


# Kalamata 1821 “Roads of Freedom”: initial efforts and challenges

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**Abstract.** We present the main aspects of a new project dealing with Greek history of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginnings of the War of Independence. The project has three main actions: 1) Creation of an historical documentary/film, 2) Design, implementation, testing and releasing of new city technologies both for historical immersion and city exploration, 3) Establishment of multiple cultural events preserving and enhancing the memory of residents and visitors who will enjoy a different interactive journey of knowledge and experience. We discuss the main challenges in each action, as well as challenges in Humanities (content creation, evaluation issues), Technology (diverse applications for indoor and outdoor use) and Business actions.

**Keywords:** Cultural heritage, Games, Apps, Tourism, City Branding

## 1 Kalamata 1821: Roads of Freedom

Wishing to commemorate 200 years from the beginning of the War of Independence, the project “Kalamata 1821: Roads of Freedom” is being implemented within the framework of the Operational Program “Competitiveness, Entrepreneurship and Innovation” (Greek National Research Funds 2014-2020). Being the starting point of the war of independence and thus of the establishment of the modern Greek State, Kalamata is a central place of memory and associated with important events and famous historical figures. The aim is to study, highlight and interconnect all the individual elements, historical, cultural and social that contributed to the beginning of the war in Kalamata on March 23, 1821. Historical events and daily lives in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century are studied in the wider region of Kalamata and Messinia, linking the past with the present. The historical research will feed three main domains of action:

- Creation of a historical documentary/film

- Design, implementation, testing and releasing of new city technologies both for historical immersion and city exploration
- Establishment of multiple cultural events preserving and enhancing the memory of residents and visitors who will enjoy a different interactive journey of knowledge and experience

The consortium consists of 3 partners: 1) The University of Peloponnese covers the area of historical research and the creation of the necessary technologies. 2) The Public Enterprise of the Municipality of Kalamata "FARIS" that is the official body of the Municipality's policy in the fields of Culture, Social Solidarity, Training and Promotion in Employment. FARIS will lead the multiple cultural events to take place in the city of Kalamata. 3) The private company, View Master Films, responsible for the production of the film/documentary. The project started in 2018 and will be completed in 2021.

## **2 Issues in Humanities**

### **2.1 Historical truth**

A very central and important event in modern Greek history like the one presented in the project, implies that almost all (Greek) participants are familiar with the basic ideas and the popularity of the theme is excepted. However, being so popular also implies that the historical truth as perceived by the wider public is often intertwined with legends and even misconceptions. In many cases, it is difficult to separate the tradition, personal identities and beliefs from historical perceived truth [1]. The humanities experts of the project wish to respect personal beliefs and meaning making, but at the same time also have to be scientifically grounded and present the historical evidences. In doing so, certain content or newer interpretations of events might be contradicting to previously believed historical "truths" and personal viewpoints. Project historians need not only to respect the scientific evidence but also need to find ways to present it to the public. They carefully select material and topics to be presented and they will also work with largely unknown aspects of the war (possibly implying less public misconceptions). This is an ongoing process in the project and one of the main challenges to work with acceptance of historical evidence and personal beliefs [2].

### **2.2 Complex evaluation for the three actions**

Being at the first year of works, the project has not yet completely clarified the way the evaluation processes will take place. However, since there are three project actions planned, all three must be evaluated.

In particular, the film/documentary presenting different aspects of the War of Independence will be evaluated in two dimensions. The first dimension includes the evaluation from humanities experts that will access the historical evidence presented in the film. Project humanities experts are involved from the initial stages of the film creation and they have an active role in feeding film directors with accurate historical

facts. In this light, there is a continuous evaluation process taking place, in order to guarantee the historical accuracy of the presented material. The strong collaboration between the film makers and the humanities experts allow little room for serious historical mistakes, since historians are involved from the concept generation phase to the scenario evaluation.

The second dimension has to do with the public acceptance of the film and the evaluation of the viewers' experiences, as well as the creative outcome of the production. Although it is very difficult to access creativity in films [3] there are certain indicators used by the film industry to evaluate films and especially their popularity, such as critical reviews from experts, financial performance and popularity, awards received [4]. All these, will be applied after the release of the film in 2021.

For the evaluation of the technologies created for the project, there are numerous issues to be taken into account. The easiest to assess is the usability of the applications and in fact, the project will use extensive usability testing to make sure that the outcomes are highly usable by the wider public. Since many of the technologies are intended to be used outdoors, extra caution will be taken to assess risk factors, like screen visibility under sun light, using the apps while mobile, environmental sound levels, etc. In addition, the quality of the user experience needs to be further evaluated and this will cover the engagement levels with the applications, the satisfaction and emotion self reports, as well as the possibilities offered by the apps for intra and inter group interaction and communication. Finally, a very important element to assess is the educational character of the applications, since we are dealing with historical concepts and events. The learning outcomes can be assessed in multiple levels from simple memorization of facts and comprehension of events, to analysis of complex historical phenomena [5].

Furthermore, the project together with city policy makers will also have to evaluate the cultural events designed and implemented. Popularity of the events is important, together with market indicators like consumption rates in local market, increase to tourists, etc.

### **3 Issues in Technology**

There are different technologies being designed and implemented for the project. In particular, there is a treasure hunt game in the city, a mobile guide and interactive indoor technology to be used in the project's physical exhibition space.

#### **3.1 Treasure Hunt game**

An entertaining and fun way to explore the historical centre of the city, get familiarized with central historical locations and concepts, is planned through the use of a treasure hunt game. The game is designed as a mobile application and asks people to find and capture specific city locations and historical objects, like statues, churches, etc. As the user interacts and unlocks locations and objects, she wins points that she can later use for discounts and offers in local shops and businesses, also targeting to

increase user motivation and to boost the local market. Figure 1 shows the initial game screens.



Fig. 1. Initial game screens.

### 3.2 Mobile app

The mobile app, apart from the mobile game, it will also allow visitors to explore the city and find out more about its rich historical past. Over the last 200 years the city has changed significantly and expanded. Although the city suffered from catastrophic earthquakes in 1986, which destroyed many of the historical buildings of the city, there are still many examples of traditional architecture and historical buildings surviving. There are three main phases in the expansion of the city historically. The first one is before the 1823 war where the core of the city was found around the castle. After the war, the city is expanded further and its centre is moved around the church of the Apostles. After 1830 the city starts facing outwards and thus expands towards the sea, establishing shipping and trading activity and port. These three main areas are covered by the mobile app and allow relevant historical exploration (Figure 2).



Fig. 2. Areas covered in mobile app for city exploration.

### 3.3 Interactive table

In one of the historical buildings, in the old town hall, the physical exhibition of the project will be hosted. In this space, the visitor will have the opportunity to explore all the content created for the project, including the film/documentary. The central element in this space will be an interactive table, where different themes can be explored further. The first theme supports the exploration of history through specific city locations (initial design shown in Figure3).

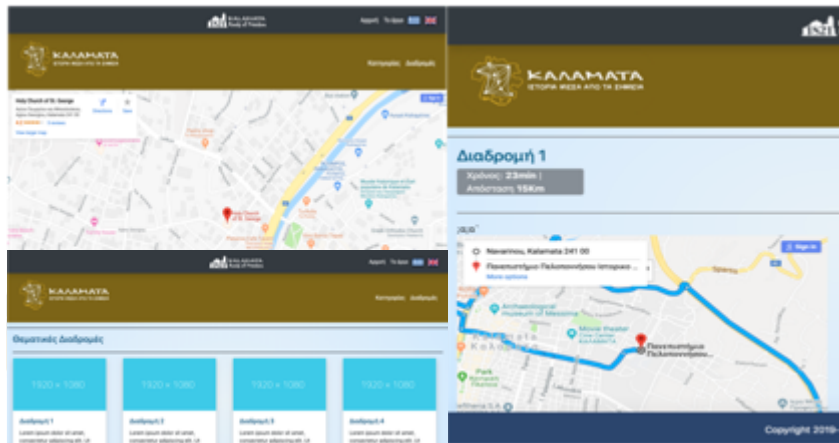


Fig. 3. History exploration through specific city locations.

The second theme, supports exploration through images. When the user chooses to explore known images, she can access stories about these images and explore known and unknown aspects of the war and the key historical figures (Figure 4).

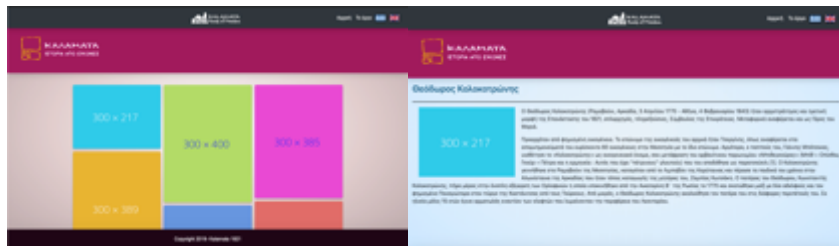


Fig. 4. History exploration through images.

The final theme allows history exploration through story trees. The story trees build historical episodes that can have multiple continuations depending on the user interests. For example, hearing an episode one person might be interested to find out more about one specific hero, whereas another might want to hear more about a battle (Figure 5). This theme allows visitors to personalize their experience and access in-

formation that is closer to their preferences and interests. This is performed by allowing the users to control the flow of each story by selecting how to continue at the end of each story.



Fig. 5. History exploration through story tress.

#### 4 Issues in Exploitation

The project was initially designed to have a strong exploitation scheme and work both as a tool to promote local history, but also as a way to enhance and support cultural tourism. Past branding efforts made Kalamata known as a dance city, hosting an international dance festival. The project is actively creating a new city brand name, one to incorporate the historical past related to the war. The project aims at bringing Kalamata to the centre of the 200-year national celebrations of the war of independence and attracting new city visitors. In close collaboration with the local community and local businesses, the project logo will be placed in multiple locations in the city, indicating participation to the project, like shops, restaurants, service providers, etc. The project participants will have various benefits from the local businesses, like discounts and offers. For example, after playing the Treasure Hunt game, the users can collect badges that correspond to specific discounts at the participating city businesses. In this way, the project advertises local shops and services and in return it ensures sustainability (the exact way and specific business plans remain to be explored further during the project). Figure 6 presents the project logo, as it is used by the project and the participating businesses.

In one of the scenarios currently examined, the project shows the eating habits of the early 19th century in the region and connects them to local products, thus familiarizing the wider public with the local cuisine and food production. Similarly, different business scenarios are explored in order to represent the rich local traditions, like production of silk, etc. The specificities of the daily life in 19th century as care-

fully reviewed by humanities experts and are also reflected in the produced film (i.e. specific details for clothes, food, tools, etc).



**Fig. 6.** Project logo and city branding logo.

## 5 Open Challenges

One of the project open challenges is the application of an extensive educational plan targeting children of all school ages from the wider area of Kalamata and Messinia. There are multiple educational activities planned like art competitions and co-creation of art and content. The large scale of the involvement of the city children poses new challenges in the way cultural heritage is brought to educational settings within the framework of a specific project. The first educational programs have already started, and we will soon be able to report from the extensive educational activities.

Furthermore, it is important to recognize the role of technology as a tool to examine our past and our roots and utilize it in such a way in order not to distract from the main scope of the project. Finally, the capturing and accuracy of the historical data through the documentary that will be created within the scope of the project is of great importance for the success of the project. Its scope should remain the provision of historical data while in parallel being able to transmigrate the historical truth through the extensive use of technology.

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