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Communications in Computer and Information Science

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# Transdisciplinary Multispectral Modeling and Cooperation for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage

First International Conference, TMM\_CH 2018  
Athens, Greece, October 10–13, 2018  
Revised Selected Papers, Part II

Part 2

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## Contents – Part II

### **Sustainable Preservation and Management Lessons Learnt on Emblematic Monuments**

Improving the Geometric Documentation of Cultural Heritage: Combined Methods for the Creation of an Integrated Management Information System in Greece . . . . .	3
<i>Eleftheria Mavromati, Eleni Stamatiou, Leonidas Chrysaeidis, and Konstantinos Astaras</i>	
The Temple of Apollo at Corinth. Observations on the Architectural Design . . . . .	22
<i>Dimitra Andrikou</i>	
Anastylosis of Roman Temples in the West End of the Roman Forum, as Part of a Management Plan of the Archaeological Site of Ancient Corinth . . .	36
<i>Evangelos D. Kontogiannis</i>	
The Restoration of the Katholikon of Daphni Monastery: A Challenging Project of Holistic Transdisciplinary Approach, Novel Methodologies and Techniques and Digital Modelling. . . . .	59
<i>Androniki Miltiadou-Fezans and Nikolaos Delinikolas</i>	
Restoration and Consolidation of the Byzantine Church of Palaia Episkopi in Tegea, Arcadia . . . . .	78
<i>Konstantina Siountri</i>	
Decryption, Through the Collaboration of Historical Accounts and Technology, of the Hidden Phases of Construction of the Church of the Holy Monastery of Kykko in Cyprus. A Preliminary Report . . . . .	88
<i>Nasso Chrysochou</i>	
The Oslo Opera House – Condition Analysis and Proposal for Cleaning, Protection and Maintenance of Exterior Marble. . . . .	104
<i>Pagona-Noni Maravelaki, Lucia Toniolo, Francesca Gheraldi, Chrysi Kapridaki, and Ioannis Arabatzis</i>	
Modern Architecture and Cultural Heritage. . . . .	117
<i>Agnes Couvelas</i>	

**Cross-Discipline Earthquake Protection and Structural Assessment of Monuments**

Post-seismic Restoration Project of Basilica Churches in Kefallonia Island . . . 131  
*Themistoklis Vlahoulis, Apostolia Oikonomopoulou, Niki Salemi, and Mariliza Giarleli*

Investigation of the Structural Response of Masonry Structures. . . . . 143  
*Georgios A. Drosopoulos, Jan Phakwago, Maria E. Stavroulaki, and Georgios E. Stavroulakis*

The Timber-Roofed Basilicas of Troodos, Cyprus (15th–19th Cen.).  
 Constructional System, Anti-seismic Behaviour and Adaptability . . . . . 157  
*Marios Pelekanos*

Alternative Dome Reconstruction Method for Masonry Structures . . . . . 177  
*Argyris Fellas*

Cultural Heritage Structures Strengthened by Ties Under Seismic Sequences and Uncertain Input Parameters: A Computational Approach. . . . . 188  
*Angelos A. Liolios*

Masonry Compressive Strength Prediction Using Artificial Neural Networks . . . . . 200  
*Panagiotis G. Asteris, Ioannis Argyropoulos, Liborio Cavaleri, Hugo Rodrigues, Humberto Varum, Job Thomas, and Paulo B. Lourenço*

Nominal Life of Interventions for Monuments and Historic Structures . . . . . 225  
*Constantine C. Spyrakos and Charilaos A. Maniatakis*

**Cultural Heritage and Pilgrimage Tourism**

Restoration and Management of World Heritage Christian Cultural Sites: Problems of Religious Tourism – Challenges - Perspectives . . . . . 239  
*Alkiviadis Prepis*

On the Greatest Challenge in the Management of Living Religious Heritage: Linking the Authenticity of Heritage and the Authenticity of Tourist Experiences to the Authenticity of Religious Tradition . . . . . 262  
*Ioannis Poullos*

**Reuse, Circular Economy and Social Participation as a Leverage for the Sustainable Preservation and Management of Historic Cities**

Towards a New Heritage Financing Tool for Sustainable Development . . . . . 275  
*Bonnie Burnham*

Public Built Cultural Heritage Management: The Public-Private Partnership (P3) . . . . .	289
<i>Cristina Boniotti</i>	
A Programme for Sustainable Preservation of the Medieval City of Rhodes in the Circular Economy Based on the Renovation and Reuse of Listed Buildings . . . . .	299
<i>Antonia Moropoulou, Nikolaos Moropoulos, George Andriotakis, and Dimitrios Giannakopoulos</i>	
<b>Inception – Inclusive Cultural Heritage in Europe through 3D Semantic Modeling</b>	
Advanced 3D Survey and Modelling for Enhancement and Conservation of Cultural Heritage: The INCEPTION Project . . . . .	325
<i>Roberto Di Giulio, Federica Maietti, and Emanuele Piaia</i>	
INCEPTION: Web Cutting-Edge Technologies Meet Cultural Heritage . . . . .	336
<i>Ernesto Iadanza, Peter Bonsma, Iveta Bonsma, Anna Elisabetta Ziri, Federica Maietti, Marco Medici, Federico Ferrari, and Pedro Martín Leronés</i>	
Cultural Heritage Sites Holistic Documentation Through Semantic Web Technologies. . . . .	347
<i>Anna Elisabetta Ziri, Peter Bonsma, Iveta Bonsma, Ernesto Iadanza, Federica Maietti, Marco Medici, Federico Ferrari, and Pedro Martín Leronés</i>	
In Situ Advanced Diagnostics and Inspection by Non-destructive Techniques and UAV as Input to Numerical Model and Structural Analysis - Case Study . . . . .	359
<i>Vlatka Rajčić, Mislav Stepinac, and Jure Barbalić</i>	
Current and Potential Applications of AR/VR Technologies in Cultural Heritage. “INCEPTION Virtual Museum HAMH: A Use Case on BIM and AR/VR Modelling for the Historical Archive Museum of Hydra Greece” . . . . .	372
<i>Dimitrios Karadimas, Leonidas Somakos, Dimitrios Bakalbasis, Alexandros Prassas, Konstantina Adamopoulou, and George Karadimas</i>	
<b>Heritage at Risk</b>	
Reconstructing the Hellenistic Heritage: Chemical Processes, Devices and Products from Illustrated Greek Manuscripts—An Interdisciplinary Approach . . . . .	385
<i>Dimitrios Yfantis</i>	

<b>Glittering on the Wall: Gildings on Greek Post-Byzantine Wall Paintings. . . .</b>	<b>397</b>
<i>Georgios P. Mastrotheodoros, Dimitrios F. Anagnostopoulos, Konstantinos G. Beltsios, Eleni Filippaki, and Yannis Bassiakos</i>	
<b>Advanced and Non-Destructive Techniques for Diagnosis, Design and Monitoring</b>	
<b>Kinematic Analysis of Rock Instability in the Archaeological Site of Delphi Using Innovative Techniques . . . . .</b>	<b>407</b>
<i>Kyriaki Devlioti, Basile Christaras, Vasilios Marinos, Konstantinos Vouvalidis, and Nikolaos Giannakopoulos</i>	
<b>Monitoring and Mapping of Deterioration Products on Cultural Heritage Monuments Using Imaging and Laser Spectroscopy . . . . .</b>	<b>419</b>
<i>Kostas Hatzigiannakis, Kristalia Melessanaki, Aggelos Philippidis, Olga Kokkinaki, Eleni Kalokairinou, Panagiotis Siozos, Paraskevi Pouli, Elpida Politaki, Aggeliki Psaroudaki, Aristides Dokoumetzidis, Elissavet Katsaveli, Elissavet Kavoulaki, and Vassiliki Sithiakaki</i>	
<b>Radar Interferometer Application for Remote Deflection Measurements of a Slender Masonry Chimney. . . . .</b>	<b>430</b>
<i>Georgios Livitsanos, Antonella Saisi, Dimitrios G. Aggelis, and Carmelo Gentile</i>	
<b>Multispectral and Hyperspectral Studies on Greek Monuments, Archaeological Objects and Paintings on Different Substrates. Achievements and Limitations . . . . .</b>	<b>443</b>
<i>Athina Alexopoulou, Agathi Anhoula Kaminari, and Anna Moutsatsou</i>	
<b>Infrared Hyperspectral Spectroscopic Mapping Imaging from 800 to 5000 nm. A Step Forward in the Field of Infrared “Imaging” . . . . .</b>	<b>462</b>
<i>Stamatios Amanatiadis, Georgios Apostolidis, and Georgios Karagiannis</i>	
<b>Fusion of the Infrared Imaging and the Ultrasound Techniques to Enhance the Sub-surface Characterization . . . . .</b>	<b>472</b>
<i>Stamatios Amanatiadis, Georgios Apostolidis, and Georgios Karagiannis</i>	
<b>Moisture Climate Monitoring in Confined Spaces Using Percolation Sensors . . . . .</b>	<b>482</b>
<i>Helge Pfeiffer, Charlotte Van Steen, Els Verstrynge, and Martine Wevers</i>	
<b>Author Index . . . . .</b>	<b>495</b>





# Advanced 3D Survey and Modelling for Enhancement and Conservation of Cultural Heritage: The INCEPTION Project

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**Abstract.** Digital documentation technologies combined with innovative analytical techniques and digital tools can be an effective strategy supporting multidisciplinary documentation and modelling aimed at conservation, enhancement and preservation of Cultural Heritage. New technologies and digital devices should play an important innovative role to understand, access, enhance and preserve Cultural Heritage.

In this framework, the ongoing project INCEPTION *Inclusive Cultural Heritage in Europe through 3D semantic modelling* – funded by the European Commission within the Programme Horizon 2020 – proposes a workflow aimed at the achievements of efficient 3D digitization methods, post-processing tools for an enriched semantic modelling, web-based solutions and applications to ensure a wide access to experts and non-experts. The implementation of data collection processes and the development of semantically enriched 3D models is an effective way to enhance the dialogue between ICT technologies, different Cultural Heritage users and different disciplines, both social and technical.

Moreover, INCEPTION deals with complex heritage architectures and sites; in order to manage this complexity, a common protocol for data capturing has been developed, considering the uniqueness of each heritage site, accuracy and reliability, additional data and semantic proprieties to be recorded for different heritage applications.

**Keywords:** Heritage digital documentation · Advanced data capturing · Semantic modelling · Inclusive accessibility · Enhancement · Conservation

## 1 Introduction

Cultural Heritage conservation is more and more linked to the opportunities of documentation, condition assessment, monitoring and predictive analysis by means of non-destructive procedures. Protection, conservation and sustainable maintenance of Cultural Heritage is one of the Europe's priority to preserve our common assets to future generation, to foster social cohesion, to reinforce a sense of belonging to a common European space and to support job creation and economic growth.

Heritage management is a strong interdisciplinary field and many actors are involved in the complex process that, from the documentation up to the restoration, leads to the preservation, enhancement and sustainable exploitation of assets.

In this framework, the European Commission supports more and more several challenges related to different fields of Cultural Heritage toward a European common identity, transnational dialogue and understanding.

Moreover, the increasingly widespread use of different diagnostic methodologies and three-dimensional survey devices opens new scenarios within the non-destructive assessment and characterization of structures and materials, toward an overall and holistic digital documentation of cultural heritage [1].



**Fig. 1.** INCEPTION “corporate” image. 3D digitization methods, post-processing tools for an enriched semantic modelling, web-based solutions and applications to ensure a wide access to experts and non-experts are the core of the project.

As stated during the Innovation & Cultural Heritage Conference, held on 20 March 2018 in Brussels [2], the future European research on cultural heritage needs a holistic and critical research agenda and an inclusive interdisciplinary approach. One of the key questions is how to best use the opportunities provided by digitalization in the valorization of cultural heritage. Several presentations, based on ongoing Horizon 2020 funded projects, showed the manifold advances of digitalization for conservation, presentation and consumption of heritage. “Digitalization can be an effective instrument of democratization of cultural heritage as it opens new forms of access, e.g. by allowing entrance to previously closed heritage places or museum collections, or by allowing memberships in heritage communities without physical presence in a locality. [...] More research is needed concerning the use of digital heritage by the different social, cultural and professional groups, which takes into consideration the social

effects of virtual realities and the visibility of actorship in the processes related to cultural heritage practices” [3].

Advanced 3D documentation identifying different layers of data to be recorded for heritage knowledge, enhancement and conservation is one of the main outcomes of the European Project “INCEPTION - Inclusive Cultural Heritage in Europe through 3D semantic modelling” (Fig. 1), funded by the European Commission under the Programme Horizon 2020 and started in 2015. The project proposes the enhancement of efficiency in 3D data capturing procedures and devices, especially dealing with complex heritage “spaces”: cultural heritage sites, historical architectures, archaeological sites characterized by non-conventional features, location and geometries [4] (Fig. 2).



**Fig. 2.** Integrated digital documentation of complex heritage buildings. The example of Palazzo del Podestà in Mantua (DIAPReM Centre).

The overall project workflow is developed starting from requirements, integrated data capturing and holistic heritage documentation, the semantic enrichment via 3D modelling in H-BIM environment, and the models deployment and valorization through the INCEPTION platform. Indeed, the main innovations under INCEPTION will be delivered through an open standard platform to collect, implement and share digital models. Platform interface and functionalities will allow users to download and upload models, work with H-BIM models with different level of details, enrich contents and information linked to geometric models in an interoperable way and explore a wide range of data and contents.

The project has the ambition to strongly support the development of a pan-European approach to data usage for decision making related to conservation and preventive interventions and for supporting site management and sustainable exploitation of assets by integrating new methods for condition assessment survey of Cultural Heritage based on predictive analysis (diagnostic, conservative, morphometric) and non-destructive procedures.

## 2 The INCEPTION Project Overall Vision

INCEPTION aims to develop new tools for the interoperability and the inclusive sharing of three-dimensional heritage models towards new forms of access and awareness of the European cultural heritage. In the middle of the fourth and last year of activity, the project is working on models deployment and widespread sharing, starting from a methodological and technical advancement in 3D data capturing and holistic digital documentation [5].

The project consists of five main actions:

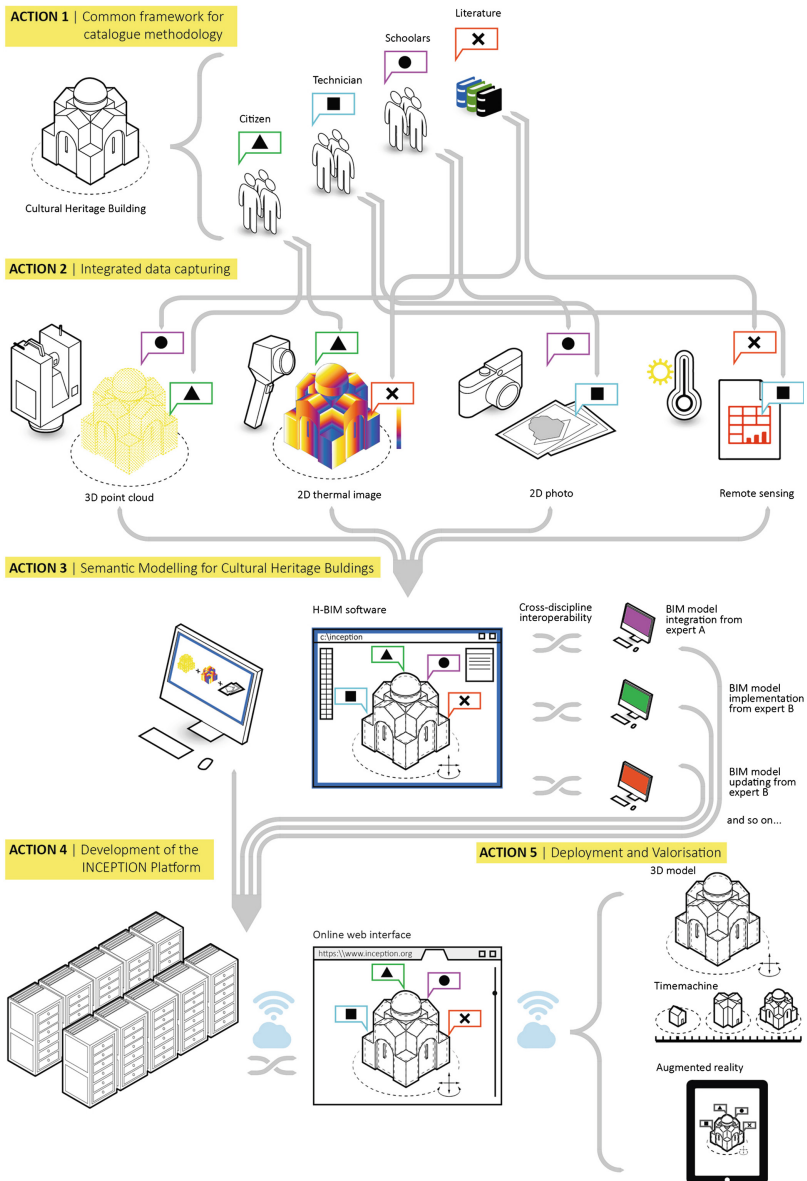
- the definition of a common framework for catalogue methodology, by mapping the stakeholder' knowledge demands;
- the development of an advanced integrated 3D data capturing;
- the identification of the Cultural Heritage buildings semantic ontology and data structure for information catalogue and modelling in Heritage-BIM environment, based on Open BIM standard;
- the implementation of the INCEPTION Semantic Web Platform. Deployment and valorization of 3D heritage models, to enable the sharing and enrichment of the information and interpretation of the models by users.

### 2.1 Project Workflow

The overall project workflow is developed starting from requirements (according to specific users and needs, what kind of data and information can be collected and managed by a 3D model), the integrated data capturing and holistic heritage documentation. Semantic modelling for Cultural Heritage buildings in H-BIM environment and the development of the INCEPTION platform for deployment and valorization of enriched 3D models will allow accomplishing the main objectives of accessing, understanding and strengthening European Cultural Heritage [6].

According to the abovementioned workflow, the H-BIM modelling procedure starts with a depth analysis of user needs (considering both expert and non-expert users). The identification of the Cultural Heritage buildings semantic ontology and data structure for information catalogue will allow the integration of semantic attributes with hierarchically and mutually aggregated 3D digital geometric models for management of heritage information. The development of the INCEPTION platform is the key-targeted achievement of the overall project, in order to accomplish the main objectives of accessing, understanding and strengthening European cultural heritage by means of enriched 3D models. The main aim of the platform is to innovate 3D models “forever”,

“for everybody”, “from everywhere”, by developing, collecting and sharing interoperable 3D semantic models (Fig. 3).



**Fig. 3.** Schema of the overall INCEPTION workflow, from the mapping of requirements and holistic documentation up to the semantic modelling and model sharing through the INCEPTION platform.

In the cloud-based platform, the main input is a BIM model of a Heritage building or site. All the BIM models are uploaded in the platform as IFC (Industry Foundation Class) standard files, in order to allow the access regardless of the software used to generate the BIM model. The IFC file is then processed by means of several server-side custom Windows services, extracting all the semantic information and generating Resource Description Framework (RDF) triples, according to the INCEPTION H-BIM ontology, serialized as Turtle (TTL) files. All these triples are stored in a semantic triple store, accessed via HTTP through a dedicated Apache Fuseki SPARQL server. The platform provides the user with the possibility of enriching the models with new semantic metadata, new data and attachments related to the whole CH site or to a specific geometrical element.

Therefore, semantic H-BIM models uploaded on the platform will allow users to interact with the models; thus, not only “to access” and “to understand” the models, but also to be stimulated “to give the users’ perceptual responses to the models” through multi-layered information and documentation systems eligible for spatial and multi-criteria queries in a virtual 3D environment [7]. The end-users will be able to access information utilizing a standard browser, and they will be able to query the database using keywords and an easy search method.

This could be particularly relevant to foster the use of 3D models for diagnostic procedures and as a very efficient assessment and decision-making tool. Digital data can be used to manage dimensional analysis of the buildings or sites [8], typological analysis, technological analysis and material assessment to assess the current condition (typical materials and structures and their damage) and state of conservation, technical solutions for preservation and overall maintenance planning.

The INCEPTION platform offers the opportunity to manage contents such as single elements of a building to visualize different historic phases, stored data of previous interventions and links with external databases to increase the quality of reliable information. The possibility to share and make available documents linked to the geometric 3D model and the capacity to download 3D models with different scales of detail are very relevant tools supporting diagnostic procedures [9].

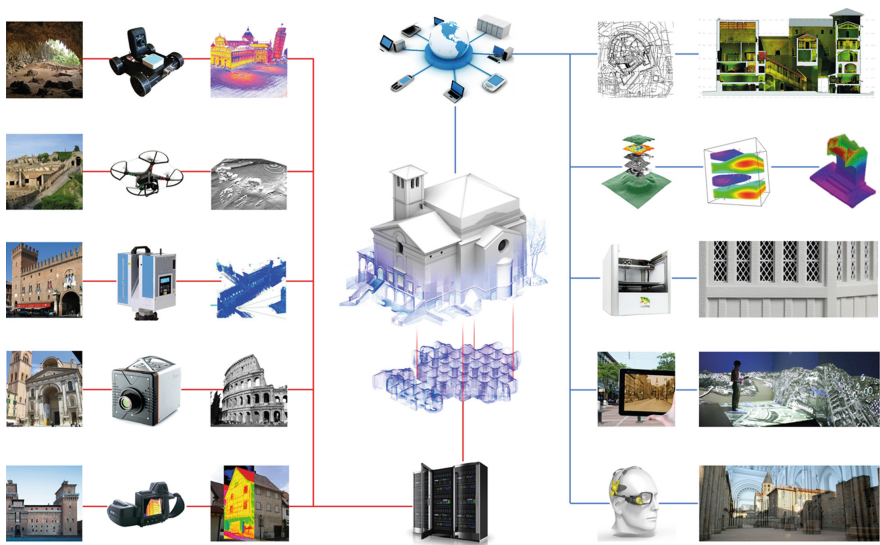
### **3 Integrated 3D Survey and Holistic Documentation**

Methods and processes for data collection are continuously developing and today are characterized by an effective interdisciplinary. Skills on 3D laser scanner survey, diagnostic procedures and historical researches, as well as environmental condition assessment or management of metric and dimensional data support the vision of integrated digital documentation for cultural heritage assessment [10]. The INCEPTION’s approach is focused on the 3D data capturing and modelling of heritage buildings and sites, through digital representation of the shape, appearance and conservation condition, in addition to a set of semantic information able to enrich research and deployment applications. The project is developing new research avenues in the field of heritage 3D data acquisition and modelling in order to guide the process of digitization of cultural heritage and innovation strategies to the three-dimensional modelling.

Advancement of 3D data capturing under INCEPTION starts from a primary concept: the 3D survey of complex heritage architectural spaces needs a common protocol for data capturing considering the uniqueness of each site, quality indicators, time-consumption, cost-effectiveness, data accuracy and reliability, additional data and semantic proprieties to be recorded for heritage applications, adaptability to different sites with different historical phases.

The architectural space becomes the foundations, the common core and the “connection” for the creation of a protocol for optimizing the 3D documentation of cultural heritage. The methodology set as a priority the unconventional features/geometries, unique and complex within Heritage, avoiding the “segmentation” of data acquired and facilitating data access and use through an inclusive approach [11].

The integration of digital data and the possibilities of re-use digital resources is an important challenge for protection and conservation of the historic buildings as well as for an efficient management in the long term [12] (Fig. 4).



**Fig. 4.** From the left: integrated data capturing through the data acquisition protocol, advancement in 3D models processing in BIM environment and model sharing.

The data acquisition protocol has been developed within a more general methodological procedure of heritage documentation: integrated digital documentation under INCEPTION is carried out through a holistic approach. Through the 3D digitization of a monument, various aspects of recording concerning diagnostics (building material and decay patterns), construction and architectural documentation, new digital content management may be achieved. In this context, interdisciplinary approach means that the advantages and the output of every method applied to a monument, can lead to the

3D modelling approach, improving an inclusive understanding of European cultural identity and diversity [13].

### 3.1 The INCEPTION Data Acquisition Protocol

In order to face the main challenges related to 3D survey of complex architectures and to start solving the issue of the large amount of captured data and time-consuming processes in the production of 3D digital models, an Optimized Data Acquisition Protocol (DAP) has been set up. The purpose is to guide the processes of digitization of cultural heritage, respecting needs, requirements and specificities of cultural assets.

The DAP provides a workflow for a consistent development of survey procedures for tangible cultural heritage and define a common background for the use of H-BIM across multiple building types and for a wide range of technical users. Furthermore, this protocol will be useful for any agency, organization or other institution that may be interested in utilizing survey procedures aimed at 3D H-BIM semantic models creation and their implementation for the INCEPTION platform.

The DAP is intended to ensure uniformity in 3D digital survey for all the buildings that will be part of INCEPTION platform, considering a wide range of 3D data capturing instruments [14] because of multiple users and different techniques related to specific disciplines. 3D survey instruments and techniques continue to evolve, and this protocol will continue to be reviewed and updated to reflect advances in industry technology, methodology and trends; in every case, the protocol application will ensure data homogenization between surveys tailored to different requirements.

The survey workflow is split into eight main steps that define specific requirements and their related activity indicators: Scan Plan, Health and safety, Resolution Requirements, Registration mode, Control network, Quality control, Data control and verification, Data storage and archive. Each step of the workflow becomes a measuring system to verify the requirements of the survey, and the ability of finding the right answer define the level quality [15]. Every single step becomes an activity indicator that contributes to get a specific evaluation ranking. Four incremental evaluation categories have been defined (B, A, A+, A++).

“B” is the minimum evaluation category to be compliant with the INCEPTION Platform. It’s intended to be used for very simple buildings or for the creation of low-detailed BIM model for digital reconstruction aimed at VR, AR and visualization purposes. In this case, the metric value of the model is less important than the morphological value.

“A” is the evaluation category suitable for documentation purposes where the metric and morphological values are equivalent in term of impact on the survey that needs to be preliminary scheduled and designed. The registration process of 3D captured data cannot be based only on morphological method but it should be improved by a topographic control network or GPS data.

“A+” is the most suitable for preservation purposes because only the surveys compliant with this category could be a useful tool for restoration projects that need extremely correct metric data. From these surveys, BIM models as well as 2D CAD drawings until 1:20 scale are available. The project phase gets more importance than previous categories in order to schedule and manage the survey campaign and choose



the right technical instruments to perform the data capturing. The management and the correction of metric errors are based on topographic techniques, in particular for what could concern the registration of different scan. The documentation phase will be developed organizing the information into Metadata and Paradata. Elements of quality control are integrated into the process.

“A++” is suitable for very complex buildings where the capturing process need to be documented and traced in order to get the maximum control on data or when monitoring process developed in a non-continuous time span take place. This category could be useful even if different teams of technicians work together, simultaneously or in sequence, with different capturing instruments and different accuracies. The A++ category allows analyzing how a survey has been performed in every single phase: moreover, this capability allows integrating a survey in different times.

## 4 Conclusions

“Heritage information – the activity and products of recording, documenting, and managing the information of cultural heritage places – should be not only an integral part of every conservation project but also an activity that continues long after the intervention is completed. It is the basis for the monitoring, management, and routine maintenance of a site and provides a way to transmit knowledge about heritage places to future generations” [16].

The possibility to achieve interoperable models able to enrich the interdisciplinary knowledge of European cultural identity is one of the main outcomes of INCEPTION. The implementation of data collection processes and the development of semantically enriched 3D models is an effective way to enhance the dialogue between ICT technologies, different Cultural Heritage experts, users and different disciplines, both social and technical.

Collecting information to preventive conservation, monitoring and maintenance of European cultural historical heritage is undeniably connected with the use of methods, tools and techniques that in recent years have become technologically advanced and widespread. The technological evolution of survey systems represents an important innovation to manage three-dimensional databases [17]. The integration of other non-destructive procedures as thermal imaging, intensity value, integrated sensors, spectrophotometry, sonic surveys, etc. allows the collection and integration of other important digital data. These databases are geometric archives that can be used for research goals and for preservation, restoration and protection of cultural heritage.

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The clustering of small medium enterprises includes DEMO Consultants BV (The Netherlands), 3L Architects (Germany), Nemoris (Italy), RDF (Bulgaria), 13BIS Consulting (France), Z + F (Germany), Vision and Business Consultants (Greece).

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