'100 buildings - 100 stories Places, people and digital storytelling'
By Hermes - Heritage Management eSociety

Keywords: cultural heritage, community engagement, cultural tourism

The aim of the project: The historic city of Hermoupolis is rich in architectural heritage, much of which is endangered or decaying. The key idea behind 100 buildings/100 stories is that to preserve their value, buildings need people. Beyond the technical conservation of a building, the local community can keep heritage alive by recognising and sharing its qualitative value: the stories it tells. The challenge of 100 stories/100 buildings was to make citizens aware of the vulnerability of their built heritage and encourage them to engage in its preservation

Partners: European Heritage Days, Council of Europe and Syros Institute.

Project implementation time: Ongoing

Budget: 9,950€

Granted by: The total budget was used for human resources (design, installation) and services (publication, translation, printing). The idea was made possible and 90% funded by the European Heritage Days Stories call of the European Union and the Council of Europe. HERMES NGO finances 10% of the project (hosting, updates and new activities) through donations.

Priority line/Specific objective: The project is developed by HERMES - **Heritage Management eSociety.** The NGO aims to record, preserve, manage and disseminate tangible and intangible Cultural Heritage in all its forms and manifestations, with the help of technology and digital applications. It differentiates by approaching Cultural Heritage as tangible and intangible Cultural Relations that emerge in a city. HERMeS addresses all institutions (Municipalities, Regions, NGOs, Chambers) that are interested in saving their monuments, promoting the cultural value of their place, and aiming to motivate citizens in order to sustain participatory cultural development.

Context: The historic city of Hermoupolis (in Syros island, Greece) is rich in architectural heritage, much of which is endangered or decaying. The key idea behind 100 buildings/100 stories is that to preserve their value, buildings need people. Beyond the technical conservation of a building, the local community can keep heritage alive by recognising and sharing its qualitative value: the stories it tells. The challenge of 100 stories/100 buildings was to make citizens aware of the vulnerability of their built heritage and encourage them to engage in its preservation.

Description: The solution was to turn the conservation management plan into an active, creative and participatory process, instead of a sterile procedure implemented by experts and public authorities only. 100 building/100 stories allows residents to narrate, share and re-create the stories of the city and its buildings. Through digital storytelling, the initiative bridges the tangible and intangible heritage of the city and sparks community engagement.

The city integrated the participatory digital tool 100 stories/100 buildings into its local digital heritage system, HERMeS (HERitage Management e-System). HERMeS facilitates the management and preservation of Hermoupolis' built heritage, and the added tool allows citizens to submit their own stories and memories relating to a particular building. Through the online portal, users are asked to (a) share a story, (b) propose a building that is worth mentioning in the list, or (c) both. Users can also upload photos, audio and videos. The stories are registered and hosted on an online page. Then a QR sign is placed in front of the associated building. Via their mobile phones, visitors can scan the sign and discover the story of the building through the eyes of

the community. A new outreach strategy makes citizens aware of their contribution to the collective memory of the city, together with public events and participatory workshops to learn about, evaluate and improve the initiative. The initiative is ongoing and being evaluated. It won't be limited to 100 buildings and the digital tool will be improved through the lessons learned. New proposals to extend the tool are being discussed with the municipality.

Results: Boosts citizens' curiosity to know the stories behind the buildings of Hermoupolis. Allows the community to acknowledge their heritage and raises awareness of its fragility. Develops a feeling of collective heritage ownership and raises the sense of belonging to a place. Enables the community to shape their own opinion for the conservation management plan in the future. Promotes collaboration among individuals, public schools, the university and cultural organisations. Became an umbrella for other local heritage activities by different stakeholders.

Success factors: HERMeS designed and implements the initiative, with the support and input of the Syros Institute. From 2010 to 2015, the HERMES system was funded and updated by the Municipality of Hermoupolis and Region of Cyclades. The Municipality of Hermoupolis actively supports the project. Discussions to develop new projects in partnership with the municipality are ongoing. The Municipality and the South Aegean region supported the organisation of a cultural event to promote the initiative. Cultural organisations like the Institute Kyveli, Plagma and Anima Syros contributed by creating stories, disseminating the initiative and developing related projects. The Department of Product and Systems Design Engineering of the University of Aegean contributed through research and development of educational digital tools. Public schools organised educational activities to inform students how they could participate. Citizens contributed by creating and submitting their own stories.

More specifically, everyone can write, tell or draw a story about their city and heritage! For those citizens that are less keen on technology, alternatives are provided. HERMeS uses open-source software that can be transferred to other locations. It is already being applied in cities in Greece, Albania and North Macedonia.With little budget, digital preservation and management systems for built heritage can be opened to community involvement. Cooperation with local authorities is key. It is important to develop a common understanding of what heritage and heritage protection means.

Limiting factors: The University of the Aegean Spot Team is not involved in the project but Heritage Managemet eSociety is a stakeholder of the Spot project. The main limiting factors is that the project can currently be only be applied in Hermoupolis, it requires a small budget as well as digital literacy of the participants.

Applicability and upscaling: The project is sufficiently flexible to be scaled up/down depending on the resources available. This initiative can inspire other community-oriented heritage services that encourage digitally creating and sharing stories about buildings. However, it should be taken under consideration that in oder to develop the project in other locations it is necessary to allocated a leading and coordinating body, a budged and all the necessary digital resources.
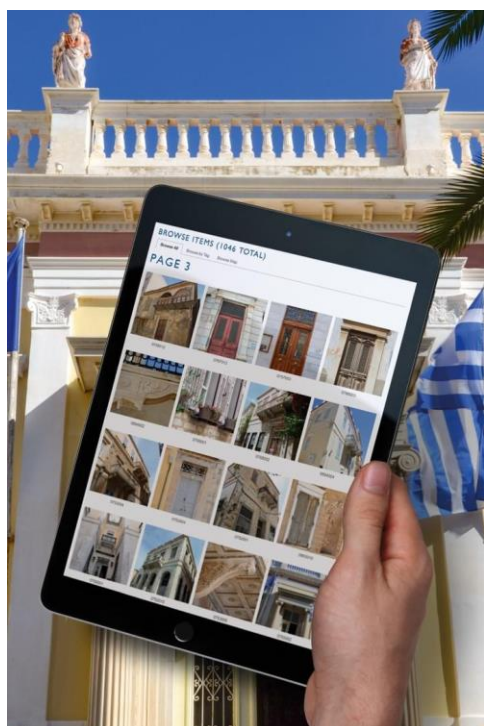
Others:

100 buildings – 100 stories (video)

Heritage Management eSystem (video)

Heritage Managemet eSociety NGO website

Hermoupolis Digital Heritage Management website

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