

A Tourism Model Shift for Historic Cities: Valorising the Musical Heritage through ICT

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Abstract

The intangible reading and valorisation of the cultural heritage is often put aside by the tourism models due to the considered supremacy of the physical built environment of the site. In this work, a theoretical framework is proposed and described, which aims to investigate the role of the intangible patrimony under the scope of place-making. The proposed framework has a two-stage application plan that is based on the historic city's musical tradition presented by Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). To better illustrate the practical implementation of the theoretical framework, its application plan on the Mediterranean Greek island of Corfu is described. The first methodological step focuses on the value of the extended community participation in local music, while the second methodological step examines how ICT, and more specifically location-based services, mobile computing, and Augmented Reality (AR) can serve these goals and facilitate content delivery.

Keywords: Augmented Reality, historic cities, musical heritage, sustainable tourism

1 Introduction

Reflecting on the term “Sustainable Tourism” and considering the common ground among the internal self-constructing concept of creating the place and the external more observatory process of responsibly visiting it, a core message is being strongly communicated. That is, the role of the identity and its common vital significance for both the successful introvert conceptual design and development of the space, as well as for its extrovert diffusion that enables the development and growth of responsible tourism models (Wang & Prominski, 2016). Nevertheless, when contemplating the urban, cultural and social messages, which are embodied by the spatial attributes and contribute to the establishment of the place's personality, some identity parameters are more highlighted than others (Thomas, 2016).

The intangible reading and valorisation of the cultural heritage is often put aside by the considered supremacy of the physical built environment of the site, despite the acknowledged principle that historicality is the most important variable for the place-

making and branding of historic cities (Rosaldo, 2013). This situation does not only exclude other new “creating place” factors, but also conceals the non-material values, as it is the material elements that are being mainly decoded, restored and promoted (Tomaszewski, 2003).

The mobilisation of the historical intangible narratives of the cultural landscape as identity carriers and their underestimation can lead to the dominance of superficial, disconnected and disassociated content, exclusively linked to the historical presence of prominent monuments (Maniatis et al., 2011). The current “material takes it all” model deprives (1) the local community of the existential, philosophical and psychological opportunity to empirically define itself in a holistic way and (2) the guest of the prospect to feel relevant in the visiting environment by cross-correlating it to his own reality and existing knowledge frame (Maniatis et al., 2011).

In this work, it is proposed and described a framework that aims to investigate the role of the intangible patrimony under the scope of place-making, applying Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the tourism context. The work seeks to form an alternative towards the existential balance between the tangible and intangible elements. Considering the historic cities’ musical traditions and spiritual values, the proposed framework explores how the employment of their added value by ICT, can serve as a driving force for the natural emersion of the non-material attributes of the historic public space, leading the way towards participatory place-making, creative economy and responsible tourism.

2 The Motivation for a New Approach

Despite the growing world-wide attention on the relatively recent concept of the intangible heritage (Yuan, 2008), the extended academic research (Alivizatou, 2012), as well as, the newly established international law regulations and the innovative international European projects (e.g. FP7 project ICHEUROPE), the gap between the conception of the intangible heritage conservation and the perspective of putting it in service remains unbridged. The outcome of the insufficient interdisciplinary communication is reflected on the unsustainable spatial organisation of tourism, the low quality of the tourism product in heritage cities, and the decline in the attractiveness of the historic cities with Venice leading the way (Russo, 2002).

Nevertheless, the tourism industry could not be held as the main responsible. It is the local community itself, which demonstrates a surprising lack of historical and cultural awareness, which does not allow for external cultural context narrations and interpretations (Beckett, 2011). The intended overreliance of the educational systems on national and international historic developments leads to the underestimation of the local past (Beckett, 2011). The absence of local educational narrations results to the superficial consumption of the own culture phenomenon (Beckett, 2011). The protagonist component is used for dominance reasons, which cannot, in any way, guarantee cultural sustainability

and can raise the risk of turning the historic cities into content empty thematic parks (Russo, 2002).

3 The Proposed Theoretical Framework

To overcome the barriers and propose a holistic solution, a new attitude that includes both the material and mental dimensions of heritage is needed and the key unifying factor may be searched in the element of music. This unifying element can provide the basis to understand a further transnational connection between the material heritage, the international historic developments and their impact on the development of the intangible heritage of a place (Green, 2003). The story and the aspects of the music developments, which are strongly connected to heritage sites, are not thoroughly investigated, despite the late extended research on the expressions of the intangible heritage (del Mármol et al., 2009). The historic and patrimonial nature of music is often overshadowed by the magnificence of the tangible treasures and by its vivid present relevance to the local community's cultural life (del Mármol et al., 2009). This can result in an undervalued sense of memory and awareness of the past cultural imprint, and most importantly, of its contribution to the formation of the present place's musical manifestation.

In the same direction, another intangible component, which is connected with music and can be outshined by the prominent, materialistic approach, is the spiritual and religious value of the heritage sites (Mallarach, 2010). The occidental product of positivism does not always welcome the elements, which are regarded as sacred by the community and tends to disconnect the heritage site from its natural area, undervaluing the integrity of the place (del Mármol et al 2009). The official heritage conventions usually do not consider the special spiritual significance and the cultural beliefs as core meanings that can justify the outstanding universal value of the heritage (del Mármol et al., 2009). The materialistic "cosmovision" does not enable the recognition and the understanding of past concepts, rituals and naturalism beliefs, which are profoundly linked to the heritage places (Mallarach, 2010). Intrinsic values like beauty, silence, sacredness and harmony, which have been celebrated through music are sacrificed to the reductionist, dry approach of seeing nature as a source to take advantage of, as a concept outside the human being (Mallarach, 2010).

Based on the above points, this work has two interrelated objectives: (1) an analysis of how the musical identity of the heritage places can stimulate a different narration of the heritage sites' aesthetic, artistic and spiritual values for both the local community and the visitor and (2) an evaluation of how ICT and audiovisual storytelling can contribute towards this direction. The musical tradition, both under the local and tourism scope, must be investigated in the hope of correcting flawed cultural representations, values and stereotypes that have been ruling the heritage mass tourism places. Scope of the work is to overcome the dichotomy between, on one side, the genuine vivid culture of the community, defined by the locals, the students and the emigrants, and on the other side,

the tourists, in order to help protect and promote the rich cultural and religious diversity of the heritage sites.

To better illustrate the practical implementation of the theoretical framework its application plan to the Mediterranean Greek island of Corfu is described. Corfu is an example of a historic city of world heritage value (UNESCO World Heritage Site), a place of rich intangible patrimony, a vivid phenomenon of active community cultural participation and, nonetheless, a victim of landscape alteration due to the mass tourism practices of the last sixty years. (Beriatos, 2008).

4 A Case Study of the Framework's Application Plan

The proposed theoretical framework has a two-stage application plan, focusing on the historic city's music and relevant ICT and research. Naturally researchers should take into consideration the specifics of each history city in these areas and design the methodology accordingly, by following these two basic methodological steps.

The first methodological step focuses on the value of the extended community participation in local music, investigating how the tradition of the music can lead to the rethinking and re-conceptualising of the tourism discourse in terms of location, sense and meaning. More specifically, Corfu has a long Venetian Opera tradition, 19 Philharmonic Orchestras, 33 choir groups and world famous musicians, surrounding every aspect of the political, social, educational, cultural and spiritual expressions on the island, encompassing the Corfiot lifestyle, value systems, traditions and beliefs. This step can empirically investigate (through questionnaires and focus groups) the different ways in which the merging nature of classical music can be the key elements for creating the “in-between” space between the host and the visitor providing unique experiences based on their personal interests, affections and passions.

The second methodological step examines how ICT and more specifically location-based services, mobile computing, and Augmented Reality (AR) can serve these goals and facilitate historical content delivery through music. Recent location-based and AR projects conducted for the Corfu Old Town, (Kourouthanassis et al., 2015a; Kourouthanassis et al., 2015b; Ringas & Christopoulou, 2013), as well as further tourism content-related research with focus on the audio component, (Ternier et al., 2012; Rozier, 2000) have not taken into consideration the music element of the place. Therefore, the proposed framework fulfils that need by investigating the use of location-based services and AR, through a pilot mobile application, to unfold the site's musical personality.

By applying the proposed framework for the heritage site of Corfu, the researcher can examine how an island, which is currently on the stagnation phase of the Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle curve (Butler, 1980) can stand up from its glamorous laurels gained by its long history from the Homer times. The ultimate goal is for the city to engage in a collective reflection to reinvent its identity through the power of the classical music in

combination with the digital media, using its romantic and nostalgic landscape, to innovate and become relevant again (Russo & Richards, 2016).

5 Conclusion

The described theoretical framework "builds" on the fact that technology can facilitate music to acquire a prominent position in the tourist model, valorising the tangible and intangible heritage of the historic cities as a whole. The validity of the framework will be assessed by practical research that will measure the impact of its implementation in the city of Corfu.

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