to the relation between the transcendental ego (i.e., empirical self-consciousness) and the world (Husserl, 1982: 31). Such a process intentionally reconstitutes the bracketed phenomena, or the 'noumena', i.e., the fundamentally unknowable things-in-themselves, back to a context where we can relate to and interpret them.

4.2. 'Walk and talk' interviews

From a phenomenological point of view, to do research is to question the way we experience the world and to want to know the world in which we live as human beings. And since to know the world is to be in the world in a certain way, the act of researching is the intentional act of attaching ourselves to the world, to become more fully part of it, or better to become the world, an inseparable connection to the world (Van Manen, 1990). Phenomenological researchers value in-depth, iterative interviews and prolonged engagement, often with a small, relatively homogeneous sample of participants[5]. This allows for the elicitation of depth over breadth and the internal meaning structures of lived experience, which is true to the spirit of phenomenology (Van Manen, 1990).

Since the topic and approach of **phenomenology connects with everyday experience** (Smith et al., 2009), we were interested in employing a research tool that would allow for its **adaptation to the pandemic condition**, thus accommodating participants' impressions from that period (or 'world'). The COVID-19 crisis and the measures employed to harness the pandemic around the globe brought about new ways of understanding ourselves, society, our immediate surroundings and the landscape, until recently considered as familiar, safe and given (De Gruyter, 2020). Amid the vast closure of cultural spaces, GLAMs and heritage sites and the halt in all cultural participation that entailed physical presence and socialisation, **'a new kind of cultural event was born: lockdown walks'** (Meneses-Sala, 2021). In the limited time and distance allowed to venture outside their houses-safeholds, people were opting for nearby walks and runs, populating corners of the city and areas of the cityscape in ways unexpected and thought-provoking. In a time of exceptionality in urban life, this type of pedestrian recreational mobility can be seen as a 'lived, performative aspect of urban communication' (Niitamo, 2023: 628). **Walking is a 'place-making' practice and embodied mobility affects how people engage with their environment** and how they formulate, affirm

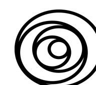
[5] For example, Smith et al. (2009) recommend six cases as a sufficient sample size for exploring a phenomenon.



or contest it (Gros, 2023; Witte, 2023). Furthermore, from a phenomenological perspective, walking can be viewed **as a function of 'being-in-the-world', a human-landscape engagement where the landscape, a sense of place, and the moment are closely entwined with one's own lived experiences** (Rybråten et al., 2019).

Figure 2 Walk and talk interview in Ghent (April 2024)

Thus, contrary to traditional sit-down interviews, we have chosen to use here the mobile 'walk and talk' interview technique, which as its name implies, embodies talking with the practice of walking (as in the pandemic period). According to Pranka (2018), the walk and talk method allows us to explore different aspects of life in motion while observing the relationship 'between what people say and where they say it'. As recommended by Carpiano (2009), participants should be provided with the liberty to choose the route, guide the researcher through the landscape and decide what they want to show them. This provides researchers with additional insight into **a participant's relationship or alienation from its spatial and social surroundings that cannot be grasped in a traditional interview setting** (Pranka, 2018). While enabling our subjects with all these liberties, we introduced one condition to our design: **the walking route of the interview needed to mimic (or revive) participant's lockdown routine walks.**



The interviews were semi-structured, featuring questions that invited participants to 'reconstruct [their] experience within the topic under study' (Seidman, 2006: 15). Seidman (ibid.) advanced the in-depth phenomenology-based interviewing, proposing for each subject to be interviewed three times under the following rationale: **the first interview focuses on life history, the second concentrates on the person's lived experience, and the third invites deeper meaning-making (intellectual and emotional) and reflection of the phenomenon under investigation**. For Seidman (ibid.), such a protocol of three-rounds of interviewing can mitigate superficiality and help us glean valuable information for each case.

4.3. Data collection, sample and analysis

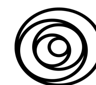
Since the experiences of the pandemic crisis can differ substantially across different parts of the EU, we considered purposeful to collect evidence from people living in various European cities (e.g., Rotterdam, the Hague, Leiden, Ghent) and neighbourhoods (e.g., Lycabettus, Patissia, Kypseli, Polygono and Kaisariani in Athens)[6], with the view to **accessing the phenomenon under study from multiple perspectives.** This has led to a large corpus of cases produced by a total of twenty individuals (including 1 pilot interview at Newcastle), as shown in Table 2. Participants were selected under a non-probability sampling strategy, based on convenience and geographic availability. All interviews took place from March to July 2024, which is about four years after the onset of the crisis and the imposition of the first lockdown (March 2020). All interviews were conducted in participants' mother tongue (Dutch/Flemish, Greek) and then translated in English.

Table 2 Sample

Num. of participants	20
Participants based in the UK (pilot)	1 (5%)
Participants based in the Netherlands	7 (35%)
Participants based in Belgium	6 (30%)
Participants based in Greece	6 (30%)

Following Siedman (2005; see also Section 4.2), **we built an IPA interview protocol that featured three stages of interviewing for each subject**, with distinct goals: ***contextualising* the phenomenon (interview 1), *apprehending* the phenomenon (interview 2) and *clarifying* the phenomenon (interview 3).** Interview 1 introduced participants to the research scope and aims while mobilising their memory (e.g., asking them to say a few things about their life situation at the time of the pandemic, their walking habits and their copying with lockdown and self-isolation measures). To recreate the social distancing experience of the

[6] The exact locations emerged through convenience sampling (proximity/access, language).



time, interview 1 was often conducted online. Interview 2 was the main ‘walk and talk’ interview. In it, **participants were asked to revive a standard pandemic walking routine of their choosing and guide the researcher through it.** These interviews were performed with the help of the RESCAPER mobile application to record the route and pinpoint sites of interest on the map. Finally, interview 3 involved a post-discussion that encouraged participants to further contemplate on their experience during the walk’s revival and revisit their memories of the pandemic period. Interview 3 normally took place shortly after interview 2 while subjects were resting and relaxing. The RESCAPER route and recorded points were shown to the subjects[7] to provide them with a stimulus for their reflection.

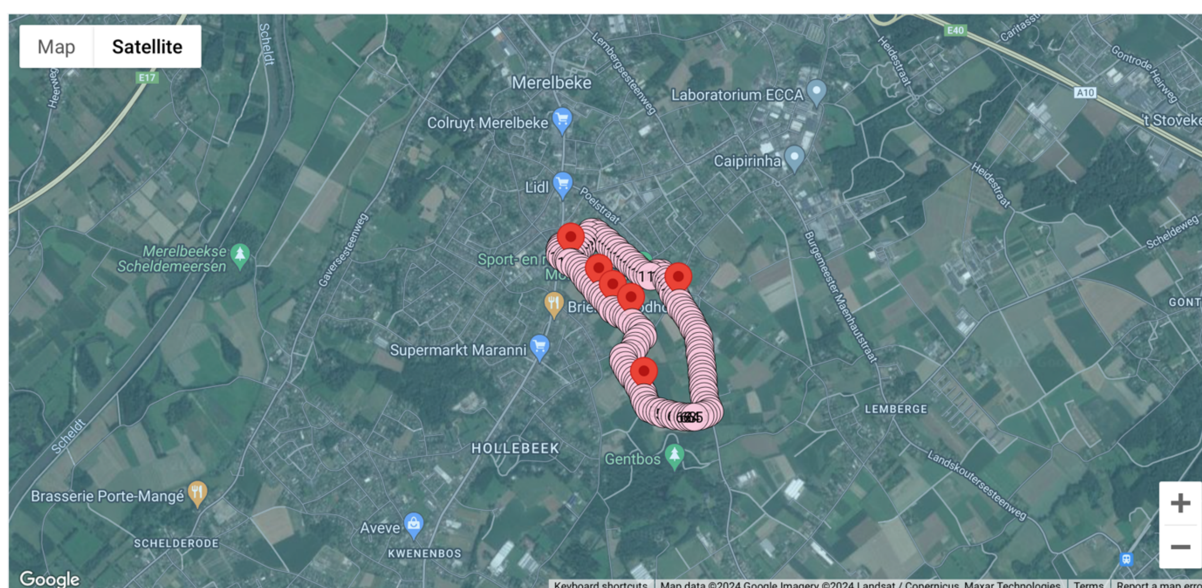
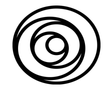


Figure 3 Using the RESCAPER app to record lockdown walks.

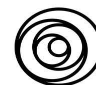
Following the analytic process in IPA as described by Smith et al. (2009), our focus when processing the data was directed towards ‘participants’ attempts to make sense of their experiences’ (ibid: 80), with particular interest in the thematics of heritage and well-being. This involved initially a line-by-line analysis of each transcript, noting things of most interest, such as places and their meaning for the participants, while compiling transcripts’ extracts to allow for themes to emerge. After the initial reading, familiarisation and compilation, each researcher moved on to comment and thematise the data, by identifying patterns within the material (e.g., ideas, feelings, memories) and noting commonalities or convergences. Identified themes were then discussed between researchers, leading to the development of a more interpretative narrative and a structure-frame to further organise key motifs as evidenced by interview extracts. In our case, **this frame was a quadripartite schema, grouping themes under ‘time’, ‘memory’, ‘space’ and ‘materiality’ superordinate categories** (see Section 5 in

[7] To comply with data ethics, the application and recordings were all stored exclusively to the researchers’ devices.



detail). During this process, RESCAPER data were also used by researchers to cross-check information and get a better understanding of the related sites and objects[8]. In the next section, we provide a thorough presentation of the emergent themes across our cases and develop our full narrative of participants' experience with the pandemic and lockdown regimes.

[8] It should be also noted that beyond the work performed for this working paper, RESCAPER data are also intended to inform the assessment and upgrade of the app to 'RESCAPER+' as part of GLAMMONS' Work Package 4 (Task 4.3, Deliverable 4.5).



5. THE PANDEMIC AS A HERITAGE LAYER

This section presents and discusses the main themes that we identify in our data, denoting repeated patterns of meaning for the pandemic experience, as reflected in the feelings, thoughts and notions expressed by our research participants[9] during their walk and talk interviews.

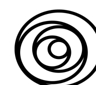
5.1. COVID-19 as context

As in any crisis context, idiosyncrasy and personal circumstances affect how people make sense of the situation and act (Tietjen, 2023). This can be applied to the pandemic and lockdown experience, focusing on how people are making sense of it retrospectively and whether they share some common ground that would allow us to discuss COVID-19 as context. As our cases reveal, there are several commonalities in the ways people have responded to the condition of self-isolation amid a public health emergency, which was more or less ubiquitous (‘*everybody lived through this… Nobody escaped it but everyone did it alone*’, interviewee I), and how revisiting these memories - often unsettling and awkward, co-creates the COVID-19 history and heritage ‘from below’.

Based on our interviews, we can safely discuss some of the characteristics of this new context: a novel world brought about or more accurately, **a new layer that was formed in the world during the pandemic**. This layer is present today, concealed and impalpable but still **important** and **transformative**, even though largely **unexplored** (interviewees LA, E, NA, S); it is ‘*far from forgotten, but hidden from view*’ (interviewee S). This obscurity makes its examination difficult but also reveals its other characteristics. The COVID-19 layer of our lives has been **pushed back** and its latency is the reason for our difficulty to make sense of it (interviewees D, I). An **unhinged** and **uninspiring** (interviewee I) situation that poses difficulties when attempting to create a historic reference or analogy: The pandemic ‘kind of disappears into the background’ (interviewee R) as ‘*perhaps many memories aren’t connected to COVID. And then, by coincidence, they had happened at [that] time [so] perhaps, influenced your behaviour a bit. But it's not really COVID that you remember in the landscape*’ (interviewee A).

The problem of establishing references might be historically a common feature of how humanity experiences and processes pandemics (Gardika, 2018), as layers are hidden from view but reveal themselves in other events: ‘*It’s mostly [when] you think on family events that it maybe comes up, like, memories of X’s first birthday. That we weren’t really allowed to have*

[9] To maintain the anonymity of our subjects, we have assigned a code to each interviewee, as follows: Interviewee FR (Newcastle, UK), Interviewees NA, P, SA, SB, W (Ghent, BELGIUM), Interviewees A, D, EA, I, LA, MA, NB, R (various parts of the NETHERLANDS, including the Hague, Leiden, Rotterdam and its suburbs), Interviewees J, M, S, FP, FK, Y (Athens, GREECE).



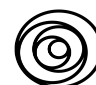
visitors, but that they did come by in the garden and we did these window visits' (interviewee A).

What strikes us the most in the discussion of these unhinged experiences is their **disordering** character; a **disruption** of our ordinary way of being-in-the-world and being-together. This brings about an existential change of our affective lives at large, including a change in the type, intensity, depth, content, form, and/or constellation of our emotions (Tietjen, 2023:1287); a pattern acknowledged in existential crises when the basic constituents of human existence are being revealed (Lekakis & Fairclough, *forthcoming*). It is perhaps due to its disruptive character that the pandemic experience makes up some kind of 'repressed' and 'pushed back' memory that we discuss in great detail in later paragraphs.

Still, although people are keen to throw the memories of such 'difficult times' into oblivion, these emerge as 'uninvited guests', as despite our wills and intentions, COVID-19 has been sewed on our personal and family moments, as was the case with X's first birthday. This disruption, along with the moods, emotions and relational approaches it brings about, establishes and nurtures an **alternative normality**, which more often than not becomes a necessity, an imminent need to change scope and mindset as a means to surviving (interviewee EA), commonly described even as an impression of 'seeing things for the first time' (Turner & Fairclough, 2018).

In general, during the pandemic, there is an interplay between the 'normal' and the 'abnormal' as people seek to make sense of the world and show resilience and adaptation. For some (e.g., the younger), the abnormal becomes normal (interviewee A) whereas for others, it is quite the opposite: '*you were doing something that was the most normal thing in the world and for some reason it had become illegal'* (interviewee M). For some others, the normal becomes 'special', instilling in them a new appreciation of the 'ordinary things' or the 'little things': '*Whenever we took a walk, it was also often like "let's go see the goats". You couldn't go anywhere and then this felt like something special or something. It all sounds so stupid… it has given me a lot of joy in the pandemic and I still appreciate that this was there*' (interviewee I). Walking in this situation emerges as a reference point to normality inside this alternative 'order', a reminder of sorts but also a necessity (interviewees MA, FP).

In a more specific example, **one's 'home'** - **the 'inside' - is identified as 'the world'** and **the 'outside'** (i.e., the immediate surroundings that people were allowed to venture during lockdowns) **as a break from it** (interviewee I) and also **a domain to look for meaning**, a place to make sense of what has been happening. Even though the outside is unfamiliar in the beginning, especially to the people who were not used to going out or walking much in their everyday lives, it soon revealed itself as something much more comforting than the 'inside'. Here, there is a curious **interrelation with Freud's (1919) discussion of the 'uncanny' ('unheimlich')** in both its meanings: the 'unhomey, unfamiliar' (not of the 'home') but also 'the revealed, the inadvertently made known' (something hidden inside the 'home', which comes to light) (Aho, 2020; Raphael-Leff, 2020). The uncanny is the familiar which has become estranged by the process of repression (Freud, 1919), exiled to the realm of the imaginary (classified as 'irrational fear') yet, reappears in reality.

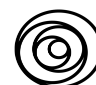


However personal, fleeting and repressed, the interpretation of this alternative normality, as experienced by all interviewees, is still a rupture with the known world. And it can be considered as a paradigmatic trauma, shared and within that might take some time to develop in a social or even cultural form (Galani & Lekakis, 2020: 462-465): ‘*an archaeological layer of peoples’ lives. If we put all these together, they create something, they tell a story - the same story from many different angles*’ (interviewee S). Expressed is the **need for collective processing** ‘*because it’s been so lonely, everyone did it alone*’ (interviewees I, NE), as a means of ‘*collective therapy*’ (interviewee S).

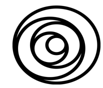
To support this process and further develop our understandings of the pandemic layer and the new ways brought about of considering things as socially significant, the next subsections navigate the reader through a theme-by-theme commentary across four key dimensions of heritage-making; these are **(i) time, (ii) memory, (iii) space/landscape and (iv) materiality**. The emergent themes and their organisation within this four-dimensional frame are exhibited at Table 3.

Table 3 The pandemic ‘heritage’ and its dimensions

Dimension: TIME		
Themes	**Examples**	**Interviews**
Life on pause	*‘…when life started up again…’*	A, La, Sb
Finding (dis)comfort in routine (ambivalence)	‘*I still did the same stupid route every day*’; *‘a continuous stream of sameness, all the time’.*	Ea, I, La
Temporal disorientation	*‘I have lost my sense of time’; ‘It feels so far away’; You don't realise how years have passed since 2020. […] Somehow, I'm stuck at 2019’*	La, FK, Ma
Alone/free time	*‘In Covid times, it wasn’t very crowded here. And we loved that’.*	A, Na, Nb, Sa, J
Dimension: SPACE/LANDSCAPE		
Themes	**Examples**	**Interviews**
A finite space; a shrinking world	*‘The walk [at the end of the day] was really for not to go insane. Just not to be stuck in the house and feeling like the walls were closing in on you’; ‘the world did become smaller’*	A, La, Na, R, Sb, S
Landscape as consolation	*‘a therapeutic walk, almost’*	A, La, Sa, Sb



Exploring space/time	*'It is a tour that's taken on a different meaning. And we also discovered some new paths. Now, sometimes I still go there because, yes, we explored them in that period*'.	A, I, W, FP
The 'awe' of deserted land	*'It was like, you know, the dawn of the apocalypse'.*	S, FP, FR
Dimension: MEMORY		
Themes	**Examples**	**Interviews**
Oblivion – repressed memory	*'I had completely forgotten about it. I didn't remember that it went on for that long';* *'I try to remember it, and as much as I do, it's something dark';* *'I think the legacy of the pandemic is something that you probably don't want to remember'*	A, La, Na, R, Sa, Sb, S, M
Missing/missed sociality	*'The most difficult thing was being away from my friends…And even after the quarantine this was not repaired.. it seems that I have drifted away somehow'.*	La, Na, P, R, FK, FP, M
Recalling childhood (to make sense of a new world)	*'it was as in my very early childhood and maybe that feeling of doing something forbidden'*	A, I, Na, S, FK
Dimension: MATERIALITY		
Themes	**Examples**	**Interviews**
Memorabilia	*'I started taking pictures. I'd see the city lights, and all the views … I put them all together in a collage, which turned out very beautiful'.* *'we were picking wild plants from various spots and planted them at home. I still have plants from that time'.*	I, S, M
Covid-walk landmarks	*'that is the Covid bench… [It feels] like memories merging together because it's so much the same place where you've been. And to have these anchor points it makes it more comprehensible'.*	Ea, I, J

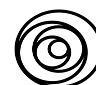


Finding comfort in the ordinary/detail	*'…it's just such an ordinary park, it's the ordinariness for me that makes it important'*	Ea, I, R

5.2. The pandemic time: routines and temporal disorientation of a 'life on pause'

Figure 4 *'It was a form of pleasurable fatigue':* Walking in Athens during the pandemic (May, 2024)

The pandemic time, the upsetting properties of time during what felt like **a 'life on pause'**, is a common trope in the COVID-19 literature (Velasco et al., 2023: 1127). In the narratives of our interviewees, time usually passes more slowly (Interviewees A, S, MA), it is somehow contracted or even suspended, enforcing the feeling of 'temporal disorientation' (Velasco et al., 2023), a key characteristic of the alternative normality we discussed above, as a *'lost sense of time*' (interviewee MA). '*You don't realise how years have passed since 2020. We are 4 years older. I haven't realised that. Somehow, I'm stuck in 2019*' (interviewee FK). The **sense**



of a lost or disoriented time seems to **emerge more clearly in hindsight,** after the end of the pandemic, where people realised they had been left with a void; there is a feeling that *'nothing [had] happened'* (interviewee MA) during the COVID-19 crisis. This is often mixed with the memory of a temporary relief, as the pandemic had '*stopped a little bit this very fast way of life*' (interviewee FK); '*for the first time there was no need for stress. Neither social anxiety, nor work stress*' (interviewee J).

However, in our walk and talk interviews, time gains a more nuanced appreciation: it seems that (especially in the first days of the first lockdown) people indeed felt some relief with slowing down the pace of their busy lives and having more free time to spend alone and in uncongested places ('*in COVID times, it wasn't very crowded here and we loved that',* interviewee NB). However, as days were passing by, time stalled: more time was needed to make sense (interviewee A) or for meaning to emerge. And often this was acquired through -sometimes obsessively- repetitive activities that were underlining or enforcing behaviours; '*During my walk, I tried not to focus only on walking, but also to look around me to see how the landscape changed with the weather or the time of the day I was going out. I was trying to discover interesting facts around me that had to do with the city's past.*' (interviewee Y). **Repetition or layering in this context empowered acquisition of significance for the activities performed or for objects encountered** as we will examine in the 'memory' and 'materiality' sections: *'I feel like it really became valuable by doing it multiple times'* (interviewee EA). However, in some cases, loneliness and isolation together with continuous circles of repetitive practices ('*a continuous stream of sameness'*, interviewee LA) - including walking 'the same stupid route everyday' created fatigue and unpleasant feelings: '*it's not like it was a pleasant holiday or something… it was a hassle*' (interviewee A.); '*it's been so lonely*' (interviewee I.); often harmful for well-being ('*at some point, we broke the rules of social distancing because [we] were going completely mad'*, interviewee NA). Alternative time properties dwindled when COVID-19 limitation ceased (interviewees A, NA, SB, W), reducing the concept to a '*blindspot that has disappeared*' (interviewee FP).

5.3. The pandemic memory: recalling and forgetting

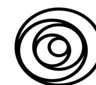
The aforementioned pandemic time ambivalence directly connects to memory and often troubling recollections of the lockdown condition. Memory in the pandemic is regularly considered **absent**: it is gone, lost and cannot be recalled or repurposed for the future. The 'I don't know/I don't remember' response was quite common during our interviews (interviewees A, NB, SB, FP, M), probably signifying **the 'I don't want to' or 'I can't remember' trope of trauma, a recollection that is repressed and out of view**, that nobody wants to talk about: '*Now that we're doing all this and I'm getting all this endless whining, I think the legacy of the pandemic is something that you probably don't want to remember or that you only take away from it as a lesson, so to speak.'* (interviewee M).

To **trigger** the pandemic memory, alternative processes are required, such as walking (Interviewee LA); somehow employing a means used to inscribe this type of memory on the

body but also employed to creatively construct meaning in this unhinged world '*in my memory is really this accumulation of different moments, different seasons really, that it has become [the 'walk']* (interviewee Ea). In this light, the walk and talk format of collecting data was a very effective tool in terms of methodology, as **the landscape, its features and the embodied memory of walking** served as stimuli. In the context of **repetition**, as discussed above, occurring when encountering the same things in a premeditated routine walk, memory layers its own subjective significance (the emergence of *'our walk'*, interviewee SB) but also sometimes, it becomes a pastiche of a very limited repertoire, reducing a site or feeling of interest to a numbing landscape element ('*the stupid walk*', interviewees I, A).

Figure 5 *'I've forgotten it, it's in there somewhere but it's hidden':* Recalling faded pandemic memories while reviving the lockdown walk (Ano Kypseli, May 2024).

In the same walking context, the invocation of **childhood memories** was another very common element across the participants (interviewees N, I, NB, FP, FK). People walking in a

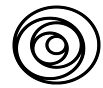


radically shrunken world, **were retrieving their childhood memories and practices as a mechanism for meaning-making**, when venturing outside. This was hardly nostalgia; interviewees discussed things that they used to do as children with or without their parents, tapping into a reservoir of previous -important and catalytic- experiences to make sense of and **organise a disordered world**. Interestingly, this was also used as a lens, for the interviewees that were walking with (their) small children. The walks were then serving as platforms for memory (re)making processes, for educational and life orientation purposes (interviewee NB, EA). In this way, the walks were also opening broader issues for deliberation; for instance, thinking about the landscape as commons (interviewee A), as we will examine in more detail in the next section.

In the pandemic memory, the tropes of **fear and rage** also stand out, as have been discussed extensively in recent literature (Degerman et al., 2020; Ktenas, 2023; Samikou et al., 2023). 'Fear' and 'terror' were regularly emotions colouring the discussion of the pandemic memory, materialising the imminent threat of the lockdown atmosphere and the possibility of contracting the disease (interviewee LA), a '*warlike atmosphere*' (interviewees J, S) or even the sense of how the end of times would look like: '*I've never watched the Walking Dead, but I've been told that there is a series that starts when the first people get infected and become zombies. And everybody, people are going like 'arghh', you know... And then people go like that and actually it's quite serious. Yeah. Felt a bit like that*' (interviewee FR). Social distancing amplified the emotion and caused erratic behaviour - in hindsight - as people avoided each other, when the possibility of a face-to-face meeting appeared (interviewees FP, MA).

Policing played its role not only in underlining the extraordinary of times, but also in invoking public rage. Side to the fear of getting a fine for breaking the social distancing rules (interviewees S, NB), a growing public response saw the establishment of an increasingly oppressive context that promoted injustice and undermined public freedoms, actions with serious political repercussions (Agamben, 2020; Ktenas, 2023; Samikou et al., 2023): '*But the second quarantine was not a normal quarantine. It was just a curfew. Which was obscene, wasn't it?*' (interviewee M), '*And then there's also that feeling of disgust and revulsion. In the sense that somehow, we are to blame, that you're also at fault for all of this happening, especially in relation to the spread of the virus. Yes, that's unbelievable.*' (interviewee S).

Finally, the 'shared' character of the pandemic emerges in the space of memory as well, in a collective but also inspiring way. It is one of the '*anchor points*' (interviewee I) in this erratic world and it can also be a way forward, to engage and appreciate with your people and community more (interviewees Y, SB). '*This could be like group therapy. That is, we could all gather and share our experiences, talk about what went wrong, what we might be angry about, and what it reminds us of. And it's not a coincidence, because whenever you talk to someone, the story always starts with their childhood. They mention something about their parents, something about the problems they had in their personal life. So, we're discussing the landscape, but it's always the self that emerges*' (interviewee S).



5.4. The pandemic space: exploring landscape in a 'shrinking world'

Space and landscape appreciation follows suit the pandemic time and memory elements. Space in the COVID-19 world is distorted and commonly feels **limited or 'shrunken'** (interviewees LA, MA, R), reflecting the radical swift to spending time 'inside' and also the repetitive behaviour of **venturing to the same 'outside'**. As the landmarks we were using to orient ourselves in our everyday life prior to the pandemic had been shaken, many found themselves in a state of disorientation that apart from its temporal dimension, it also had social and spatial ramifications (Velasco et al., 2023: 1122).

Figure 6 *'We did the same walk around the little nature reserve of the Bourgoyen'*: Walk and talk interview in Ghent, Belgium (April 2024).

These new characteristics felt like **the emergence of alternative spaces** with distinct qualities and names, such as: '*the mayflower path*' (interviewee LA), *'the dog path'* (Interviewee EA) or the place '*where lapwing flower and orchids grow*' (Interviewee R). The pandemic walks, slowly and repetitively charted local (close to home) space and made new sense of it, in a bottom-up way that at times matched, exceeded or disrupted the top-down provisions of walking space (interviewee A). Crowdedness was assessed in novel ways (interviewees NB, W, J, FK, FP)

in what it seemed like an exploratory experience (Interviewees EA, W, FP), that we can name as **the 'Xavier de Maistre's effect' -** inspired by the author's 1794 autobiographical work, titled 'Voyage autour de ma chambre' (*A journey around my room*), where an imprisoned young official describes his wanderings around his room for six weeks, reconsidering his belongings, furniture, engravings and the like, in the (parody) form of the grand tour narrative, while questioning the historic properties of the landscape (interviewee A).

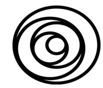
However, the most prominent characteristic of the pandemic space is **the 'consolation of the landscape'; this, almost therapeutic, feeling of distance from the burden of 'home'**, a pivot to escape and be secluded (interviewee A) and also, a means to exploring the inner self and addressing pestering thoughts (interviewees FP, FK, S). This can be attributed to **the social angle of the landscape**, i.e., the 'outside' as a prime space to meet people (interviewees I, Y, P, NA, R, SB) but most commonly during that time, **to encounter the 'other than human'**, such as animals, insects and greens (interviewees EA, I, LA), satisfying the need for the 'ordinary', the basic and nature (interviewees A, EA). 'W*hat I really liked... It was when we were picking wild plants from various spots, because I had a new house and because all stores were closed, we were picking little wild plants. From the corner over there, I remember we cut something, I don't remember if it was oregano or something else that we cut down and planted at home. […] They are plants that I still have from that time*' (interviewee M).

The consolation of the landscape in distressing times again opens up questions of public space and how to curate it, pointing back to the commons agenda, we discussed in the previous section (interviewee A).

5.5. The pandemic materiality: memorabilia and landmarks

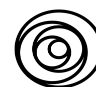
Pandemic materiality was the most elusive of our categories. Walking in a distorted landscape, memory crooked and time repetitive, brought about strange forms of objects and materials. COVID-19 materiality 'as memory' is again lost, '*no souvenirs taken*' (interviewee Y). But pandemic materiality needed to be erased, at least not encountered, as it could have been contagious, similar to the people that have died and buried without any friends or family present (Samikou et al., 2023).

Things that survived eradication (e.g., plants, interviewee M; photo collages, interviewee S) are of course a response to availability: '*because all shops were closed back then*' (interviewee M), but most importantly, they did so because they represent specific elements of the COVID-19 experience and by no means the context itself. They encapsulate a sense-making instance in the disordered world or even an epiphany of the 'self' or of 'us' in that unhinged reality. And this is where the **attention to detail and appreciation of little things and changes in the landscape become a vital feature for humanity in distress** (interviewees EA, Y, I). These secondary things are enough to baseline, anchor people and bring about a moment of sanity, when talking about or looking for someone's '*reading bench*' (interviewee EA) or '*covid bench*' (interviewee I). Processes like those **promote the ordinary in the sphere of 'the monument', through a mnemeiotic gesture that underlines the quotidian as personally and**



communally significant in times of distress. *'These cattle were of course really an attraction. And they still are because when we walked here with K. [we would say] "Oh, we haven't seen the cattle yet"'* (interviewee LA).

Figure 7 *'These cattle were of course really an attraction':* encounters with the 'other than human' during the COVID-19 self-isolation (April 2024).



6. CONCLUDING REMARKS: REMEMBERING, CURATING AND DEALING WITH OUR COMMON RECENT PAST

The pandemic, examined from a heritage commons perspective, has been 'an archaeological layer of peoples' lives and as all remnants of the past, it needs to be understood, interpreted and curated to decide about its preservation and/or its afterlife. The use of Husserl's epoché and the IPA framework in our walk and talk interviews, allowed us to observe this informal and spontaneous process of bottom-up heritage-making, namely another act of 'mnemeiosis' (Lekakis & Dragouni, 2019; 2020; Dragouni & Lekakis, 2023) by the anonymous and diverse community of European city citizens, that attempted to make sense of a disordered world. Understanding heritage as a (collective) process, what we are left with after the pandemic is a new heritage resource that can be considered a 'commons'; produced by everyone, through manifold experiences and trajectories: collective memories of individuals (re)inscribed on the landscape during and after the crisis, through a shared process of constant negotiation and transformation in the COVID-19 context.

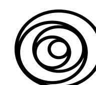
What is the value of heritage if not to provide us with space and stimulus to critically engage in a reflective dialogue with our past and about our past - even the most recent one? COVID-19 is not an ahistorical random incident. Although the emergence of the virus was a coincidence, its management and impact were clearly situated within a specific political and social context. Behaviours, decisions, actions and reactions across the wide public-private spectrum deserve further problematization. In this study, documenting and analysing the phenomenon, 'the same story from many different angles', proved that the shared features identified in the pandemic memory, place and materiality provide ample material to problematize on the heritage making processes in adverse conditions but also its role in the well-being of the people. Future research can further explore these issues spatially; for instance, by employing GIS data, as these recorded on the RESCAPER tracker app.

As our cases illuminated, a commonly-shared sentiment is that people want to forget. During the pandemic, our life was on pause and resumed once the self-isolation measures were over. Surprisingly, in the post-lockdown era, although there were still some corona outbreaks, we no longer seemed to care about it as much. Since the abolition of lockdowns, quarantines and controls, we have hardly ever spoken about it. This is why we cannot remember something so recent. A dark veil hides something that is still painful, so we prefer to let our memories slip to oblivion. But then, if we do so, how can we make a little bit more out of it, since we - all, together, in different ways - have sacrificed so much?

Although not pleasant, it is worth troubling ourselves with the pandemic and its legacy (another kind of 'difficult heritage', see GLAMMONS Deliverable 3.5: 'Processes, tools & protocols of researching areas of dark heritage') due to its manifold and lasting repercussions - e.g., isolation/oppressed socialisation, self-blaming, inequity and an overall experience of a global crisis that seems (and was for a long time) beyond our control. More crises are to come; we

do not simply want to be prepared, we want to prevent them actively and collectively. What can COVID-19 teach us - if anything, about solidarity, resilience, adaptability and the value of landscape and its meaning-making, as a toolbox for retaining our sanity and (well-)being?

In our case, the heritage making process revealed a therapeutic potential: People being consoled by the 'outside' landscape, paying attention to detail and appreciating little things and changes in their immediate nature were all mnemeiotic gestures, promoting the quotidian in the sphere of the socially significant 'monument'; an anchor point in times of distress that helped people soothe and reorientate. Specific impacts on health (as discussed in section 2.2.) is another avenue for potential future research, but from our findings, we can acknowledge the potential role of GLAMs (through their programming, exhibitions and outreach projects) in curating the pandemic heritage, not only as a phenomenon of resilience and solidarity but also, as a means of healing, i.e., a process of collective therapy and empowerment, as the interviewees suggested. As we saw here, lockdown walks and their revival became a medium for co-curating the memory of our common recent past. There is much scope for GLAM work engaging further in the pandemic 'heritage' with the view to mobilise processes of critical reflection, collective negotiation and co-creation of a more resilient future.



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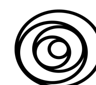

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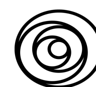

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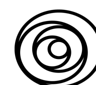

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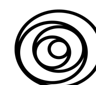

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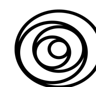

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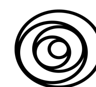

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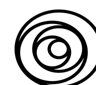

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