

San Lorenzo Urban Memory Museum – Slumm Mapcast

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Abstract: It is possible to create a museum where there are libraries instead of bookshops, craft shops instead of gift shops, where the employees are the citizens, the educational projects and the night events are linked together and art is a vehicle for narration and regeneration. This is SLUMM, San Lorenzo Urban Memory Museum. The aim of the museum is to preserve San Lorenzo memories and to address its social, political and cultural transformations through the voices and the memories of the people and the places. One of the approaches used by SLUMM is the use of the mobile app Mapcast, created by Etcware SRL, for the creation of personalised cultural itineraries. The users can select the quality of the material and add their own information in order to integrate the content and to be actively involved in the creation of culture and knowledge.

Key words: SLUMM, museum, urban regeneration, San Lorenzo, community, cultural itineraries, mobile app

Museo de la Memoria Urbana San Lorenzo - Slumm Mapquest

Resumen: Es posible crear un museo en donde existan bibliotecas en vez de librerías, tiendas de artesanía en vez de tiendas de regalos, donde los empleados sean los ciudadanos, los proyectos educativos y los eventos nocturnos estén unidos y el arte sea un vehículo de narración y regeneración. Esto es SLUMM, el Museo de la Memoria Urbana San Lorenzo. El objetivo del museo es preservar la memoria de San Lorenzo y abordar sus transformaciones sociales, políticas y culturales a través de las voces y de la memoria de la gente y de los lugares. Uno de los enfoques utilizados por SLUMM es el uso de la aplicación móvil Mapcast, creada por Etcware SRL, para la creación de itinerarios culturales personalizados. Los usuarios pueden seleccionar la calidad del material y añadir su propia información de manera que quede integrada al contenido y así involucrarse activamente en la creación de cultura y conocimiento.

Palabras clave: SLUMM, museo, regeneración urbana, San Lorenzo, comunidad, itinerarios culturales, aplicación móvil

Introduction

Traditionally, a museum is 'a building in which objects of historical, artistic or cultural interest are stored and exhibited' (Oxford English dictionary). However, during time, this concept has changed and museums have embraced different and wider roles than just the pure conservation. In fact, the International Council of Museum defines a museum as 'a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment'. This new enlarged concept of museum

finds one of its main repercussions in the role that museums play in the urban setting and in the relationship between economy, urban requalification and local community. Several are the worldwide examples of museums and arts that have helped the regeneration of poor urban areas: the Tate Museum in Liverpool, the Guggenheim in Bilbao, the Tate Modern in London and the new forthcoming Louvre-Lens (France), Pompidou-Metz (France), Guggenheim-Hermitage (Lithuania) and Guggenheim-Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates). The term urban regeneration implies not only the regeneration of decaying buildings but also, and especially, of a deteriorated quality of life. In this sense, the impact of museums has an economic, environmental and social aspect: they create direct and indirect wealth with

sales, jobs and tourism; they can have a strong visual impact changing the street scene; and they can radically improve the quality of life thanks to their educational and entertainment value (Lorente and Lorente 1996). Additionally, the community involvement and access to the arts has to be a key element in the urban regeneration in order to shift from cultural heritage as a privilege for some to cultural heritage as an ownership of all. To achieve this goal, museums have to focus on the social aspects, such as a strong local identity and the preservation of urban memories to build a bridge between themselves and the territory. Medellin in Colombia and Nantes in France represent two examples where arts and culture have become key aspects of the economic development of the city and Rotterdam, in the Netherlands, a demonstration of the importance of the local community involvement. People need memories: not as a repository of their past, but as a token of their identity and a guide to the future (Rykwert 2008).

The concept of museum can therefore cross the boundaries of a physical space that encloses objects and extend to everything is vehicle for memories, such as the case of Open Museums. Traditionally, they correspond to old buildings and archaeological and/or historical sites preserved and exhibited with the intent of recreating past lifestyles. King Oscar II's collection, opened in 1881 in Norway, represents the first example of Open Museum; this Scandinavian model, known as Folk Museum, recalls an old-fashioned and static image of timber houses, rose paintings and traditional knitting (Mellemsether 2015). The Children Open Air Museum in England and the Den Gamle By in Denmark are based on the same model by preserving historical buildings and recreating past lifestyles of 1700, 1800 and 1900. Some of the Open Museums are now trying to change this outdated structure by performing live shows where the public is transported back in time or trying to link with the present through educational projects. The Open Museum of Glasgow in Scotland aims to bring the collections outside the walls of the museum by organising travelling exhibitions and interactive events and Leicester's Open Museum delivers museum collections to the community and promotes community projects. However, these ideas represent often only local approaches or short-term solutions. Therefore, the deep role that those museums have in their context should become clearer and focus on the social, cultural and economic benefits that they can offer to the community where they belong. To provide these communities with the memory and knowledge about their past is not only a pre-requisite for the survival of the traditions and the identity but also part of our responsibility towards the future generations. But what happens if the community itself is the object to preserve?

SLUMM: San Lorenzo urban and cultural regeneration

San Lorenzo is one of the oldest and most unique areas of Rome as documented by the remains of Porta Tiburtina, dated back to the roman period, the monumental Campo

Verano, the evidence of the Second World War bombing and its rich cultural, political and artistic past that has always attracted artists from all over the world. In the past, San Lorenzo was a working-class district mainly populated by workers with their families with a strong social and political identity. Today, however, its main attractions are the pubs, bars and breweries that crowd the streets set up in response to the growing number of students living in the area because of the nearby Sapienza University. The consequence of these transformations is the replacement of social and public spaces with bars and nightclubs that causes poor quality of life for the citizens and a loss of the local identity (Macchia et al., 2017). With the intent of preserving and promoting San Lorenzo memories and its community, Yococu in collaboration with ANPI San Lorenzo created SLUMM – San Lorenzo Urban Memory Museum [Figure 1].

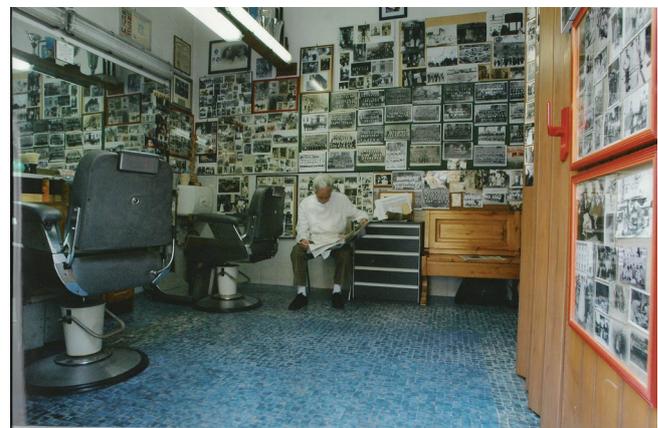


Figure 1.- Gaetano Bordoni, historical barber of San Lorenzo, with its collection of photos and memories (ph credit: ANPI San Lorenzo).

The idea was to pick up the main concepts behind the Open and City Museum and take them beyond their limits and boundaries. To create a museum without walls that uses the local buildings and the architectural and artistic objects already present on the territory to tell stories and preserve memories, playing an important role in the cultural regeneration of the area and, therefore of the whole city. SLUMM tries to balance the business requirements and the needs of the local community by building a close relationship with the people who represent the community. The idea is to involve citizens, students, schools and private and public institutions in the social and cultural regeneration of this district using the buildings, libraries and craft shops and as an open and collective museum. The projects undertaken as part of the cultural activities might appear small and limited but, when viewed as a whole, their importance in blending together the culture and the community become clear.

—*Guided and self-guided tours*

The past of a city and the memories of its community are intangible assets and to show and explain those to the

visitors can represent a challenge. This is the reason why one of the main strategies used by SLUMM are tours that allow the visitor to access the places where these memories happened and to interact with the people who lived them. The guided tours are especially planned for students, because the social interactions happening during practical experiences and fieldtrips, as well as the process of sharing their experiences, are an important aspects of the learning process and improve it (DeWitt and Storksdieck 2008; Kelly and Groundwater-Smith 2009). On the other hand, the self-guided tours, based on the Mapcast mobile app, are the perfect instrument for tourists and citizens who are free to personalise their cultural experience by choosing their itineraries and adding information about the places visited. Through these walking tours people can learn also about the local business and cultural activities such as the local artisan shops and libraries [Figure 2].



Figure 2.- The students discussing the organisation of the cultural events within SLUMM.

— Cultural events

Because San Lorenzo district encloses the museum, the events organised in order to promote the memories of the area can benefit from types of experiences that would hardly be possible in a conventional museum: overnight events, debates, theatre shows and celebrations are interactive and innovative ways of approaching the culture.

— Crowdfunding

SLUMM is a museum created by the local community and that survives thanks to its work. However, it is possible to respond to specific calls for funding in order to increase the resources available, even if they are not essential for the growth and development of the museum.

— Artistic installations

The museum is an open-air gallery where artistic installations are used to remember and promote the

memories and the story of San Lorenzo area. The first and most important of those installations will be the “House of Memory” where the testimony of the Second World War and its bombing are narrated.

— Website

SLUMM is online with its platform that includes all the information about the museum collection, the activities, the events as well as the pictures of the past and present people that are involved in the life of the area.

The aim of this paper is to present Mapcast, one of the tool used by SLUMM for the self-guided tours. Since the museum was created, the numbers of downloads of the app have increased by 12% and, in a short period of time, several cultural contents about San Lorenzo have been added to the itineraries available on the app. This allowed a further development of Mapcast that started sharing videos through the Youtube channel.

Mapcast

SLUMM is a complex museum, involving different types of contents, both physical and intangible, and therefore implies difficulties and challenges when it comes to its coordination and communication to the public. The solution came from the collaboration between Yococu and Etcware srl and thanks to a Research&Development funding that led to the creation of Mapcast (<http://www.mapcast.it>), a geo-semantic repository oriented towards cultural, green and specialised tourism. The name comes from the merging of *map* and *broadcast* and expresses the possibility to create and share geo-referenced stories, tying together places and maps. The geo-semantic repository is a part of Mapcast backend (that is the architectural component not directly accessible to the users) and it allows entities (places, stories and itineraries) categorization by using a thesaurus represented with SKOS (Simple Knowledge Organization System) that is a standard format to represent thesauri, classification schemes, subject heading lists and taxonomies within the framework of the Semantic Web. With Mapcast repository it is possible to find categorized entities by searching them with geographical position, SKOS categories, and content. With Mapcast the users can discover places, itineraries and monuments nearby through the GPS system. It is possible to visit both open air spaces and buildings where it is possible to obtain detailed historical and cultural information directly on the devices used for the navigation through QR codes provided. Mapcast is available on iOS and Android markets in multiple languages and includes the mobile app and a web editing console that offer different services [Figure 3].

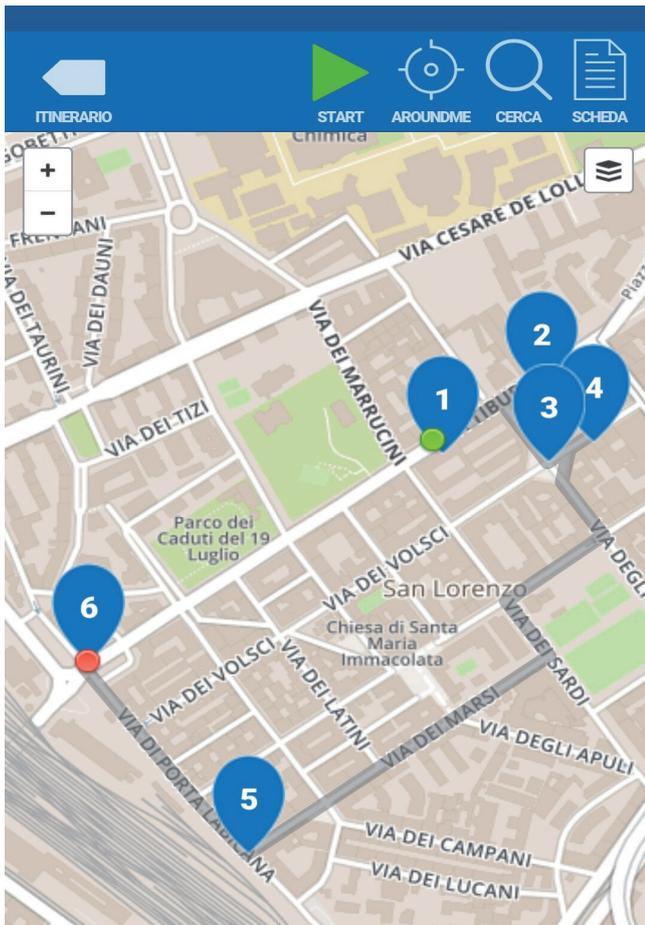


Figure 3.- Mapcast screenshot with suggested itinerary, points of interests and audio guides for San Lorenzo area in Rome.

The Mapcast App has the following features:

- Google maps or OpenStreetMap switching.
- The Tourist Navigator that guides tourists on itineraries with its voice and warns them of the presence of stories to listen to in different languages.
- POIs, stories and itineraries that can be searched by proximity and/or category (semantic search).
- Indoor navigation for museums and exhibits with QRcode recognition.
- POIs, stories and visited itineraries local storing to minimize access to data connection.
- The editors can create new POIs directly from the app at the current position and record audio and get photos stories that will be published by the web editing console.

The web editing console allows:

- To create places (Point Of Interest), stories linked to places or itineraries.
- To create QRcode to be put on the signs, when the GPS is not available (typically inside buildings).
- To publish stories - a multilingual and multimedia content (image, text, audio, video, youtube videos) - and itineraries - a set of stories linked together by our routing system or a GPX track - to make them visible on the app.

The users can select the quality of the material by rating the content and be actively involved in the creation of the content itself adding their own information so that they can play a key role in the creation of culture and knowledge.

Conclusions

San Lorenzo is one of the richest area of Rome in terms of cultural, political and artistic history and the perfect setting for the development of an Open Museum. The creation of SLUMM aimed to preserve and promote the cultural and historical transformation that characterised this area through the people who represented it. In order to achieve this aim, the project used San Lorenzo libraries, laboratories and social spaces as main element to build this new concept of museum and involved citizens, workers and students through educational projects and night events. The integration of traditions and new technologies also led to the use of Mapcast, a geo-referenced app that allows the creation of cultural itineraries, guiding the user to the discovery of the local culture and history through personalised choices and paths. Mapcast represents, therefore, a great achievement in terms of accessibility and divulgation and an essential step for the creation of a virtual space where memories, past and culture are preserved and shared for the future generations.

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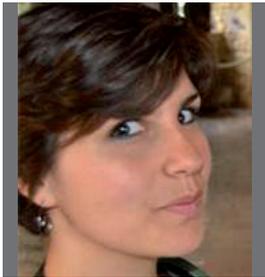
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