



An interpretive walk in the old town of Chania, Greece

Due to the coronavirus circumstances we couldn't proceed with all the phases of the project as much as we wanted. Therefore the next pages present briefly what we did and what we were thinking of doing but the circumstances limited us.

Project description

Introduction

Where and what is the situation we'll focus on?

For the Delphi project we have planned an interpretive walk through the old town of Chania, the western northern city of Crete which is the fifth biggest island of the Mediterranean Sea. Crete has a long history since prehistoric times. It is also an island with three mountain ranges and summits that reach the 2400 meters. Although an island, it is known as an island of agriculture and shepherds and not so much as a fishermen place. Cretans have a strong cultural identity famous for its Cretan diet and simple way of life.

Chania is a very touristic city that has kept the traces of some big civilizations in the crossroad of East –West, North and South: Minoans, Mycenaean, Romans and Byzantines. In the Middle Ages it was called the Venice of the south. In the 17th century, the Ottomans conquered the island leaving us some important mosques and minarets as well as fountains. After the Ottoman Empire the island became independent and then in 1903 it was attached to Greece.

The old city is a medieval citadel that was for some centuries home to four religious communities: Christians (Orthodox and Catholics), Jews and Muslims. This element is as I think the most relevant to our present were societies become multicultural with immigrants and foreigners coming to settle down in our city. The city combines lots of tourists and locals, nobles and poor, abandoned and reconstructed sites. This mixture in a small city of 70 000 people is the situation we are interested in. A situation that looks like a mosaic of cultures, of life and abandonment, of a city used for touristic purposes as an open air museum but at the same time with inhabitants living everyday lives.

What are the specific objectives for this project?

The objectives of this project consist in:

- 1) Bringing locals to a reflection of their heritage by using some interpretive tools that the Delphi course project showed us in Belgium.
- 2) Making them active into the process of planning a guided walk about their lives and neighborhoods.
- 3) Making them more conscious about the memories they have and make them realize their responsibilities about the present and the future.





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- 4) Involving them into meeting others and exchange their feelings and thoughts about their city and what it means to them.
- 5) Bringing them into a circle to talk about this cohabitation of several cultures, memories and how it is used in today's life and how they would like their city to be and what values to promote.

The last but not least objective is to find ways to communicate these messages to visitors or other locals in order to start a dialog with different people about resemblances or differences with their lives and cities.

How is this project related to heritage interpretation and/or local engagement and/or adult training?

It is related to Heritage interpretation because it pops out the point of view of the locals for the city they live in by focusing on specific "material" monuments or parts of the city. Local engagement is achieved when we facilitate locals to "interpret", to talk about these phenomena and make them reflective about them and their experiences. It is a way to mobilize them first to think about them and then to do something about it.

Local Engagement

In what way are locals engaged in the project?

By starting the planning process without any fixed previous idea or theme but following a bottom –up process. We like to engage locals to reveal their stories, feelings and memories as well as thoughts about the present and future in order to engage them in preserving their heritage. Only through their eyes we can constitute an interpretive walk that could talk into visitors' hearts by emphasizing on what the city's people want to talk. It's a way of making their voice heard and making them understand their importance and engagement into cultural process as we like it to be: making a safe space to discuss, to meet, to exchange and to co-create in equal terms.

Which tools did we use to assure local engagement?

The tools that we used or would like to use are borrowed from the ethnographical and Heritage Interpretation method.

1) In the beginning locals are interviewed in a long biographical interview that tries with open questions to start a discussion starting from the point that their experiences are important not only because of the historicity but because of the transgenerational² values that they carry. We want to meet them, to discover them. We use questions as:

- What do you remember from the phenomenon?
- How was it? What did you do there?

² By transgenerational values we mean the sensitivity of all humans (independently form age, race or gender) to interpret their lives from an ethical point of view



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- What did you feel? And now?

- How has the neighborhood changed?

2) After this first step, we aim to continue this work by bringing them into a round table with others with the same experiences (of the same community) to condense those experiences in a main theme or topic for the phenomena that they are attached to. They will have to bring an object for the period they have lived in the French School for example (one of our phenomena) and present it to all. Or we could use some pictures to talk about senses and feelings that come out.

3) The next phase is to bring people from the 4 different communities but from the same city to co-create something bigger, a more generic theme that could involve them all and it could be the message of the city for visitors: after visiting our interpretive walk, on what subject would we like you to feel and reflect thinking of it, what questions did arise from this experience. What could we do better as citizens to preserve and use heritage for present and future? The tools that we will use are mental maps and open questions like: 'what makes your neighborhood special to you?', 'What is your image of the other community?'

Target Groups

What are my target groups?

We can think of two target groups: one for the first, creative, phase of our project and one for the presentation of it to visitors.

At first place we need the locals, the people who experience the city. So our target group is the local community itself that will experience some heritage interpretation activities.

Among them there are seniors, workers and children. They are our source group but at the same time they are a target group because they are going to "work" with some interpretation tools.

At second place the target group of the interpretive walk is visitors: tourists as well as locals that want to see the city through another gaze. These could be:

- 1) Cruise visitors that have only half day to visit the city and are interested in cultural routes,
- 2) Sensitive visitors from all around the world who want something different, condense and generic,
- 3) People that are not so much into archeological or historical details but want to wonder around the city and "feel" it without any special interest in dates, monuments, heroes,
- 4) Locals that haven't experienced an interpretive walk and want to rediscover their city in an afternoon.

How will my project meet their needs and profiles?

The seniors of the first group are people that are living history. Nobody refers to them when a cultural event is organized. It will be like giving them the chance to share with others their lives and to feel useful. For workers and shop owners it is a way to make their streets

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attractive to visitors and think how they could present their work in a more interesting way every time. They can become more responsible towards heritage by explaining its importance to others.



For visitors talking about values, experience (through senses) so many different cultures in one city makes this project open to many different profiles and relates to their own cities where they experience more or less the same questions, problems, thoughts about the multicultural cohabitation.

Media

The only medium I thought of using in the beginning is the guide him/herself (personal interpretation). Nevertheless after the work of the first phase, through local engagement, other media can be used in the future due to the material (photos, objects) that locals can add.


Appendix



Interpretive walk

Phenomena	Theme	Narratives
	Galleries lead us to secret neighbourhoods of time.	To be decided with the community
 <p>The Greek-Jewish dish in the menu of the tavern To Hani, in front of the synagogue</p>	Memory makes the difference into present	The story of the Jewish neighbourhood, fraternity, injustice and the present of “touristization ³ ”

³ See: Young B., Touristization of traditional Maltese fishing-farming villages: A general model, in : Tourism management, Volume 4, issue 1, March 1983, P. 35-41

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	<p>Our heart is a palimpsest where different versions of ourself coexist.</p>	<p>To be decided with the community</p>
<p>The church of Saint Nicolas in Splatzia square with a minaret and a Christian tower bell</p>		

Phenomena	Theme	Narratives
	<p>Beauty rises in care</p>	<p>Abandonment, attempts to care</p>
		
<p>French school – the wall</p>		

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