

15

INTA MOAT

a tool for governing the urban commons

Francesco Bagni, Valentino Canturi, Mariza Daouti, Joatan Preis Dutra, Charalampos Ioannou, Maria Kikidou, Athanasia Panagiotidi, Marianna Patelida, Eftychios Savvidis, Harry Varnavas

Introduction

The Venetian walls of Nicosia, designed by the Italian engineers Giulio Savorgnan and Francesco Barbaro (1567-1570), embody the virtues of the 'Ideal City' as conceptualized in the Renaissance period, with the perfect circular design of a 1.6 km diameter and 11 heart-shaped bastions enclosing the existing medieval city. Initially built with mudbricks, with the lower part only buttressed by stone, the walls' current state is credited to the British Government (Leventis, 2009). Nowadays, the 80 meters wide moat 'protecting' the walls seems to be fragmented and abandoned by the people of the city.

The field study carried out on the moat and the old city of Nicosia during the Training School focused on re-imagining this fragmented space and its re-connection to the urban net, based on the shared interest and common good for the city of Nicosia, its walls and moat space. The INTA MOAT project envisions the continuity of the public space, and intends to enable citizens' and visitors' better use of the moat area, both from the spatial as well as the users' perception point of view.

The INTA MOAT project facilitates the temporary accommodation of community-managed activities in the spaces of the moat within the medieval Venetian walls of the city. By enhancing the perception of an overall coherent public space, INTA MOAT attempts to re-establish the connection of the historical value of the old city wall and the moat with the citizens' various contemporary social, physical and communal activities.

INTA MOAT promotes a self-organising appropriation of the moat monument for the city's common good through a mobile application that will be freely available, and open, to the public. A future possibility for this platform is to become compatible with smart city tools such as smart parking services, suggesting the use of smart city facilities linked to new proposed activities.

Background

Existing situation

Even though Nicosia is not lacking in public open spaces (10 sq.m. per capita), most of these spaces lack the necessary qualities to be appropriated, such as usability, accessibility and facilities. At the same time, due to the prevailing use of the car as a means of transportation, many open space areas are leased to private holders and serve as parking lots (Figure 15.1).

According to the empirical field research conducted during the Training School, the public space of the moat and the bastions of the Venetian Walls of Nicosia were found to be underused by both locals and visitors. The area in its entirety is rather diverse, containing green areas, a local food market, private tennis courts, parking lots. Empirical observations, discussions with locals, and research presented at the Training school, led to the conclusion that the moat is at its length fragmented and underused (Figure 15.2), functioning in a few cases as a passageway or a temporary facilitation of certain organised uses, but largely overlooked and deteriorated.

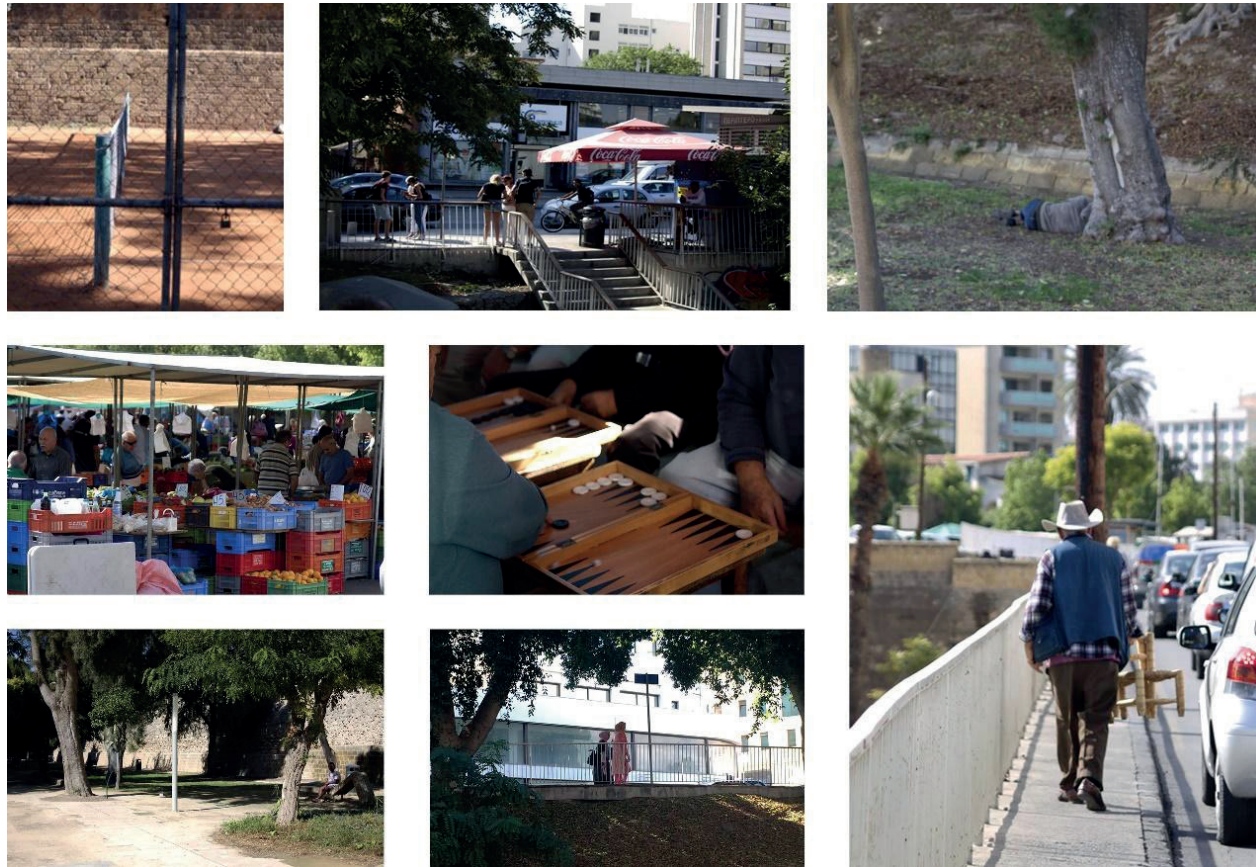


Figure 15.1. Activities currently taking place in the public space of the Moat.

Concept

The project focuses on the potential of this underused space for the development of the communities living around it and of the city itself. This proposal is grounded on the assumption that the city is part of the commons, namely a resource or good jointly developed and maintained by a community and shared according to community-defined rules (Siefkes, 2015). By extension, the term urban commons refers to the resources available in cities, and common spaces describe city spaces open to the public, in which rules and forms of use emerge by practices of commoning within the community, instead of being defined by a prevailing authority (Stavrides, 2016).



Figure 15.2. Graphic representation of activities currently taking place in the Moat.

The commons refers to the governance of the resource rather than its mere description. Therefore, the focus is placed on (re-)opening access to and use of this asset by the community, on account of the social value that this would generate for the community (Foster and Iaione, 2016). In such a context, the State supports the use and governance of the city as commons, by creating the conditions for citizens to develop collaborative relationships, and together with public authorities take care of common resources. INTA MOAT is developed based on this principle: it provides the context for experiencing, using and managing the moat as a public space accessible to all, by facilitating the organisation of diverse uses in it (Figure 15.3).



Figure 15.3. Enabling citizens' and visitors' active use of the moat will encourage the development of more activities and will in turn, enhance the perception of a continuous and coherent public space.

INTA MOAT is imagined as a tool that will enable the enhanced experience of the moat area by citizens and visitors. Some of the activities that could potentially take place in the moat are urban community gardening, social kitchen, and social work activities - i.e., public area cleaning, open-air cinema, etc. The activities held on the site are expected to attract more activities, triggering a positive cycle of use, and, in turn, establishing the moat as a continuous and coherent public space in the perception of the citizens and its users.

Vision

"Have you ever seen the fortified city? Perfect round way with these arrows. It is a symbol! This diagram of the city – it is the symbol of Nicosia" (Respondent 1, in field interviews by Batista and Žemaitaitienė, 2017).



Figure 15.4. Possible ways to appropriate the space of the moat.

INTA MOAT envisions Nicosia as a symbolic city that brings together its citizens through its own (historic) boundary. A penetrable border between the old and the new city, which allows inclusiveness and innovation to occur through activities organized by the citizens themselves, and seeks to encourage a common sense of public space use and identity.

INTA MOAT aims at rendering the Moat as a day-long active public open space that serves as a platform for citizen groups, creatives, artists and the community as a whole to better develop their activities. Under this scope, the platform acts as the main tool for the citizens to inhabit the urban commons through collaborative events and the use of ICT. In this sense, the moat will host a diverse range of social activities, such as open-air yoga classes, outdoor education events, outdoor exhibitions of the city's museums, and evening concerts (Figure 15.4). Lastly, an overarching vision for the project is to congregate people from confrontational interest groups - citizens, visitors, authorities - in an open dialogue, a negotiation about the public space of the city and the management of built heritage.

Objectives

INTA MOAT provides a creative solution for the unused potential of the moat, activating its public space, and highlighting the values of the commons and active citizenship. With the view to creating a practical and accessible tool for governing the urban commons, the objectives of the proposal are:

- To develop a new model for the co-management of events in the moat that will allow sharing the public space and supporting the co-design of ephemeral appropriation activities;
- To foster knowledge about the history and the characteristics of the walls and the moat;
- To build a new identity of this public space, based on collective use and management, by applying new purposes to the historic area;
- To offer a motive and opportunity for the re-appropriation of unused and leftover sites of the moat by dynamic citizen groups;
- To encourage citizens to actively engage with the open spaces of their city; and,
- To introduce collaboration and ICT in the governance of the urban commons of Nicosia.

Developing the platform

What it does

INTA MOAT facilitates the organization of ephemeral community-managed activities in the spaces of the moat. In doing so, it promotes a proactive, yet responsible, use of the public space of the moat, and a way for communities and municipalities to approach anew the acknowledgement and management of public spaces.

The proposed platform (mobile application) informs about the public usability of the space for single users or groups (i.e., availability of public spaces for community-managed activities, characteristics of the space, 'dos and don'ts,' regulations in place), and shares information about the historical and cultural characteristics of the space.

The mobile application provides a time and space management tool for each of the moat's public spaces, all mapped and compiled as public space locations. This management tool allows users to propose an activity to be held in the public space and to 'book' the location for the ephemeral activity (Figure 15.5).

The INTA MOAT application also includes an enquiry tool, through which users can address requests to the public authority responsible for the public space, and a tool through which public authorities can monitor the activities being held in the public spaces of the moat. This tool is meant to streamline the permission request procedure for activities held in public spaces, and to simplify the dialogue between local communities and the municipality over the management of those public spaces.



Figure 15.5. Case scenario storyboard.

The underlying message is that the public space is for everyone to use, and all share responsibility for it, but it is for no one to own exclusively. As many locations of the moat are used in a semi-private way, or being occupied by uses (such as permanent tennis courts, parking lots and so on) that exclude different types of activities, our proposal for supporting more ephemeral and diverse uses can allow a larger portion of the local community to build stronger attachment and consideration for their public space in the short term, while in the long term it could support the community to reclaim more locations of the moat that are currently not available to the public.

What is it?

The INTA MOAT project consists of a mobile application; online digital tools, such as an online platform (with desktop and mobile version); and communication activities: such as social channels communication activities, on-site signage, and print information materials. Other awareness activities can be scheduled, such as local advertising, partnerships with local event organizers, or events to inform the public about the initiative.

‘Inta’ - Etymology

From the Byzantine Greek είντα (*eínta*) τι είναι τα - “*what are the*” and in contracted form ίντα (*ínta*). Also, in many of the Aegean islands and Crete, it is a dialect form of the Greek ‘γιατί’ (*giatí* - “*why*”). In the Cypriot dialect, it is as an expression of surprise for something, usually in the form of a question, to show either enthusiasm or disappointment or as τι; (*tí?* - “*what?*”). This colloquial word is used in this context to build a phonetic association with American urban slang “in da”, instead of “in the” (Nicholas, 2004).

Target Group

INTA MOAT addresses all existing and potential users of the moat. The targeted users of both the platform and the app are divided into different categories. Emphasis is placed on local residents and stakeholders near the monument. These digital tools will also include other ethnic groups who live close to the site, commuters and passers-by, users that already visit and currently use the moat. Local authorities, such as Municipal office and the Department of Antiquities, which is legally responsible for the monument, will be included in the list of target groups. We envision these tools to become a communication channel for Nicosia citizens, as well as for tourists/guests.

Concerning the use of the platform itself, the users of every specific activity are divided in the two following categories:

- Organizers
- Participants

It is important to mention that prior to the organization of each planned activity, users will have to undergo a security check and authorization procedure by providing ID card verification in order to prevent possible damage of the monument.

Features

A key element of INTA MOAT is the self-organised use of the moat for the city's common good. Therefore, the city's empty spaces will be reused and filled with new social activities and more, as described above. In addition, public spaces will act as a long-term learning 'device' and as an urban commons for education and knowledge purposes. Not only the city will benefit from this platform, but the community as well, since the marginalized groups can express themselves in this space of the moat.

Moreover, longer term benefits from this intuitive platform of social and public use of the common spaces of the city and its heritage include the enhancement of public participation in urban matters. Additionally, a new relationship of trust will be built between the municipality and its citizens, as they can work together and share responsibility for the maintenance and monitoring of the space. This structured relationship between citizens and authorities will become good practice for public sites management.

Finally, stakeholders involved in this project will benefit from INTA MOAT by hosting activities in the public space and by communicating their activities to a wider public, thus leading to wider awareness of their businesses. Regarding the long-term advantages for stakeholders and city, we envision an improvement in the quality of public space and economic activities.

Mobile App Concept

With the INTA MOAT objectives in mind, the mobile app concept took into consideration usability guidelines (Nielsen and Molich, 1990; Shneiderman, 1997) on its creation and development, but focused on the main proposed moat activities of enhancing public participation and site management.

User Interface Elements

Navigation

The navigation prioritised four main functionalities around the activities to be offered for the public use of the moat: create (activity), search (activity), map (of activities), and calendar (personal and public). The navigation used a self-explanatory approach (Inostroza and Rusu, 2014; Ahmad, Rextin and Kulsoom, 2017) by using text associated with icons (Shitkova et al., 2015; Joyce et al., 2014), with the aim to be easily recognised by the users (Figure 15.6).

The navigation also provides visual feedback about the chosen section of the app, by changing the colour of the text and icon (from standard dark-grey to orange). This feature, associated with making the navigation bar visible in all the sections of the app, helps with the users' orientation and easy navigation among the available functionalities (Inostroza and Rusu, 2014; Ahmad, Rextin and Kulsoom, 2017).

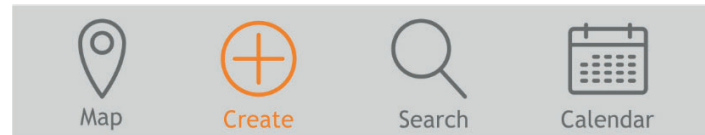


Figure 15.6. The main navigation bar.

Colours

It is recommended to limit the number of interface colours, to keep the layout clean and easy to understand (Nielsen and Molich, 1990; Ahmad, Rextin and Kulsoom, 2017). The choice of using orange was inspired by the flag of Cyprus, making it a neutral colour by not using blue or red - the colours normally associated with the Greek and Turkish flags ('Republic of Cyprus Flag' n.d.). The same colour principle was applied to the INTA MOAT logo.

Layout

Maintaining consistency between different sections, including the way the tasks are performed, helps to understand the visual cues and functionalities of the app (Inostroza and Rusu, 2014; Miniukovich et al., 2017). Also, it is important to avoid vertical-scrolling, by prioritizing the main content section in one screen.

The use of aesthetic graphics, such as content-related photos, helps with the recognition of places and the reinforcement of content (Hoehle, Zhang and Venkatesh, 2015; Hincapie et al., 2016), for instance, when a location is selected for an activity, the main picture at the head of the section displays the chosen location (Figure 15.7).

Aside the content location feedback on the main navigation bar, the navigation orientation is also reinforced by displaying the session title (Cota et al., 2014; Ahmad et al., 2017), along with another action title which changes according to the user's action (i.e., how many steps to create an activity), (Figure 15.8). The placement of a 'back' function on the main title bar provides better orientation and control to the user (Silva et al., 2014).

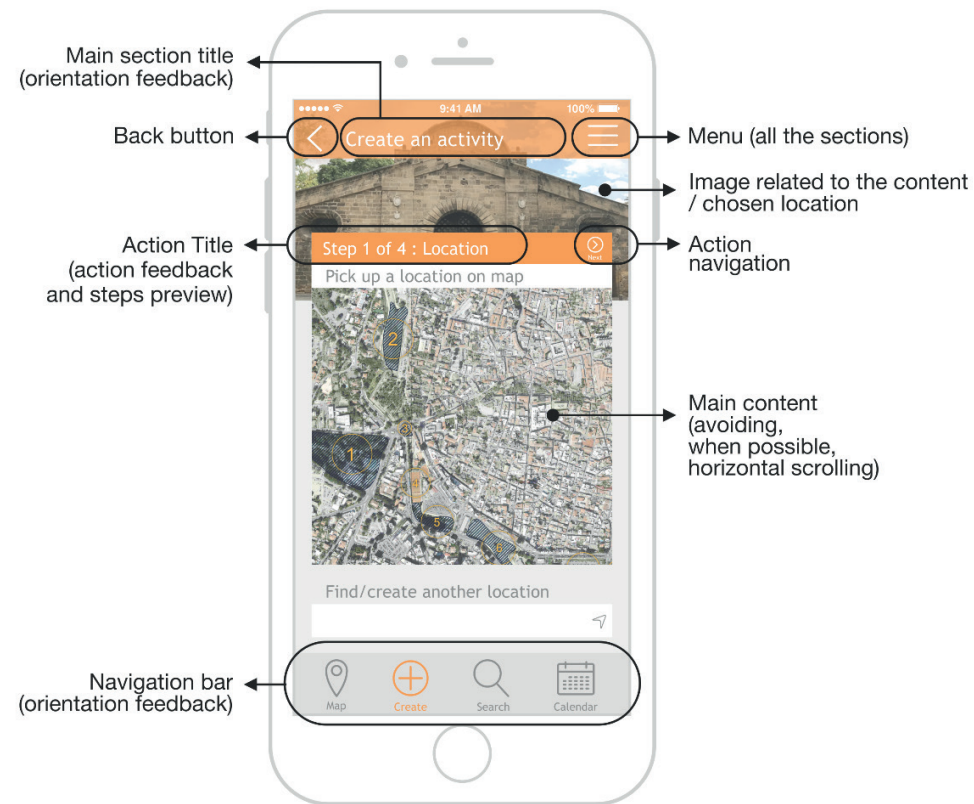


Figure 15.7. The app layout.

Concept Samples

Screen samples for the main sections and login page.

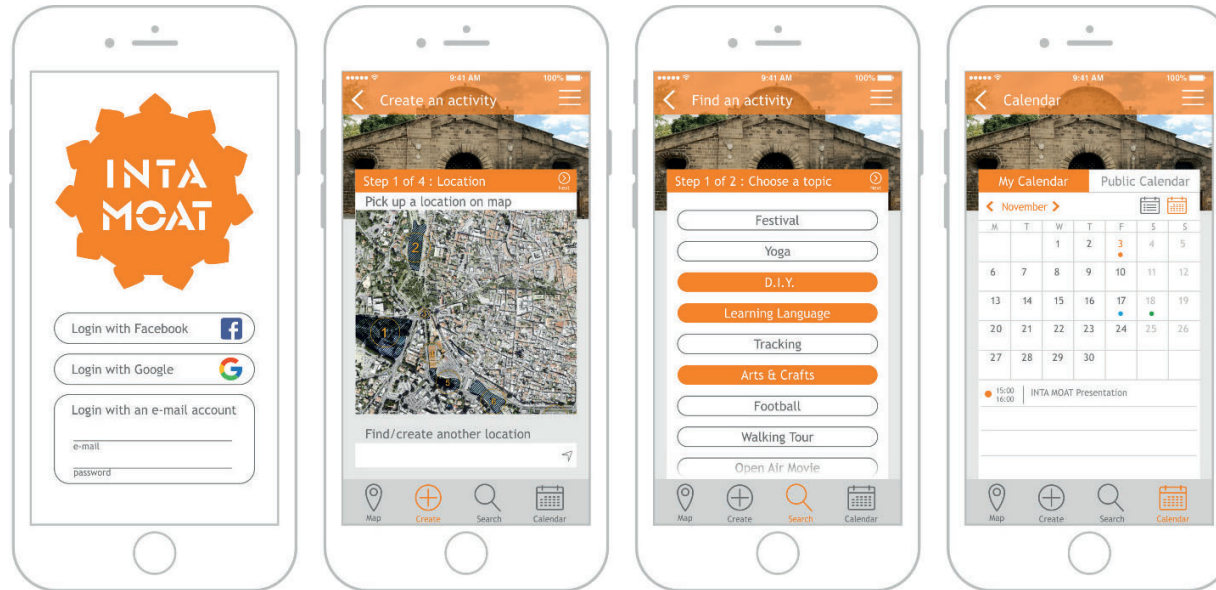


Figure 15.8. Main sections and login screens.

Communication Strategy

The communication of the INTA MOAT mobile application and platform will be implemented through different channels (Pearson and Culver, 2016). Advertisement campaigns with engaging mottos, i.e., 'Are you interested in the space? Get on board!' or 'I live here', etc., are expected to enhance the users' sense of belonging regarding the monument and surrounding space. As regards the marketing channel, apart from the 'INTA MOAT' brand, there will be options to disseminate the project by physical signage, printed material (brochures, fliers), digital material (videos, digital signage using NFC technology on site). The platform-website itself will be used as a communication medium.

Concerning Media Channels, the mobile app will be connected with social media (i.e., opportunity via Facebook login, events in the app can be published as Facebook events, etc.). There will be a weekly event calendar which will be circulated in the press (mostly local newspapers, magazines) and websites.

A significant part of the quickest diffusion of the tools will be achieved through networking and lobbying within key-partners and stakeholders. Local associations which already use the space, and/or the platform/app can become ambassadors of the project. In this context, the role of the municipality, by giving special incentives to those interested, can significantly contribute. In the first phase of the dissemination process, possible networking to existing festivals in the area will be very helpful not only in forming collective knowledge on how to organize public events but also to the extent that the existing events themselves will be used as communication channels for the promotion of the platform/app (i.e., physical signage on the event site, newsletters, etc.).

Final Considerations

The INTA MOAT project works as evidence that the medieval walls of Nicosia city can be considered as a Common Pool Resource, as a public open space that brings the old and new together in order to co-manage, plan and develop the social and economic life of the city. The co-design practice and ICT tool proposed in this project bring multiple benefits to the local community, the municipality, stakeholders and the city itself.

Local community benefits

In the short term, the implementation of the INTA MOAT project encourages the simplification of permission procedures on the use of public space, as well as the free expression of marginalized groups in the area.

In the long term, an important benefit, which also sets the base for the overall sustainability of the community, is the trust that will be built between citizens and the municipality, and therefore, the confidence deriving from achieving change and the appropriation of the space. Moreover, citizens' participation in urban matters will be intensified through the emergence of pressure groups and a moat assembly - inclusion is set as one of the characteristics of the medieval walls' public space.

Stakeholder benefits

The short-term benefits for the stakeholders are tied to the redefinition of their relationship with the city's public space and users. They have the opportunity to host their activities in the public space of the walls, as well as organize relevant communication campaigns in order to spread the word for this open call to collaborative culture in the use of public urban spaces.

Municipality benefits

In the short-term, the benefits for the Municipality include the simplification of the permissions attribution procedures, and therefore, early feedback on possible needs and uses of the public space of the moat will also be provided to the Municipality.

In the long-term, this will create a feeling of shared responsibility, with regards to the maintenance and monitoring of the public space in use, and thus, the relationship between its users is re-structured and leads to a common strategy towards the possible resolution of any conflicts. Also, from the Municipality's perspective, the INTA MOAT project functions as good practice for place management that strengthens the identity of the territory under its responsibility.

City benefits

The city of Nicosia, in the short term, will benefit to a high degree from the reuse of empty spaces and the upgrade of the neglected ones, increasing the quality of daily life within and outside the walls.

In the long term, Nicosia's image is brought to a higher level, while reinforcing the debate on the use of the city's heritage assets and cultural identity. The INTA MOAT project also promotes the city's public space as a learning device and as urban commons that every citizen can experience with the help of the proposed ICT tool.

Economic Sustainability

What kind of funding and operative structure can actually build and support the INTA MOAT proposal? Given the strong link with the public administration that this initiative inherently seeks, the operative structure should be linked to the Municipality. Also, since the time, effort and expertise needed may arguably not be a high priority for the Municipality, the operative structure should come from an external collaboration with a public institution rather than a municipality office dedicated to this.

A desirable operational structure for the INTA MOAT project (or else, a business plan) would be that of an independent NGO, a small team willing to collaborate and share efforts with the Municipality on a project base, and only for the duration of the project. The scope of the work would be to fully design, build and deliver the platform and related guidelines, to manage and adjust it for the initial period, and to plan possible project developments. A cooperation agreement should be signed with the Municipality with the objective of exchanging information about permission procedures, seeking opportunities about public property management, and possibly amending public regulations, sharing usage data and other quantitative/qualitative data about the everyday use of public spaces.

As for the funding possibilities, the following options are foreseeable:

- Local advertising. Being heavily location-based and being targeted to citizens and passers-by spending their time on location, the platform can be of interest for local businesspeople seeking advertising opportunities;
- EU funding. With the goal of enhancing public space, and working on the revitalization of the cultural heritage of this very symbolic monument in the last divided capital of Europe, there is an opportunity for EU funding;
- The platform will gather data about wanted uses of the monument, its attendance, permission requests and, broadly speaking, the overall use of this public space. These datasets could be of market value, and there's an opportunity to manage and sell datasets to governmental departments or public research departments.

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15. INTA MOAT: a tool for governing the urban commons.

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