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Infopack
ROAD TO DIGITAL CULTURAL TOURISM
Lessons learnt from the village of Fikardou

This road is for:

ENTREPRENEURS IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY, REGIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND MUNICIPALITIES, AND CULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS WHO ARE INTERESTED IN DIGITISING CULTURAL HERITAGE

Abstract

In the ever-evolving landscape of Cultural Heritage (CH) preservation, digital documentation is ushering in a **new era of understanding, conservation, and societal engagement.**

This infopack delves into the multifaceted world of digital recording and emphasises its role in capturing the essence of the past, preserving it for posterity, and fostering knowledge dissemination to future generations and general public such as educators and tourists. Through **3D digitisation, CH objects, structures, and environments** are not merely archived but brought to life digitally, enabling in-depth analysis, interpretation, and promotion.

The complexity of selecting optimal technologies for digitisation underscores the need for **interdisciplinary collaboration and strategic planning in documentation projects.** Drawing upon the case study of Fikardou Village in Cyprus, we start our journey to explore the **transformative power of digital preservation in revitalising cultural landscapes and promoting tourism.** As part of TExTOUR project, the UNESCO Chair on Digital Cultural Heritage at Cyprus University of Technology (CUT) team has undertaken a holistic endeavour to digitise Fikardou Village, thereby creating an immersive online platform for global access. From data acquisition to storage, each step in the digital preservation process is meticulously executed to ensure data integrity, accessibility, and long-term sustainability. Through initiatives like the digitisation of Fikardou Village, we honour our past but also pave the way for a **more inclusive and interconnected future,** where cultural heritage serves as a beacon of identity, inspiration, and unity.

This comprehensive approach safeguards tangible heritage but also celebrates the intangible essence of cultural identity, tradition, and values, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of our shared heritage on a global scale. As we move through the complexities of the digital age, the road to CH preservation is illuminated by the transformative potential of digital technologies, forging new pathways towards sustainable conservation and societal enrichment.

What to pack:

KNOWLEDGE, TOOLS, AND SKILLS REQUIRED BEFORE IMPLEMENTING THE ACTION

Architectural Knowledge

- A deep understanding of architectural principles and heritage conservation techniques is essential. Proficiency in identifying architectural elements, understanding building materials, and assessing structural integrity enables accurate documentation and preservation of historical structures.

Digital Tools

- Familiarity with a range of digital tools is crucial for effective documentation and preservation. Proficiency in software such as Revit, Agisoft Metashape, and Rhino facilitates the digitisation process, enabling precise modelling, photogrammetry, and analysis of cultural heritage artefacts and environments.

- New ideas based on existing cross-border projects and collaborations

- Professional moderation to identify projects and set priorities

Historical Context

- Historical knowledge provides essential context for documenting and interpreting cultural heritage. Understanding the socio-cultural, political, and economic contexts of a site enhances the accuracy and significance of digital documentation efforts, ensuring that cultural heritage is preserved within its broader historical framework.

Community Engagement

- Building strong ties with the local community is vital for successful heritage preservation projects. Effective communication, collaboration, and community engagement strategies foster trust, involvement, and support from local stakeholders, ensuring that preservation efforts align with community needs, values, and aspirations.

Platform Proficiency

- Proficiency in using digital platforms is essential for creating and managing online repositories, digital tours, and educational resources for public access. Familiarity with content management systems, multimedia integration, and user interface design facilitates the creation of engaging and accessible digital platforms for sharing cultural heritage with diverse audiences.
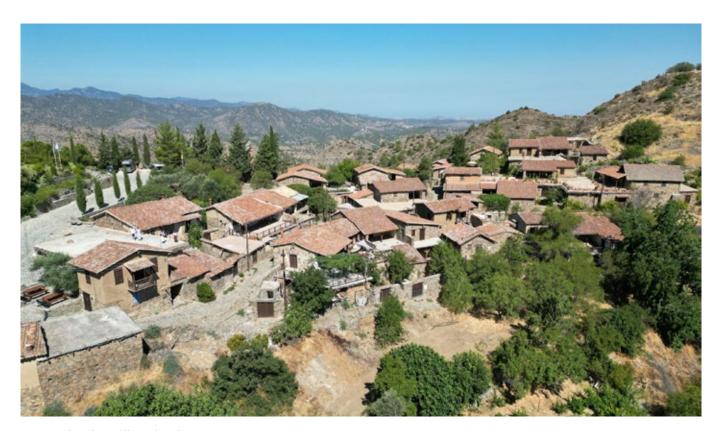
Preserving the past: the digitisation of the Fikardou Village

FIKARDOU VILLAGE: HISTORY AND CHALLENGES

The case study was undertaken by the CUT team and focused on the comprehensive digital documentation and preservation efforts directed towards Fikardou Village in Cyprus, exemplifying a rare and remarkably preserved traditional settlement. This village stands as a prime example of a traditional rural settlement, thoroughly conserving its 18th and 19th-century architecture amidst its pristine natural environment. Named after its noble lineage during the Frankish rule in Cyprus, **Fikardou embodies a rich cultural heritage** that has endured through the ages.

Despite its serene atmosphere, the village faced challenges in the mid-20th century due to urban migration, resulting in a dwindling population and financial strain. This in turn led to the abandonment of many historic buildings and posed a threat to its cultural heritage. Recognising the urgency of preservation, the Department of Antiquities took charge of Fikardou in 1978, declaring it an "Ancient Monument" and establishing strict regulations through a "Controlled Area" designation.

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Pic 1: Fikardou Village by the CUT Team

In 1984, a comprehensive revitalisation effort was launched, focusing on the restoration of dilapidated structures and the enhancement of the village's infrastructure. These endeavours have garnered recognition, with **Fikardou now proudly listed on the tentative UNESCO World Heritage Sites roster.** Notably, the restoration of key residences, such as the "Residence of Katsinioros" and the "Residence of Achilleas Dimitri," earned international acclaim, affirming the village's status as a beacon of architectural heritage.

DIGITAL CONSERVATION STRATEGIES: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Additionally, the team conducted extensive interviews with the villagers spanning generations. **These interviews were invaluable in capturing the intangible heritage of Fikardou**, including stories, traditions, and cultural practices passed down through oral tradition. Each voice added depth to the digital archive, weaving together a rich tapestry of intangible heritage that defines **the village's unique identity.**

The digital documentation process employed by the CUT team commenced with data acquisition, utilising advanced technologies such as **laser scanners, 360° photography, and drones** to capture the details of Fikardou's built environment. This initial phase created a comprehensive digital representation of the village and facilitated subsequent data processing stages. Data preparation involved **cleaning and organisation of acquired data**, ensuring its suitability for analysis and interpretation.

Pic. 2: Digitization process of Fikardou Village by the CUT Team

Subsequent processing stages encompassed **registration, interpretation, and storage**, culminating in the creation of structured digital assets that faithfully represent Fikardou's architectural and cultural heritage. **Data modelling** ensured the coherence and accessibility of the village's digital archives by establishing clear relationships between data entities and attributes.

Digital preservation strategies ensure the longevity and accessibility of Fikardou's digital materials. They adhere to best practices, including metadata documentation, controlled storage environments, and proactive management, to safeguard the integrity and authenticity of the village's cultural heritage in the digital realm.

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Furthermore, the development of **an online platform (efikardou.eu)** emerged as a strategic avenue for disseminating Fikardou's cultural legacy to a global audience. Through immersive virtual tours, interactive exhibits, and educational resources, the platform serves as a dynamic portal for engaging with the village's rich history and architectural splendour. By harnessing digital technologies, the CUT team fosters cultural awareness, promotes sustainable tourism, and ensures the enduring cultural heritage of Fikardou for future generations.

In conclusion, the journey towards digitally documenting and preserving Fikardou Village encapsulates a harmonious fusion of heritage conservation, technological innovation, and community engagement. Through meticulous data acquisition, processing, and preservation, the CUT team has created a comprehensive digital archive that

safeguards the architectural and cultural legacy of the village for posterity. As we navigate the complexities of the digital age, Fikardou serves as a symbol of resilience, reminding us of the enduring value of preserving our past for future generations. Through collaborative efforts and technological innovation, we can ensure that the rich tapestry of human history continues to inspire, educate, and unite us across time and space.

FIKARDOU PLATFORM
VISIT THE WEBSITE
https://efikardou.eu/

Roadmap:

THE MAIN STEPS TO EMBARK ON

1 **MONTH 1**
Analysis of Fikardou Village's historical and cultural heritage

2 **MONTH 2-3**
Engagement of the local community to collect the intangible heritage

3 **MONTH 2-3-4**
Data acquisition using advanced technologies such as laser scanners, 360° photography, and drones to capture details of Fikardou.

4 **MONTH 4-7**
Processing and structuring of data to create structured digital assets of Fikardou.

5 **MONTH 8-10**
Implementation of digital preservation strategies to ensure the longevity and accessibility of Fikardou's digital materials.

6 **MONTH 11-12**
Development of an online platform as a strategic means to disseminate the cultural heritage of Fikardou.

Testimonials

"Through our initiative, we've illuminated the boundless potential of digital technologies in safeguarding and celebrating our cultural heritage. By embracing innovation, we've forged a path towards sustainable conservation, ensuring that the richness of our heritage endures for generations to come."

CYPRUS UNIVERSITY TECHNOLOGY TEAM

New fellow travellers

WHO JOINED AND FORMED YOUR NEW NETWORK

- **Community Council of Fikardou (as the local administration)**
- **The Department of Antiquities (as the competent state authority)**
- **Visit Cyprus (the Deputy Ministry of Tourism), ICOMOS Cyprus, the Cyprus Culture Institutions Houses of Arts and Letters, Nicosia Tourism Board, the Cyprus Cycling Federation.**

Souvenirs

BEST ACHIEVEMENTS RELATIVE TO THE PROJECT'S IMPACTS

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

- By engaging with local stakeholders, we strengthened social cohesion and empowered residents to take ownership of their heritage, fostering a sense of belonging and identity.

POLICY IMPACTS

- By showcasing the effectiveness of digital technologies in safeguarding cultural heritage, we influenced policymakers to prioritise sustainable conservation efforts.

RESEARCH ADVANCEMENT

- Through the development of best practices and case study analysis, we expanded the knowledge base in the field of cultural heritage preservation, paving the way for future research.

CULTURAL PRESERVATION

- By digitising and preserving Fikardou Village's architectural and cultural heritage, we ensured the continuity of its rich cultural legacy for future generations. Our efforts not only safeguarded tangible heritage but also promoted cultural awareness and appreciation on a global scale, reinforcing the significance of preserving diverse cultural identities.

ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT

- Through our innovative approach, we stimulated economic growth in the local community by revitalising heritage tourism. The creation of an immersive online platform attracted visitors, generating revenue for local businesses, and enhancing the socioeconomic fabric of the area

Contact us to replicate joint cultural activities between border countries

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