

Introduction to heritage interpretation

14 November 2024



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Heritage interpretation

- ...as a profession is rooted in the mid-20th century in the US National Park Service.
- ...is the oldest and most widely used approach to non-formal learning around heritage sites.
- ...is represented by national and international institutions including UNESCO and taught up to university level.



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Heritage interpretation



includes
personal
services



and
non-personal
services



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A fresh look at heritage interpretation

“ The duty related to education through value-based heritage interpretation should form the core mandate of the Visitor Centres in UNESCO designated sites and inspire their activities.

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2020) The role of visitor centres in UNESCO designated sites – Report of the Second Regional Workshop for Europe. Venice: UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe, 29



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UNESCO World Heritage Site
Yosemite National Park, USA
Glacier Point Trailside Museum



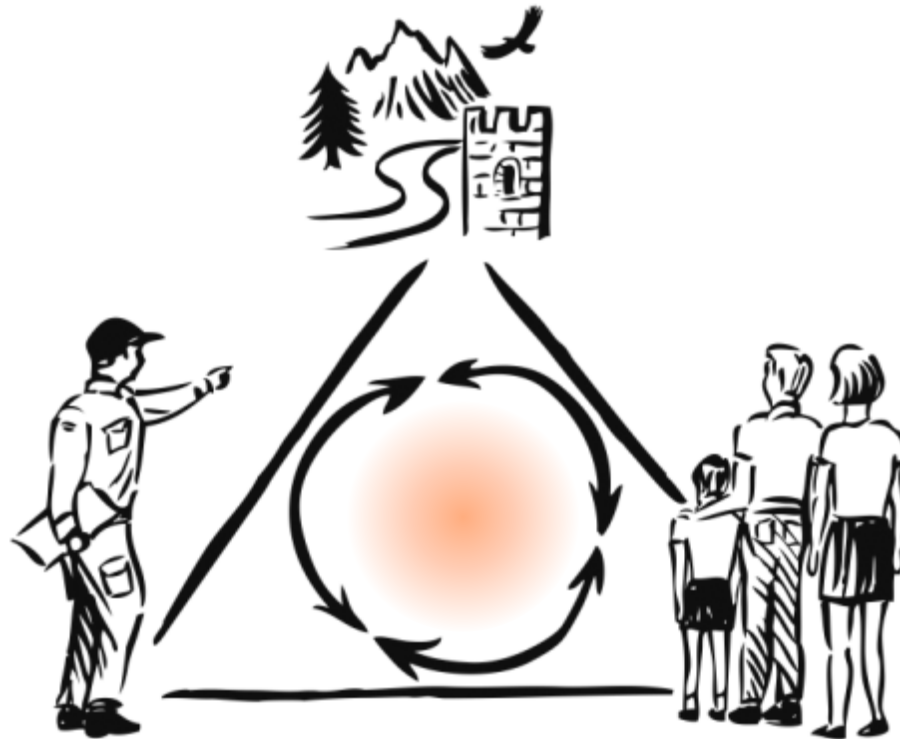
Heritage interpretation

...helps people
make heritage,
more meaningful
to them.



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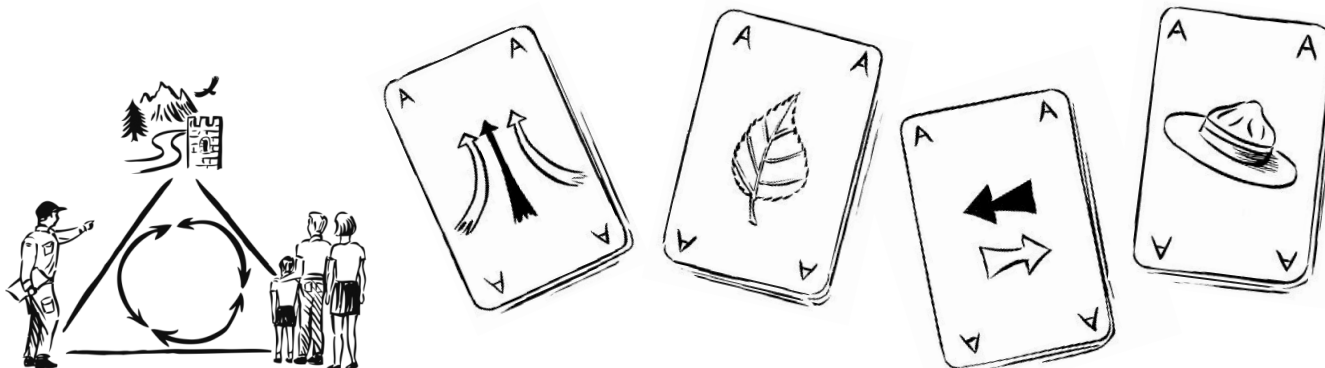
The interpretive triangle



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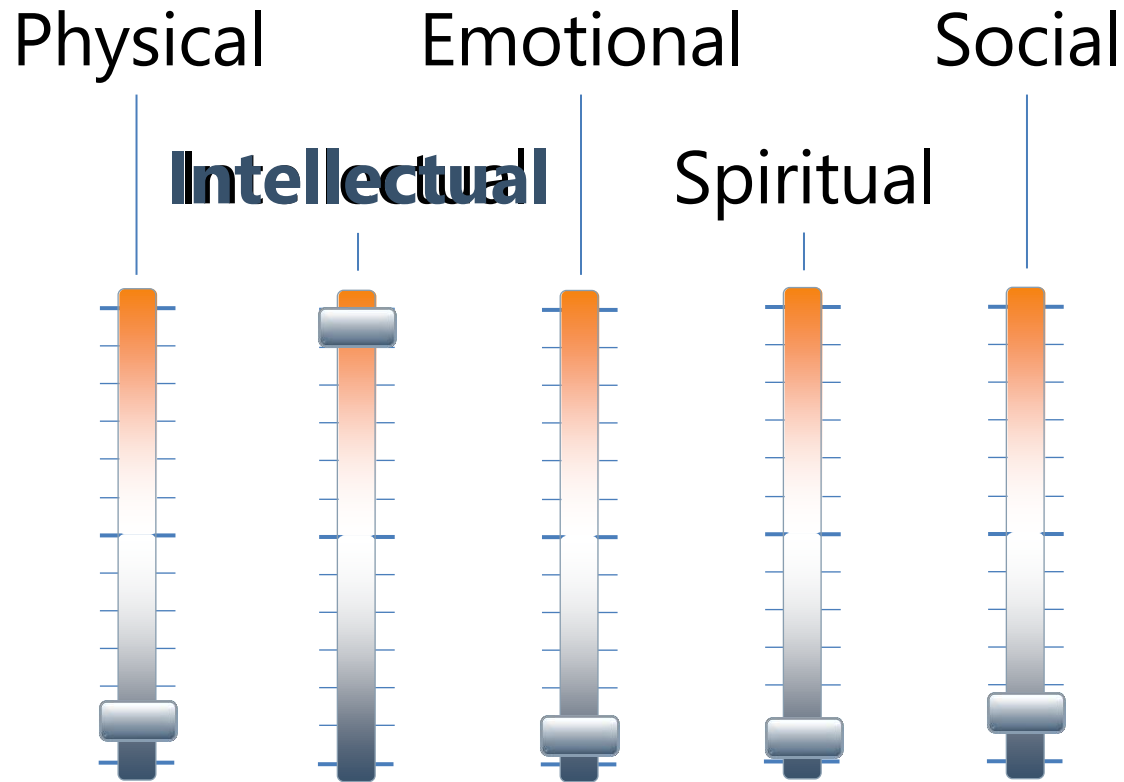
The interpretive triangle

- Turning phenomena into **experiences**
- Provoking resonance and **participation**
- Offering paths to deeper **meaning**
- Fostering **stewardship** for all heritage



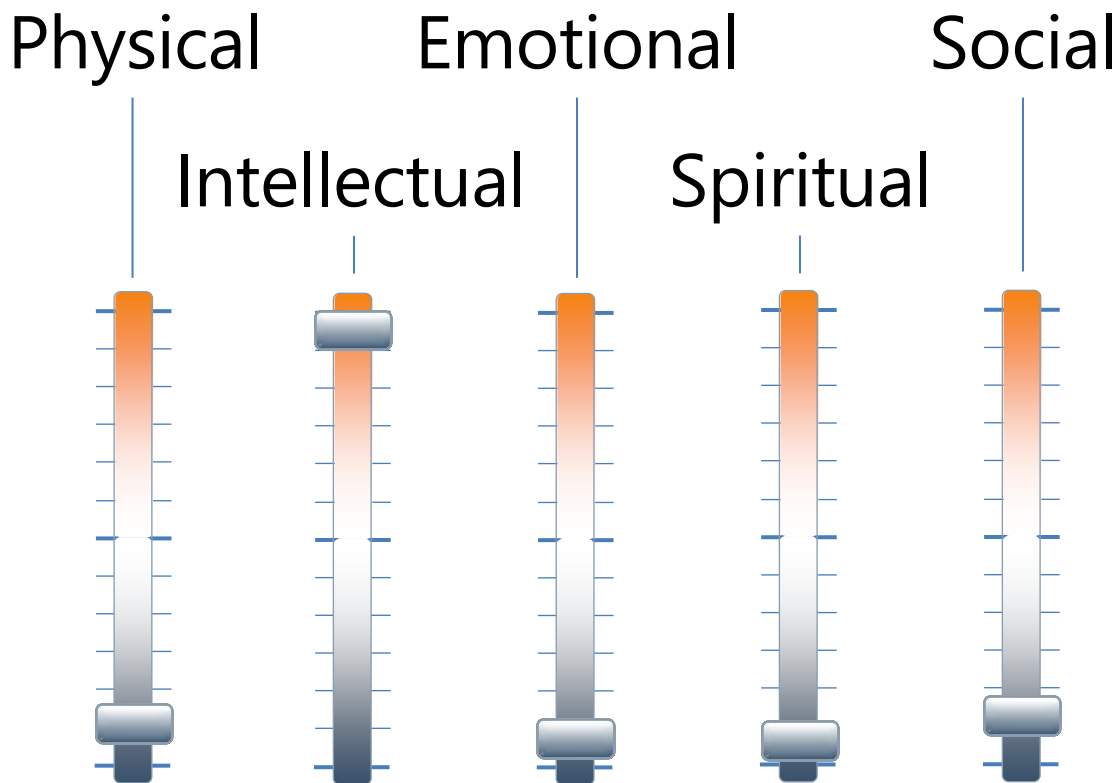
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Initiating whole interpretive experiences



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Initiating whole interpretive experiences



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Initiating whole interpretive experiences

- Look for one minute at the following picture.
- As interpreters, how would you encourage people to experience this site physically, intellectually, emotionally, spiritually and socially?
- Share your thoughts in the chatbox, or orally.



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Physically?
Intellectually?
Emotionally?
Spiritually?
Socially?

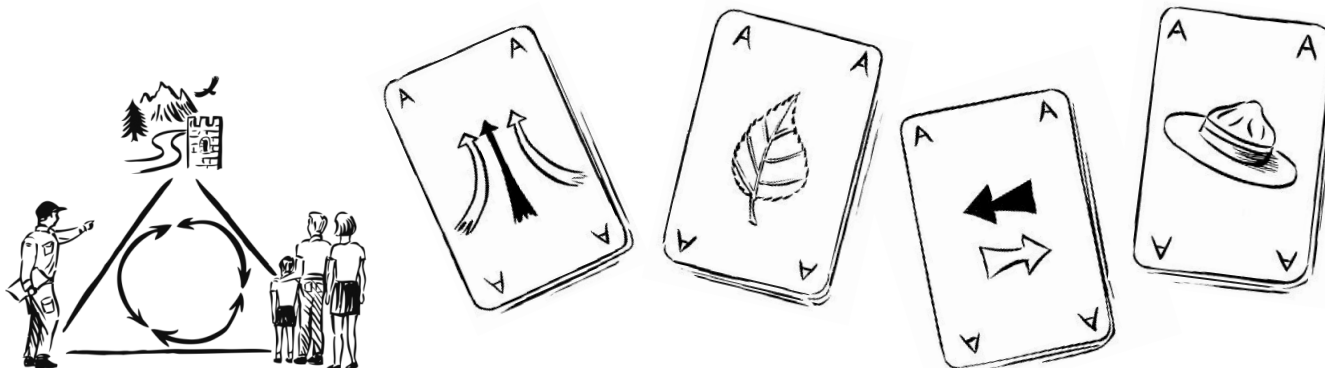
Giardino di Ninfa, Italy



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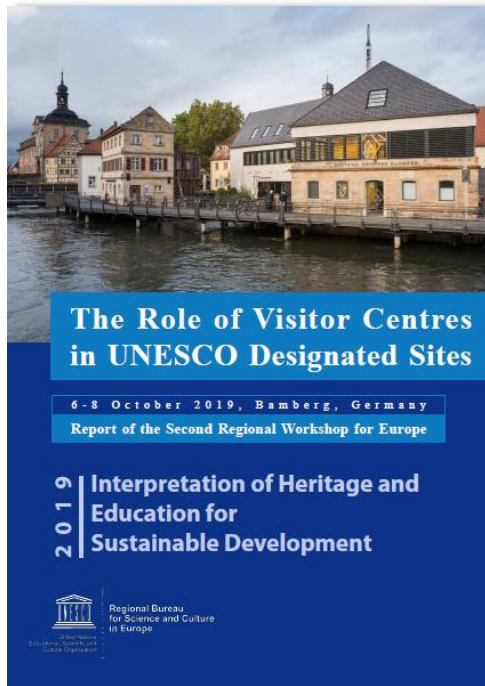
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A fresh look at heritage interpretation



UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2020)
The role of visitor centres in UNESCO designated sites –
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Science and Culture in Europe



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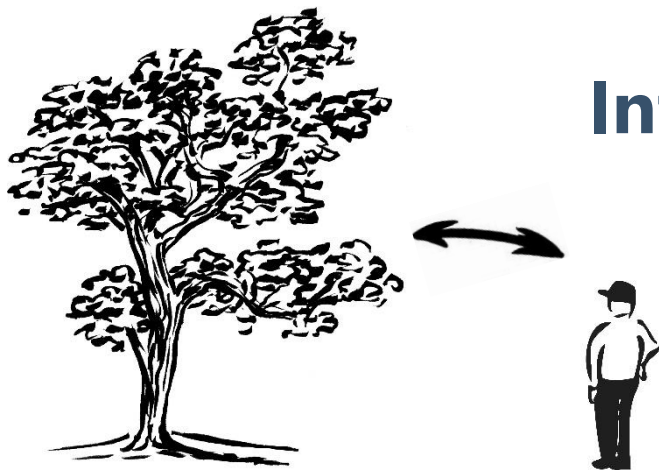
Rethinking our roles

“ I’ll interpret [...] to get as near to the heart of the world as I can.

Wolfe, L. (1978) The Life of John Muir.
Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 144



John Muir
1871



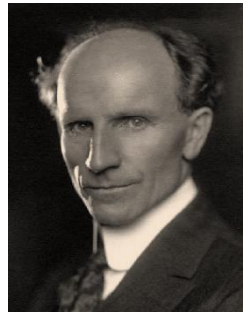
Interpretation



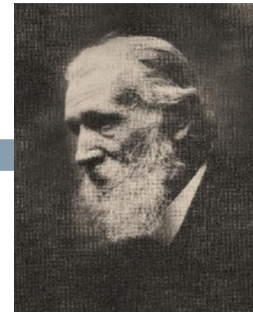
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Rethinking our roles

Trail School



Enos Mills
1902

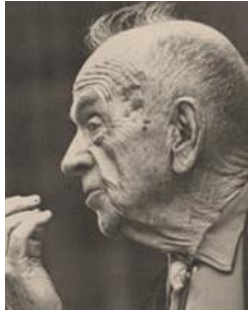


John Muir
1871

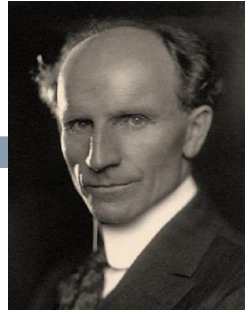


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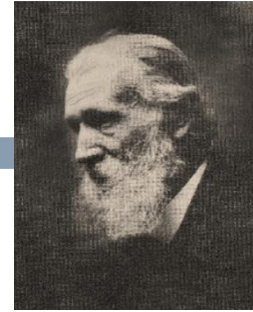
Rethinking our roles



Freeman Tilden
1957



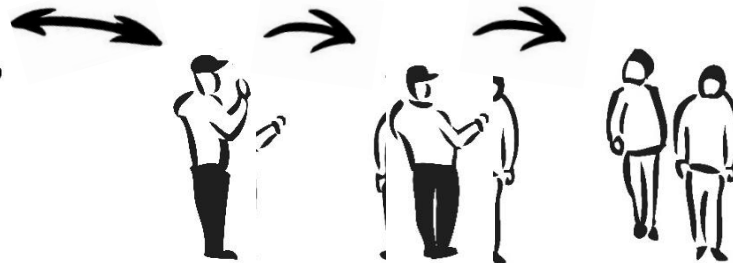
Enos Mills
1902



John Muir
1871

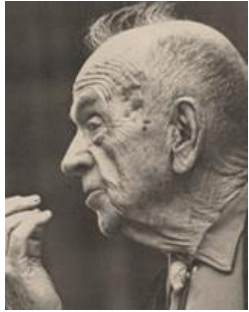


Communicating interpretation

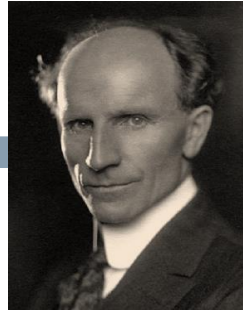


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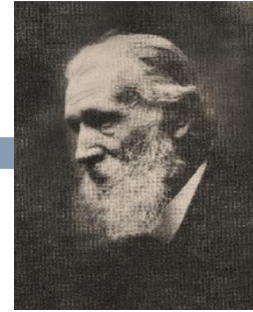
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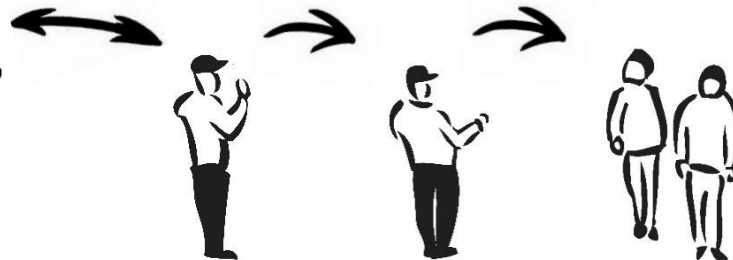
Enos Mills
1902



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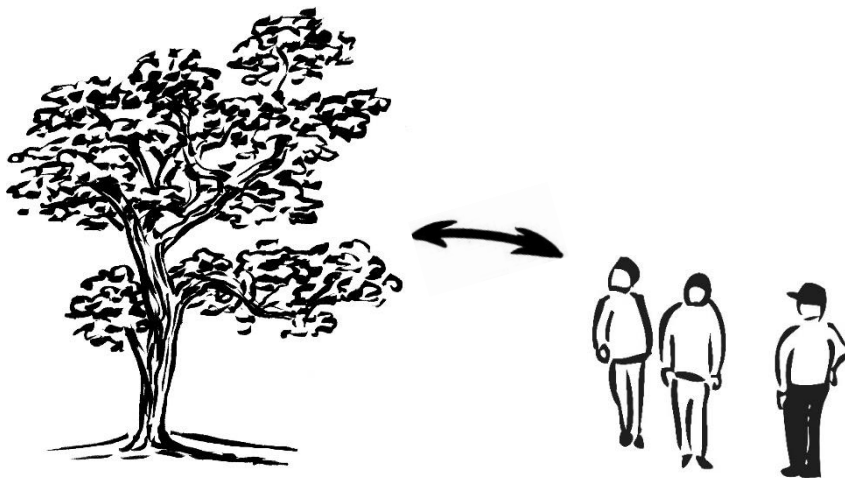
Communicating interpretation



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Rethinking our roles

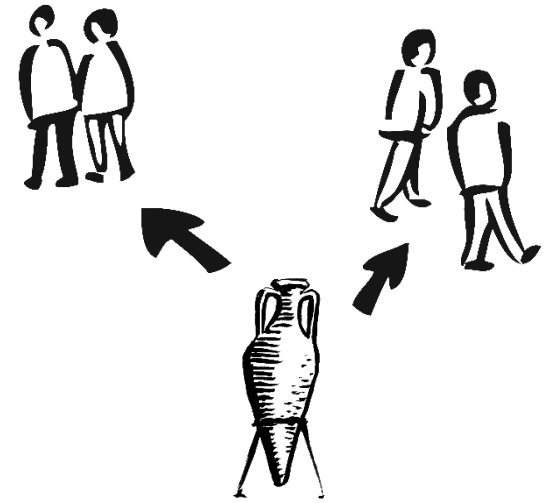
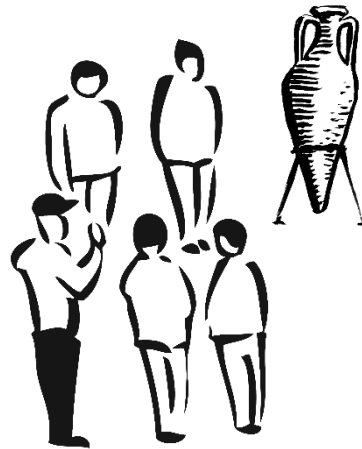
More encouraging people to interpret, and supporting this **interpretation by the people**



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Rethinking our roles

Interpretation



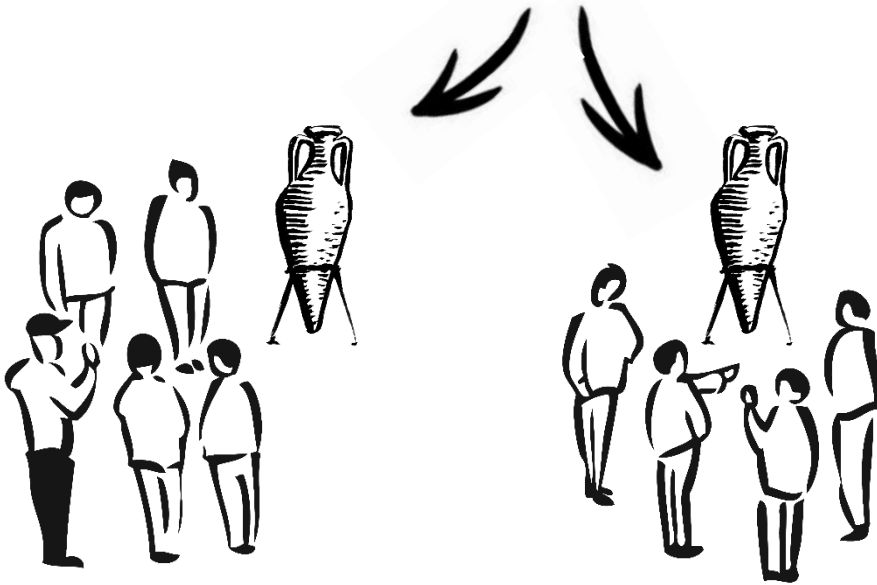
Time span for whole interpretive experiences



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Rethinking our roles

Interpretation



Facilitating the
exchange
on site

Time span for whole interpretive experiences



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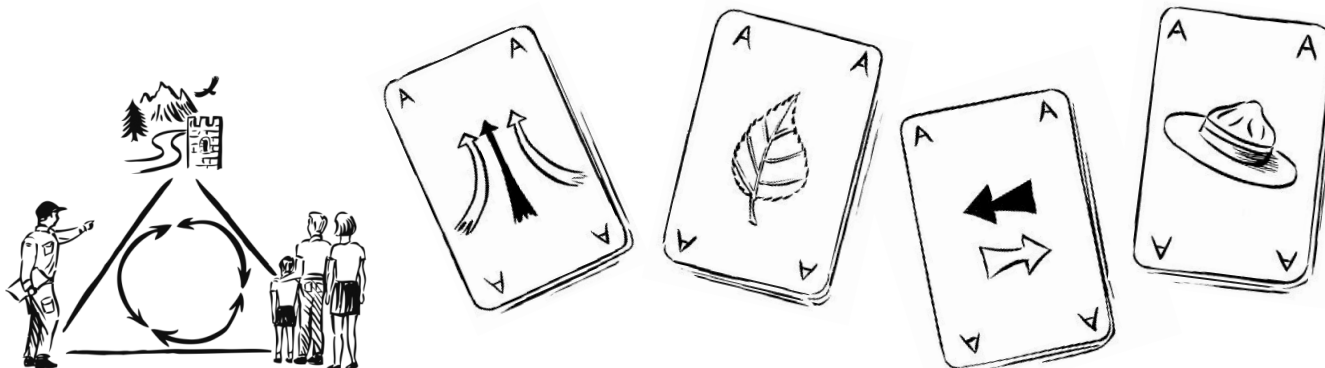
Rethinking our roles



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The interpretive triangle

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A fresh look at heritage interpretation



Interpret Europe (2017)
Engaging citizens with Europe's cultural heritage.
Witzenhausen: Interpret Europe

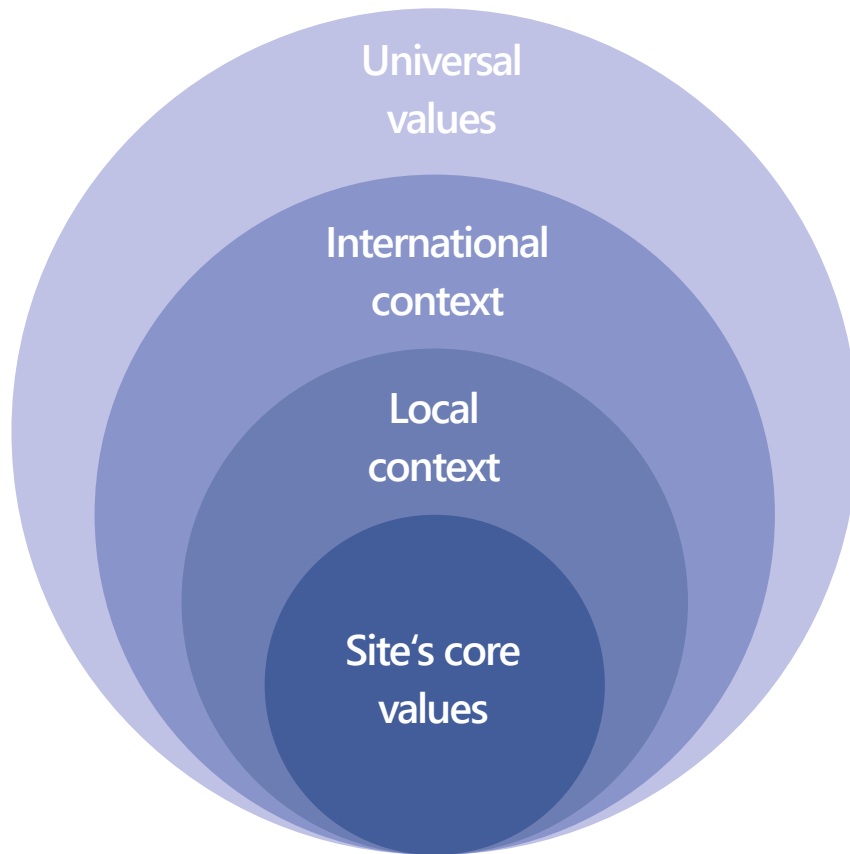


**Altiero Spinelli Prize
2017**



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Our heritage sites are part of a larger picture

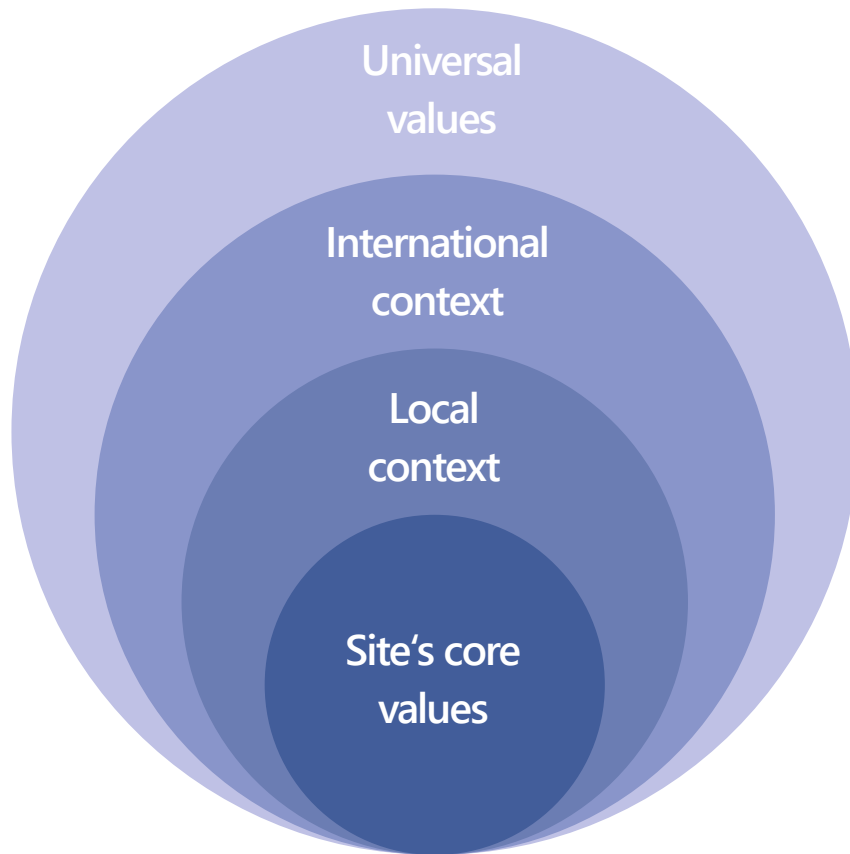


Modified version based on:
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Venice: UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe, 22



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Our heritage sites are part of a larger picture



Can interpretation help to bring these together?



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Which concepts could you relate to the sites?

Science

Health

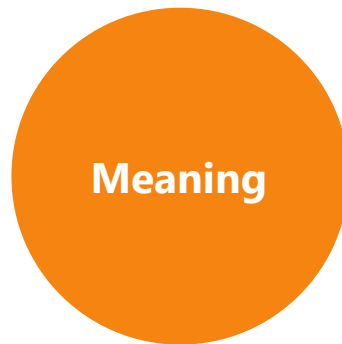
Pleasure

Justice

Peace

Freedom

Sustainability



Cathedral Square

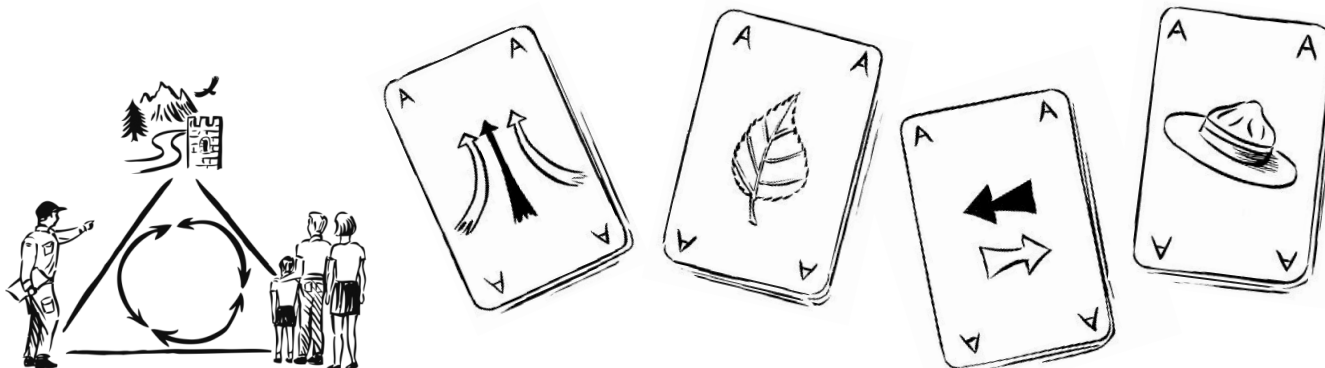
Vilnius University



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Fostering stewardship for all heritage

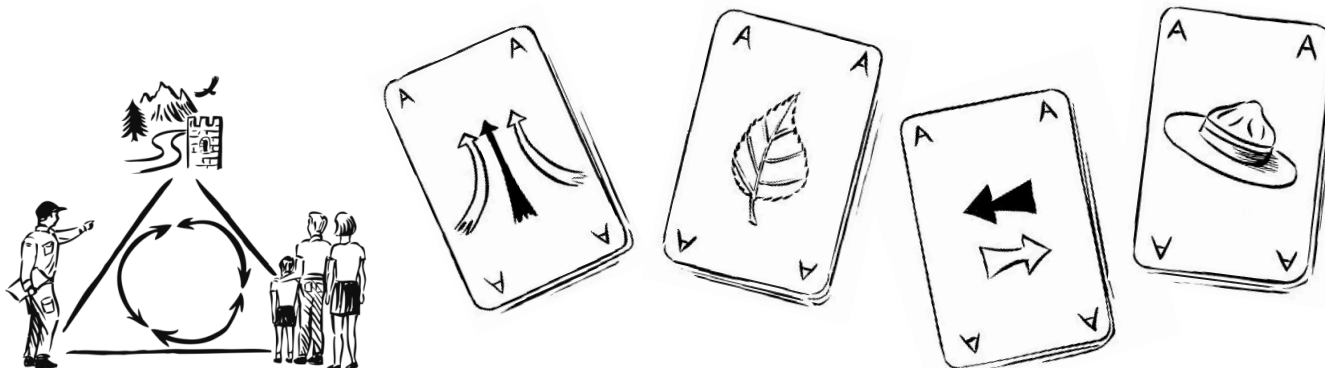
- Inspire people about this site and then...
- Reveal the bigger picture:
 - Link the 'present' with the past and future
 - Present 'this site' as part of humanity's history and/or of our natural environment
- Provoke empathy for different perspectives
- Trigger critical thinking about stereotypes



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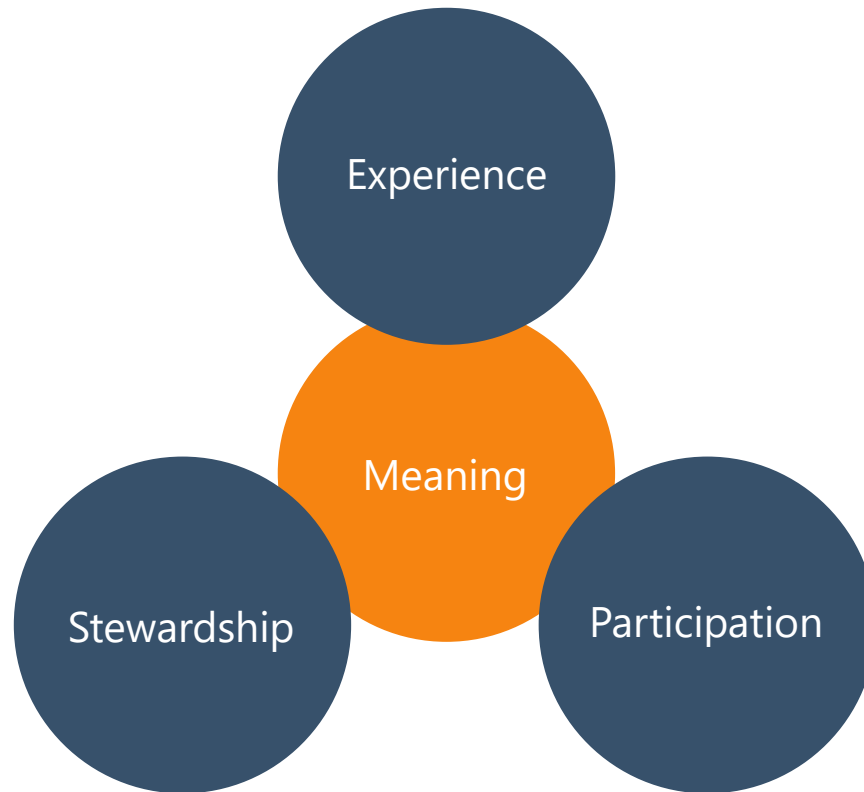
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The interpretive triangle



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Interpret Europe

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL interpret-europe.net/material/. The page features the Interpret Europe logo (European Association for Heritage Interpretation) and navigation links for 'Interpret Europe', 'What do we do?', 'Heritage interpretation', 'Join', and 'Members' area'. A large orange banner at the top of the page reads 'Material'. Below this, the page is organized into sections: 'Selected downloads' and 'General Interpret Europe papers', which lists several documents such as 'Running a conference online (2020)', 'Fostering communities through heritage interpretation (2020)', and 'Guidelines: Engaging your visitors - Spanish (2017)'. A second section, 'Event proceedings', lists 'Web conference (2021)'. The browser's taskbar at the bottom shows various application icons and system information like the date '20/1/2022' and time '1:29 μμ'.

<https://interpret-europe.net/material/>



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Thank you

office@interpret-europe-net

Picture credits:

Ludwig (3, 13), Mills (centre: 23-25),
Rutt (drawings 5-8, 22-28, 34), Sierra Club (4, right: 22-25),
US National Park Service (left: 24-25), Wearsunscreen (5)



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