

Final Project Update of *San Julián de Samos: a digital approach*

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The present report aims to reflect what meant the experience of participating in both sessions of the Summer Institute *Advanced Topics in Digital Art History: 3D (Geo)Spatial Networks* for me, as a researcher, and for my project, in the phase it was before June 2018.

To start with the first session of the workshop, the main methodology used by the instructors was to learn by “project sharing”. The nine participating teams were invited to prepare individual 60-90 minute project-focused presentations. The aim was to showcase an overview of our work: the art historical questions we try to answer and the methods and digital tools we are using for that purpose. In addition, we were asked to show the problems we tackled or we aim to tackle in the process of doing the research, as well as the big picture of future steps. Each project-focused presentation was followed by a Q&A session and general discussion to report a feedback to the presenters.

Another methodology used was to “explore technologies” through demos that allowed participants to know first person how to use certain digital tools to face specific art historical questions. Moreover, based on certain case studies, instructors presented the potential of specific 3D and GIS technologies, not only as a means for research, but also for dissemination of research results to reach a wider audience.

Last, but not least, the workshop tried to gather participants to foster an “academic discussion” about several issues related to digital art history as a discipline and the challenges it faces currently. The instructors sent the participants a selection of readings prior to the workshop. The readings were carefully chosen in accordance to the topic of each day. The target was to cause a dialogue about questions of scale and perspective, digital mapping and 3D modeling, as well as the suitable methods to face them in what refers to tools and data.

These three methods, “project sharing”, “exploring technologies”, and “academic discussion” were, all in all, the ones that structured the first and second sessions of the workshop. However, although here I present them separately, when they were put into practice, they got mixed. In other words, and using an example, when the members of one team share their project, they also let the other teams explore one or more technologies through a particular case study, because they show the ones they used to answer their research questions. Moreover, at the end of one presentation, a discussion was

generated around their goals, their ways of facing them, the problems they tackled, how they managed data, and so on. Here, new learning was born and new progress is possible both from an individual perspective of the teams, but also for the big picture of digital art history as a discipline.

Besides, the workshop had what I consider an unusual feature of this type of learning and training programs. I refer to the fact that it was conceived in two working sessions with one year between each other. From my view, this is a key issue to get the advance of the projects and the discipline. At the end of the first fifteen days of working together, each team along with instructors set future steps for each project to be faced during the following year prior to our second meeting, where this new phases, steps, or ongoing work was expected to be presented.

In the case of my project, *San Julián de Samos: a digital approach*, I proposed as future steps to make accessible the project through a web-presence, and to create an animation of the monastic site evolution over time. In both cases, these steps were formulated to advance the project, to open new research questions through interactive presentation and analysis, to add new assets, and to create a new means of project dissemination for a wider audience, formed of scholars but also general public.

How did the workshop cause the advance of my project? Firstly, the used methodologies favored learning and without learning there is not possibility of advance. As a researcher, during both sessions of the workshop I had the chance of seeing several projects of digital art and architectural history, along with their different research questions and methods to approach them, their problems and challenges, their multiple strategies to present and disseminate their research results, and the possibilities that working with people coming from disparate backgrounds offers.

To learn about all these ongoing projects, in various phases of developing their research program and resources, was a source of inspiration for me. Although all projects are different, it is possible to identify common art historical questions and, through the presentations, I was able to learn about different ways to approach them. This way, I started thinking about how I could use all this knowledge to advance my own project. In other occasions, I could also recognize research questions I have not proposed yet in my particular case study, but they could be applied to open future research paths.

Something similar happened in what refers to tools. Through the presentations I had the chance of learning about what digital tools are used by each participating team to approach the proposed art historical questions, based on their available historical data sources. This was also a way to learn what these tools offer based on the results they already achieve. This way is possible to be

aware of how these tools can support the development of new approaches and analysis in another ongoing project.

Not only was the fact of doing the presentations important as a participant, but also as a presenter of my own project to the instructors and participating teams. Up to now, in very few occasions I had the chance of presenting my work during time enough to showcase its whole complexity, its aims, methodologies, results, and past and current problems to an audience of skilled scholars, although the project has already been shown in a number of congresses for the last years. At this point I think it is good to remember that, in the first session of the workshop, each team had about 60-90 minutes to do their presentation. In congresses or conferences that gathered scholars of similar fields this is not usual and the communications last about 10-20 minutes. This forces the presenter to sum up the main ideas to be shown and, as a consequence, this sometimes leads to offer a kind of simplified picture of the project and its results, which is not good for a thorough understanding.

Another important fact of the individual presentations was to get a feedback from researchers working in the same field. Many questions and suggestions emerged, and above all, I got a very positive response to the work done so far. Together with the learning, this was a key and needed drive to my future engagement to advance this project and new ones within Digital Art History. Moreover, it was also important because the results of these projects are not yet rightly assessed within the academia, and the lack of this recognition along with the lack of funds to carry out them are permanent obstacles that young researchers can not usually assume to keep their interest to work in this field.

During the one year period time between first and second workshop sessions all instructors and teams were in touch through monthly videoconference meetings. We shared the advances of projects and new problems that arose in the work in progress, we talked about tools, and we also exchanged ideas. To keep in touch, the feeling of belonging to a network with similar interests and difficulties was, from my view, another key point to forge the continuity and advance of my project during the time period of both workshop sessions.

In fact, in my particular case, the project experienced what I consider a significant advance with the creation of the project website called digitalsamos@udc.es (Fig. 1), and the animation "Creating the Monastic Site from the origins to the 19th century" (Fig. 2). The first one was launched on 30th April 2019 and the second one is supposed to be part of an exhibition in the monastery if I get the needed funding. Briefly speaking, the website digitalsamos@udc.es aims to make accessible the project for a wider audience and to become a tool for interpretation and analysis. The core section of the website is an interactive map in which the question of change over time of the monastic site is shown and analyzed. Besides, the graphical information of the

map is visualized along with the historical data used for the research. This way I aim to preserve the transparency of historical data as well as to open up the possibility of doing new questions by querying this data in the future.

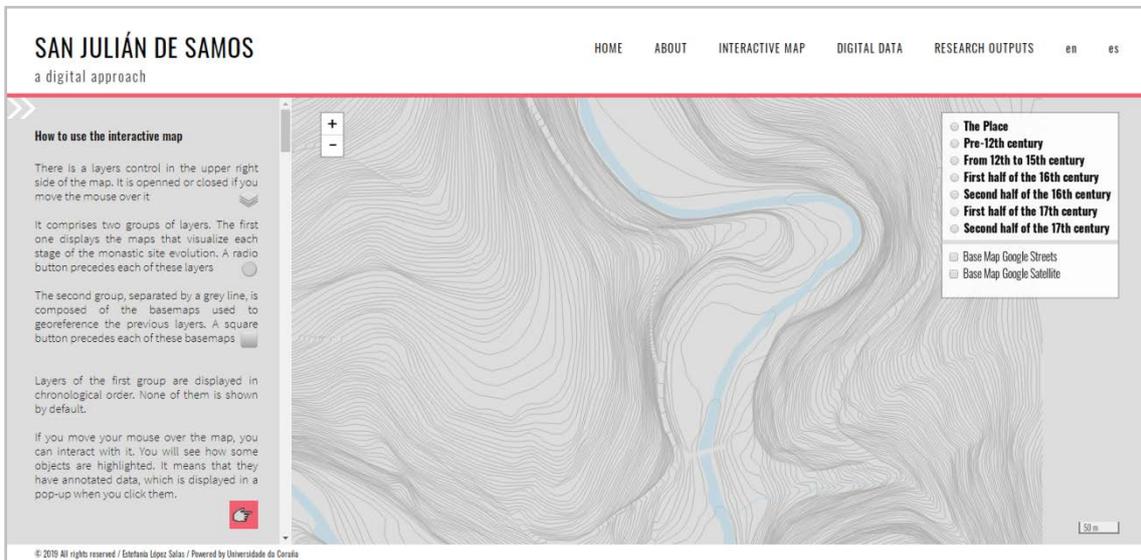


Fig. 1 Screenshot of the in-progress project website digitalsamos@udc.es (López Salas, Estefanía)

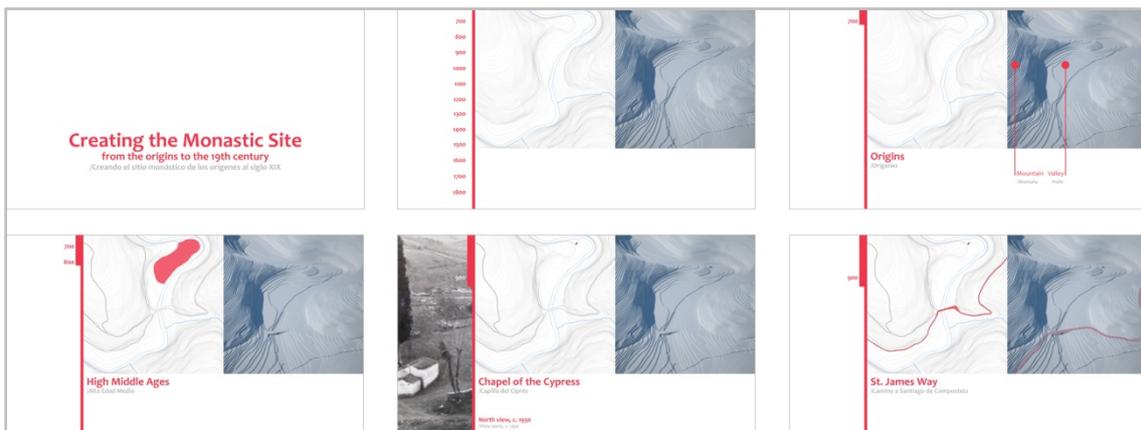


Fig. 2 Selected frames of the animation titled "Creating the Monastic Site from the origins to the 19th century" (López Salas, Estefanía)

Finally, I would like to highlight that thanks to DAH-Venice workshop I could establish new collaborations that, otherwise, would not have taken place. The first one is the work in progress with Augustus E. Wendell that aims to study how pilgrims towards Santiago de Compostela experienced their travel along the way when they approached the monastic site of San Julián de Samos, walked next to the wall and passed through the village by applying an Agent-Based Modeling system. The first results of this work in progress have already been presented in the 107th CAA Annual Conference (New York-February 2019) (Fig. 3), and in the 37th International Conference on Education and Research in Computer Aided Architectural Design in Europe (ECAADE), and 23rd Conference Iberoamerican Society of Digital Graphics (SIGRADI) (Porto-September 2019) (Fig. 4). In addition, the workshop instructors invited

participating teams to be speakers in a panel in the forthcoming 108th CAA Annual Conference (Chicago-February 2020), where I will present a communication about my project website, but, above all, this is another good chance to meet again in person and to go on working together. Another positive result that was born in DAH-Venice was the short post-doctoral stay I made in Padova last July and August.

All in all, I am very grateful for being one of the participants in the Summer Institute *Advanced Topics in Digital Art History: 3D (Geo)Spatial Networks* because, it represented a chance of undoubted value for me and my present and future work, as this report aims to briefly reflect in writing.



Fig. 3 Poster titled “User Experience along the St. James Way. Intervisibility testing with agent based modeling at the Monastery of San Julián Samos” presented by Augustus E. Wendell and Estefania López Salas at 107th CAA Annual Conference (New York, February, 2019).

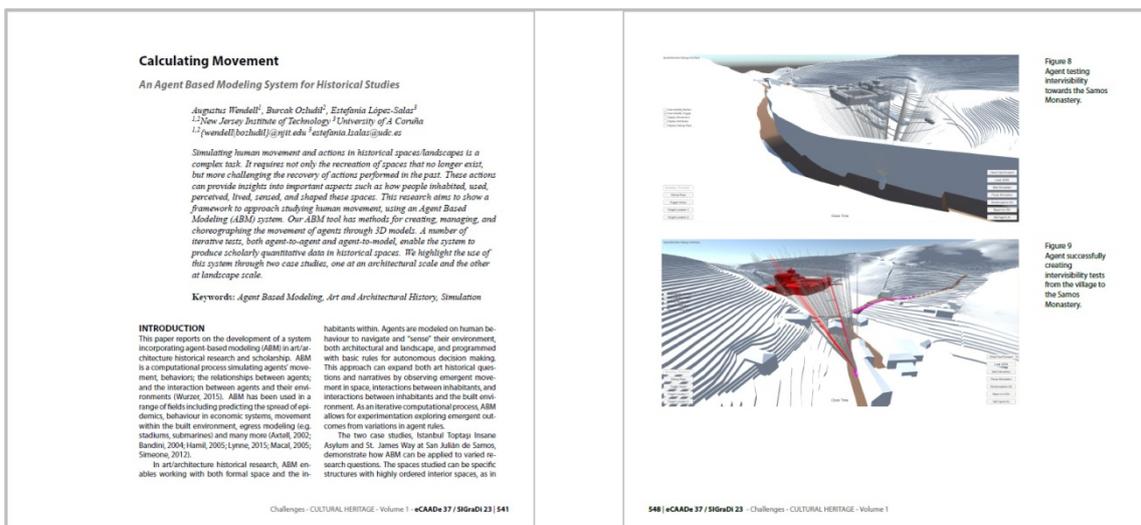


Fig. 4 Paper titled “Calculating Movement. An Agent Based Modeling System for Historical Studies” that was written for 37th International Conference ECAADE and 23rd Conference SIGRADI “Architecture in the age of the 4th Industrial Revolution” (Porto, September, 2019) by Augustus E. Wendell, Burcak Ozludil, and Estefania López Salas.