(1) Abstract

How can we effectively use ICT to enhance the use and improve the everyday role of a previously neglected public space? What opportunities and problems come from this public space holding a highly symbolic historical and cultural value for the communities it can serve?

As a result of the Training School “Hybrid Heritagescapes as Urban Commons in Mediterranean Cities: accessing the deep-rooted spatial interfaces of cities”, a service concept was defined to start addressing the previous issues. We envisioned a good opportunity for real world application of the work of EU funded COST1306 Action “Cyberparks” through this specific project proposal in Nicosia, Cyprus: the public space object of the project is the medieval walls and the moat surrounding the divided city, both sides. This STSM (short-term scientific mission) brings further the exploration of the project’s actual realization opportunities, by trying to establish a network of on-site partners and supporters, and by engaging the main stakeholders that can determine the success of the proposal.

(2) Purpose of the STSM

Aim and Motivation

As a result of the Training School “Hybrid Heritagescapes as Urban Commons in Mediterranean Cities: accessing the deep-rooted spatial interfaces of cities” (30 October to 3 November 2017 in Nicosia, Cyprus) we developed concept proposals to enhance the perceived image and identity of the Medieval Walls of the city of Nicosia towards citizens and tourists. During the workshop I encountered the rich history of this Mediterranean city and was occupied with the development of ICT-enabled methodologies for the repurposing of the moat of the medieval fortification of the historic city of Nicosia from being used as parking space, and other fragmentary private uses, into a green belt that highlights the only shared heritage that unites the two sides of the divided city, that is, its Medieval Walls.
As part of the team that developed the INTA MOAT proposal, I helped define the concept and develop a project draft. The project explores a potential way to communicate and engage local communities in a pro-active use of the monument, and creates the basis of an open management of cultural heritage interpreted as commons.

During the Training School we envisioned a good opportunity for real world application of the work of Cyberparks Action through this project proposal: this has been the focus of this specific STSM.

**Objectives and Outcomes of the STSM**

- A new model of co-management of events in the public spaces of the moat, and the promotion of the co-design of ephemeral appropriation activities in that space;
- An alternative and more sustainable way of managing the appropriation of open air green public spaces of the city;
- Further develop the concept drafted during the “Hybrid Heritagescapes as Urban Commons in Mediterranean Cities” Training School, and present the proposal to relevant stakeholders;
- Gather feedback about the project’s compatibility with local stakeholders’ visions, and adjust the proposal to better meet their needs;
- Report on obstacles and opportunities for the actual implementation of the project.

**Proposed contribution to the scientific objectives of the Action**

The proposed STSM is expected to contribute to the objectives of the Cyberparks COST Action in several ways. First of all by complementing the CyberWAY app with the proposed ICT platform, piloting the urban park of the moat and the history of the Medieval Walls, contributing to CyberParks objective for research about the opportunities of ICT usage in public spaces. Also a contribution much in line with the CyberWAY objectives comes from the exploration of the unique opportunity of applying CyberParks concepts to contested heritage-scape of the last divided capital in Europe, promoting the cultural function of public spaces.

Moreover, the concept of using ICT for co-management strategies and for the promotion of cultural and historical identities of open air public spaces will be explored in practice. Along the same level of intervention, which is civic engagement, the exploration of the possibility to promote active citizenship in relation to public spaces, supporting ephemeral re-appropriation of the moat, will also contribute to the CyberWAY objectives. Another important aspect of civic engagement is the exploration of the possibility to practically engage public bodies in co-management strategies for public spaces they oversee, searching a way for public institution to delegate or share management quotas to citizen-led bodies. This would provide benefit for the public bodies in the form of a distributed effort of monitoring and managing the open air public space; an effort not centrally organized nor as costly as an official public body that would perform the same activity.

A final level of contribution is the exploration of the possibility to use in practice digital tools to monitor and gather feedback about public spaces.
**(3) Description of the work carried out during the STSM**

This STSM has been an effort to materialize a real-world case study stemming from the Cyberparks research, in a place where opportunities were favourable for this vision to be achieved. The STSM took place in Nicosia, Cyprus, at the Science and Technology in Archaeology Research Center of the Cyprus Institute, where research activities focused in the realms of public space, cultural heritage and ICT, are being pursued with the vision to enable greater accessibility to local historical and cultural heritage for tourists and citizens while providing valuable resources, via ICT and digital tools, to the local authorities responsible for those assets.

During the STSM the main focus has been to explore the opportunities of practically offering the urban service concept INTA MOAT to the city of Nicosia. In short, the INTA MOAT concept proposes to deploy a dedicated online digital platform to enable organizations and individuals to support the accommodation of community-managed ephemeral activities in the moat and medieval walls in a legit, publicly visible and manageable way for everyone using the platform. The activities held during this STSM addressed the needs introductory to the implementation of this actual service in that specific place, as showed in the following paragraphs.

Inherent to the INTA MOAT concept, is the need to adapt to site-specific spatial and environmental characteristics as well as to local administrative requirements. Spatial characteristics inform the kind of activities that can be held (for example dimensions and materials), while environmental aspects may imply specific management restrictions (such as in close proximity of water canals), and administrative permission procedures may be needed for certain kind of activities. Moreover, the project cannot work without a proper adoption of the concept from the specific stakeholders that we plan to engage, and from the user base ultimately. On one side there’s the need to properly involve the cultural and technical local institutions (the main partner stakeholders, other than the municipality), on the other side the service has to be designed so that the specific local community of potential end users (this includes both residents and visitors) can find specific value in using it.

A list of local ideal partners of the INTA MOAT proposal was defined, based on criteria such as: stakeholders without which the service project couldn’t be deployed; potential partners who could provide resources to help the implementation of the project; potential partners whose core activities match the vision of the service project, and that could benefit from the existence of the project in place; partners who could help in communicating the project to the broader public, and facilitate its adoption within the local community. The service concept was presented to the people responsible of the organizations listed, to enquire the level of potential engagement of each in the project and what support each would provide.
In the stakeholder presentation process, of course, attention was put in gathering insights and as much feedback as possible from the stakeholders to refine the concept to better meet local needs and encourage active participation of prospect partners. Finally a brief implementation plan of the service based on the information gathered, and a provisional budget for the realization of the first steps of the project was defined.

The STSM took place between February 26 - March 04 2018. The researcher was based at the STARC at the Cyprus Institute, which proved convenient to perform pre-scheduled interviews and to benefit from ad hoc talks and impromptu meetings with other researchers present at the research institute’s campus as well as the people visiting the centre in the context of other research activities. In addition, other meetings were performed at specific locations suitable for the selected stakeholders, which also proved useful to get a sense and better understanding of the real-world environments in which the INTA MOAT service proposal would need to be adapted, integrated and operated.

(4) Description of the main results obtained

The on-site phase of the STSM consisted mainly in stakeholder meetings and on-site surveys, to start building the network needed to support an actual realization of the project, and to better explore the feasibility and obstacles of the actual realization in the specific local conditions.

The STSM researcher had unstructured interviews with a number of potential stakeholders and prospect partners:

- Municipality of Nicosia, Agni Petridou (Executive Civil engineer of the Municipality), as well as with the Chief Officer of the Cultural Operations of the Municipality.
- RISE Center of Excellence in Emerging Technologies and Innovation (EU-funded), Yiorgos Chrysanthou (Associate Professor at the Computer Science Department of the University of Cyprus and Project Scientific Coordinator at RISE).
- Museum of Cyprus, Dr Efthymia Alphas (Museum Curator, and Officer of the Department of Antiquities).
- AHDR - Association of Dialogue and Historic Research and the House for Cooperation, Loizos Loukaides, Ozhe Ozogul, Marios Epaminonda, Kyriakos Pachoulides (members of the Board of Directors and researchers).
The service concept proved to be well received by prospect partners, and prompted interesting ideas and suggestions. From these conversations it became clear that, also in the opinion of these stakeholders, the public space of the moat and medieval walls could accommodate both metaphorically and physically an interesting dialogue and confrontation about the layers of local and contested history that this monument embodies, about what role it can hold in everyday life of local community, and about what role it can play in the future vision of the city of Nicosia. The monument holds the historical and cultural heritage of the communities that made home here, the active use of its public spaces can be a new access point to a representation of that memory for residents and visitors, and the way in which current communities inform the monument of a renewed role. The cultural organizations active in bridging the divide between the opposing authorities in Cyprus and Nicosia (especially AHDR, and UNDP consultant), saw in the INTA MOAT concept a potentially positive step in trying and setting the stage for the aforementioned dialogue and confrontation, and in trying to involve local communities and users in it.

While the symbolical aspect of the concept holds an importance, more practical aspects resulted also of interest for the stakeholders interviewed. The Municipality representatives appreciated the possibility to have a new tool to enhance the use of open air public spaces, especially considered that this effort would be deployed in a place and community that doesn’t typically value activities in the public spaces, especially not those spaces of the medieval walls, if not for structured entertainment events the likes of Buffer Festival (more culturally oriented and bi-communal), or the summer Beer festival (more entertainment oriented, only in the greek-cypriot side) held in the area.

What became clear from the interviews is that the specificity of the administrative and political situation in Nicosia and Cyprus, the divide and the constant confrontation of the two authorities, is a potential obstacle to bear in mind when dealing with any project focused on the medieval walls monument. That opposition of interests can be a mechanism for identity definition, in local political agenda, so much so that the aforementioned argument which defends the potential for bi-communal reach for the proposed project can become counterproductive for certain circles. The possible solution to this tricky situation actually comes from the implementation process of the project itself: the INTA MOAT project would start operations from specific and delimited areas of the southern side medieval walls, namely the areas with less physical and administrative hindrance, and only in later phases the project could include more and more segments of the wall. This implementation process would allow avoiding the aforementioned kind of obstacle for most of potential stakeholders and would help the project in not polarizing or losing its potential support.

Results and Achievements of the STSM

One stakeholder without which the service project couldn’t be deployed is of course the Municipality of Nicosia, that together with the Department of Antiquities holds responsibility for the public space of the moat and for the medieval walls. Meeting with the responsible employees of the Municipality resulted in the most tangible achievement, which is receiving the permission of the Municipality to use a suitable area of the moat where, by Municipality standards, the service can take place without notable hindrance. The specific space, located under Costanza bastion, is currently used as a storage
area for the *Eleytheria Square* construction site. Soon to be available again for the public, this area doesn’t have a specific function within the public space fabric. In this eventuality the goals of INTA MOAT concept and the ones of the Municipality meet, which is to regain a public functionality for a previously denied area. Moreover, the future plan for Nicosia’s development (which was discussed in the meeting with the responsible employees) approaches the medieval walls and moat area with the purpose to at least functionally reconnect it with soon to be implemented pedestrian routes. The position of the moat, in respect to the defined urban planning, will bring the opportunity for it to be the connecting filter between the new administrative and commercial district, located just south west of the walled city, and the Old city itself. In this vision the moat should work as a linear park surrounding the city center. The INTA MOAT concept fits neatly in this vision.

In the stakeholder meetings, the Municipality also suggested suitable person inside the administration to inquire as for permission procedures and limitations for public space use. One of the important levels of function of the INTA MOAT service is to enable the legit organization of ephemeral activities in the public space of the moat, thus enabling the end users to deal with the administrative aspect of the organization is a must for the project. To do so, at the very least it is necessary to correctly direct end users to the correct contact office inside the Municipality. But the vision is to engage the Municipality in streamlining the permission procedure, in exchange of the benefits of distributed monitoring and management of public spaces, as well as public space use enhanced supervision.

Ideal partners of the service implementation will be *RISE* - Center of Excellence in Emerging Technologies and Innovation. The organization, based in the Old city of Nicosia, focuses on interactive media and technology applications in a wide range of market scenarios, one of these scenarios is dealing with urban data. One important level of function of INTA MOAT is the use in practice of ICT tools to monitor and gather feedback about public spaces. Enabling the gathering of people in the public space and supporting the organization of ephemeral activities in the public space allow for several levels of data to be harvested about public space use, its perception, and user needs. This is a shared interest with RISE organization, so their interest in the INTAMOAT proposal was operative. The discussed support will involve mainly human resources for the development of the actual ICT tools. Equally important, RISE offered to be recipient of specific funding that can be directed to the concept implementation phase of INTA MOAT.

Another level of function of the service focuses on conveying cultural and historical information and context to the users about the public spaces available for use. In this way, when using the platform to organize an event, or while searching for events organized in the public space of the moat, users can access to layers of information about the locations they’re paying attention to. All the Museums consulted stated positive interest in providing content to populate this level of the platform. Also, they could be end users of the platform, in the role of event Organizers: a scenario that was received positively, but even more so if linked with the possibility of directing the users of the INTA MOAT platform to the Museums also.
In the same level of function of the INTA MOAT project, AHDR is also an ideal partner. AHDR - Association of Dialogue and Historic Research and the House for Cooperation, is active in bridging the division in Nicosia and Cyprus, at community and political levels, with educational programs focused on history and directed to all communities. The educational activities that the organization holds would enrich the contents of the platform, by giving layers of near history or recent chronicle, by contextualizing the division related issues or by highlighting the shared legacies on the contested ground. AHDR directors and researchers stated high interest in both providing content for the platform, and in using the platform as event organizers.

Finally, an interesting dialogue with Mr. Konstadinidis, UNDP consultant and Urban economist among the other titles, highlighted the procedural difficulties of engaging in the project any public body or organization of the Turkish-cypriot side for the time being. The conversation also brought up more contact possibilities to enquiry for potential support.

Unstructured interviews were also held with cultural organizations who carry out activities that hold a relation with the public spaces of the moat and medieval walls, such as Cyclists Across Barriers. These were interviewed as end users of the service concept, in order to test the concept against desires and needs of real-world users.
(5) Follow-ups - future collaboration with host institution and foreseen publications or papers for conferences/congresses resulting or to result from the STSM

The initial positive factors that led to the assumption that Nicosia, and the moat of the Medieval Walls specifically, could host the materialization of the service concept INTA MOAT were confirmed by the STSM activities on field, as described before.

Potential for the future is certainly the opportunity to actually build the envisioned service, initially at a reduced scope level, and then scalable in time as response and support becomes explicit. To this purpose, an immediate collaboration to seek and put in place is with those bodies, organizations and people who can provide support for the actual implementation of the service especially in funding resources. With this goal specific collaborations with RISE, with the Municipality, and possibly with UNDP - United Nations Development Programme, active in Cyprus and Nicosia, will be pursued.
March 29, 2018

Dear COST Action TU1306 Coordinator,

I am writing in support of Francesco Bagni’s report of the STSM in the context of the COST Action TU1306. As the organiser of the Training School Hybrid Heritagescapes as Urban Commons in Mediterranean Cities in Nicosia (November 2017), and responsible on behalf of the host institution (the CyI) for the implementation of the proposed STSM I hereby confirm that I approve the Scientific Report he submitted. During his STSM I supervised him closely and carefully in order to provide to him all necessary information and available resources so that he would pursue his plan and implement it in the best possible way. The results of the STSM are considered successful in that Francesco managed to interact with and collect meaningful feedback from all relevant stakeholders. It is worth mentioning the great opportunity that is given to him in, and the team that developed the INTA MOAT project during the TS in Nicosia, though the willingness of the Municipality to commit to granting access to part of the public space of the moat in order to utilise it for the implementation of the proposed platform.

I would be happy to provide more details should you require so.

Yours sincerely,

Georgios Artopoulos, PhD (Cantab.)
Assistant Professor,
Science and Technology in Archaeology Research Center,
The Cyprus Institute

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