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Foreword: The tentacles of interpretation

by Michael H Glen HFAHI, FSA SCOT, FTS
Chair, Supervisory Committee, Interpret Europe

Let me start with what might appear as a paragraph of digression.

The Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) system for libraries is a sophisticated but minimalist means of arranging the universe of knowledge and endeavour in a tidy – and accessible – fashion. It is, as our US friends would say, 'neat'. It is philosophically simple and yet it masks a complex process of understanding – of understanding itself, of 'connections', of relationships and of inter-relationships. It's a superb information-sorter; it might even be called 'cool'.

When I looked at the topics encompassed by the papers in this first of Interpret Europe's *Conference Proceedings* – and they are a self-selected sample of the many papers we have enjoyed at our first three conferences – I was struck by three things. The first is the range of intangible and tangible topics represented, the second is the diversity of locations discussed and the third the spread of origin of the authors. Come to any of our conferences and you will experience this roller-coaster ride over, around, under, above and through theory and practice, geography and subject matter, philosophy and experience. It would be interesting to use DDC to classify the heterogeneous (and yet also homogeneous) elements of the event.

It is this miscellany that makes interpretation such an all-consuming and immensely satisfying profession for those of us who are involved in it. No one topic exists without links to another, no practical activities are without their theoretical support, no approaches without the underlying philosophy that guides them. If DDC helps us to be tidy in our intellectual explorations, interpretation guides us into being apparently untidy in our practical presentations, by establishing relationships across logical boundaries, by offering valuable digressions and by widening horizons beyond our expectations.

I think that Mr Tilden, whose wisdom transcends time, would be greatly pleased – and more than satisfied – to see that his six principles work just as well today as they did 60 years ago. He must have been familiar with systems of classifying information and his second principle is relevant in that context:

> 'Information, as such, is not interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based upon information. But they are entirely different things. However, all interpretation includes information'.

Information, properly-organised, is of course the essential starting point for interpretation; interpretation cannot succeed if the knowledge-base is hazy or muddled or inadequate. It is the use of that tidily-organised information in an imaginative, creative and inspirational way, provoking not instructing, presenting a whole rather than a part and relating to its audience, which empowers the art of interpretation to bring about revelation.

This is a philosophy that we in Interpret Europe, and our fellow-professionals across the world, believe in, follow and promote for the greater good of everyone who passes, visits, experiences or just stumbles upon what we call *heritage* – our shared (and occasionally contested) inheritance of 'tangibles and intangibles', things we see and things we feel from the continuing past.

You will see this belief underpinning the papers in these *Proceedings*. The papers reveal ideas, philosophies and concepts; they explore locations, activities and people; they add to our understanding of heritage interpretation as a technique and as a profession; and they affirm the importance of 'great explanations' which is what all good interpretation offers.

We are very grateful to all the authors for their papers which launch Interpret Europe's series of *Conference Proceedings*.

Perth, Scotland, April 2014

The future and potential of interpretation in the context of EU policy:
Itineraries as an interpretative product for a quality tourism

by Francesca Conti

Abstract

Digital technologies and a new attitude to consumers are changing the scenarios in tourism destinations. Itineraries (tours, road, trails) are the prominent tourism products based on experience. A tourist guide or an interpreter could be a facilitator that leads visitors to understand the places, to experience and to share emotions. The paper presents a project in Sicily on a contemporary art trail in nature and the methodology used to develop it. It discusses an important role of a tourist guide in facilitating an experience and telling an original and unconventional story about the places.

Due to the increasing dialogue between producers and consumers, supported by ITC technologies and, in the near future, enhanced by possible mobile applications, tourism and tourists are changing and the traditional way in which tourism produces and delivers its products is already undergoing major changes.

Tourist and interpretive guides should represent the qualitative human experience and provide a guarantee of good quality service, instead of something just simply added; to be a facilitator for the comprehension of local identity, history and contemporary life. While the need for a facilitator (such as the tour operator) is decreasing, the need and the demand for tools for qualitative comprehension, entertainment and learning increases, and the tourist guide can represent the reference point on site for the local experience. When information is available on different forms of support, on site, as well through augmented reality and many different other possibilities, the environmental interpreter is finally able to do his work on the emotional side of communication as a key for in depth comprehension. Often the interpreter does not have the desired profile.

The ideal environmental interpreter should be skilled in arts, on information technologies, be friendly with media communication, and be an artist of the human touch. On these main skills national and international associations should work with enhanced effort.

We, as ACTA - Cultural, Tourism and Environment Association, on the basis of our experience are trying to plan some key actions so that these major changes can be understood by tourism stakeholders, local administration, and tourism guides. Itineraries (tour, road, track, or whatever else) are the main tourism products of the future based on experience and the guide is its main facilitator, a “Virgilio” that could lead us to understand; to live emotions and to share.

We started to study ‘how to design an itinerary’ as a tourism product in the 2000s, with the Plan for Cultural Tourism in Lombardy, followed by Arte Pollino project in Basilicata Region in 2008 and in Sicily with the Tour of Fiumara d’Arte, a contemporary landscape art experience.

All the projects contributed to some elements and now we can count on having a more comprehensive design for our model scenario, from the concept to the market. In this model, interpretation plays a key role.

The case: Tour of Art Fiumara, Sicily, Italy

Elements. The elements of the Tour of Art Fiumara are: the location, the institutional support, the theme, the model of “how to do an itinerary”, the connection between guides and tourists – the platform towards the market with the community enriching the local offer.

The *location* is a gift of an enlightened pioneer who from the early ‘80s created the concept of ‘Art as the Beauty able to Renovate Our Life’ and economically sustained the building of monumental art works in the landscape of a “fiumara”, a seasonal river that in the history of the area deeply shaped the physical landscape. The art works have been donated to the local community but despite this for a long time he was accused of illegal building until the area was declared a contemporary art regional park. Our project focuses on enhancing the tourism value, on the basis of the rich cultural value of the site. The tour is the natural way to visit the area and has been designed to be done by car, by bike and on foot.

The *institutional support* has been great, and both the Ministry of Economic Development and the Department of Tourism for the Sicily Region understood the potential tourism value of the area and supported the project as a pilot action. They were able to give guidelines in tour designing, guide training and community cohesion around the tourism economy.

The theme is *contemporary art* in the landscape, as an emotional experience able to make visitors more sensitive to the beauty of the surroundings, including the two regional natural parks. Therefore the Art Fiumara is conceived as the natural gateway that leads one from the coast (the closest well known international tourist destination is Cefalù) towards the discovery of the inland and of the parks.

The *guidelines* about “how to design an itinerary” include the analysis of the role played by the different local and non-local stakeholders, based on the perspective of reinforcing local small entrepreneurs based on facilitation skills, so that they become visible, organized and competitive in the market.

The on line *platform* is the connection tool between the local and global dimension; between the guides and the self-organized tourists. It is a display of the vitality of the local community within the tourism market place.

The *process*. These are just elements; about the process, where we work to take care of the life of the “tour” experience.

Design

The tour should be created and tested. The physical dimension should be taken into account, and the same applies to the economic and cultural ones. We analyse the major trends in terms of preferences related to the destination areas, the target tourists and the themes we want to take into account.

The design loop is not finished until the concept, trends and the area are in tune.

Depending on the aim, (such as public support for developing less developed areas; implementing some key action of the local tourism policy, or for private promotion) the project should lead to a planning tool facilitating the individual independent tourist.

The people involved are mainly the expert team, the economic stakeholders and the tourist guides.

Diversity

The tour is a collection of multiple related experiences. The experiences are activities designed to involve the visitor, let him do something new, answering an explicit or implicit demand of edu-entertainment.

Depending on the vitality of the community the offer experience can be enhanced by short activities (half day / one day courses) and expert activities, or through buying opportunities (handiworks and merchandising, on site / on line), through memories (photo & video, recording and uploading). These three emotional areas are closely interconnected and our role is to act as amplifiers, collectors and connectors.

The people involved are entrepreneurs, art & craft workers, tourism guides, cultural and free time & sport associations.

Dialogue

The tour is a tool for a living community.

The reasons why the tourist is attracted to an area is often well known by local inhabitants. But this is not always true and someone should say “when it starts to be perceived, it starts to be damaged”. This is not our belief: we are operating in Europe and what is needed is awareness, willingness to collaborate, openness to others, consciousness of the values to be transmitted and the ability to do so! An Asian professor at the opening of the academic year in the Bocconi Milan University said that we are not aware of what are the main European values: the peace and the expectation of peace for the future, the compassion and the collaboration.

The people involved are schools, art school trainers, young people, bloggers, cultural associations and cultural entrepreneurs, social network fans, etc.

Transform

The tour is a competitive tourism product, that changes and diversifies through the years on the basis of the preferences of the visitors, the suggestions of travelers, Fiumara fans, and friends, all gathered in the collaborative platform. On the basis of flows and the profile of the surfers, the platform can aggregate tourism offers and new market proposals for tourism activities focused on specific interest groups.

The people involved are tourists, web surfers, entrepreneurs, young people, bloggers, cultural associations, services cooperatives, tourism entrepreneurs, social network fans, etc.

Itineraries: How we work

Our business model is based in the following steps.

Create a standard, based on identified criteria but also on reliable communication. The aim is to be reliable both for local communities, for the entrepreneurs and for the market. "Standard" means a way to proceed not the minimum level to satisfy. The minimum is not attractive; the tailored, the unexpected, the transparent is marketable.

On this activity line:
- we are elaborating guidelines on how to make itineraries that will be edited in autumn
- we are designing training projects
- we are establishing roots to the Sicilian project in the local community
- we are looking for the next area project
- we are looking for partners

About Europe: The interest in Europe about creating itineraries as a tourist product, able to interpret the European values and heritage and to give economic opportunities to small enterprises is evident. Recently, the Tourism Unit presented a report on this topic. Interpret Europe should become a consultee for the EU, working in synergy with "Europe No.1 tourism destination in the world". That means becoming a partner of the EU on building the "European experience". We propose that IE set up a working group in order to draw up some key actions through the country partners. In the meantime it is important to stimulate the dialogue among the members in order to better understand and use the European policies and programmes.

Training

We need partners. We need the tourist guides to become more active, more connected, more open minded; less focused on their own knowledge and more sensitive to relations to others, more aware of the change of market, more digital and less corporative.

We know that tourist guides:

Know a lot > talk too much

Are passionate of some theme > not interested in other's

Are individuals > but prefer groups (individuals ask too much)

Are individuals, with hobbies and skills > that are not used in the job

They are good communicators > a guided tour is boring

They are too many > no tourist knows where to find a guide and how to deal with him

They work with tour operators > they miss the growing market of individual tourists

They are really good > there are no feed-back systems about tourist satisfaction

Finally, we all want to build tourist loyalty > we treat them as one shot tourists

We are working on blending the tourist guide profile with art disciplines in order to create more creative experiences for visitors and to bring guides closer to life-long learning opportunities. Our belief is that the enthusiastic feed-back of the visitors is the only certification needed and guides should be ready to embrace this deep change within the market.

About Europe: We need to train tourist guides widely to environmental principles; we need these principles to become a criterion in the rules and laws defining who is a tourist guide. Now is the time, when the regions are thinking how to incorporate the Bolkesteins directive into their legislative frameworks. Interpret Europe should establish a task force, on this matter, to give guidelines and assistance to the European Regions.

Local community start up

We need ambassadors.

We need involved people so that setting tourism itineraries leads to common benefits and business. Guides and local people are the best designers of itineraries; ACTA supports them in designing, providing training, standards, brand and market. The start-up is a tutoring phase, in cooperation with ACTA the community creates its on-line avatar. Experts and bloggers talk about quality in tourism and promote itineraries; tourists find information and feedback; tourist guides make their offers, local entrepreneurs find visibility and services supporting itineraries are proposed.

The tourist chooses the most appropriate proposal or designs his own preferred tour; a card works as the trip planner and co-ordinator for booked activities. Through the card, it is the tourism entrepreneur that searches and contacts the tourist and not the tourist buying among many and equal proposals.

About Europe: Participation is a strange animal. It sleeps when it is looked for and suddenly it springs up in an unexpected way. Participation needs a critical mass to become attractive to the majority; alternatively it needs a leader. Neither are easy to find in rural areas. The vision – but this is already the reality - is to re-establish participation on the basis of common interests and scopes, not only through the theme, geography and solidarity. This way the community can be larger than the real one, including people and skills not yet belonging to the area but in some way linked to it: emigrants, fans, groups of interests, visitors, entrepreneurs, service suppliers and students. The "community start up" is an inclusive process oriented to the quality of local life, coherent with Europe 2020, in terms of social inclusion, knowledge sharing and business integration.

IE should open a window on social media and participatory tools and process, where interpreters and guides could play a role of the catalyst.

Stay connected and market quality services

Understanding the market is always a weakness for individual business. Coordination and collaboration is the hardest result to achieve. The same applies in tourism and for tourist guides.

The market is changing but it still conserves its traditional patterns, and TO (Tourism Operators?) are still the main clients for the guides. The changes are adding opportunities and information accessibility, open opportunities for individuals and for groups based on interests (or gender, abilities, etc) that should be understood and utilised.

The community start-up phase provides multiple "content managers", able to give a rich and living portrait of the life of the tourism destination. The only rule for business and community is transparency through information, opinions, feed-back and offers.

ACTA tutors the start-up and provides the final door to the market: the brand and the market platform, of which gobyguide.com is the first tool, directly oriented to our main audience - the guides.

The platform provides services such as tests and market searches for destinations, develops new products (AR & heritage), renews the standards through a constant attention to the training, makes projects in pilot areas and participates in the tourism quality debate.

About Europe: innovation in tourism follows the larger revolution about the content production and management and we should interpret the process as an opportunity to enlighten the mission of associations such as IE.

Active interaction with the opportunities being created is important and IE needs to focus its attention on market dynamics in order to be able to promote quality experiences through interpretation.

Are you interested in ACTA and want to be kept informed on its activities? Are you interested to become partner? Are you interested in Sicily and want to collaborate? Are you leader in some area and want to collaborate with us? Please let us know!

Author

Francesca is an architect skilled in sustainable design and integrated planning. She is a co-founder of ACTA - Culture, Tourism and Environment Association – a no profit association expert in research, planning and development in the field of sustainable tourism and local development. Since 1994 she works in international projects and participatory processes in order to share a vision with the local community and to deal with environment rescue, social cohesion, economic and tourism development. She is member of Ecotrans board, European network on sustainable tourism and takes part in V.O.D. Value of Differences, a collaborative network on sustainable design

Citizens of the world in 2014-2018:
Interpretation in the front line

by Susan Cross

Abstract
As Europe approaches the centenary of the Great War (1914-18) many interpreters across the continent will be working on that conflict and its legacy. This is an important responsibility that requires us to reflect deeply on the ethical, social and political aspects of interpretation. Working on interpreting remembrance at the National Memorial Arboretum in the UK has highlighted the similarities and differences between heritage interpretation and remembrance and leads to the view that interpretation has a responsibility to take a wider and more inclusive view. This may well involve challenging widely-held community and national beliefs. A centenary is an event that is just beyond living memory and the role of interpreters in selecting which stories are highlighted becomes particularly influential. The issues presented by this centenary are ultimately about how we represent difference, deal with complexity and include hidden stories. They are widely applicable to interpreting contentious historical and natural heritage.

The reference to 'citizens of the world' in the title of this conference suggests harmony and understanding or at least a perspective that allows us to communicate across national and political boundaries. That seems an appropriate consideration as we approach the centenary of the First World War in 2014-2018. I think this is an important time for interpreters, the way we respond to this centenary, particularly maybe in Europe, will be a measure of our maturity and of our values. This interpretation challenge will require the very best of our skills. I hope we manage to bring an international perspective to it.

I want to take the opportunity of this international gathering to share my thoughts and to hear yours.

I have been reflecting on this for some time. For the last few years I spent a long time thinking about Remembrance largely because of the work I have been doing for the National Memorial Arboretum, 'the national centre of remembrance' in the UK. This has been eye-opening, moving and immensely thought-provoking. It has led me to think hard about the similarities and differences between remembrance and interpretation.

I approach this talk today conscious that I need to know more. This is a big subject and I have just been picking away at it. My approach has been to talk to people, asking them questions and listening to the answers they give. I have spoken with historians, but mostly I have talked with to people who have no apparent connection to the war. I have questioned my family and friends, people I sat next to on trains, people who attend my courses and people from different countries. Everyone I talk to tells me something new and valuable, everyone has a perspective. Today I want to share some of the things I have learned but most of all I want to listen and learn more.

Remembrance and interpretation

I will share some thoughts about remembrance and interpretation and then try to apply it to the First World War.

The National Memorial Arboretum is a national centre of remembrance. It is 'where the nation remembers'. My role as an interpreter writing the interpretation plan for a new Remembrance Centre was to work out what that meant. At first 'remembrance' felt very familiar to me as an interpreter. The parallels with heritage interpretation were clear: both are about keeping stories and connections with the past alive; both focus on the legacy of history and what it means in the present.

This is powerful stuff. Remembrance is often personal and about remembering comrades or loved ones who have died. Personal grief and loss has its own inarguable authority. Remembrance recognises and creates a place in the public domain for that.

But remembrance is ceremonial and political too. The Remembrance ceremonies in the UK involve Church, State and Royalty. There is little, if any room for alternative voices and stories. I came to feel that remembrance is often a group talking to itself, passing on its own legacy to the next generation. It is about identity and it is therefore often inward-looking. We remember our own. Personal, emotional involvement, including the need to grieve, can reinforce this.

At a centenary however, we are not remembering people we knew. One hundred years is longer than personal memory. One of the most poignant places at the Memorial Arboretum is the Shot at Dawn memorial. Nowadays we know about post-traumatic stress disorder; in the 1939-1945 war they called it 'shell shock' and in the First World War they called it 'cowardice'. The young (often very young) men affected were court martialed and shot at dawn. This memorial remembers them. The story behind the memorial is about remembering grandfathers, great grandfathers, great uncles, people who were beyond personal memory, but held in family memory. The descendants of these young men campaigned long and hard for this memorial. They claimed it as a just recognition of the service and sacrifice of the ancestors they never met. A few years after the memorial was erected, the soldiers who had been shot at dawn were all pardoned. This is a probably rare example of how remembrance can bring in new perspectives. That can be, as in this case, challenging for the official version, which often does not embrace diversity.

So, remembrance is complex. It is one the one hand official and on the other personal and painful. It is often limited in its view. I think remembrance often takes a narrow, blinkered view. It tends to keep things simple, to show people what is front of them and blanks out the rest.

There are clearly many similarities with heritage interpretation, and not only when we are interpreting conflict. Interpretation often tells the stories of communities, of a defined group of people. Both interpretation and remembrance are about remembering, about keeping a story alive, reminding us of what happened, of who 'we' were and what we did. Like remembrance, interpretation passes stories on a legacy of stories to the next generation.

Figure 1 and 2: Shot at Dawn memorial, National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas, Staffordshire, UK

I think the difference between heritage interpretation and remembrance lies in interpretation's understanding of story and most importantly in its ability to include different stories. Unlike memorials, interpretation of conflict must aspire to deal with complexity and to present conflicting narratives. It must take the blinkers off and let more people in. An unblinkered view takes in a wider perspective; it includes things around the edges, things that are maybe a bit fuzzier, less convenient and more difficult. This is particularly important for international audiences.

Looking back to 1914-1918

100 years is a long time. I think it is also an important time. It is the point where there are no more first-hand accounts to be gleaned. Those who

can actually remember have gone. The events we 'remember' are now beyond living memory. They are within family memory; people who have heard first-hand accounts are still alive, but not for long. The events are moving into 'community memory', the realm of myths, beliefs and 'shared heritage'[1].

I am fascinated to discover how the story of the First World War settles out. I hope the stories that we choose to tell and remember are inclusive and international ones. Interpreters will be involved in passing the story on and making it relevant for this and future generations. We have an important part to play in finding the connections. What we do and where we look, the stories we highlight will strengthen some connections. The stories we do not tell will be weakened. This is a serious responsibility.

I am all too aware of how little I know. I am talking of an event that tore lives apart and destroyed individuals, families, communities, landscapes and ways of life. How can I or we approach interpreting that? It is overwhelmingly large, almost too much to think about. Where are my / our connections? What are the sources? What do I know? What touches me? Why and how does this matter? Indeed, does it still matter?

I began this journey by looking for my connections to that long ago conflict. At the start, I thought I had none. Of course, I was wrong. In my country we all can find connections with 'The Great War'. There are family connections, community connections, national connections and all of them come with stories. The stories may well not be 'true', they may come from unreliable sources but they are 'real'. They have been told many times and form our family, community and national heritage.

I set out to find my own connections. I began with my family and I talked to my father and mother. At first there was silence – for most British people, this was a war where the men went away, and often spoke little of their experiences when they returned. Then memories returned slowly, in fragments. I learned a little of what my parents' fathers did and how that had changed my life. I learned that horses were important, inadequate but important. My grandfather was a farmer and good with horses and that made all the difference. To cut a long story short, it allowed the family to jump up a class, a very important thing in England, especially then, and part of a much wider picture of increased post-war social mobility.

I talked to my brother and amongst other things he pointed me to the village war memorials and the fact he 'knew' that many more people were killed in that war than in the 1939-45 conflict. So I turned to the war memorials in these small Norfolk villages. I found he was right and I was shocked. I did the sums and found I was looking at a death toll of more than 10% of the total population of these places.

That got my mother talking again … about the Vanished Regiment. She told me another, curious story, this time from the oral history of my village. All these village men she said were in the same regiment with a useless captain who led them into an impossible battle and they all disappeared in Gallipoli. There was talk of alien abduction. There was a Hollywood film about it (so it must be true). I suspected (rightly as my later researches confirmed) that, if they went to Gallipoli, the alleged 'uselessness' of the captain may not have been their biggest problem.

There are so many stories and so many mixed sources. They come from echoes and whispers and shreds of evidence. When the eye-witnesses have gone, all we have is the echoes of what they told us. It seems we take those echoes and turn them into stories – into popular accounts, books, and films. In families, villages and nations we create a legacy of war, our heritage. Heritage, of course, is more than history – history is what happened, heritage is what that history means to us. Heritage interpretation aims to play a role in making, building or discovering that meaning. The responsibility of that when faced with a history so weighty, so resonant and so political is daunting. It is a challenge to the values and ethical basis of our profession. I hope that one of the outcomes of the centenary of the First World War will be a clearer statement of the ethics of heritage interpretation particularly, but not solely, in relation to contested histories and issues.

[1] There is further interesting discussion of the influence of the passage of time on interpretation in (and in the comments following) Regan Forrest's interactivate blog; see http://reganforrest.com/2013/04/the-half-life-of-history/.

Some approaches to interpreting conflict

As heritage interpreters we need to be aware of history and to beware of the things that we, and others, 'know' because they have been part of the family, local or national story. Interpreting conflict and controversy is as difficult as it is important.

We are dealing with sensitive issues and negotiating a minefield of possible offence. It is impossible to be neutral; our attitudes reflect what we believe, and what we have been taught. My work in these areas has shown me how deeply embedded cultural prejudices and national prejudices are and how easy it is to be unaware of them. I have found that the only way around them is to listen to as many perspectives as possible before I start interpreting anything. Listening is always important in interpretation. In the interpretation of conflict it is even more so – especially if we want to do so as citizens of the world.

We need to be ready to listen creatively to difference, even when that is painful. Interpreting conflict involves unearthing stories of terrible events and encountering guilt, anger, grief, accusations. When that happens, we must keep listening, without argument or judgment, beyond our comfort zone.

We need to be humble and open to challenge. We need to discover how other people's personal stories combine with their national stories if we are to interpret conflict and division justly and inclusively.

Conversely we need to remain suspicious. We cannot accept simply the story we are given. What I think I know comes from blinkered perspectives and sometimes unreliable sources. War generates secrecy and propaganda that contribute to the legacy of beliefs and stories. Historians tell me that not everything the British public 'knows' about the 1914-1918 war is true. Navigating this is difficult and requires the ability to spot gaps and silences in the narrative.

So, can we as international interpreters rise to the ethical challenge of this daunting and disturbing centenary? Can we talk and understand across our national perspectives? Can we unearth the buried and forgotten stories? From the safety of the 21st century can we find common ground?

I hope so, because the issues I have identified are part of wider challenges that interpreters face in interpreting both historical and natural heritage in an international and multicultural future. This call to reflection does not apply only to one 100-year-old war, or even conflict in general. It is about how we represent difference, deal with complexity and make room for other stories.

Author
Susan Cross (MA AMA FAHI), founder and Director of TellTale (www.telltale.eu), is a heritage interpretation expert from the UK with more than 30 years experience of working in museums and heritage sites. She is author of 'Sharing our stories; using interpretation to improve visitor experience at heritage sites' a manual for operators of Irish heritage businesses and has written and lectured widely on interpretation in Europe and Australia. She is a trainer and mentor who works mainly within heritage organisations, supporting the strategic developmentand practical delivery of high quality interpretation for contemporary visitors.
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Cultural differences and interpretation for international visitors

by Susan Cross

Abstract

As leader of the TellTale team, Susan Cross has worked extensively with Fáilte Ireland (the Irish Tourism Development Authority), using heritage interpretation to deliver the national Cultural Tourism Strategy, This has included training and one-to-one mentoring for more than 65 heritage attractions in using interpretation to improve the visitor experience particularly for overseas visitors. This talk considers how a foreign perspective can be an advantage and where the cultural gap can be a challenge. It highlights three key aspects of the work: 1) disseminating the basics of good practice in interpretation and visitor experience development 2) recognising what is local and likely to interest foreign visitors and 3) identifying barriers to communication. For this Englishwoman working in Ireland brought many lessons including the opportunity to reflect on the delicate area of dealing with shared histories of conflict, both recent and further past.

Introduction

For the last two and a half years I have worked with Fáilte Ireland, the Irish Tourism Development Authority, on developing the use of interpretation at heritage sites in the Republic of Ireland. Fáilte means 'welcome'. My role has been as trainer and mentor working with heritage attractions which has been some of the most enjoyable, stimulating and thought-provoking work of my 30-year career in interpretation. In particular, working closely with the heritage of this country that is so close to, and so very different from, my own has sharpened my perception of cultural difference and how it influences the way we tell, or do not tell, our history.

This paper outlines some key lessons from that work. I am grateful to the Irish people I have worked for them for their patience and generosity in explaining their heritage and its significance to me and for the time and thoughtfulness they have given to this process. I have done my best to record what I have been told faithfully, but any misinterpretations or misunderstandings of their story are unintentional and my own.

Background: working in a different culture

Fáilte Ireland had identified that Irish culture is one of the most important factors that attracts overseas visitors to Ireland. In 2008 they produced a Cultural Tourism Strategy[1] that examined how to maximise its potential. Heritage is a very important element of Irish cultural tourism: almost all cultural tourists to Ireland visit a heritage site during their stay. Fáilte Ireland asked me to support heritage site managers in 'using interpretation to improve the visitor experience at heritage sites' with a particular focus on interpreting for overseas visitors.

This led me to question exactly what a foreign consultant can offer. There are certainly some extra pitfalls, so where are the compensating opportunities? There are three main aspects where I believe my coming from outside the country were helpful: 1) disseminating the basics of good interpretation / visitor experience practice; 2) recognising what is local and likely to interest foreign visitors; and 3) identifying barriers to communication.

Training and mentoring: covering the basics

The fundamentals of good interpretation practice are the same, I believe, wherever we are. People are diverse but we have some things in common.

[1] Fáilte Ireland (2008) Cultural Tourism: Making it Work for You. A New Strategy for Cultural Tourism in Ireland. Download from: www.failteireland.ie/FailteCorp/media/FailteIreland/documents/BusinessSupports

As an experienced interpreter and trainer I had years of experience of doing and talking about interpretation in the UK. That transferred well to Ireland.

The first work comprised running workshops that introduced the value of well-planned interpretation in creating memorable visits to heritage sites. These included some basic approaches to interpretation planning. They were a great success. Fáilte Ireland next asked me to write a manual covering the same material in greater depth for wider dissemination. This led to the 'Sharing our Stories' manual[2] which draws on Irish examples of good practice and encourages attraction managers to review the interpretation and visitor experience on their site and how they could be improved.

However, training in the basics is not enough. We wanted to do more to help people put good theory into better practice so set up a mentoring programme. Mentoring is not like training: it is one to one, flexible, responsive and based in the workplace. Working side by side with an experienced interpreter helps people learn quickly and put their learning into practice. It can make a big difference to individuals and to the attractions they run. I strongly believe mentoring is an excellent way of developing interpretation skills and practice that respects and adapts to individual and national diversity. This has proved to be the case in Ireland. I built a team comprising myself, my business partner Peter Phillipson and our associates, Nigel McDonald and Steve Manning, two UK interpreters whose work we value and respect. This TellTale team and I have now mentored (or are mentoring) 39 businesses throughout Ireland.

The greatest lesson from this mentoring is the importance of listening. Listening lies at the heart of both great interpretation and great mentoring. It is vital to listen before you speak; to hear before you start telling. This is even more important when you are working in someone else's country.

Recognising the local

We always begin the mentoring process by asking people what they want from it. By far the commonest answer is 'a fresh pair of eyes'. It's a good answer. Like all interpretation, international interpretation involves being able to see your place from someone else's perspective. One of the great things visitors, especially overseas visitors, bring is a new way of seeing. In our mentoring we emphasise the importance of watching and listening to visitors and understanding their perspective of what is interesting and important.

Interpretation at its best recognises, values and shares local identity. It can help to highlight local distinctiveness and draw out the reasons for visiting, the unique selling point of a place. This can translate into hospitality, sharing our stories draws the stranger closer to our community. Interpretation can extend a welcoming hand from the heart of a culture to the interested visitor by making the different understandable and approachable.

It does this best if the hand and heart are local. Interpretation that cherishes distinctiveness will be adapted to local conditions and use a local voice and local talents. We found, for instance, that the Irish have talents in, and a strong culture of, welcoming and talking to strangers and in story-telling. This resulted in some of the very best face-to-face interpretation we have ever seen. At many sites, the mentors, were able to recognise and acknowledge these strengths, stressing the value of people in communicating culture and its significance to visitors. Identifying what people are doing well, and why, is often a key part of our mentoring.

We helped people build on these strengths: by adding structure, targeting them more for specific audiences, increasing the animation or by strengthening the interpretive theming. In some places we helped managers to introduce training and peer review processes to ensure quality and consistency. In this way our mentoring in Ireland has, amongst other things, helped make good tours excellent.

[2] Fáilte Ireland (2010) Sharing our Stories: Using interpretation to improve the visitor experience at heritage sites. Download from: http://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/2_Develop_Your_Business/3_Marketing_Toolkit/5_Cultural_Tourism/Heritage_Interpretation_Manual.pdf?ext=.pdf

Barriers to communication: the need for background

Communication is not easy and it is harder when there are barriers such as language and knowledge. Britain and Ireland speak (almost) the same language so being an English speaker is no barrier to visiting or working in Ireland. Maybe it is that lack of the obvious barriers of language that enabled me to recognise other, more subtle but probably no less potent, barriers to understanding that visitors may stumble over. The most important of these is the lack of background knowledge and experience.

When working in my own country I have a pretty sure sense of what people know. I know the dates and events that are regularly referred in conversation and in the media and that are part of the national life. I have over the years learned not to overestimate the British – and particularly the English - public's historical understanding but there is some background knowledge we can usually build on when planning interpretation. In Ireland, it was different. The names of Irish national heroes and the dates of events that shaped their country meant nothing to me. I did not know what national history was taught in schools nor talked about in bars.

I became aware both of the yawning gaps in my historical knowledge and, linked to them, more important voids in my understanding of Irish culture and history's part in it. I had no idea how the Irish discussed and drew upon their heritage. In fact, I was nearly as ignorant as most of their foreign visitors. I could therefore help Irish heritage attraction managers work out how to tell their stories to visitors who did not share their past.

I could recount many stories and incidents to illustrate how this appeared in practice, but I will focus on just one, that was important in developing my thinking.

One of the first training workshops I ran was at Croke Park in Dublin. For an international audience, but not for an Irish one, that needs explaining - international visitors often need background that domestic visitors do not. Croke Park [Páirc an Chrócaigh] is a sports stadium, but it is also much more than that. It is the home of Gaelic or Irish sport (Gaelic football and hurling). The ground was renamed Croke Park in 1913 and developed by public subscription because Gaelic sport has always been an important part of Irish identity and was closely associated with the Irish nationalist cause. The occupying British played and encouraged soccer, rugby and cricket, the Irish resisted those imported games and focused passionately on hurling and Gaelic football. Gaelic sport is still hugely popular, so Croke Park has a significant place in contemporary Irish life. I talked to the taxi driver on the way there (interpreters should always talk to their taxi drivers!) and he confirmed and detailed that significance and the passion behind it.

Croke Park contains a museum of Gaelic Sport and, as part of the training day, I sent the group to look at it. I went too – and found myself lost. Gaelic sports are not widely played in the UK and I know nothing about them. Their household names, those big events, these famous commentaries, all meant nothing to me. They were outside my experience and my culture. Interestingly there were a few connections, a few all important points of relevance. I grew up in a small village and knew about village sport so that provoked some recognition. But mostly I was lost, a stranger in a strange land. I could see the exhibitions provoked huge recognition from my Irish group, it touched on familiar and evocative aspects of their life. As a foreign visitor I could not be part of that. This was cultural difference in practice and it highlighted that international visitors often need background before they can make sense of the story of it.

However, there was another, more painful and poignant lesson about communicating heritage to foreign visitors for me at Croke Park. One of the displays in the Museum particularly drew my attention. It was an anniversary year and visitors to Croke Park had been invited to post their memories of the place. There was a big wall full of postcards each telling a personal story: remembering winning goals, Championship games, visits with grandfather, bus journeys from the country, many, many great days. One card stood out, and changed my visit. It said something like:

I am ten years old and my father works in this museum and I just want to say that what the English did here on Bloody Sunday was *disgusting and they should be ashamed.*

And suddenly I remembered a scrap of history from my school days and my cheery taxi driver's voice fading away when he talked about the Croke Park stands "named after … after people who died ...". I grabbed the nearest person and said "Tell me, is this where the Bloody Sunday shootings took place?" "Yes," she said. So, there I was, standing where, in November 1920, the British Army shot players and spectators in cold blood. It's a long and bitter story but here the history of Ireland and Britain clashed and changed. I was shaken at finding myself, not at all comfortably, on a place where history happened. Of course, I have experienced that before, feeling the presence of history is part of my job, but never more powerfully than then.

I went back through the museum displays looking everywhere for this story and, eventually, tucked away in a corner, I found a single panel.

Eventually, my workshop group came back together to talk about the exercise. I had asked them to look for several things in the interpretation, including something specific to the place, something that happened here and nowhere else. They told me all sorts of things, a sports stadium inevitably contains many unique stories. No one mentioned November 1920, no one mentioned Bloody Sunday, no one mentioned the British. So I did. I told them how it had shaken me. The room went very quiet. No one met my eye. Some things are hard for us to tell. Some of our history is so painful, so enraging, that we still cannot speak of it – especially to the old enemy. Cultural differences run deep, throughout Europe. They affect the way we tell our stories to outsiders.

Barriers to communication: the weight of history

Cultural differences certainly run deep between Britain, particularly England, and Ireland. Our shared history is full of bitter and bloody conflict and resentment for the way my country treated Ireland is fairly common among the Irish. I have to stress that being English never affected the welcome we received in Ireland. We were consistently met with extreme generosity, and céad mile fáilte 'a hundred thousand welcomes'. I salute the Irish people for that. They are wonderful, hospitable people and Ireland is a wonderful country to visit. British tourists feel welcome in Ireland, they make up 50% of the overseas visitors.

Yet the weight of our history can make sharing heritage stories and their significance difficult. Croke Park was not the only place where people hesitated before talking to the Englishwoman. Some of our most significant stories are not easy to tell or to hear. Some history leaves deep wounds. Some stories are not finished yet. Working in Ireland confronted me with all of this and raised big questions about how we explain what a place means with integrity.

I discovered another layer of complexity in the gaps in my knowledge. Sometimes what I thought I knew was partial and often biased. Stories can be told very differently, and often I had been taught the other side. I learned to listen even harder to what I was told in Ireland and to understand the importance of an authentic local voice in telling the national story. The interpretation of heritage is not just about facts, it is about emotions, community and a sense of belonging and becoming.

Our work was not about telling people what stories they should tell at a site but often it was about exploring in considerable depth the stories they could tell. The Irish found some of their stories hard to tell to a British audience. I have recently worked at a significant attraction in the south of Ireland that focuses on emigration and especially on the Potato Famine of the 1840s. The Potato Famine is another example of a history whose significance needs explaining to non-Irish visitors. Its horrors are written deep into the hearts of the Irish. It led to mass starvation, evictions and emigration. Some say it formed the national character. I have learned that the plight of the starving Irish peasants was worsened by the behaviour of the British government and have heard more than one person describe it as genocide.

Yet what the Irish call the Great Hunger is hardly written at all in the memory of the British, even though Ireland was at that time part of the United Kingdom. Most of my compatriots have heard of it, maybe know it was bad, probably do not know when it was. Mostly they do not understand.

The curator of the attraction had a problem. Some of her local Irish visitors had complained that the new displays about the Great Famine are not truthful, they do not explain the politics, they do not explain how the UK Government treated the Irish. Her problem was that she could not see how to satisfy these local visitors (who were not isolated or extremist voices) without offending her many English visitors who she wanted to feel welcome and comfortable at her attraction. How, she asked, can I tell that story?

It is a good, sensitive question. We talked about it for a long time. I asked her if there were really things that were missing from the story in the displays. She said they were. I could see she felt deeply uncomfortable telling me about them. I listened, compared what she said with what the British know and told her 'If you do not tell your story, we will never hear it'. I am sure that was right, this is background that foreign tourists in general need, without it they cannot understand why emigration became such an important feature of Irish society in the 19th and 20th centuries. I would also argue that the British visitors need it too because it sheds a new light and give a context to recent and contemporary British-Irish relationships. In the end, we decided two more panels needed to be added and that they would have to be written with great care, sensitivity and integrity.

Conclusions

Working in Ireland has reminded and taught me a great deal about the importance of cherishing and telling our histories. It has emphasised the importance of interpretation in creating heritage attractions that are enjoyable and meaningful to overseas as well as domestic tourists. It has highlighted the importance of welcoming strangers and the new perspectives that they bring to our past and present, whilst holding onto to our own traditions. It has confirmed the value of local voices, of being strongly and specifically rooted in a place and of being linked to a wider world, when interpreting for overseas visitors.

These experiences have made me think, more than ever, about the ethics of storytelling, the slipperiness of truth, and the precariousness of balance in the interpreters' role particularly when covering histories of conflict. It has demonstrated the importance of heritage interpreters being thoughtful and responsible storytellers, sensitive to both their listeners in contemporary culture(s), and to their ancestors who lived the stories they tell. More than ever, it has convinced me of the roles of interpretation in creating tourism products that allow overseas visitors to explore and celebrate similarities and diversity.

Postscript

I am very keen to learn more about cultural and historical differences and their impact on international interpretation from other parts of Europe and the world. I would love hear of other examples of heritage attractions that deal with conflicts (particularly recent ones) and difficult or divisive history. Please contact me on susan@telltale.co.uk.

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Re-examining the meaning

by Natalija Ćosić and Veljko Džikić

Abstract

As the physical traces of the past, cultural heritage objects represent a reflection on all information integrated in material, from the time of its creation, use and ultimately at the moment of disposal of an object. In contemporary museological practice presentation of objects is mainly delivered through exhibition activities, whose content often fulfills aesthetic and innovative museum criteria aimed at various types of visitors. However, one of the integral and crucial parts of the life of an object is frequently being ignored- its life from the moment of excavation or acquisition, its entering the museum collection and the time when it becomes part of a new museum reality. Thus, interpretation of cultural heritage doesn't stop, nor does it begin by revelation or historical determination. On the contrary, it continues through its existence in new circumstances, new interactions and environment – throughout the history of its material, its fragility and its reaction to environmental conditions.

Introduction

The key issue addressed in this paper is an outline of the possible role of conservation in interpretation field. Conservation is focused on preservation of heritage integrity and its prolongation for future use and reuse. During these activities, a vast amount of data is gathered or revealed. Unfortunately, that information is often not used actively in the presentation of a particular object or museum collection, but rather left aside as a part of official documentation.

The physical traces of human action, as objects of material culture which have survived to the present day, usually are a direct link with the past and evidence that provides the basis for the analysis and understanding of social and cultural contexts in previous eras (Olsen 2002). Cultural heritage is determined by objects from the past, which get their attributes through the value recognized in the present, reflecting characteristics for/in the future. Debate on the importance, role and origin of cultural heritage emerged in past decades and this is still a vital and equally important discussion. There are different opinions on the issue of how heritage is shaped and brought to the present, accordingly approaches in the examination and the role of material depends on the perception and understanding of the phenomenon of different disciplines - anthropology, archeology, museology, heritage studies, conservation, and the changes in their theoretical concepts. Regardless of the various theoretical concepts, in terms of cultural heritage, the essential idea was always the same – the protection and selection of objects due to specific value and significance. In this way, this definition corresponds to the epistemological sense of preserving memory, and what is the purpose of collecting, preserving and presenting heritage (Булатовић 2004: 141). Thus, cultural assets are seen as an absolute source and unconventional carriers of information, because the information and data that have a hidden inherent part of their existence. Similarly objects of cultural and natural heritage can be considered as one form of media, defined as content carriers and transmitters consisting of facts, data, ideas, memories and values (Мароевић 1993: 123).

Taking account of the fact that the information carried by a particular object is layered and variable and dependent on many factors, it can be said that conservation engages change management on cultural assets and/or their environment in a manner that provides, reveals and enhances its value and importance (Ladkin 2004: 17). Therefore, conservation should always search for balance between access and use with long-term preservation as one final goal, so the cultural heritage can be available for future interpretation and re-interpretation.

Shaping the heritage

Values have always been a reason to keep certain objects, and as such they are proof that society will not make efforts to preserve something if there is no recognized value (Torre 2002: 3). Taking into account the specific characteristics and values of cultural assets - the materials of which they are made, their function and user/interest groups, different types of cultural heritage are recognized nationally and internationally, for their protection and conservation on the basis of recognized value. Thus the protection of cultural heritage, as one of the basic elements for decision-making, legally and in terms of conservation, takes values and significance of cultural assets as the basis for these actions, but also questions the existence of these values in the context in which they are preserved. With the development of the concept of heritage, and therefore conservation discipline, the number of individuals from different fields of expertise, from professional and scientific to the general public, become increasingly involved in decision-making processes on how something should be preserved or presented. The democratization of decision-making and the involvement of stakeholders is a positive development from closed professional circles, but on the other hand, the introduction of ''unqualified '' perception, raises the question of how these social values and subject views can be evaluated to shape conservation in the wider context of conservation strategies. For instance, on the one hand, the significance and value of heritage can be a clear and evident category. On the other hand it can be vague, difficult to define, or only understandable to members of certain cultures or communities.

Different interest groups often demonstrate a strong connection to heritage. The discipline of conservation is facing new challenges - the need for more flexibility and diversity of approaches to be able to include new aspects and new uses and new contexts. Also, is the closely related question of ethics and accountability in the process of deciding on the most appropriate way to protect and present. Therefore, it is important to understand the historical, aesthetic, religious, technical and other important aspects before proceeding to the conservation and curatorial assessment and activities. The ultimate aim of conservation is not to conserve material for its own sake, but rather to maintain (and shape) the values embodied by the heritage—with physical intervention or treatment being one of many means toward that end (Avrami and Mason 2000: 7).

Conservation in museums has, in the past, focused almost entirely in making objects displayable, and has been largely exhibition-led, in that work concentrating on the objects required for the next exhibition (Pye 2001: 14). The purpose of protection is to preserve the integrity of heritage, to create conditions for the survival and measures for the maintenance of the object and all its features, in order to delay the inevitable decay and loss of information. All measures and actions should respect the significance and the physical properties of the cultural heritage item. Since conservation, in general, is a process that continuously reinvents its products (cultural heritage), rational and conscious articulation of the context and circumstances in which it is carried is essential, especially taking into account the value and importance of the subject (Pye 2001: 7). Conservation has an essential place in understanding the past, the context and the material related to a particular object. In this way conservation offers the possibility to communicate identified values and messages. Inevitably in its broadest sense, it can be considered as a comprehensive multi-layered, social, scientific and professional process aimed at preserving and interpreting the perceived value materialized in the objects that surround us.

All these issues are embedded into the phenomenon of heritage and every process that is related to it - from recognition to protection and to presentation. Conservation is mostly driven by the context of the heritage object and consequently conservation treatments may differ depending on that. Hence interpretation itself could be changed over time. In dealing with heritage information there is a wide range of data that is related not just to provenance or explicit values, but also to its material in terms of preservation, state of conservation or techniques, which closely determines how, when and under what circumstances object can be shown, presented or protected. Simply put, by clarifying the evidence they contain and by maintaining them in a good condition, it helps to make objects available for study and appreciation by specialist and by the public (Pye 2001: 23).

Conservation in interpretation

The most common way to communicate heritage stories is through exhibitions, the meeting place between visitors and the material remains of the past. However, is our goal to make an interesting pastime for the public or are we trying to make them leave with a story of their own, which they could pass on to others? That's where interpretation comes in with its vital role of establishing relations by revealing not so obvious information about displayed objects. It encourages people to think about the past, to reflect and debate, adjusting the narrative to their personal knowledge and ideas. To achieve these goals we use a lot of tools like books, flyers, guides (print and audio), info panels, graphic illustrations and video material, interactive software and games, and other creative solutions. Depending on the target audience, we decide to use appropriate tools, which could include even hands on experiences, acting performances etc. (Figure 1, Figure 2).

> "Interpretation is an educational activity, which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information" (Freeman Tilden in Shalaginova 2012: 28).

On the other hand, people involved in heritage conservation have, in past decades, put increasing efforts into promoting the process of conservation-restoration to the wider public. Usually, it is done through lectures, open days and publications, but recently even through dedicated exhibitions and internet sites. As part of the efforts to enhance public awareness, the Antiquities Conservation Department of the J. Paul Getty Museum, in collaboration with the Antiquities Curatorial and Education and Academic Affairs departments, set out to produce an exhibition entitled Preserving the Past that would explain the conservation principles and activities related to the museum's collection of ancient art (Podany and Maish 1993: 101-108). Experts from Victoria and Albert museum felt it was essential to provide the public with information on the long-term treatments and to highlight the difference that conservation makes to objects. They considered the use of digital animation to help visitors understand how the appearance of a medieval painted sculpture of the Virgin and Child had changed over time, but instead decided to publish several case studies on their web presentation (Frost 2009).

Figure 1: The workshop on making copies and replicas for kids, in National Museum in Belgrade

Figure 2: Actors in costumes from the original period, recreating the atmosphere in the city house, from the end of XIX century

Even in museums and galleries instead of finding certain areas "closed for restoration" there is a positive trend to be "open for restoration", allowing people to see the actual conservation-restoration work being done on cultural heritage. At the Museum of London, conservators treating timbers destined for the Medieval London display worked in a prominent position near the main entrance. In the Museo del Bargello in Florence, the conservation of Donatello's David was recently completed in an open workshop. At the V&A, conservators have been working on objects for the new Medieval & Renaissance Galleries in the Italian Cast Court whilst it was closed to the public. Visitors were able to view the work in

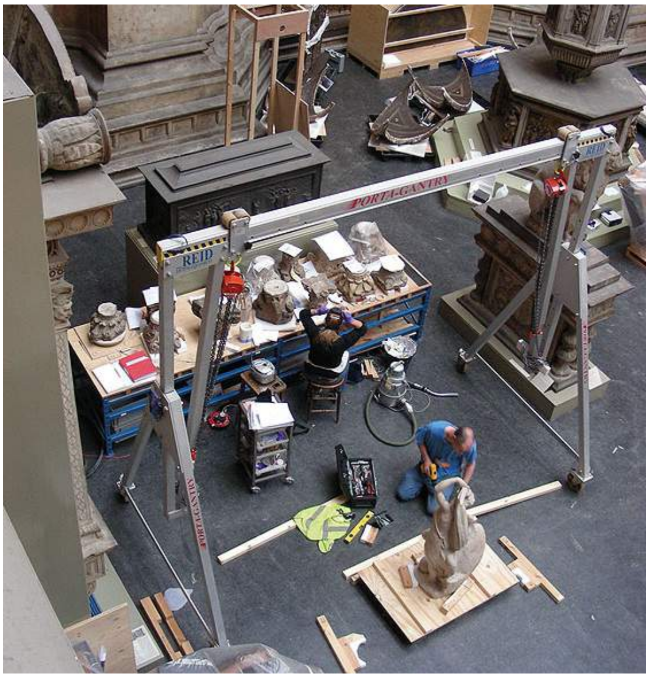

Figure 3: Conservators working in a closed section of V&A museum, but open to the view of the visitors, from the upper floor

Figure 4: Restoration work done in the Main hall of Palazzo Nuovo, in Capitoline Museum in Rome, in front of public

Figure 5: The Main hall of Palazzo Nuovo, before restoration project

progress from an upstairs gallery (Figure 3). In 2004, at Bilbao, the "Open for Restoration" project received the Keck Award of the IIC, the London-based International Institute of Conservation, for the best public information project on the theme of conservation. In this project the Main hall of Palazzo Nuovo, in Capitoline Museum in Rome, was a stage for study, documentation, conservation and restoration of the gray marble statues, like The Centaurs Furietti from Villa Adriana, offering the expert conservation work to interested visitors (Figure 4, Figure 5).

Also the Association Louis Daguerre, in Bry-sur-Marne, France, allowed visitors to an internet presentation to follow the restoration work on the last surviving diorama by Daguerre. They took the presentation conservation even further by featuring live webcams, on which you could log on in real time from anywhere in the world to see what is being done at that actual moment (Figure 6).

Finally, in 2000 ICCROM has published a book entitled Youth and the safeguard of heritage, in which they presented different approaches to raising awareness on the fragility and the conservation of cultural heritage. The book contains various examples of how to work with the public and involve them in the process of protection and presentation of cultural heritage (Blondé 2000).

However, the collaboration of conservators/restorers and curators is not simultaneously visible in exhibitions. Restoration work is often done behind the scenes before display while staying invisible to the visitors of the exhibition. On the other hand, presentation of restoration work, in above-mentioned examples, pays very little attention to interpretation of objects.

The Central Institute for Conservation in Belgrade is an institution for the protection of cultural heritage, which is always trying to use interdisciplinary approach to conservation of cultural properties. That often includes collaboration with curators in preparing exhibitions. The way the objects are being used in a display almost always bears great significance in decision making in conservation-restoration treatment.

For several years, the Institute has been trying to collaborate with curators in mounting exhibitions, to inform the public about conservation-restoration work done on displayed objects. This is usually achieved with posters explaining the fragility of the objects, displaying photos of the objects before and after treatment and even the risks the heritage properties are exposed to (Figure 7). Visitors are in this way sensitized to conservation issues of displayed objects, ultimately introducing a new way of appreciating their value. Raising awareness will consequently make them participate in conservation of displayed material, by avoiding actions that could harm them, like touching metal objects. Actually, the goal is to tell a different story about the same object, used in presenting a piece of our common past. By cross-linking different stories we try to create new relations that could help visitors remember what they saw through multi-layered associations. Essentially, the aim is to raise awareness about the sensitivity of objects and the conservation work behind the scenes, as well as help the interpretation of objects by peeking into their life after proclaiming them heritage items.

Figure 6: Internet presentation of the restoration work on the last surviving diorama by Daguerre

There are many examples where conservation-restoration work has yielded new information about the object, opening up new opportunities of linking it to other objects through a different context. This is sometimes done by simple cleaning and removing of a layer of dirt or previous restoration, and sometimes by the use of multi-spectral imaging (UV and IR photography, spectroscopy, X-ray etc.), that reveals otherwise hidden information. In 2010, the Italian Institute in Belgrade organized an exhibition, featuring two apparently identical paintings, accompanied by dozens of posters explaining all the research and restoration work done, in order to bring to light some new amazing facts (Figure 8). Based on this new found evidence presented on posters, researchers concluded which one of the two paintings was the original by Caravaggio, and which one was a copy by one of his students. They were even able to pinpoint the time when the other one was created, based on comparative research of other works of art from his school.


Figure 7: Example of a poster describing the restoration of wooden sculpture

Similar research was done on paintings from a famous Serbian painter Petar Lubarda, which also resulted in new information, allowing the conservators to participate in a conference dedicated to Edward Munch, in Norway (Figure


Figure 8: Two paintings depicting St. Francis in meditation, one by Caravaggio and one by one of his students

Figure 9: A poster on conservation of Lubarda paintings in a conference dedicated to Edward Munch


Figure 10: Exhibition on painters from Munich School from collections of City Museum in Sombor, featuring posters on their conservation


Figure 11: Lecture on conservation-restoration of displayed paintings, set up in the exhibition area

9). They found some technical similarities between two painters, as well as numerous analogies in their style and even personal life. Edward Munch and Petar Lubarda are two of the great artists fostered by Europe. They never had an opportunity to meet, but they shared a similar artistic philosophy. During the 1930's, both artists had similar styles in colouring, expressive elements merging with emotional mood, fluid lines and large surfaces of colour. This is without mentioning some of the similarities that relate to the painting technology of these two authors- the texture of the paint application varies between much diluted paint layers and buttery brushstrokes and some of their paintings are extremely poor in binding medium and give the image of tempera and even fresco painting. These are just illustrative examples from work that conservators of paintings from Atelier revealed during their work on conservation treatment of Lubarda's paintings. This gave a whole new appreciation to Lubarda's work.

The first exhibition that featured posters about conservation work done in our Institute was set up in the City Museum in Sombor, in 2012, on painters from the Munich school from museum's collections. Each of the five paintings restored in our Institute was displayed with posters next to the painting, presenting visitors with details from their restoration treatment (Figure 10). On the second occasion, in 2013, in the same Museum, we presented research and restoration work on three posters, which included UV and IR photographs, as well as the lecture on restoration of works (Figure 11). On one of the paintings, "A woman in front of a mirror", IR photograph revealed a reflection in the mirror that was, at the time, completely obscured by the layer of dirt. There was a chance that the reflection was painted over by the artist, but it actually appeared after cleaning. Judging by the impressions of our colleagues from City Museum in Sombor, people responded enthusiastically to posters, which allowed them to peek into the object's history and the conservation profession.

The next project was done for Belgrade Heritage House, where restoration of several paintings and sculptures was presented on posters. They displayed not only the state of objects before and after conservation, but also some documentation techniques and the whole set of tools used in restoration treatment (Figure 12, Figure 13). Belgrade Heritage House will soon finalize a huge project of restoration of Petar Lubarda's house along with all of his works that he donated to the city of Belgrade. A great part of his house is now turned into an exhibition area, showing his most famous paintings, but also printed and video material about his life's work as well as a very interesting story on the salvation of his legacy. After his wife died, an expert team from city authorities and National Museum in Belgrade, came to take care of the legacy he left behind, and found the horrible sight of a decaying house, with roof leaks, cats and pigeons living inside, paintings laying on the ground, sometimes torn, sometimes with bird droppings and other examples of heavy degradation, like paint layer delamination etc. Everything was documented with photos and videos and will now be a part of his permanent exhibition, so as to show to visitors that they are in a position to admire the works of one of the most significant Serbian painters thanks to enormous efforts of conservators from Central Institute for Conservation and City Secretary of Culture. They will appreciate it more and they will surely remember the works of art that were most heavily damaged that are now standing in front of them.

The same work was presented in the Italian Residence in Belgrade, with 10 posters and 3 paintings from Lubarda, because they felt proud to have participated in this project, by giving a great deal of support to the establishment of our Institute (Figure 14).

Finally, the extensive conservation-restoration work, done on the objects from the Home of Jevrem Grujic, a famous Serbian diplomat from the end of XIX century, was presented on posters in a recently opened exhibition (in 2014) (Figure 15, Figure 16). This house, which was recently inscribed in the list of European Heritage Houses, is specific because the heirs of Jevrem Grujic still use the house (Figure 17). The exhibition, recreating the atmosphere of a luxury city residence with designed furniture of the period, exclusive costumes, paintings and sculptures, weapons and medals, etc, captured the interest of public, proving to be one of the most visited venues of the year. More than 10.000 people came to see the exhibition in just two weeks, which is a

Figure 12: Restoration of a sculpture, showing documentation techniques and some details from the treatment

Figure 13: Set of tools used in conservation-restoration of paintings on poster, displayed in the exhibition by Belgrade Heritage House

Figure 14: Exhibition of Petar Lubarda paintings, with posters on their conservation, in Italian Residence in Belgrade

Figure 15: Public showed great interest in the conservation issues displayed on posters in the exhibition of the Home of Jevrem Grujic

Figure 16: Posters on conservation of items from the Home of Jevrem Grujic

Figure 17: The heir of Jevrem Grujic, Lazar Secerovic, talking with an interested visitor

great result for this type of event. So, we were able to reach a great number of people and to interest them in conservation issues and certainly to enrich their experience of consuming heritage.

Conclusion

Conservation focuses on ensuring that objects are usable; that they can be viewed, or handled, or set in motion; thus it facilitates access to the cultural heritage. (Pye 2000: 24) Simply put, we consider heritage to be something from the past that bears enough value to preserve it for future generations. No matter which definition of heritage you choose, we cannot omit the term “value” which defines it. We separate personal value we give to some objects from shared community values. The heritage value could be expressed through its aesthetic, cultural, scientific, symbolic and spiritual significance. As much as it is important to research and conserve our heritage, it is essential to communicate its values and meanings to the public.

The aim of this paper is to re-examine and challenge the existing models of interpretation and presentation of cultural heritage by introducing new and different information regarding conservation activities and data gathered during that process. Current interpretation narratives often exclude the matter of the “new” life of the objects - the one that is going on at the museum and in which visitors can participate in as well. By using conservation data as a tool for re-exploring the object, there is a possibility for the creation of new sets of information. This can be used further in interpretation in order to introduce every aspect of the object’s heritage life in its presentation.

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Spiritual journeys:
Exhibiting religion at the British Museum

by Stuart Frost

Abstract
Between 2010 and 2012 the British Museum staged three exhibitions exploring 'spiritual journeys'. The interpretation team spent over three years working on these displays. This paper focuses primarily on the final exhibition, *Hajj: journey to the heart of Islam*, and discusses the role of consultation, evaluation and interpretation in refining the exhibition narrative and shaping the visitor experience. British Muslims were one of the target audiences for the exhibition and interpretive strategies needed to cater for those who knew a great deal about Islam as well as those who knew very little. The paper will present key findings from the summative evaluation of the exhibition which demonstrates that the visitor profile to *Hajj* was markedly different to the other 'spiritual journey' exhibitions and suggests that the Museum was successful in catering for different audiences.

The British Museum was founded in 1753, the first national public museum in the world. Visitor numbers have grown from around 5,000 in its early years to over 6 million in 2013, making it the most visited museum in the United Kingdom. Its collection has also grown exponentially to over eight million works, now global in scope, documenting human culture from its origins to the present day. There are over 90 permanent galleries and usually at least four temporary exhibitions are open at any one time.

Admission to the permanent collections is free but there are charges for larger temporary exhibitions which draw on international loans. The special exhibition programme plays a crucial role in allowing the Museum to share new academic research with the widest possible audience, to generate income and attract investment and to develop the audience that visits the Museum. The exhibitions attract significant media interest and are crucial in changing perceptions of the Museum, and helping to communicate its central purpose to a wider audience.

The interpretation team at the British Museum was created in 2005 and works collaboratively across the organisation to develop special exhibitions, new permanent galleries and to improve the visitor experience across the site. The team's main aims are: to enhance the quality of every visit; to deepen engagement with the collections; and to help the Museum deliver world class special temporary exhibitions.

Spiritual Journeys

Between November 2010 and April 2012 the British Museum held three successive exhibitions with a spiritual journeys theme in the former Reading Room of the British Library. The first, *Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian book of the dead* (4 November 2010–6 March 2011) explored the religious beliefs of a dead civilisation. The next *Treasures of Heaven: saints, relics and devotion in medieval Europe* (23 June – 9 October 2011) focussed on medieval Catholic practise but inevitably touched on topics of relevance to millions of Christians today. The final exhibition, *Hajj: journey to the heart of Islam* (26 January – 15 April 2012), explored the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca throughout history.

These three exhibitions were developed collaboratively by interdisciplinary project teams. Front-end and formative evaluation, and consultation, informed their development and extensive summative evaluations identified the respective successes and shortcomings. Summative evaluation in the UK has been the focus of a recent review which has called for institutions to share their findings more widely with the museum community, and university academics have also argued that museums should be more active in sharing their experiences of developing exhibitions

(Davies and Heath 2013). This paper is intended to be small contribution towards both ends at a time when the role of religion in modern society is under intense scrutiny (Woodhead 2012).

Treasures of Heaven

Treasures of Heaven will be referred to later in this paper as it provides an illuminating point of comparison with *Hajj*. Its development also informed *Hajj* indirectly, and is therefore worth addressing briefly here. Front-end and formative evaluation for *Treasures of Heaven* uncovered an initially cool response from regular visitors to the prospect of an exhibition with such an overt connection to the Christian faith and Church (Fisher 2010). Debate about the proposed design for the exhibition reflected these anxieties. Whilst there was a broad consensus that a churchlike design was appropriate for a show with over a hundred reliquaries, an overtly sacred design or atmosphere was problematic. Some visitors with a secular outlook were concerned that a church-like design might subliminally manipulate them into an uncritical, reverential or devotional response. This is interesting as formative evaluation usually reveals strong support for an immersive or atmospheric approach to design.

Consultation with visitors from Roman Catholic and other Christian backgrounds highlighted an alternative perspective as might be expected, and a church-like or reverential atmosphere was not an issue. These consultations heightened awareness of the extent to which the manner in which faith was represented mattered to practicing Christians in contrast to the 'secular' majority. For example:

> "I think for people of faith this exhibition becomes a pilgrimage and a devotion in itself there is something about these things that touches us at a very deep level."

The value of extensive evaluation and community consultation in developing *Treasures of Heaven*, and helping navigate between the needs of different groups, ensured that these approaches were refined for the next exhibition where the contemporary dimension was much more prominent in the proposed narrative. Summative evaluation of *Treasures of Heaven* (MHM 2011a) also provided insights which helped shape *Hajj*.

Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam

Hajj is the annual pilgrimage to Mecca that all Muslims must make at least once in their lifetime if they are able. The *Hajj: journey to the heart of Islam* exhibition, curated by Dr Venetia Porter, explored the origins of Hajj, how pilgrims have negotiated this undertaking throughout history, up to the present day (Porter 2011, 2013). The exhibition was divided into discrete sections in the initial interpretive plan, arranged in an order which took visitors on a linear journey through the key stages of Hajj, mirroring the journey of the pilgrim. The plan defined the key objectives, which included: to foster a greater understanding of Islam; to create a focus for cross-cultural and inter-faith discussion and debate; and to bring new audiences to the Museum.

Front-end evaluation

Every exhibition poses unique challenges and front-end evaluation is essential in establishing these. For *Book of the Dead* evaluation revealed a need to negotiate between the needs of family groups without alienating the core audience of regular exhibition-going adult visitors (MHM 2010). With *Treasures of Heaven* we have seen that there was a tension between visitors from a Catholic or Orthodox background, and the secular majority (Fisher 2010). For *Hajj*, it was self-evident that Muslims and non-Muslims would have differing levels of knowledge and interest.

The front-end evaluation for *Hajj* began 18 months before opening. Twelve depth interviews took place with Muslim and non-Muslim visitors ahead of detailed design work (MUSE 2010). Comments from non-Muslim visitors were coloured by intensive media coverage of terrorism or other events such as the Danish cartoon controversy of 2005/2006:

> "I don't like to talk about the contemporary confusion but it is inevitable that you think of terrorism whilst knowing it's not representative of the faith" (*non-Muslim*).

Levels of knowledge about Islam were generally low amongst non-Muslims, and although associations with the Qur'an, Mosques and Prophet Muhammed were common, the depth of understanding was limited. Most participants were conscious of the importance of pilgrimage to Muslims, but the word Hajj itself was unfamiliar and only two people named it unprompted.

The Ka'ba, the square building inside the Grand Mosque in Mecca, is the centre of the Muslim world, and is a unifying focal point for Islamic worship. Muslims face towards the Ka'ba during daily prayer and it is the most sacred site for Muslims who aspire to visit it at least once in their life if they are able. Most participants knew that Muslims face in a particular direction when praying, but few knew that they were orientated towards the Ka'ba. Even when prompted, people were unaware of the building. When told more about the Ka'ba interest became more elevated and animated, and this prompted the project team to explore making it more prominent in the exhibition design and visitor journey.

Inevitably low levels of knowledge about Hajj and Islam meant that non-Muslims found it difficult to understand pilgrims' motivations, or to empathise with them, or to relate it to their own experience. Comments suggested that some felt as though they would be viewing the exhibition from a removed position:

> "I'd feel like a bit of voyeur as I'm not part of the faith. It will be a different sensation looking in from an outsider position."

Unsurprisingly, British Muslim participants' conversations revealed a stronger emotional connection with the exhibition reflecting a more intimate knowledge of Hajj. All participants were shown a representative selection of objects that were likely to feature. Contemporary art and photography, intended to offer a new perspective for all audiences but particularly for Muslim participants who were already familiar with other aspects of the exhibition, tested positively. The integration of these contemporary elements alongside older historic and archaeological material, was something which had not been done for previous special exhibitions at the British Museum.

Almost a year on from the qualitative depth interviews, a large online survey was used to test three different treatments or marketing propositions with a robust sample (MUSE 2011). Again, the Ka'ba emerged very strongly and became the dominant visual in the marketing for the show. Contemporary and historic images were combined in some of the promotional posters to communicate the dual nature of the exhibition proposition (MUSE 2011). The importance of developing an effective visual identity for an exhibition to its overall success should not be underestimated.

Community consultation and exhibition advisory group

Project Curator Qaisra Khan undertook Hajj in 2011, documenting her pilgrimage, sharing her experiences with the rest of the project team, deepening their understanding of it. Extensive consultation took place with British Muslim groups during the exhibition's development, both to help build relationships with communities around the country, and to inform the shaping of the project. Additionally an Advisory Group was convened to help steer the exhibition's development and to provide critical feedback. The exhibition text was read by several prominent figures at key stages to ensure that the content expressed key ideas accurately, sensitively and meaningfully.

The exhibition: narrative, structure and design

A large contemporary artwork, *Seven Times* by Idris Khan (b.1978), was placed in the Great Court in front of the Round Reading Room, welcoming visitors who arrived via the main entrance. This consisted of oil-sealed steel cubes sandblasted with lines of prayer in Arabic script recalling the five daily prayers and was a reduced version of a larger artwork. The full installation of 144 cubes arranged in a grid with the same footprint of the Ka'ba (which pilgrims circle seven times in a counter-clockwise direction) was considered for the exhibition itself as a spectacular finale but it was simply too big.

A long curved corridor which connected the ticket desk at the entrance to the Reading Room with the start of the exhibition proper was used to create a pre-exhibition prelude. Speakers placed in the outer wall played the 'Adhan' (call to prayer) and the 'Talbiya' (a prayer to announce the arrival of the pilgrim to God). Photographs of pilgrims walking at Mina near Mecca were reproduced at life-size, as though walking alongside the visitor. At the end of the corridor a short audio-visual presentation showed a selection of images from Hajj, pairing close-ups of individuals with wider photographs of collective experiences, to convey something of both the scale of the experience and its emotional intensity for the pilgrim.

The exhibition proper was divided into ten sections which took visitors through the key stages of Hajj; Introduction; Preparing for Hajj, Routes to Mecca (four sections); Mecca the Blessed; The Rituals of Hajj; Medina the Illuminated, and; The Homecoming.

Objects were grouped into traditional subject displays arranged sequentially in a narrative (or visitor journey) that was intended to be aesthetically, intellectually and emotionally satisfying. Additionally seven contemporary artworks were distributed throughout the exhibition, reasonably evenly. The themes of the works reflected the sections in which they were located, placing the art in a richer context than usual for a commercial or contemporary art gallery. The label for each artwork maintained the same descriptive and informative tone as the other texts in the exhibition. The contemporary art was central in communicating a key message, that Hajj continues to inspire remarkable personal, literary and artistic responses.

The introductory section explained some fundamental points about the key tenants of Islam, and Hajj, through a small selection of important objects, including an early Qu'ran. The following segment explored the preparations required for such a long, arduous and often life-changing experience. The following displays focussed on four of the most important routes to Mecca, across Arabia, from Africa and Ottoman Turkey, and maritime routes across the Indian Ocean. A final journey sub-section focussed on the present day British pilgrim route, from London to Jedda by plane. The contemporary experience for British Muslims was highlighted as an important strand throughout. The next two sections, *Mecca the blessed* and the *Rituals of Hajj*, were arguably the emotional, intellectual and aesthetic centre of the exhibition, and it is worth focussing on them a little more here.

A seven minute film, utilising spectacular footage shot for the IMAX movie *Journey to Mecca* was used a means of introducing visitors to the key rituals undertaken by pilgrims, and to communicate something of the sheer scale of Hajj today. Seats were provided and the location of this informal cinema space at a mid-way point provided an opportunity for visitors to rest. The visuals were intended to establish an intellectual framework which visitors could carry with them through the following object-focussed displays which explored each ritual in turn.

On leaving the film theatre space visitors encountered a spectacular display of textiles used to cover the Ka'ba, displayed on a cube-shaped structure which suggested their original function and appearance. The contemporary art works in this section also focussed on the Ka'ba and the rituals that take place around it. For example, *Magnetism 2012* by Ahmed Mater al-Ziad, an installation which utilises a small Ka'ba like magnet surrounded by thousands of iron filings, was placed prominently in a freestanding case. The label included a quote from the artist, again helping to foreground personal significance:

> "When my grandfather's spoke to me as a child about their experiences of Hajj, they told me of the physical attraction they felt towards the Ka'ba, that they felt drawn to it by an almost magnetic pull'.

The installation was accompanied by four etchings based on photographs taken during experiments in installing *Magnetism* in the artist's studio in Saudi Arabia."

The subsequent section focussed on Medina, the second holiest site in Islam, visited by many pilgrims before or after Hajj. The final section, *The Homecoming*, explored the impact of Hajj and the often profound changes that result from its completion. A selection of extracts from interviews with British Hajjis talking about their personal experiences were played ambiently, allowing visitors to hear pilgrims describing their experience in their own words. These interview extracts were part of a larger project funded by the AHRC conducted for the exhibition by Dr Sean McLoughlin at the University of Leeds.

The last object in the exhibition was also a contemporary art work, *You and Only You* by Idris Khan. The work was made up of a series of texts hand stamped directly onto the wall created on site especially for the exhibition. The texts were fragments of responses by pilgrims to the experience of performing Hajj. The shape of the work evoked the site of the sanctuary at Mecca with the Ka'ba at its heart with each word representing the footstep of a pilgrim. The Hajj exhibition was book ended by contemporary art.

Evaluation of *Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam*

Data collection for a major summative evaluation began when the exhibition opened. This involved over 300 exit surveys, 300 visitor observations in the exhibition space and two post-visit focus group discussions with Muslim and non-Muslim visitors (MHM 2012). Additionally, five visitors completed personal meaning maps in an attempt to explore the impact of visiting on their attitudes towards Islam. Without this evaluation it would have been impossible to provide any reliable insight into the composition of the exhibition's audience and the experiences they had had; the Museum would have been relying on anecdote. The final report includes full-transcripts of all discussion and interviews, but for reasons of space only a small number of representative quotes are given here.

Audience Profile

Around 117,000 people came, exceeding both the target set for the project and the total achieved by *Treasures of Heaven*. The profile of visitors was markedly different and to any other British Museum exhibition to date; 66% of visitors had Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, compared to only 7% for the *Treasures of Heaven* exhibition. Almost 50% of visitors described themselves as Muslim, again an unparalled figure, reflecting the strong appeal of the exhibition for British Muslims. Around 25 % of the audience were on a first time visit to the Museum. Over 20% of visits were made by families, an exceptionally high proportion for an exhibition at the British Museum, reflecting the high proportion of Muslims who visited in family groups.

The average length of visit was 1 hour 28 minutes, higher than many previous shows, and arguably a reflection of the audience's engagement with the display as well as the number of objects and high word count.

Table showing the breakdown of Hajj and Treasures of Heaven exhibition audiences by religion, compared to national data from the Taking Part survey (DCMS 2011, MHM 2011):

Religion	Hajj	Treasures of Heaven	Taking Part Survey
Muslim	47%	0%	4%
Christian	22%	63%	66%
None	23%	30%	26%
Other	8%	8%	4%

Motivation data confirms that Muslims and non-Muslims attended the exhibition for quite distinct reasons. The later were significantly more likely to be driven by the desire to gain a deeper insight into the subject, or to improve their own knowledge and understanding. They were driven primarily by intellectual motivations; 63% of non-Muslim visitors, for example, stated that they wanted to learn more about Islam generally and frequently cited having Muslim friends, family and work colleagues as important motivating factors.

Not surprisingly, Muslim visitors gave different reasons, influenced by whether or not they had completed Hajj themselves. Muslims were more likely to be driven, both by a desire to feel a strong sense of personal connection and a desire to encourage their children's interest. Muslim visitors who hadn't undertaken Hajj, wanted to experience what it would be like to make the journey to Mecca:

> "We've got an intention of going to Mecca … and we just wanted to see how it is… just to get the feel of what it is when you get there" (*Muslim visitor*).

The motivation for those who completed Hajj was, as might be expected, very different. For 34% Muslim visitors the exhibition gave them an opportunity to recall and reflect on their personal experience of pilgrimage. Many Muslim visitors also expressed an interest in seeing how an institution like the British Museum would tackle Hajj and represent Islam in an exhibition.

Visitor response

The summative evaluation provides rich and varied insights into visitors' experiences. However there were three elements of the exhibition that featured particularly prominently in visitors' unprompted testimony and these are discussed below.

The entry corridor

The transitional corridor, from the entrance to the Round Reading Room to the start of the exhibition proper, with the Adhan and Talbiya soundtrack and pilgrim images, appears to have played a crucial role in shaping visitors' mind-set, preparing them for their visit, and introducing the idea of the exhibition as a collective journey mirroring that of Hajj. This approach appears to have worked equally well for all visitors. Some comments suggest that this pre-visit experience helped non-Muslims identify with pilgrims:

> "I particularly liked the beginning … it's a little dark hallway and you're walking towards the light … and I really like the huge imagery of the people walking alongside you so that was helpful in terms of putting everything in place and putting you in the mood of the entire exhibition … it made you feel if you were going on a Hajj yourself so that was great" (*Non-Muslim visitor*).

The immersive atmosphere helped ameliorate some of the sense of voyeurism that had emerged as an issue for non-Muslims during the evaluation 18 months earlier.

For those Muslim visitors who had undertaken Hajj, the atmospheric nature of this installation was a powerful prompt for the recollection of personal experiences, emotions and memories.

> "From the minute I actually walked in, where the entrance was of the exhibition, I was starting to feel things … because I have been to Umrah… it just felt to me that I was there, and when I went in I could relate to it and it just felt… I was very close to Saudi Arabia as opposed to being in the British Museum" (*Muslim visitor*).

Other Muslim visitors spoke of the impact of the audio and photographs in prompting spiritual feelings, or of closeness to God.

> "The Adhan… I really liked that….it really made me feel so near to God" (*Muslim visitor*).

It is fascinating that an element that was designed as a prelude to the exhibition proper, and which didn't feature any objects, was cited so frequently both as a highlight and as part of visitor's recollections of the exhibition. It is also interesting to note that whereas there were undoubtedly anxieties amongst potential visitors to *Treasures of Heaven* about possibly being unconsciously manipulated by the exhibition design into a devotional or reverential response, similar fears did not appear to have emerged with *Hajj.* In this context the immersive, experiential approach was warmly welcomed. For non-Muslims perhaps this was because that felt more comfortable with Islam as a subject than Christianity. For Muslim visitors the audio element appears to have provided a powerful prompt for either recollecting past experiences, or imagining what the experience might be like.

The Journey to Mecca film

The film was described by many visitors as their highlight. Some of the sequences gave visitors, for the first time, a sense of the sheer scale of contemporary Hajj and the vast numbers of people that participate. Holding back the full impact of Hajj to this this point was a conscious decision. The Museum was fortunate to be able to utilise recent spectacular footage, of pilgrims circumambulating around the Ka-ba for example, that otherwise would have been well beyond its resources. Although the film was intended to primarily to introduce the key rituals of Hajj sequentially, it highlighted the emotional significance of them. As with the Adhan audio-soundscape, for Muslim visitors who had undertaken Hajj the film was a powerful stimulus for recalling memories of their own experiences.

> "The thing I found most moving in terms of reminding me [of] when I was there, was the video… the pictures and so on …were very moving" (*Muslim visitor*).

From a practical perspective the film theatre space helped with the pacing of the exhibition, proving an opportunity for rest and recharging:

> "It was at the right point… because you have done about half and you just want to have a sit down… and watch this… for five minutes" *(Muslim visitor).*

The more practical prosaic and practical aspects of exhibition visiting are easily overlooked. Pacing in any large exhibition, where a visit might last for several hours, is an important factor.

Contemporary art

Although there were only seven contemporary artworks, compared to over 150 objects or artefacts, their impact was disproportionately high, and they featured prominently in visitors' accounts of the exhibition. Many of these unprompted comments revealed surprise that contemporary art had been included in the exhibition. Some older Muslim visitors felt that contemporary art was an important way of helping younger Muslim's understand Hajj, and its relevance, even if it was something that they personally found less engaging.

Some of the contemporary art appears to have been particularly effective in provoking an active response or encouraging intuitive connections. *Magnetism 2012* by Ahmed Mater al-Ziad was the most frequently identified piece and seems to have communicated the attraction of the Ka'ba in a more immediate an intuitive way than traditional interpretive approaches. Pieces like *Magnetism* and *You and Only You* helped visitors understand the emotional impulses and motives behind Hajj:

> 'This last piece of art work here was quite striking … when you saw it they re-created the image of everyone walking around and then when you got closer you suddenly realised it was actually writing... You finish your spiritual journey by looking at this, what seems to be the Ka'ba in the middle and you go out – it's just brilliant'

The approach to interpreting art is one that remains the focus of contested debate in the museums and galleries sector in the UK. Penelope Curtis, Director of Tate Britain, for example, was quoted as saying: 'I want people to engage directly with the art…not to read what an interpretation team has cobbled together' (Bankes 2011). However it is a recurring finding in exhibition evaluation at the British Museum that audiences value a contextualised approach, rather than simply leaving the art to 'speak for itself'. It seems reasonable to suggest that placing the artworks within broader thematic sections in Hajj was an effective strategy that enriched both the contemporary artworks and the more narrative driven displays. The art also appears to have been particularly effective in provoking thought, fulfilling one of Freeman Tilden's six key principles of interpretive communication (Tilden 1957/2007)

What impact did the exhibition have on visitors' attitudes?

The qualitative data gathered through exit interviews and post-visit focus groups indicates that the visitors felt that the exhibition had encouraged them to re-evaluate their attitudes towards Islam, Muslims, and the British Museum. One visitor stated that the exhibition had given them:

> "A deeper understanding of what it is to be a Muslim" (*Non-Muslim visitor*).

It is unusual, in my experience, for the audience itself to become a subject of conversation during evaluation. Both Muslims and non-Muslims commented on the atmosphere in the exhibition, and that it had brought together groups who would not ordinarily encounter each other. Each exhibition at the Museum attracts a high proportion of repeat visitors, and it is not surprising therefore that both the high proportion of Muslim visitors, and the different atmosphere, was commented upon. Many visitors felt the exhibition had brought people from a range of backgrounds together for a shared experience:

> "It is nice to see lots of Muslims in the Museum. I don't think I have ever seen so many, and they are of all ages and it is just very pleasant that there are people who are here for different reasons…" (*Non-Muslim visitor*).

The opportunity to witness Muslims engaging with the exhibition appears to have provided other visitors with insights into the 'real' pilgrim experience, whether this was due to seeing the bustling crowds of Muslim visitors around the exhibits or overhearing specific conversations. The fact that Hajj is only open to Muslims meant that Muslim visitors were sometimes viewed as additional and more authentic sources of information (Berns 2013).

Conversely some Muslim visitors commented upon the non-Muslims in the audience in a way that suggests that their presence was also an important element the exhibition experience. For example:

> "Seeing the vast amount of people that were there. They'd all come from different cultures… I was very impressed to see and pleased … that there were a lot of non-Muslims [there]… (*Muslim visitor*).

> "I'm just so touched that I saw so many people from different faiths…Everyone's sitting quietly listening and it shows people are tolerant of all religion which is meant to be the case" (*Muslim visitor*).

It is impossible to quantify but based on personal experience of previous exhibitions at the Museum Hajj seemed to have a more social or talkative atmosphere. People were interacting with each and their presence or agency arguably played an important role in shaping the exhibition experience.

The positive atmosphere may have played a significant but unexpected role in creating a successful visit and shaping perceptions of the Museum. Visitors were asked whether visiting the exhibition would affect the way they used the British Museum in the future. The table below shows the proportion of exhibition visitors who said they would alter their behaviour.

Table showing impact of visiting Hajj on future behaviour (MHM 2011):

More likely to…	**% Overall**	**% Muslim**	**% Non-Muslim**
Visit the permanent Islamic Gallery (Room 34)	65%	76%	54%
Find out more about Hajj events and activities	52%	72%	34%
Make a general visit to the British Museum	45%	64%	30%

The statements are an indication of the goodwill generated by the exhibition. The reality, of course, is that only a small proportion of those visitors surveyed followed up on their intention. Once the exhibition was closed, the profile of the Museum's audience quickly returned to its pre-Hajj composition. The long-term impact of *Hajj* on its audience is impossible to quantify because there is no reliable evidence. Like most exhibition evaluations, the data was gathered either during the exhibition visit, or immediately after visitors had exited the space. The long term impact of exhibition visiting generally remains an under-researched area (Anderson et al. 2007).

Additional research

During the runs of both *Treasures of Heaven* and *Hajj*, doctoral researcher Steph Berns conducted a concurrent study using a combination of semi-structured exit interviews and observations to explore how both exhibitions shaped visitors' experiences of the divine. This research was undertaken as part of an AHRC-funded collaborative doctorate between the University of Kent and the British Museum (Berns 2013). Berns' study revealed visitor behaviour and responses that were not captured by the summative work undertaken by MHM, evaluations which inevitably need to focus on the typical or the average.

In *Treasures of Heaven,* Berns observed visitors performing religious rituals and prayers in the exhibition space, behaviours that were not fully anticipated at the planning stages of the project In contrast, most of the Muslim visitors Berns interviewed about the *Hajj* exhibition were reluctant to identify their museum experience as 'religious'. For Muslim visitors *Hajj* seems to have primarily provided an opportunity to reflect on or imagine the pilgrimage. Few visitors were observed performing religious rituals in the exhibition space in contrast to *Treasures of Heaven*. Authorised rituals such as prayer were instead either performed outside the Museum or in the prayer room that was provided during the run of the exhibition. The fine-grained research undertaken by Berns is a reminder of nuanced and varied ways visitors can respond to religious objects and subjects in spaces that might be thought of as secular or neutral.

Conclusion

For around twelve weeks in the spring of 2012 the Hajj exhibition successfully drew a significantly different audience to the British Museum. The exhibition provided a focus for discussion and debate about Hajj and Islam. The coverage generated in the media underlines the role of exhibitions as a powerful platform for exploring issues of contemporary relevance. The exhibition exceeded its target for visitors, and the evaluation revealed high rates of satisfaction. Not all feedback was positive, of course. Some individuals felt that the exhibition could have addressed female experience more, and others that potentially controversial content have been deliberately omitted. However the quantitative and qualitative evaluation suggests that for the majority the exhibition delivered its objectives successfully. The exhibition design, the interpretive framework around the objects including digital media, created an immersive experience that the majority of visitors enjoyed regardless of their faith background. The diverse mix of visitors created a unique atmosphere that had not really been anticipated. Other visitors appreciably added to the visitor experience:

> "I really enjoyed the way that everyone enjoyed it together … the subject that is being dealt with is difficult to appreciate when it is totally outside your realm of experience I think, but that is where the other people come in and the fact that I could see people around being so moved really helped me to understand the impact that it can have on your life. That was a very nice thing."

Hajj: journey to the heart of Islam provides further evidence, if any is needed, that it is possible to develop successful exhibitions around religious subjects, and that these exhibitions can be a powerful way of reaching a new audience and bringing people together for a shared experience. Maintaining the momentum generated, and sustaining the relationships, are of course more difficult and an area where many museums have struggled. The British Museum is fortunate to have an important collection of Islamic art, and a permanent gallery devoted to it. The Museum now has a remarkable opportunity to take the successful interpretive approaches used in the Hajj exhibition and to apply them to the permanent displays at the Museum, reinvigorating them, deepening visitor's engagement with them, and providing a platform for visitors to explore aspects of the Islamic world which are seldom encountered in media coverage.

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Our world heritage:
Interpreting a cultural landscape with local character(s) and world connections

by Lisa Keys

Abstracts
Supported by the South Pennines LEADER programme and Heritage Lottery Fund, the Watershed Landscape project aimed to enhance and conserve the South Pennines landscape, whilst improving access for all. Over three years the project sought to reveal the hidden heritage stories of this unique landscape. The often-perceived 'natural' South Pennine landscape was to be revealed in a new light – as a cultural landscape fashioned by 10,000 years of human impact. The character of this landscape, along with its people, folklore and buildings, is a product of global connections and trade routes that crossed over its hills. Local communities and stakeholders contributed to the development of a range of interpretive media, including interpretive trails for mobile devices, which enhance understanding of this landscape's world heritage. Through increased access, this area is a source of pride for local people, but has greater relevance for visitors from further away.

The Watershed Landscape Project

The South Pennines landscape includes 'large-scale sweeping moorlands, pastures enclosed by drystone walls, and gritstone settlements contained within narrow valleys' (Natural England 2012: 2). Natural England's Natural Character Area profile identifies opportunities for the South Pennines including 'encouraging more people to visit… and understand their surroundings' and suggests 'providing interpretation of historic buildings and artefacts to bring out their role in the development of the landscape over time' (ibid.: 15).

The Watershed Landscape Project in the South Pennines 'was a three year programme that ran between 2010 and 2013' (Pennine Prospects Ltd 2014) to protect and enhance, improve and encourage understanding of and conserve the landscape (Pennine Prospects Ltd 2013). The Watershed landscape project area was 'defined as the upland areas of the South Pennines that lie between the conurbations of Leeds/Bradford and Manchester' (TellTale 2009: 7). The baseline interpretation plan noted that the area 'has a distinct, but under-regarded landscape character: its lack of recognition probably derived from its straddling a number of local authorities and two English regions' (ibid.).

The baseline interpretation plan (TellTale 2009) developed for the project, as well as findings during the project phase, identified two specific locations for interpreting the landscape's historical development; the Castleshaw Valley and the Upper Colne Valley. These are located on opposing sides of the South Pennines ridge, and both provided interpretive opportunities relating to the Mesolithic, Roman and Industrial periods. These time periods witnessed movements of people, trade between communities and changes to the landscape on scales that have had lasting impacts. Communication routes were established over the South Pennines ridge at this point; where east meets west.

Desk-based research and interpretation plans were developed for both locations to (after Minerva Heritage Ltd 2011):

- Identify and assess the nature of the heritage resource;
- Gather historical information on the development of the areas and individual sites within them;
- Recommend the course of heritage trails;
- Recommend key sites and features to be interpreted.

The heritage resource

The landscape, often perceived as 'natural,' is anything but. From every perspective, human impact on the landscape is evident. The built and archaeological remains, archive and museum collections and cultural heritage provided opportunities, if interpreted in the right way, for insights into this unique landscape.

Physical remains
Owing to the area's rich industrial heritage, particularly due to the area's engagement in the wool trade, there is a considerable built heritage resource (see Figure 1).

There were also many earthwork remains that are the visible evidence for prehistoric and Roman occupation of these valleys. To the untrained eye, the historic buildings and the 'lumps and bumps' in the ground were nothing more than old houses, or natural irregularities in the landscape (see Figure 2).

Archive and museum collections
A plethora of material existed about the areas within the public record offices, libraries and museums. Photographs, maps, documents and artefacts provided an opportunity to further understanding of the area's heritage (see Figure 3 and 4).

Cultural heritage
The people and the folklore of the valleys were crucial to understanding the valleys' heritage. Records of the people who lived and worked in the valleys, the people who came along and changed them and the stories they told could provide further insights into the heritage of this area (see Figure 5).

Interpretive media
The heritage resource provided many route-ways for people to engage with the heritage, but the resource by itself could not facilitate this.

The baseline interpretation plan noted that the heritage should be interpreted to the public at 'entry level and assume little or no background knowledge of the uplands' (TellTale 2009: 13). Adding to this, the media should 'not intrude into the wild experience of the uplands' (ibid.: 12).

In-depth consultation with stakeholders and partners, land-owners, residents within the valley and the surrounding area and local schools was

Figure 1: The Castleshaw and Upper Colne Valleys still contain dozens of examples of woollen workshops, some now converted into residential dwellings but many more of which have been lost. The small windows lit up the looms of the 18th-19th century weavers © Minerva Heritage Ltd.

Figure 2: A canal ventilation shaft at the head of the Upper Colne Valley. Canals built over, under and into the Pennines opened up the landscape in the 19th century, allowing transport of raw materials in and out of the valleys © Minerva Heritage Ltd.

Figure 3: Navvies were set to work building the reservoirs that changed the landscape forever but importantly provided towns with vital drinking water (from Fox, M. and Fox, P 1989: 13).

Figure 4: A Roman quernstone found in the Castleshaw Valley providing evidence for Roman occupation and the far-reaching impact of the formidable empire © Minerva Heritage Ltd.

Figure 5: Blind Jack of Knaresborough was a key historic figure for both the Castleshaw and Upper Colne Valleys. He was the civil engineer responsible for the building of the Turnpike road that traversed the Pennines from east to west (image from Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia)

carried out to inform the themes that were emerging from examination of the heritage resource and the preferred media option for the interpretation. The consultation revealed that telling the stories of the 'people in the valleys' past would facilitate maximum engagement with the heritage (Minerva Heritage 2011: 53). Interpretive panels to explain the valleys' heritage were the preferred media option by the general public. However due to planning restrictions and the 'intrusive' nature of interpretive panels in the 'wild' landscape, the second preferred option of the public (and the first option by partners and stakeholders) – heritage trails accessible to iPod and Smart-phone device users – were selected as the way forward.

A number of formats were considered for the heritage trails. In the Castleshaw Valley, there were sufficient resources to allow the development of audio-visual trails. The final output of the trails here was developed as three mp4 video files which can be downloaded from the Watershed Landscape Project's website (http://www.watershedlandscape.co.uk/resources/downloadable-resources/audio-guides/). A local voice-over artist was employed to narrate the audio scripts which users can hear as they walk around the trail route (see Figures 6, 7 and 8).

The 'Passage to the Pennines' and 'Going the Distance' Upper Colne Valley trails were produced as podscroll trails (http://www.watershedlandscape.co.uk/resources/downloadable-resources/pod-scrolls/).

Consultation highlighted the importance of directions to the nearest facilities and refreshments being included in the trail videos/podscrolls. Also, the trails needed to be very clear about the length of walk, terrain and access issues (for example if stiles were involved en-route). These factors were clearly explained at the beginning of each trail video/podscroll.

Consultation also demonstrated the need to sign-post users to websites, attractions and places where they could find out more. Links and locations were provided at the end of the trail videos/podscrolls to encourage people to explore the heritage of the areas further.

Further information about the heritage of the valleys was also developed for inclusion on the Watershed Landscape Project website.

Was it a success?

The Castleshaw and Upper Colne Valley heritage trails

In July 2013, evaluation of the heritage trails was undertaken with five focus groups. The comments about the interpretive content and presentation demonstrated success:

> 'It was interesting to hear snippets of useful information rather than long boring bits of historical information' (*Female focus group attendee*).
>
> 'I liked being put into the time when people would have lived here during the woollen industry' (*Female focus group attendee*).
>
> 'I loved the thematic approach, you could have told me anything about Marsden but the fact you concentrated on the history of transport which can be reflected in Marsden's buildings and infrastructure made it really interesting and memorable' (*Male focus-group attendee*).
>
> 'It was the right amount of information; I was not overloaded by information which you can be on some other walks…I'll definitely go home and download some more' (*Male focus group attendee*) (Minerva Heritage Ltd 2013: 5, 6 and 9).

The main obstacles experienced with the trail videos/podscrolls highlighted the draw-backs of technology to date. Some of the focus group participants had difficulty downloading the trail files from the Watershed Landscape Project website onto their respective devices. Instructions for download had been provided but the obstacles had arisen where participants had not fully understood how their own devices worked.

The Watershed Landscape Project

The Watershed Landscape Project itself has been awarded a Laureate in the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Awards 2013. It was the only UK winner in the 'Education, Training and Awareness-raising' category, placing the heritage of the South Pennines and the work of

Figure 6: Local folklore provides a superstitious angle to the area's heritage. The bleak moorland was said to be haunted by frightening witches and its quarries by mischievous spirits called boggarts.

Figure 7: A screenshot of the audio-trail MP4 with introductory leaflet inset

Figure 8: An illustration of a Mesolithic flint-knapper seated in the Pennine area above the Castleshaw and Upper Colne valleys. It was produced to help users visualise and understand the distant past © www.sinclair-illustration.co.uk

its volunteers firmly on the European stage.

Conclusion

The Watershed Landscape Project and the heritage trails discussed in this paper highlight the considerable opportunities for engagement with heritage. The project outputs have been a European success, and on a local level, using a thematic and entry-level approach, they have helped users to see the landscape in new ways – that this is a cultural landscape that has been fashioned by people for millennia. Through interpretation people are now also able to appreciate better the impact of world connections on the most 'local' of places in one of the remotest parts of England.

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Participatory interpretive frameworks:
Increase community involvement in interpreting heritage sites

by Jon Kohl

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Abstract

Interpretive planners with development experience and facilitation skills can guide communities through the creation of meanings held and displayed in interpretive frameworks, which contribute to community self-identity and self-worth. But first interpreters must leave behind the conventional consultant-driven approach. These participatory interpretive frameworks not only allow communities to design more authentic heritage products, but also to more fully participate in development projects of all kinds. The interpretation community has underestimated the role of interpretation in community development.

Interpretation as Community Development Strategy

The difference between heritage and resources are the meanings that a community ascribes. Once a consensus emerges that a resource indeed embodies significant meanings, we call that resource "heritage", even though no such consensus may exist on what those meanings are. Though consensus may seem elusive, the prize well merits the hunt. A community's self-esteem, self-identity, pride, and even market potential all depend on meanings that people both inside and outside the community assign to the place. Often residents may perceive only a shadowy notion of their site's worth or its central story and have never joined their thoughts with those of fellow members in a facilitated, consensus-based conversation.

Most communities cannot boast the attractive power of a Paris, and not just because they do not share such outstanding heritage. Often they have never even articulated a collective meaning. Thus they suffer a confused self-identity and self-worth that can inhibit development, especially in poor, underdeveloped communities, leading to a lack of self-confidence and dependency on outsiders.

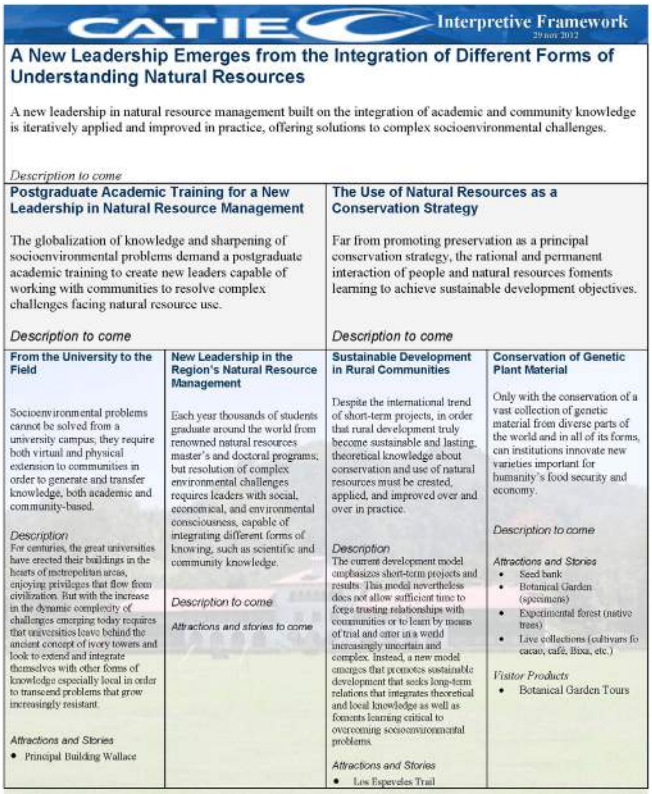
If indeed interpretation can be used by skilled interpretive facilitator-planners to help people forge collective meanings; meanings that help them to more deeply understand and appreciate their own community, then perhaps interpretation could be not only a therapeutic tool, but a force to promote development, especially in heritage tourism.

Communities that cannot articulate their meanings, or have been wooed into declaring marketing slogans or have lost inherited meanings can fall victim to uncontrolled tourism that threatens the very heritage and value that attracted tourists in the first place.

To avoid the absence of making meaning or to pull communities from a negative story that chains them down, interpretation can meet the need, but first interpreters must cast down the traditional consultant-driven approach. Instead, interpretive planners need to become meaning facilitators and one tool that can help is the participatory interpretive framework.

Interpretive Frameworks Guard Community Meanings

An interpretive framework holds local and universal meanings, stories, attractions, and symbols relevant to a community on a single page so that people can view the entire framework. Aside from the hierarchical, interrelated web of interpretive messages themselves, the framework may include brief descriptions of each message offering evidence for perspectives revealed in messages as well as how messages connect to the local site. They may also include short lists of



CATIE Interpretive Framework
29 nov 2012

A New Leadership Emerges from the Integration of Different Forms of Understanding Natural Resources A new leadership in natural resource management built on the integration of academic and community knowledge is iteratively applied and improved in practice, offering solutions to complex socioenvironmental challenges. *Description to come*			
Postgraduate Academic Training for a New Leadership in Natural Resource Management The globalization of knowledge and sharpening of socioenvironmental problems demand a postgraduate academic training to create new leaders capable of working with communities to resolve complex challenges facing natural resource use. *Description to come*		**The Use of Natural Resources as a Conservation Strategy** Far from promoting preservation as a principal conservation strategy, the rational and permanent interaction of people and natural resources foments learning to achieve sustainable development objectives. *Description to come*	
From the University to the Field Socioenvironmental problems cannot be solved from a university campus; they require both virtual and physical extension to communities in order to generate and transfer knowledge, both academic and community-based. *Description* For centuries, the great universities have erected their buildings in the hearts of metropolitan areas, enjoying privileges that flow from civilization. But with the increase in the dynamic complexity of challenges emerging today requires that universities leave behind the ancient concept of ivory towers and look to extend and integrate themselves with other forms of knowledge especially local in order to transcend problems that grow increasingly resistant. *Attractions and Stories* • Principal Building Wallace	**New Leadership in the Region's Natural Resource Management** Each year thousands of students graduate around the world from renowned natural resources master's and doctoral programs; but resolution of complex environmental challenges requires leaders with social, economical, and environmental consciousness, capable of integrating different forms of knowing, such as scientific and community knowledge. *Description to come* *Attractions and stories to come*	**Sustainable Development in Rural Communities** Despite the international trend of short-term projects, in order that rural development truly become sustainable and lasting, theoretical knowledge about conservation and use of natural resources must be created, applied, and improved over and over in practice. *Description* The current development model emphasizes short-term projects and results. This model nevertheless does not allow sufficient time to forge trusting relationships with communities or to learn by means of trial and error in a world increasingly uncertain and complex. Instead, a new model emerges that promotes sustainable development that seeks long-term relations that integrates theoretical and local knowledge as well as foments learning critical to overcoming socioenvironmental problems. *Attractions and Stories* • Los Espeveles Trail	**Conservation of Genetic Plant Material** Only with the conservation of a vast collection of genetic material from diverse parts of the world and in all of its forms, can institutions innovate new varieties important for humanity's food security and economy. *Description to come* *Attractions and Stories* • Seed bank • Botanical Garden (specimens) • Experimental forest (native trees) • Live collections (cultivars fo cacao, café, Bixa, etc.) *Visitor Products* • Botanical Garden Tours

Figure 1: Partial interpretive framework from a university community (CATIE, in Costa Rica) showing examples of descriptions, attractions, and stories matched to messages.

principal site attractions and stories that correspond to different messages in the framework (see Figure 1). It is through attractions and stories as well as interpretive products that visitors encounter and experience messages.

While the bottom row may have messages that directly refer to the interpreted site (see Figure 2), the upper echelons display universalized messages that express some truth applicable throughout the world, for which the interpreted site proves an outstanding illustration. Through making the meaning universal we ascend the pyramid, local stories enjoy a direct connection to revealed truths relevant to people around the world, thus tying local reality into greater arcs of consciousness and importance, granting even the most forlorn place its rightful place in the evolving universe.

Meaning must be Co-Created

For an interpretive framework to have any chance of success, a wide and diverse slice of the community must participate in its forging. If they do not co-create, they will not own, and when the interpreter leaves, the framework will fall into

Interpretive Framework for El Cocuy National Park, Colombia, 2013

Overarching universal message	**Glacial Routes, Biological Routes** With the passage of time, glacial routes open and close routes for humans and other species			
Universal messages (true even without local references)	**Throwing Salt on the Sacred Wound** Commerce along the Salt Route unleashed a wave of desecration of indigenous territory.		**Glaciations and Biodiversity** The millennial expansion and retrocession of glaciers in El Cocuy National Park created refuges that permit speciation along altitudinal gradients.	
Local messages (small committee)	**The Salt Route** Commercial traffic along the Salt Route, whether indigenous or Spanish, drove the cultural and territorial domination of El Cocuy and its surroundings.	**Desecration** Despite the fact that the Spanish brought the Holy Cross to extend their religion over the indigenous cosmovision, in reality, they desecrated their land.	**Glacial Masses** Although the snowcap mountains of Güicán, Cocuy and Chita have one of the most extensive glacial masses north of the equator, the peaks that were once covered in ice, one by one, are melting.	**Biodiversity and Endemism** Given the altitudinal gradient that cuts across extensive forests and paramos and the resulting abundant of habitat, El Cocuy National Park is the heart of high levels of biodiversity and endemism, such as the Frailejón *Epeletia cleffi* and collard lizard (*Stenocercus lache*).
Message groupings (workshop)	**Thoughts of the locals**		**Biophysical characteristics of the place**	
Emerging messages (workshop)	Cocuy, Art, Beauty, and Culture	History of the magic and religious	The Sierra Nevada in its majestic height	5,300 meters in biodiversity

Figure 2: The interpretive framework for El Cocuy National Park in Colombia illustrates how a framework is built from the bottom up, from emerging messages produced in plenary, through local and universal messages written by a small committee with the approval of the plenary.

disuse. If key community perspectives are left out, people who represent those perspectives may not support the framework. Co-owning is not enough though, a community must be accompanied in its learning to use, practice, know, and create a new habit to integrate it into daily work. There must be enough awareness of its utility and even leadership to try out the initiative.

Interpretive Frameworks Arise through Participation

The methodology described here comes from the PUP Global Heritage Consortium's Interpretive Framework module, part of its Public Use Planning Process (www.pupconsortium.net). The one-day workshop consists of two principal exercises.

Historical Scan. While site history may be well documented in books, when a community reconstructs it collectively its members come to understand its evolution and its eras in a new collective light, out of which arise stories that will later populate the framework as well as possible theme ideas that feed into the afternoon session (see Figure 3). While this step is not essential to an interpretive framework, its absence lessens the group's ability to develop a collective flow and work together which will be well served in the upcoming exercise.

Creation of emerging messages through consensus. The steps follow the Consensus Workshop Method, a participatory tool along with the "Historical Scan" within the Technology of Participation, developed by the Institute for Cultural Affairs. Essentially the facilitator asks participants to

Figure 4: The coordinator for the historic center of the World Heritage City of Evora, Portugal leads individuals from throughout the city in creating the city's interpretive framework, drawing on thousands of years of history (Photo: by Jon Kohl).

brainstorm significant attributes about the site which participants then group, name, and analyze into short thematic phrases, called "emerging messages" (see Figure 4). Later the facilitator works with a small committee of participants to convert emerging messages into interpretive messages and then to fill out the hierarchy of 4–7 messages, local to universal.

Interpretive Planners Require New Skills

Carrying out an interpretive framework in a community development context requires a new job description for conventional interpretive planning consultants. Such workers need training in participatory process facilitation, experience

Figure 3: Residents of Union Island, the most southern island in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, used the historical scan technique to identify stories, eras, and themes in their island's history. This participatory tool is the first of three principal steps in developing a community interpretive framework (Photo by Jon Kohl).

in community development, a deep sensitivity to internal issues of both individual and collective minds, such as concerns, motivations, values, and consciousness. Anyone who works in development should also be emotionally mature, have an ego in check, and be willing to accompany communities during extended periods. Of course they also have to be expert interpreters, especially capable of helping others make connections between local stories and universal meanings and then help them capture these meanings in well-crafted messages.

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Jon Kohl is coordinating facilitator of the PUP Global Heritage Consortium, a global network of organizations and individuals that support the introduction of emerging paradigms about planning and management into the heritage management field in order to reverse the tendency for plans to end on shelves unimplemented (www.pupconsortium.net). This process includes participatory interpretive planning. He has also worked as an interpretive planner, interpretive trainer, writer, blogger, exhibition researcher, university professor, and zoo educator. Jon has published widely on interpretation and currently maintains a blog on international heritage interpretation that highlights tools, examples, and ideas from around the world of interpretation. The blog can be found atwww.facebook.com/heritageinterpretation. He currently lives in Manhattan, Kansas where his wife, Marisol Mayorga, pursues her PhD in environmental interpretation under the supervison of Dr. Ted Cable.

Exploring the benefits of heritage interpretation:

The role of interpretation in reducing potential conflicts at a heritage site

by Iryna Shalaginova

Abstract

This article briefly introduces the benefits heritage interpretation can bring to a heritage site; these are four in number educational, conservation, management and economic. It indicates some of the studies which were conducted to prove the role of interpretation in achieving one or other of the benefits. It then suggests to including an additional benefit – prevention of conflicts at a heritage site – that can be achieved with the help of interpretation. An example of the Britz estate (Hufeisensiedlung) in Berlin illustrates the reasons for a conflict between the managing organization and residents of the estate. It is further shown how this conflict could have been prevented with the help of heritage interpretation. Need for further research on the role of interpretation in preventing conflicts is stressed as a concluding remark.

Benefits of heritage interpretation

Heritage interpretation originated as a non-formal educational activity and it has been primarily used by heritage managers in order to enrich the visitor's experience and to raise visitor's awareness and understanding of a heritage site. The definition of heritage interpretation given by Freeman Tilden in 1957 guided the philosophy and the work of heritage interpreters for many decades but, in recent years, it has been recognized that heritage interpretation can be used for accomplishing a number of additional management goals, such as regulation of visitors at a site, promotion of public understanding of an organization that manages the site (Hall and McArthur 1993: 27), gaining public and political support, bringing more visitors and thus more money to a site, and reducing cost of maintenance (Veverka 2000). According to Atkinson and Mullins (1998) heritage interpretation benefits all the stakeholders involved: visitors get a better understanding and appreciation of the world around them and their relationship to it; society benefits from having a more informed citizenry who appreciate their natural and built environments and owners or managers of sites, through explanation of the needs and processes of management, help people to "develop empathy with the organization through intelligent, nonpropagandistic explanations" (Knudson et al., in Atkinson and Mullins 1998: 49).

In the past years, more and more empirical research has been conducted in order to investigate how far heritage interpretation may contribute to management issues as well as to education. The potential benefits heritage interpretation may bring to a heritage site can be grouped into: (1) educational; (2) conservation; (3) management and (4) economic. In many respects these benefits interrelate and overlap. Thus, one of the management benefits heritage interpretation may have is the management of visitor flows at a heritage site for the purpose of site preservation, which can be achieved with the help of carefully designed heritage trails. At the same time, the same trails may also educate visitors specific aspects and values of a site. But for a better understanding, the above mentioned benefits of heritage interpretation will be discussed individually.

Educational benefits

Use of heritage interpretation for educational purposes has been studied empirically over the past few years and proves effectiveness of interpretive activities on knowledge gain and information retain. As early as the 1980s, studies of museum exhibitions indicate that including interpretive information within the exhibits, or aiming for fewer words of explanation prove effective in knowledge gain, as well as increasing the attraction and holding power of the exhibits (see for example, Peart 1986; Borun and Miller 1986; Arndt et al. 1993).

However, it is worth mentioning that most studies only analyzed short term effects on knowledge gain. A long-term recall of interpretive experience as well as the factors that aid the recollection of interpretive experiences are not numerous. Two studies by Knapp and Yang (2002) as well as Knapp and Benton (2005) can be mentioned here. In these studies, test subjects participated in an interpretive programme and a few months later (in the first study) or two years later (in the second study) they were contacted by phone and interviewed. Even though the sampling groups of four participants (in the first study) and six (in the second study) does not allow generalizations, the studies nevertheless show that visual material, novelty, personal significance of the interpretive material, as well as active involvement during the interpretive programme, had a positive effect on a long-term recollection.

A positive effect of heritage interpretation on knowledge gain has been effectively proven not only by various empirical studies but also by practical daily experience of heritage interpreters and is now taken as an axiom rather than something that needs further investigation.

Conservation benefits

In the last few years, the role of heritage interpretation has been expanding from simple explanation of the site history and significance to the tool for reducing negative impacts of visitors by distributing visitors at the site, controlling access to sensitive sites or providing an alternative experience as well as generating resources for conservation (Moscardo 1996: 379; Kohl and Mayorga 2003). Pierssené perceives interpretation primarily as a tool for the conservation of a site:

> "Because conservation is the prime, the underlying, the ulterior motive of Interpretation, it stands to reason that the Feature itself is the most important party to the Interpretation process. It is not there to be exploited; it must be handled with loving care. This is not just for the selfish and cynical reason that attractive and interesting features, if well looked after, can be made to generate money, but because they are parts of our world that matter – if they did not, then we would not consider them worth interpreting. We interpret in order to conserve" (1999: 43).

Interpretation can help to raise awareness about conservation activities at the site, regulations which exist in connection with it and stimulate behavioural change. Through explanations of complex conservation activities which have to be done at the site, it helps to win support for the site itself and for the managing organisation. Carter (1993) argues that presentation of restoration activities[1] has been greatly ignored by heritage managers. He further points out that public and private agencies working on restoration can gain as much from the explanation of their efforts as from explaining the site's values. In order to be able to develop quality interpretive programmes on restoration activities, one needs to acquire sufficient information not only on a heritage site itself but also on the techniques and methods used in restoration. Carter suggests developing new heritage site inventories which would help to develop better interpretive programmes (1993).

What Carter (1993) suggest doing is simply to expand the knowledge of a heritage site and include not only its values and history within its inventory, which is then used for interpretation, but also information on the restoration activities. This goes along with the fifth principle for interpretation defined by Tilden:

> "Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part, and must address itself to the whole man rather than any phase" (1977: 9).

By showing a bigger picture and communicating restoration activities it is possible to create a better understanding of a heritage site and indicate how one can properly care for it.

Despite the fact that many heritage interpreters believe that the prime aim of interpretation is conservation, it is not yet that widely used to promote conservation objectives. Nevertheless, there are some studies that empirically prove its

[1] Here Carter refers to restoration of natural resources. One of such activities is, for example, controlled burning.

effectiveness in this regard. Curthoys (2009), for example, argues that interpretation is able to create meaningful visitor experience that meets both visitor expectations and conservation objectives. Through interviews with managers of Ramsey Canyon Preserve and analysis of communication media over a 14-year period she illustrates how conservation objectives can be reached through positive visitor experience. A typical model for visitor management includes three courses of action (Curthoys 2009: 7): (1) physical structures (barriers, trails, type and location of facilities); (2) direct controls (charges, permits, rules and regulations); (3) indirect mechanisms (interpretation and educational activities that enhance awareness, understanding and action competence). According to Curthoys (2009), the management of the Ramsey Canyon Preserve has placed more emphasis over the years on interpretive and education activities to achieve their conservation goals rather than on direct controls, and these activities proved to be quite effective

Management benefits

In management issues interpretation is able to instil understanding and appreciation of a heritage site and in so far as possible, change visitors' attitudes and "induce thoughtful and considerate behaviour" (Uzzell 1989: 2). That is what Uzzell (1989) called 'soft' visitor management. Moscardo (1996; 1998) identified several other ways in which interpretive programmes can contribute to reducing negative impacts of visitors at a heritage site:

- Interpretation can relieve pressure through distribution of visitors at a site or controlling access to a site (e.g. allowing access to a site only with a guided tour). It can easily be done with the help of heritage trails, guided walks or by offering a variety of interpretive programmes throughout the site. In this form, interpretation is used as 'hard' visitor management as defined by Uzzell (1989).
- Pressure on a site can also be relieved by informing visitors of lesser-known sites in the area.
- Especially sensitive sites can be protected through offering alternative experiences with the help of interpretive activities, providing them with understanding and impressions of the site without visitors actually being there.
- Negative impacts can be minimized by informing visitors about appropriate behaviour, as they are not always aware of the damage they may cause to the environment, people or the local economy. Therefore, if one wants visitors to behave in a certain way then they should be told about it. Moscardo (1998) notes that information on appropriate behaviour is unfortunately rarely provided to visitors.
- Visitor's behaviour may be improved by developing visitor concern through a positive and memorable experience of which interpretation is usually of great importance. Simply providing information is not by itself likely to result in a behaviour change. Visitors, first, need to have knowledge about both the impacts of various types of behaviour and the appropriate alternatives; and, second, they need to care about the place they are visiting.

Various work on the change of visitor behaviour at a heritage site concentrates on the mechanisms of influencing visitor actions through appeal to descriptive or injunctive norms (Cialdini 1996, Winter et al. 1998) or behavioural, normative and control believes (Ham and Krumpe 1996). The fundamental idea in these works is that interpretive activities, by appealing to visitors' norms and beliefs and changing their attitudes, is able to change problematic behaviour and reduce negative impacts at a site. Thus, there are studies that analyse the use of interpretation in warning visitors of potential dangers at a heritage site, such as feeding animals in a zoo (Bitgood et al. 1988) or feeding deer (Hockett and Hall 2007), in forewarning the visitors of the dangers of dingos (Porter and Howard 2002), in reducing human-black bear accidents (Lackey and Ham 2003) or in understanding of wildland fires (Wiles and Hall 2005).

Some studies attempted to evaluate the influence of heritage interpretation on reducing negative visitor behaviour, such as littering or theft. Thus, Cialdini (1996) studied the effects of activating descriptive and injunctive norms in order to change undesired behaviour, such as littering. Widner and Roggenbuck (2000) and Widner Ward and

Roggenbuck (2003) analysed the effectiveness of interpretive signage for the reduction of the theft of petrified wood at Petrified Forest National Park. And Littlefair and Buckley (2008) empirically proved that interpretation by a trained guide is able to reduce significantly noise, litter and trampling impacts on hiking trails in a subtropical rainforest. This last study shows that interpretive programmes are the cheapest and most widely used methods to reduce negative environmental impacts caused by visitors, as compared to regulations, charges or physical infrastructure.

The above illustrated studies prove that interpretive programmes indeed are able to reduce negative visitor impacts – even more so if combined with other preventive measures. Also the same studies illustrate that interpretation on its own, even though effective in modifying behaviour of some visitors, is not able to change negative behaviours of all visitors. It should rather be considered a tool, which is able to assist and reinforce other preventive measures. To cite Pierssené, "perhaps the best that interpretation can hope to do in the short term is to modify visitor's behaviour to the site's advantage, by engaging their understanding and sympathy" (1999: 49).

Economic benefits

The main economic benefits that heritage interpretation can bring to a site as identified by heritage managers and practitioners are:

- Interpretation is able to attract more visitors to a site. By satisfying visitors' experience, interpretation encourages return visits to a site and also attracts new markets (Wearing and Neil 1999, Moscardo 1998, Veverka 2000).
- Interpretation encourages tourists to stay longer at a site and thus spend more money there and thus it generates profits from visitor spending (Veverka 2000).
- By modifying visitor behaviour interpretation can reduce the costs of maintenance and related management issues (Wearing and Neil 1999, Moscardo 1996, 1998, Veverka 2000).
- Interpretive programmes and services provide added value to a heritage site and tourism experience (Veverka 2000).
- Interpretation also provides direct and indirect employment. There are a lot people employed in interpretation, such as interpreters, guides, communication managers and the like. Development of interpretive programmes demands additional jobs, such as graphic artists, display manufactures, and so on (Wearing and Neil 1999).

Even though many heritage managers agree that interpretation is able to bring economic benefits to a site, this area remains highly understudied and needs additional research, which is supported by quantitative as well as qualitative data. There has been some research done on economics and heritage conservation[2] in the last decades, but unfortunately there is no comprehensive study of economic benefits that interpretation can bring to a heritage site. First of all, it is not easy to put a precise value on the economic return from heritage interpretation as it can be done with catering or retail and it rarely appears as an independent budget head in business planning (Taylor 2000). Secondly, there are few heritage sites that conduct systematically planned interpretive programmes, mostly interpretation is done on the basis of separate projects, when money is available. That does not allow analysing whether an increase in revenues happened due to an interpretive programme or to other factors.

Heritage interpretation and the fifth benefit

Apart from the above-mentioned benefits, heritage interpretation may assume another role and thus bring an additional benefit to a heritage site, namely the prevention of conflicts. Most of the studies mentioned above take visitors as a focal point, and ignore the communities that live within or in the vicinity of a heritage site. At the same time, heritage interpretation can and should be used to address not only the visitors but also the communities. Much is said about the necessity of involving communities in heritage interpretation but such an involvement remains an exception rather than a rule. For some reason there is a belief that it is not

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[2] See, for example, Getty Conservation Institute (1998) *Economics and Heritage Conservation.* A Meeting Organized by the Getty Conservation Institute. Los Angeles: Getty Centre, or Hutter, M. and Rizzo, I. (eds.) 1997. *Economic Perspectives on Cultural Heritage.* Great Britain: Macmillan Press LTD.

necessary to present heritage to communities that live in it as they already know everything about it. Such a belief lies often at the core of the conflicts between preservation authorities that manage and take care of the site and communities that live in it. At the same time heritage interpretation is able to prevent or to minimize potential conflicts between communities and preservation authorities by increasing understanding of a heritage site and its appreciation and by showing all the aspect which are significant for its preservation.

The term "conflict" does not have a single definition but according to Baron (in Afzalur 2010) the following elements overlap in various definitions of the term:

1. Conflict includes opposing interests between individuals or groups in a zero-sum situation[3];
2. Such opposing interests must be recognized for conflict to exist;
3. Conflict involves beliefs, by each side, that the other will thwart (or has already thwarted) its interests;
4. Conflict is a process; it develops out of existing relationships between individuals or groups and reflects their past interactions and the contexts in which these took place; and
5. Implied actions by one or both sides that do, in fact, produce thwarting of others' goals.

(Afzalur 2010: 16)

These elements described by Baron are useful in understanding conflicts that may arise at a heritage site. First of all, the conflicts are not a state but a process that is determined by the previous relationship between social groups or individuals. An intensity and quality of that relationship influences whether conflicts are avoided or created. One may say that the conflicts are born in an interaction or rather in a lack of it. Moreover, the conflicts are based on opposed interests, thus one may assume that a common interest could contribute to the conflict prevention or its resolution.

On the following example of the Britz estate in Berlin will be illustrated how a conflict between a managing organization and a community may arise and how it could have been prevented with the help of heritage interpretation.

3 A situation in which a gain is offset by an equal loss.

A case study of Britz estate in Berlin

The Britz estate, very often referred to as Hufeisensiedlung, in Berlin is one of the six estates that belong to Berlin Modernism Housing Estates, a group inscription within the World Heritage List in 2008 (World Heritage Centre 2008). It is an architectural complex with approximately 2,000 apartments on 37 hectares. Vegetation flourishes everywhere: streets are lined with trees, pathways lead to park-like courtyards. In the heart of the complex is a curved three-storey building – the Hufeisen (horseshoe) which differs from the streets with terraced houses that fork off from its sides (see Figure 1) (Borgelt 2011).

This estate was a response to an extreme housing shortage that followed World War I. From the middle of the 19th century onwards, Berlin expanded enormously as a result of industrialization and the influx of population made the housing shortage very acute. No public housing schemes existed at that time and the construction of residential buildings was mainly in the hands of private developers. The buildings were built as close together as possible. This resulted in a quarter containing four- or five-storey tenement houses with primitive facilities (Borgelt 2011). Workers and clerks could afford an apartment only in such tenement houses that as a rule were overcrowded. The courtyard inside such constructions was dark and pretty small. The living conditions in such tenement houses were also often accompanied by bad sanitary conditions and, as a consequence, health issues among its tenants (see Figure 2):

> "In 1910, 91.6 percent of the apartments in the metropolitan area had no bathrooms; 48.2 percent had to share a WC that was situated on the landing between two floors or out in the courtyard. Only 0.7 percent of the apartments were equipped with electric lighting or central heating" (Borgelt 2011: 12).

The construction reform of the 1920s and 30s aimed at improving such living conditions. Thus, the Britz estate was one of the examples which aspired to provide better, but still affordable, apartments for the working class people. Apart from bigger apartments, it was also important for an architect to provide people with more green space in the form of public green areas as well

Figure 1: Britz estate (Hufeisensiedlung) in Berlin, view of the central part of the architectural complex (Photo: Hermann Günther 2000).

Figure 2: A basement apartment in Berlin from 1908. The description of the apartment states: "Through the old door in bad condition one gets into a poorly furnished apartment. The whitewashed walls of this room are completely covered with smoke. The room height is 2.60, out of which 1.95 are below street level. The window is 1.15m." Source: Geist, J.F./ Kürvers, K. 1984. Das Berliner Mietshaus 1862-1945. München, p. 462.)

Figure 3: Work in progress on the restoration of the inner courtyard in Hufeisen (Photo: Iryna Shalaginova 2011).

as private gardens which could be used also to cultivate vegetables and fruit for personal use and thus help people minimize costs of living (which was especially an issue after World War I).

Today, the multi-storey buildings in the Britz estate are owned by Deutsche Wohnen AG and one or two family houses are in a private ownership. Because it is situated away from the main tourist routes in Berlin, it is not threatened by mass tourism and the estate residents are not bothered by the occasional visitor or a rare guided tour. The web pages, a guide book and occasional guided tours present mainly the architectural features of the estate and its principal architect Bruno Taut. Very few activities, if any, are done specifically for residents to explain the significance of the estate as well as the importance of its multiple aspects, such as public green spaces and gardens. This last aspect is barely touched upon in any of the presentations of the estate.

Lack of understanding on the importance of the aspect of public green spaces and gardens led to a conflict between Deutsche Wohnen AG and the residents, when the managing organization undertook the restoration works of the housing and green areas between 2010 and 2013 (see Figure 3) for the purposes of increasing the value of the property and making the site more attractive for tourists (among other reasons). The renovation and restoration of housing was of course welcomed by the tenants but the restoration works of public green areas, which involved cutting down many old trees and bushes, met very strong opposition, and led to public riots and open petitions against planned works.

If the situation at the Britz estate is evaluated against the elements of the conflict defined earlier the following can be observed:

Opposing interests – the managing organisation of the estate is a pro-profit organisation which is interested in gaining profit from housing rent as well as from tourist activities at the site. Thus, the restoration works are perceived as necessary for increasing the value of the site. Residents choose the estate mainly for its greenery and an idyllic, somewhat 'village', character which makes it a nice place to live for a family, and they naturally want to preserve this feature.

Opposed interests recognized – the managing organization anticipated the apprehension that could be created by the restoration works because, a few years before the restoration works began, inhabitant had already protested after some of the old but unhealthy trees had to be cut down. Nevertheless, little was done to provide the residents with the reasons for the restorations works, and the steps taken. Deutsche Wohnen AG considered the site as its property and did not see a need to consult residents.

Belief that the other side will thwart their own interests – due to the lack of communication, the residents had a feeling that their interest were violated and not taken into account and that their place of living was destroyed without proper reasons for it.

Conflict process – there was little communication between managing authorities and residents before or during the whole process of the restoration works.

Actions to cause conflict – in the first phase of the renovation works in 2011, fifty five trees were cut down (NABU Landesverband Berlin 2011) which caused great consternation among the local population.

Despite the opposing interests, when it comes to restoration works at the site, both Deutsche Wohnen AG and the residents have a common interest which could have been used either to prevent the conflict or to minimize it after it arose. It happened that a piece of PhD research was conducted at the site in 2011 in the midst of that conflict and this attempted to evaluate whether heritage interpretation was able to cause an attitude change towards what was being said about the site. Some of the results of that research can shed more light on whether heritage interpretation could minimize the conflict at the site. Thus, for example, the surveys conducted at the site indicate that 56% of the respondents in the Britz study found conservation regulations reasonable and applied them. The majority of the respondents would have liked to contribute to the conservation of the estates and their significance. At the same time, 35% of respondents in the Britz felt that they could not contribute to the conservation of the estate and its significance as individuals (Shalaginova 2012: 93). That is the common interest which was mentioned above – both Deutsche Wohnen AG and the residents (the majority of them at least) wanted to preserve the site because they took pride in the fact that it is a World Heritage Site. Many residents in the estate found the conservation regulations reasonable and would probably have liked to contribute to them but simply did not know how.

Moreover, most residents were not aware that green areas and gardens are an integral part of the site, the same as its architecture, and have to be preserved as well, which is confirmed by the results of the surveys conducted at the estate. Thus, the interpretive leaflet (see Figure 4), designed for the PhD research conducted at the site in 2011, attempted to communicate the significance of the aspect of green public spaces and gardens. From the distributed leaflets, 49% of the respondents in the Britz study stated that they learnt new information about the presented aspect and furthermore 70% stated that they understood this aspect better after reading the leaflet (Shalaginova 2012).

Furthermore, the residents were asked to rate several aspects of a site according to their importance before and after they read the leaflet (there was a gap of several weeks between the distribution of the questionnaires and the interpretive leaflet). The following aspects were offered for rating: (1) history of the estate; (2) green spaces and gardens; (3) construction reform of 1920s and 1930s; (4) estate as an example of social construction; (5) innovation in construction; (6) history of the residents; (7) history of the architects. Despite the fact that the attitudes of the respondents to the various aspects of the site were already very positive, a positive change in the attitudes to the aspect of ‘green public spaces and gardens’ could be still identified, which was characterised by 10% for all respondents and even by 24% of elderly respondents. Additionally, a positive change in attitude could also be identified for the aspect ‘the estate as an example of social construction’ which was directly connected to the aspect of green public spaces and gardens and was also communicated in the leaflet. On the other aspects, which were not communicated in the leaflet, no significant change in the attitude could be identified (Shalaginova 2012).

It is of course not possible to say with certainty

Figure 4: Interpretive Leaflet (A2 format, inner part) "Grünes Wohnen in der Großstadt: Ein Spaziergang durch die Gärten und Grünflächen der Hufeisensiedlung".

whether a conflict between the managing organization and the residents could have been avoided if more interpretation had been done for the residents before the restoration works began. Nevertheless, the results of the surveys mentioned above indicate three important facts: first, the residents of the estate were not aware of the fact that green public spaces were a part of the World Heritage site, the same as its architecture. Thus, the interests of the residents in this aspect were other than those of the managing organization (that therefore initiated the conflict). Second, more than half of the residents saw conservation activities reasonable and many would even have liked to contribute to the preservation. This fact could have been used to prevent a conflict on the first place. Third, one small interpretive leaflet was able to change positively the attitude of the residents towards the aspect of public green spaces and gardens and could provide them with a better understanding of it. Therefore, one may assume that a serious of interpretive activities or events could strengthen that positive attitude and make it long lasting. By explaining to residents the significance of the various aspects of the site and letting them know how they could contribute to their preservation, the managing organization could have given the people a sense of inclusion, of being able to change something – not being simply a part of the site but an active caretaker of it.

The study conducted at the Britz estate indicated that heritage interpretation is not only able to contribute to a better understanding of specific aspects of a site, but also contributes to a positive attitude change towards this aspect (Shalaginova 2012). There is a possibility that a better understanding of a heritage site may lead to fewer conflicts with preservation authorities, but of course this statement has to be supported by further research. It would be interesting to see the studies analysing how far interpretive activities are able to prevent or to minimise conflicting situations at heritage sites. Today the term 'a heritage site' is no longer attributed to a single historic building but is spread over historic parts of cities as well. Many of those sites still retain their original function as a place to live and work and not just as a museum. Thus, activities that happen at such sites concern not only preservation and managing authorities but residents as well. It is important that not only preservation officers know why a site is significant but also that people who live in it do so also, so that they can take pride in the history of a site and, one hopes, understand better why certain works have to be done to preserve it. Further research on the role of heritage interpretation for preventing conflicts may provide managing and preservation authorities with interpretive techniques that can be applied in communications with communities in order to avoid potential conflicts connected with the preservation of a heritage site.

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Living history in Europe:
International examples of live interpretation
by Martine Teunissen

Abstract
This paper will take you on a journey through the history of 'interpretation' in Europe, following the creation of the first open air museums in Scandinavia towards the creation and increasing use of 'live interpretation'. Starting with Skansen that wanted to be a 'living museum', we follow the broadening scope of open air museums with Den Gamble By (the old city), and see how in Arnhem academics were favoured over the approach with folk costumes, masquerade and theatrical features. We'll travel to America where the Scandinavian open air museums and museum tradition were of little importance to the new museums and where the orientation focused on showing a lively past of ordinary (American) men. We'll follow the development of living history farms and the creation of 'living history'. Then we'll travel back to Europe to see these American influences both in Bokrijk and in the projects of Beleef Het Verleden (Experience the Past).

Let me start with introducing myself. My name is Martine Teunissen. After my research master's degree in (public) history at Leiden University (the Netherlands), I created the historical event and advice company: Beleef Het Verleden, which literally means: Experience The Past. This company aims to make people experience the past, engaging them through performance and communication, involving all the senses in the experience. We try to achieve this by showing replicas of the past, make people touch them, smell them (if possible) and let people taste forgotten recipes. The greatest experience for our public is actually to see, meet and communicate with an historical character (see Figures 1 and 2). This interpretative technique is called 'live interpretation', a term that will be fully explained later in this article.

This paper focuses on 'interpretation': "a communication process designed to reveal to a specific audience the significance of a historic/ cultural / natural site or museum and the audience's relationship to it. [It is] a first-hand experience involving interaction with another person, a place, an object or an artefact."[1] I will take you on a journey through history, starting with the creation of the very first open-air museum, following its development towards the creation of 'living history' and 'live interpretation'.

Figure 1: Castle of Endegeest, Oegstgeest Live Interpretation by Beleef Het Verleden Day of Castles (Photo: J. Boesveld)

Figure 2: Hampton Court Live Interpretation by Past Pleasures (Photo: Martine Teunissen, 2008)

[1] IMTAL Europe: http://www.imtal-europe.com/resources.php

The representation of the past in open-air museums

> "Only since the sixteenth century, has the look of age become widely appreciated, first as a means of confirming the authenticating historical antiquity, then as attractive in its own right." (Lowenthal 1985: xxii)

Attitudes towards the past changed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. With the rapid transformation of society, the past became a romantically attractive alternative for the present (Lowenthal 1985: 13-15). Yearning for lost pasts and the recognition of a historical difference led to the development of an historical awareness and historical consciousness. Modern historiography came into being as an intellectual discipline and all kinds of institutions started to focus on the representation of the past for a general public.

The changed perceptions of the past were conditioned by a Romantic obsession with decline, fragmentation, decay, and ruins (Semmel 2000: 10-14). Increasingly, remains from the past were preserved by national institutions as well as private enterprises and individual collections[2]. Already in 1815, just after the battle of Waterloo, thousands of British tourists came to see the remnants of Napoleon's fallen empire, and started to collect a range of physical objects from the battlefield as a means to recapture the past. They collected buttons, cloths, bullets and teeth. One gentleman is known to have possessed a thumb, and another possessed a skull of a guardsman (Semmel 2000: 12). These collections by and from ordinary people were new, as compared to the 'old' museum tradition that began during the second half of the eighteenth century, which showed extremely valuable collections from kings and nobles to a selective public (Alexander 1996: 6-9). Historical sources and collections moved into the public sphere, making the past a matter of public interest.

In the twentieth century, European folklorists were joined by the Annales School. Their main efforts were preserving and collecting artefacts from regional cultures (Anderson 1982: 290-306). The preservation of folk culture began to be regarded as increasingly important for the sake of the nation, as 'folk' people were seen as a people free from devastating influences from cities and the industrialized world (De Jong 2001: 13). Collections of material folk culture like buildings and furnishings were preserved in museums as well as in situ. The world exhibition in 1873 in Vienna, showed an ethnographical village for the first time, in which people from Lapland and the colonies were part of the exhibition themselves. In Norway, the first buildings were moved in order to preserve them (De Jong 2001: 245-263).

The origin of open-air Museums

It is in the light of romanticism, preservation, the founding of folk life and ethnographical museums, that the very first open-air museum in Sweden developed. In 1891, Skansen opened its doors. It was a creation of Arthur Hazelius, who wanted to show the whole range of society; from aristocracy to the poorest people. Historian and museum consultant Sten Renthzog, who published a wide-ranging study about open-air museums worldwide, calls Skansen "the archetypal mother to all open-air museums" (Rentzhog 2007: 4).

From the start in the 1890s, Skansen was an immediate success, and showed historic Sweden in miniature. Buildings and furnishings of buildings from the pre-industrial period were moved to Skansen to show pre-industrial, agrarian life. In 1896, the first complete farm was moved to Skansen (Oktorpsgården) (Rentzhog 2007: 7). Hazelius' wish to show the whole range of society established itself in a representation of culture and nature. Reindeer and Lapland dogs were obtained: the start of a zoological garden. A focus on people was also of great importance. Hazelius started with displays with sculptured life-size figures; a method he also used at the world exhibition of 1878 in Paris (De Jong 2001: 578). Soon, he replaced them with real people in historical dress: Dalkullor

[2] Collecting itself seems instinctive for many people to achieve physical security, social distinction, knowledge and the idea of immortality. Also, the preservation of the past itself was not a new phenomenon: the Greeks already knew the museum or mouseion as a temple dedicated to the Muses, goddesses of epic, music, love, poetry, oratory, history, tragedy, comedy, dance, and astronomy. The Greeks and Romans preserved objects for their historic, religious, aesthetic, or magical importance. Nevertheless, the museum idea almost vanished in Western Europe during the Middle Ages, returning in the sixteenth century, with an effort and scope since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, unseen before (Alexander 1996:6-9).

(Daleswomen) and Dalkarlar (Dalesmen) from Darlana, as well as Sami from Frostiken in the province of Jämtland, who worked in the Lapp camp (Rentzhog 2007: 9) (see Figures 3 and 4). Amongst others, folk dance, folk art, and folk song were used to keep folk tradition alive.

Skansen was meant to be different from the Nordiska Museet where relics were carefully preserved. Skansen was not about preservation per se, but about an image of Sweden. It had a public role to perform. Hazelius' own description was as follows:

> "It seeks more and more to be a living museum, a museum which not only shows buildings and household goods, tools, and implements of the most different types, and memorials such as runestones…and an endless number of other things…it tries to depict folklife through its living characteristics" (Rentzhog 2007: 10-17).

Skansen paved the way for a division between a museum and an open-air museum, but with a continuing unity. According to Nils Edvard Hammarstedt, Hazelius' assistant, the Nordiska Museet scientifically preserved, investigated and classified remnants from the past, while Skansen was the summary of the museum's content; it showed a greater picture which appealed to a general public (Rentzhog 2007: 31).

Figure 3: Sami camp: Sami people portrayed by descendants of Sami from Frostiken (Photo: Martine Teunissen, 2007).

Figure 4: Delsbo Farmstead (Photo: Martine Teunissen, 2007).

Rentzhog (2007: 1-2) describes open-air museums or outdoor museums as "versatile cultural institutions, educational centres and tourist attractions." He further defines an open-air museum as "a site mainly comprising translocated buildings, and established for educational purposes." Rentzhog explicitly excludes historical complexes preserved *in situ*, reconstructed settings and commercial enterprises such as amusement parks. During the international conference at Skansen: "The Future of Open-Air Museums – a Scandinavian model for the 21st century (2007)", Rentzhog added to this that open-air museums are institutions with a mission: they try to keep memory alive and they try to generate understanding in past-present relations, as well as visualizing the future.

Historian and museum consultant Adriaan de Jong also describes open-air museums as institutions that are meant to preserve heritage. Heritage, as a celebration that recreates common identity is not unproblematic, and involves issues of use/abuse of the past, problems with authenticity etc. I will come back on this matter. Open-air museums as enterprises that preserve heritage for future generations are thus important institutions for self-image and national identity (De Jong 2001:263). De Jong's idea of preservation for future generations is not very different from the purposes of a normal museum. In essence, open-air museums do what regular museums do[3], for instance conservation

[3] "A museum is a non-profit making permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, the tangible and intangible evidence of people and their environment" This definition is defined during a general meeting of ICOM, the International Council of Museums in 1974. ICOM was created in 1946, as an international organization of museums that are committed to conservation, continuation, and communication to society of the world's cultural and natural heritage. Edward P. Alexander (1996: 14-

and exhibition of relics, but with a main focus on translocated buildings, and more easily accessible to a general public than a regular museum. As will be shown, open-air museums increasingly strive towards showing a total picture of the past, but by focusing on museum tradition and collections, they often lose sight of the public. Very soon, almost all open-air museums developed in one direction (Rentzhog 2007: 98-100).

Diverse elements determine the presentation of history

Inherent in open-air museums are discussions about preservation and authenticity. There is a continuing debate about the question whether one should use historical remnants for research, or as a means to educate and to show previous cultures. This involves the question whether one should show remnants from the past, or a view from the past (De Jong 2001: 323). Thus, while safeguarding remnants from the past, one should know what to preserve, how to preserve, and if and how it should be shown to a public.

The choice for preserving a specific relic implies the idea of supremacy of that relic above others, and involves the exclusion of other remnants of the past. Usually only fragments are preserved, and this involves de-contextualizing as well as de-functionalizing the object (Van Mensch 1992). Also, the relics are placed in a new context; loosened from time and space. The object becomes something to be seen, and therefore it becomes part of the process of historicizing culture (De Jong 2001: 577). As Semmel has argued: a relic is "fragmentary by its very nature", and "in the sense that, representing a historical or mythic scene, it holds within itself the synecdochic capacity of articulating a much fuller tableau. The de-articulation and decomposition that are detected in the relic can themselves, moreover, serve as subjects for meditation" (Semmel 2000: 14). New meanings are given to the object, in terms of legitimizing their rescue, as well as for educational purposes. Already in the early nineteenth century, a growing awareness emerged that the preservation of relics was artificial (De Jong 2001: 25, 582). Heritage can never be saved unchangeable (Lowenthal 1985). The same can be said about the stories of people.

This topic was also brought forward by Nicole Deufel during the Interpret Europe conference in 2011 in Freiburg[4]. She, however, focused on a difference between the story of history and the story of heritage. The key issue to Deufel, was the question: which story to tell? She stressed to choose a heritage approach because a historically accurate and balanced presentation misses the interpretive messages a site can give. During the discussion that evolved from these statements the idea was given that historians only give facts and therefore their stories are meaningless and boring. "The history approach is playing safe." And: "the focus on the facts is missing the point! If you only focus on historical facts you miss the meaningful connection."

One of the members of the audience stated that historians can give only a subjective view, some kind of 'personal understanding' of the site. So historians are put in the corner as presenting boring, factual and subjective info! The heritage approach presumably is not 'lying' but using historical facts to give meaning.

The distinction between heritage and history as described above, to me, is too farfetched. A so-called 'heritage' approach does not solve problems with authenticity, whose story to tell etc. De Jong already described heritage as a celebration that recreates common identity, so he distinctly focuses on the *use* of the past for a specific goal. Deufel also stressed that the 'heritage interpretation' is telling why a site is important to its stakeholders (clients/public). It is meant to be used! Is it true then, that a heritage approach is to be favoured, an explicit use of the past to satisfy the visitors, instead of a critical (perhaps historians way) of looking at a site?

Deufel asked the right question: which story is to be told? But in answering this question I would not propagate a 'heritage' or 'history' approach because they are *both* facing problems with authenticity.

15) describes museums as collection, conservation, research, exhibition, interpretation, cultural center and as social instrument. The three traditional objectives of the traditional museum are: collection, conservation, and research.

[4] Interpret Europe Conference: One Site, Many Opinions: Interpreting Diverse and Conflicting Heritage Values – talk by Nicole Deufel, Freiburg, July 12, 2011.

In my presentation during the conference I have shown how the different representations of the past in museums come into being, influenced by different interests from commercial, educational, ideological and academic sides (and I am sure there are more interests to determine). The past comes to us by relics that are used as a window to the elusive past, and by memories that are both abstract, as well as connected to these relics. As Stuart Semmel, associate professor in history at the University of Delaware, has written, "the tangible may open a window onto the past. But the view through that window is murky and uncertain (Semmel 2000: 30)." The reconstruction of the past is needed to come as close to the past as possible. However, the past can never be entirely known. History is always a selective interpretation of relics and memories, constrained by current culture. What matters is that a site is fully aware of these concerns and does communicate them with its visitors. To me that approach can give a valuable interpretation of a site.

Development of open-air museums over time

Most early European open-air museums were oriented towards pre-industrial, peasant culture, the only exception being the pre-industrial town: Den Gamle By (The Old City) (see Figures 5) built in 1914 in Arhus, Denmark (Rentzhog 2007: 85).

This development can easily be placed in the context of folk culture, of whom it was believed that they were the best expression of the spirit of the people. Also, open-air museums have remained a national affair, in the sense that there are no thematic open-air museums that combine a historic display from different countries (Bronner 2002: xi, 41). Characteristic for European open-air museums is that they show history through time. For *Den Gamle By* you can see (on Figure 6) that they have been overtaken by modern times outside of their museum: a giant modern building is interrupting their view.

The first open-air museum outside the Scandinavian region was the open-air museum in Arnhem (see Figure 7), which could develop in 1918 because The Netherlands were staying neutral in the First World War. This museum was also oriented towards peasant culture. However, the Dutch dominant civil culture and its focus on the 'Golden Age' in

Figure 5 and 6: Den Gamle By, Denmark (Photo: Martine Teunissen, 2007).

Figure 7: Open-air Museum Arnhem, The Netherlands (Photo: Martine Teunissen, 2007)

the seventeenth century prevented a strong national identification with the peasant culture shown in the museum. Nevertheless, at the end of the nineteenth century, the Dutch started to identify with both the seventeenth century civil culture and with the nineteenth century folk culture. That heritage is subject to change is shown as well in this Dutch example, because in the twentieth century people already began to distance themselves from folk culture as it did no longer fit within modern ideas of the time (De Jong 2001: 578-580).

The beginning of this museum is characterized by a struggle between the different perspectives of three people: Frederic Hoefer, August van Erven Dorens and Dirk Jan van der Ven, who focused on the preservation of national culture, buildings (material culture) and the public appeal, respectively. This struggle is characteristic for the on-going debate about the academic and public appeal. The *Vaderlandsch Historisch Volksfeest* in 1913, brought the conflict into the open. This folk costume festival, organized by Van der Ven, was enthusiastically received by the public, but it aroused violent criticisms from academics. The open-air museum committee condemned the use of folk costumes, masquerade and theatrical features. Behind this criticism lies an ancient puritan mind-set expressed in the idea that if history is entertaining something must be wrong.

Authenticity of the material culture became far more important in Arnhem than in Skansen where the main focus lay on the public. In Arnhem, academics won the debate, but the evocation of a total view lost significance. This pattern is similar to other open-air museums that became increasingly museum oriented. On the one hand, this stimulated professionalization in preservation, but on the other hand, it distanced museums from the public. Criticism by museum experts made the vision of the 'living history museum' an exception[5]. Still, open-air museums were regarded as the best way of reaching a broad general public and they were able to show the people's place in past, present, and future relations (Rentzhog 2007: 89-98).

During the interbellum period, the establishment of open-air museums developed slowly due to economic problems and the Depression of the 1930s. Nevertheless, the ideas on open-air museums were significant, especially in recently formed countries in Eastern and Central Europe as a means to stimulate nation building. Also in Germany and Britain this strengthening of the national spirit was important. The Nazi ideology glorified peasant culture, and in Wales an open-air museum was established to renew national pride that might pave the way for Welsh independence (Rentzhog 2007: 101-114). Eric Hobsbawm's (1983) famous study on the invention of tradition showed many examples of the uses of the past with such issues.

While Skansen had focused on nationalism during its creation, it now became increasingly focused on socialism and modernism. The idea of a more humane history and history in its totality came from the academic world in France: the Annales School with its focus on social history.

According to Rentzhog, the most innovative achievements in the interwar period took place in America, where the first 'outdoor museums' were created. In 1913 the first American outdoor museum was established in Decorah, Iowa, where a log cabin was moved to the college area of the town. Although this museum was influenced by Norwegian ideas, the Scandinavian open-air museums had relatively little influence on the development of American outdoor museums. Also, American museum tradition was of little importance to the new museums (Rentzhog 2007: 123).

The scale and investments in American outdoor museums were greater than in Europe, and they had a different orientation. Whereas European museums were often founded by governments, the American outdoor museums were often founded with the capital of private investors because the Unites States government refused to take action in preservation, at least until 1915 (Kammen 1993: 259-264). In the 1920s, Greenfield Village was founded by Henry Ford and Colonial Williamsburg by John D. Rockefeller[6]. European open-air museums

[5] For more information on 'living history' see part "Living history".

[6] This private interest was enforced by the fact that the United States Government did not assist in historic preservation (from 1870 until 1915), and furthermore by the idea held by the leading preservationists that government action would have a negative effect on the sanctity of American traditions. Michael Kammen, Mystic Chords of Memory, 263-264.

were, as argued before, mainly oriented towards material culture: the simulation of life in the past only occasionally included craft demonstrations and the performance of folk dancing. The American outdoor museums had agreater focus on the educational objective than on collections and preservation. They were focused on showing the cultural life of people, using environments and artefacts to show a lively past of ordinary, American, men (Anderson 1982: 292). The traditional American museums, in contrast, mainly focused on collecting European antiques (Rentzhog 2007: 134). Kammen has given possible reasons for the differences between European and American open-air museums regarding the use of costumed guides and craft demonstrations. He states that "American museum-goers might have underdeveloped imaginations that need to be stimulated" and that they might "regard museums and visits to historic sites as a form of popular entertainment in a way that European tourists do not" (Kammen 1993: 517). It was the focus on *people*, instead of a focus on materials, the display of a total environment, and the focus on the educational objective that distinguished American museums from European museums[7].

The origins of open-air museums lay in the nineteenth century nostalgia for a romanticized past, but the American outdoor museums were also inspired and led by an idea of American progress (Brandt 1991: 202-203). Greenfield Village is exemplary of this seemingly contradiction. In an interview for the Chicago *Tribune* in 1916, Henry Ford denounced history as "bunk" or "tradition" and noted that "we want to live in the present and the only history that is worth a thinker's damn is the history we make today."[8] Ironically, in the end, his efforts to preserve his boyhood farm and everything that had to do with the birth of the industrial society made Greenfield Village a historical museum after all, which can be placed in the nostalgic restoration movement. After Ford's death, his successors attempted to adapt Greenfield Village to the mainstream museum tradition (Wallace 1996:10) (Rentzhog 2007:123-135). The idea ofprogress brought forth museums that were focused on elite history, such as great men and nationalism, combined with popular folk culture, with a democratic ethos (Kammen 1993: 342-407).

Despite the idea of progress, America's open-air museums are also troubled by tradition. They are burdened by the colonial revival, which has success, but with a wrongheaded goal: it only shows the white Anglo-Saxon protestant past, sometimes shortened as WASPs. This selective past is often shown in a nice aesthetic manner, focused on pretty architecture, and rich furniture. Because of its success, it is difficult for the United States to pull itself out of this colonial revival. Colonial Williamsburg is a good example of a museum which has the burden of colonial revival, but is broadening its interpretive fields since the past 10 years (Teunissen 2010: 177-199).

In the three decades after the Second World War, numerous new open-air museums came into being. The older European open-air museums professionalized internally, with a primary focus on collections and information. The creation of the Flemish open-air museum Bokrijk in 1958 started a new school of thought with the idea of a 'village museum' or 'landscape museum'. This type of museum attempted to create a total landscape environment of pre- industrial times, focusing on everyday life (Rentzhog 2007: 152-158). The character of this type of museum remained 'scientific', rather than focused on the public. I will show in paragraph 2.3 how its recent interpretation has improved much on the latter point.

In the United States at the same time, we also see the development of landscape museums, but then called 'living history farms' (see part "Three forms of living history") Most 'outdoor museums' in this continent were established after the 1960s, several in preparation for the bicentennial in 1976.[9] On

[7] Since 1900 American museums focused on education and the public, continuing their leadership in educational programs until recently European open-air museums began to voice their confidence, and come-back towards the American museums.

[8] Ford in this expression had related to history in books, and school history, not to history as a whole. Furthermore, Ford's fascination for the complex relationship between past and present, was mainly rediscovered during and after the war years. Mike Wallace, Mickey Mouse History, and Other Essays on American Memory (Philadelphia 1996) 10.

[9] Comments by Debra A. Reid – International Conference at Skansen: 'The Future of Open-Air Museums'. Debra Reid comments that statistically most open-air museums in

the one hand, they were inspired by European folk museums, and the American examples like Colonial Williamsburg which provided examples for the use of costumed interpreters, furnished houses, and craft demonstrations, but, on the other hand, they broke with the old traditions: the museums began to change in their approach towards the representation of the past (Anderson 1982: 293).

The rise of social history influenced open-air museums in their search for new methods to show a democratic perspective of the past, including previously forgotten groups. Furthermore, theme parks such as Disneyland posed a threat upon open-air museums concerning visitor attendance. Therefore, museums searched for new means to represent the past and to attract the public. The new method was found in the use of 'living history'.

Living history

The concept of living history is used as a very broad term. Rentzhog (2007: 239) mentions diverse ways in which it is described as a "movement, a technique, a philosophy and an educational tool." The Association for Living History, Farm and Agricultural Museums (ALHFAM), an international organization of people who bring history to life (since 1970) describes living history as: "the efforts of history museums, historical societies, and other educational organizations to truly engage the public with the impact of history on their lives today. This is accomplished by using historic objects and environs and appropriate recreations to tell the stories of the people who used those objects. In the effort to 'contextualize,' some sites try to recreate a particular time and place in the past, ignoring the intrusions of the present."[10] The International Museum of Theatre Alliance (IMTAL), which was established in the United States in 1990 to encourage theatre and life performance as interpretive tools in cultural institutions, uses the concept of living history to describe interpreters in first- or third-person interpretation who engage themselves in historically authentic activities.[11] The concepts first- and third- person interpretation will be explained in part "Three forms of living history".

Concerning the idea of 'living history', IMTAL puts more emphasis on the 'living' aspect than the ALHFAM concerning the idea of people recreating the past in costumes and in a historical manner, instead of a recreated, but not always inhabited historical environment. This difference is illustrative for the different ideas about living history in European versus American open-air museums. In Europe, the museum displays are often called 'living history displays' when it seems as if someone has just left a building, whereas in America, they often inhabit the places with real living people. In America, more use is made of the method of first-person interpretation for the purpose of education, whereas in Europe the focus is more on folk life and on the use of living history in a preserved surrounding.[12] This contrast can also be explained in terms of the traditional European 'object-orientation', and the American 'people-oriented' approach.[13]

Three forms of living history

According to Jay Anderson, there are three forms of living history: (1) historical experiment, (2) re-

America were established after the 1960s, and that only recently they have been studied. However, ordinary Americans were collecting long before then, not with a focus on buildings, but on smaller items. She emphasizes that this is part of American public's construction of the past, and thus important to the American open-air museum movement.

[10] www.alhfam.org
The ALHFAM was founded in 1970 at Old Sturbridge Village and became an umbrella organization for the living history movement. It set a standard in the museum field, and greatly influenced theoretical and practical writings on living history. Remarkable in the founding of the ALHFAM is the cross-section between the agricultural and museum world. It was the farm that became most clearly identified with living history. In 1980, however, ALHFAM opened its door for all who worked with living history.

[11] www.imtal-europe.org
Imtal-Europe is a joined group of IMTAL in the US, created to promote live interpretation in museums, historic sites, galleries and science centers across Europe.

[12] Lecture Adriaan de Jong, 'Gegenstand oder Vorstellung? Erfahrungen mit 'Living History' vor alle am Beispiel nierländischer Freitlichmuseum' during conference 'Living History': Jahrestagung der Volkskundlichen Kommission für Westfalen im Museumsdorf Cloppenburg, Niedersächsisches Freilichtmuseum (Cloppenburg, October 19-20, 2007).

[13] Lecture Adriaan de Jong, 'Gegenstand oder Vorstellung?' and Lecture Uwe Meiners, 'Verlebendigungsstrategien in Freilichtmuseum. Gedanken über Chancen and Probleme populärer Vermittlungsversuche' during conference 'Living History'.

enactment, (3) interpretation/animation (Anderson 1991).

Historical experiment

The idea behind the 'historical experiment' is best seen in the creation of Living History Farms in America, which were sometimes used as historical laboratories, and which were seen as models of the past (Kelsey 1991: 73-78 & Hawes 1991: 79-97). Experiments however, were conducted *by* and *for* the visitors: therefore its educational and public appeal was higher than that of the 'village museums' in Europe (Anderson 1982: 294-302).

Re-enactment

Re-enactment refers to living history as part of a folk movement. It is pursued as a hobby, mainly to have a historical experience by the participant him/herself. In the United States, this movement began in the 1930s with the creation of Rifle Associations, and later with the celebrations of the Civil War Centennial and the American Revolution Bicentennial (Anderson 1982: 303). This form of living history is mainly associated with battle re-enactment in diverse historical times (see Figure 8). However, recently, it has spread its scope in topic and period.

Despite the fact that for many re-enacting is a hobby, it aims to be as authentic as possible, and plays a vital role in bringing the past to life. Nevertheless, its focus on authenticity remains mainly material (uniforms with the right buttons, the correct rifles etc.). Over the years I have seen just a few groups who concern themselves with the story they are telling, and even fewer groups are primarily focused on the public to tell this story to them. Because reactors are often ready to come to a museum or a site for a six pack of beer, this creates tension with professional actors and interpreters and it creates concerns about the quality control.

According to Anderson, re-enactment is pursued because "it provides comradeship, travel, a channel for intellectual curiosity, family fun, camping out, an opportunity to play-act, and finally, money." He describes this 'folk' movement as being "part revival, [a] revitalization movement, [an] ethno historical secular ritual, and [a] nostalgic response to future shock" (Anderson 1982: 305). Lowenthal

Figure 8: Battle re-enactment, Waterloo 1815 (Photo: Martine Teunissen 2008).

Figure 9: Colonial Williamsburg, USA. Scene from The Revolutionary City, 2006 (Photo: Martine Teunissen 2006)

Figure 10: Chateau Saint Germain de Livet, France 2009. Scene from project in first person interpretation, 1929.

Figure 11-13: Third Person Interpretation in the Open-air Museum Archeon, The Netherlands 2007: Demonstrations plus hands on activity.

adds to this that "re-enactments reproduce past events" to "convince themselves or others of the reality of the past", "to heighten history's revelatory significance", and sometimes "for a sense of purpose or excitement lacking in the present" (Lowenthal 1985: 295).

Interpretation/animation

The purpose of this form of living history is threefold: (1) educational, (2) informative, (3) to give an understanding of the past. The main methods are first and third interpretation. First-person interpretation is the act of performing a person from the past (see Figure 9 (p. 61) and 10). The interpreter is in historic costume and speaks as if he or she lived in the past.[14] According to the ALHFAM, the interpreter employs "a combination of techniques including storytelling, demonstration, question and answer, and discussion." The interpreter "encourages verbal interaction from the audience, and avoids breaking character."[15] First-person interpretation is also called interactive historical character interpretation or interactive historical role-play. In his analysis of Plimoth Plantation, Eddy Snow called first-person interpretation a sub- discipline of theatre, drawing analogies between interpreters and Stanislavskian[16] actors (Snow, 1993: 143-144). Also Richard Schechner called first-person interpretation a theatre method; placing living history museums in the same line as theme parks (Schechner 1985: 79-92). Stacy Roth agrees with a theatrical side, but points at the alternative body of methods and techniques that focus on communication and education. Although it is a blurred genre, with many comparisons, to Roth it is not just a subdivision of theatre (Roth 1998: 4, 50-56).

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[14] Based on the IMTAL-definition of first-person interpretation.

[15] ALHFAM definition, www.voicenet.com/~frstprsn/alhfam/glossary.htm

[16] The principles of the Russian Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938) are mainly focused on realistic drama and method acting to establish emotional engagement. Essential for good play is an unknown outcome: performance should not be safe, but risky and unpredictable. According to Stanislavski, theatre should show the historic and social essence of happenings and its characters. Actors should use their own emotional memory to perform realistic play.

According to IMTAL the term ‘theatre’ is often used by trained actors working in performance spaces in museums, and it is rather called ‘live interpretation’ when the technique is used in historic contexts. Their terminology of ‘live interpretation’ however, is again used in a broader sense, which makes it closer to the general term of living history again. ‘Live interpretation’ to IMTAL is a broad term used to cover any live interaction between museum / site staff and visitors. “This includes many living history-type activities, ranging from non-costumed demonstrations of historical craft to storytelling and costumed first- and third-person interpretation, but is also used to cover activities such as guided tours, education workshops, theatre performances and demonstrations.”[17] From all this confusion over vocabulary one can see that it is a blurred genre with many overlapping areas.

By employing third-person interpretation, the interpreter is dressed historically, but does not assume a character role (see Figure 11-13). The interpreter speaks informatively and demonstratively about the past, but from a twenty-first century perspective.[18] The latter method creates fewer barriers in communication with the visitor than first-person interpretation, but it cannot as effectively show the lifestyle of the period, or give an historical experience. A first-person interpreter cannot step out of character, and thus cannot address modern stereotypes and discuss misconceptions as a third-person interpreter can do. First-person interpretation is far more demanding for interpreters and visitors than third-person interpretation. It requires academic research, communication, education, and performance skills to make it as truthful to the past, and most engaging to the visitor, as possible.

Since the Second World War, living history became a serious movement in Europe and North America and now, many museums use it as the chief method of interpretation (Roth 1998: 178-182). It became especially popular in the United States where, in the 1980s, more than 800 outdoor museums used this method on a regular basis (Lowenthal 1985: 298). Living history became an effective way to show social history. Visitors were given the opportunity to experience the past through narratives about people and their daily life. This experience of history which makes use of the five senses, and which is focused on emotions as well as on the intellect, was propagated already by Hazelius, but was forgotten in time, and now becomes newly established. Living history’s appeal to the spiritual past, instead of a main focus on the material past, brought engaging possibilities to bring the past alive (Rentzhog 2007: 239).

According to Roth, it was the desire for a more accurate, holistic approach towards history presentation that inspired the “current burst of energy in today’s living history movement” (Roth 1998: 30).

Bokrijk

Exemplary for the many forms of living history included in one museum is Bokrijk in Belgium. The presentation as will be shown here is based on a visit in July 2007. The museum is divided in three main parts. (1) *De Kempen* presents history in a traditional setting with buildings and artefacts, including a temporary game to discover forgotten food (see Figure 14 and 15).

Figure 14-15: Open-air Museum Bokrijk, De Kempen (Photo: Martine Teunissen, 2007).

[17] http://www.imtal-europe.com/resources.php

[18] ALHFAM, IMTAL

(2) *Oost-en West-Vlaanderen, mensen aan het werk* presents craftsmen in their historic settings, who use the method of third-person interpretation (see Figure 16 and 17).

Figure 16-17: Open-air Museum Bokrijk, Oost-en West Vlaanderen (Photography: Martine Teunissen, 2007).

(3) *Haspengouw* presented life as it was 100 years ago, using only first- person interpretation. This little farming village includes two families, a church, and a school, showing diverse aspects of historic life, according to a weekly schedule (doing laundry, agriculture, religion, selling and buying products, disease and death, visitors from the city etc.)

On Figure18 one sees a woman on her death bed with her beloved ones sitting close to her, waiting for the fatal moment to arrive. The visitors are watching in the room and through the windows in a manner like: 'big brother is watching you'. There is not much interaction with them, and they listen quietly. Although a difficult aspect of life to show, the visitors seems interested to see the old Catholic traditions that are shown when the moment of death comes closer.

On Figure 19 children and grown-ups experience a

Figure 18: Open-air Museum Bokrijk, Haspengouw, scene: Kommer & Kwel (Photo: Martine Teunissen, 2007).

Figure 19: Open-air Museum Bokrijk, Haspengouw, scene: Les in het schooltje (Photo: Martine Teunissen, 2007).

Figure 20: Open-air Museum Bokrijk, Haspen-gouw, scene: church going out (Photo: Martine Teunissen, 2007).

lesson in the year 1907. Punishments are dealt with in the old fashioned way, though nobody really got hurt. The historian Luc Frenken, who, amongst others, develops the programs, emphasizes that concerning living history programs "de grote lijnen moeten kloppen, en de details moeten verrassen" (the overall story should be correct, while details must surprise).[19]

On Figure 20 and 21 one sees how the visitors experience a catholic ceremony as it was done in 1907. The rules of manners are followed: all the men must sit on the right side of the church, all the women must sit on the left side of the church. The men and women are not allowed to interact with each other.

Several times a year, there were great celebrations (in Belgium called "evocaties") including up to 50 living history interpreters. A big theme is acted out as it could have been seen 100 years ago. When I was visiting I saw scenes from The Golden Wedding (see Figure 22).

Bokrijk furthermore has another part of the museum which is the odd man out (see Figure 23). It looks like a film décor, which seems to be abandoned by all its living creatures of 1907. The beer cellar however, attracts clientele who are enjoying one of the great Belgium beers. This part could be perfectly used for first person interpretation, and I hope that the day I will go back there, I will make encounters with people of the past.

A true presentation of history?

The fact that living history is successful in attracting the public does not necessarily prove the validity of the display method. It depends of course on the different ideas and purposes of museums, visitors, and scholars. Lowenthal (1985: 296) calls interpreters at Plimoth Plantation 'character impostors', whereas the visitors love it, and find it authentic presentations.[20] Success gives the impression of a commercial purpose only, yet, living history can be a valuable educational method, when properly done.

Figure 21: Church scene (Photo: Martine Teunissen, 2008).

Figure 22: Open-air Museum Bokrijk, Haspengouw, scene: The Golden Wedding (Photo: Martine Teunissen, 2007).

Figure 23: Open-air Museum Bokrijk, the old city (Photo: Martine Teunissen, 2007).

[19] Visit to Bokrijk, July 27-29 2007.

[20] The Pilgrims, Myths, Museums and Social History. Current Cultural Beliefs about the Pilgrims and Wampanoag Indians, Their Evolution in the 20th century, and the Impact of Plymouth Museums (Plimoth Plantation, October 15, 1992).

As museum historian Sandra M. Shafernich argues: it is an "educational technique that requires research, training, and an extensive body of knowledge to be successful as well as careful management throughout its use." It can never be fully accurate, neither can any other historical account, they are all based on generalizations about the past (Shafernich 1993: 45-46).

Marc Wallis, director of Past Pleasures in the United Kingdom argues that: "A good costumed interpreter (whether in first or third person) has to combine the skills of a host, a storyteller, an entertainer, an expert, a psychologist, a guardian (of the site and its artefacts), a tour guide, a stand-up comedian (when and if appropriate), a therapist and a counsellor (Wallis 2010). Critics often overlook this difficulty inherent in living history, and also forget that in most living history representations the past is considered as a whole, whereas scholars often avoid the past's unity by dealing with portions of the past (Ronsheim 1991: 174).

The greatest danger with living history is that it can easily degenerate in mere entertainment (Rentzhog 2007: 428). Especially history in the form of "narcissistic nostalgia" implies that the past is fun (Lowenthal 1991: 159-160). Nevertheless, pleasure is not only good for business, but also for learning. In schools it is already discovered at an early age that when children like something, they are better able to keep their attention and remember things. Whether those are the right things, is another question… Critics admit that: "living history has undoubtedly been generally successful in increasing the interest and enjoyment of many museum visitors" (Ronsheim 1991: 170). As long as the interpretation of the past is based on research, and not on commercialism only, living history can be a valuable representation of the past (Shafernich 1993: 45-46).

Living history, and especially animation or interpretation asks for a participatory approach. Studies of the learning process indicate that after 48 hours, people remember only 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, 30% of what they see, and 90% of what they do (Sternberg 1993: 34). Other studies, including my evaluation of the Revolutionary City Program and my own experience in projects using live interpretation, underline the need of interactive and participatory approaches (Teunissen 2008). When the visitors of museums and sites are critically questioned and actively involved in the presentation, I think you are doing a good job as a site/ interpreter.

Anderson sees potential in living history in the field of American studies as a valuable tool for research and interpretation. Because living history is focused on folk life and the experience of everyday life by ordinary people, it is part of the democratization of historiography: the idea that one ought to represent total history. This means showing material and immaterial heritage (De Jong 2007). Of great importance is also the fact that living history has been a meeting ground for interdisciplinary academic work. Moreover, living history might work as a remedy for the so-called 'future shock', caused by rapid changes in society (Anderson 1982: 305-306). Furthermore, "academics have failed to touch the public's consciousness" (Brabazon 2006: 283-301), while living history succeeds.

Most criticisms on the use of living history or live interpretation coincide with the debate about the academic and public appeal. Are museums providing essentially an educational or a leisure experience? And, are visitors of museums really looking for that educational experience, or do they just want to be entertained? David Thelen and Roy Rosensweig have argued in their book: *The Presence of the Past*, that the starting point for historical interest is the personal family experience (Rosenzweig and Thelen 1998: 22). A great part of the museum world addresses this need for experience with living history. Is it then the public historians' task to provide historical experiences to educate and to create historical consciousness? The visitors' wish always challenges and influences the museums' displays, because they provide the money to continue with the business. It is the museum's task to see that the commercial and educational sides are in balance?

Beleef Het Verleden

The research I have done over the years into the field of living history, including the experiences with live interpretation in projects of my own company, have made me a passionate believer in the positive qualities of this method. To end this

Figure 24: Experiencing the past with all the senses.

article with, I will give you some examples of projects from my own experience in which I hope to have given the visitors an intellectually and sensory involving, provoking, historically accurate and worthwhile experience into the past.

As I have stated in the beginning of this article, *Beleef Het Verleden* aims to make people experience the past through the five senses (see Figure 24).

Following Freeman Tilden's principle of interpretation: "The chief aim of Interpretation is not instruction, but provocation" (Tilden 1957/1977: 9), it is my firm belief that provocation stimulates critical thinking. By using interactive methods, combining entertainment, and education I aim to achieve an effective learning process. Beleef Het Verleden supplies material buildings with their immaterial culture: we tell the stories of the people who lived there. In this sense we go from an object- to a human- orientation. Our programs aim to give a holistic approach.

Pilgrim Fathers in Leiden

In the year 2009, it was the 400-year anniversary of the arrival in Leiden of America's so-called Pilgrim Fathers in 1609. First person interpretation took place during the Rapenburg festival (a music and cultural festival) on August 28-29th. A series of scenarios were performed by five historical characters with different nationalities. They told the story of Leiden in 1609 as a city of refugees and international connections. In the Figure 25 you are introduced to the characters.

These historical characters talked with the public about daily live, religion, travel, the escape from England, work in the wool industry, trade, the *Hortus Botanicus*, tulip-culture, plants, scientific discoveries etc. Every topic was thoroughly researched and connected to the historical character's occupation in life. For the research of the historical characters 'Character Scores' were compiled. This means an extensive biography was built, providing also a character analysis. This is a method used in Colonial Williamsburg for the Revolutionary City program, and written extensively about by Stacy Roth. She calls character interpretation "the envelope in which the interpretive message is delivered" (Roth 1998: 57). The portrayal of the historical characters for this project of the Pilgrim Fathers was based on character scores that I created which contained both objective, external facts and internal, subjective criteria.

Objective, external criteria include mainly hard factual information: name, age, date of birth, place of birth, residence, family, education, religion and occupation. Subjective or internal criteria relate to the way an historical character act and reacts to the world he or she inhabits. An example of subjective criteria for the English characters from Scrooby

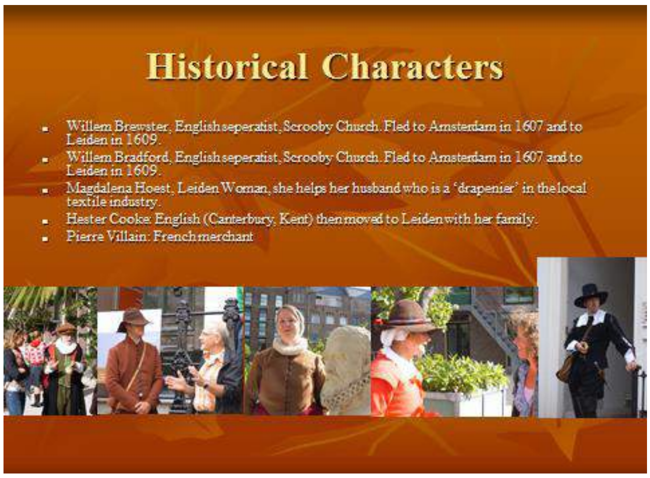

Figure 25: Historical Characters, Project: Pilgrim Fathers in Leiden

is the way their past, their persecution and their getting refuge to Holland have an impact on their character. Also their immediate circumstances in life (at that moment in Leiden) determine their interests, wishes, temperament, opportunities and fears. Objective as well as subjective criteria are not always known, and require in-depth character analysis, and a thorough investigation of seventeenth century England and Holland in all its aspects.

To develop and reconstruct the characters there are three sequential steps of development: investigation, inference, and invention. Investigation refers to the use of historical records to find information, either on an objective factual level or on a subjective level. This of course has to be done as thoroughly as possible and to an extent that you, as an historical character, can almost answer every question from the public.

Inference is filling in the factual gaps that often still remain after investigation. It means inferring "biographical information from the demographic historical record."[21] This method can also be applied for subjective criteria, for example: what kind of values and beliefs did people have with the same gender, race, age, class, or religion? This method was needed for composing the character score of *Magdalena Hoest*. Being a lower /middle class woman of the seventeenth century, little is known about her. Her husband's occupation and general information about women in Leiden in the seventeenth century provided information to fill the factual gaps.

The third step of development is invention. After investigation and inference sometimes this method is still needed to complete hard fact information. In an attempt to simulate and recreate life in the past every detail has to be filled in, just like movie-makers create a total view; but in the case of living history it goes even further in recreating a three-dimensional total view of the past, involving all the senses.

According to Robert Rosenstone, there are truthful and untruthful forms of invention. He especially applies this to films. In the movie *Daens* by Stijn Coninx, Belgian church leaders are playing billiards

Figure 26: Rapenburg 2009, Project Pilgrim Fathers. Meeting past and present – different cultures.

while arguing about choices they have to make. The game is a metaphor for these choices, playing the ball hence and forth with different arguments. Although it is historically unlikely that the church leaders were playing billiards in this situation, the metaphoric intertextuality between the physical billiard game and the mental play of arguments works well in terms of film techniques and can be seen as a true invention (Van de Winkel and De Wever 2005: 19). An example of an untruthful invention is the late medieval stone castle in the movie Beowulf, whereas the story is set in the early middle ages. Although one has to be very careful with invention, it sometimes is a necessary 'evil' to create a more complete picture of the past.

When this method is carried about to its fullest potential it gives character interpreters an enormous amount of factual knowledge to interact with the public in an interactive and in-depth way. The public has to experience the project for real and interact as much as possible to discover this extended knowledge. To give an impression of this project, I refer to a movie: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9V1D_JO-DzQ

Open Monuments Day: the taste of the nineteenth century

In the Netherlands, a day of 'open monuments' is organised, each year in September. Historical buildings that fit with the chosen theme of the year (2010: the taste of the nineteenth century) are opened to the visitors. Beleef Het Verleden was given the great opportunity to perform first person

[21] Outline Character Score Revolutionary City Program, Colonial Williamsburg, 2006.

interpretation in one of the most beautiful houses of nineteenth century Leiden (see Figure 27).

In this house, four historical characters in first person interpretation were involved (see Figure 28). Outside we had a special program for the children (nineteenth century hairstyles), a demonstration of hat making, and a stand which sold historical 'cookies', all performed by third person interpreters. My focus here is on the first person interpretation inside the house. We had chosen a particular year (1886) to tell our story. In the Leiden archive we found the original inhabitants of this house at that time and so again history records guided the story. Extensive character scores were built to ensure for each interpreter a great range of knowledge and topics to talk about.

Figure 27: Project: The Taste of the Nineteenth Century, Plantsoen 69, Leiden 2010 (Photo: Thea Teunissen, 2010).

The upper class characters Wiggers van Kerchem and Le Poole (see Figure 29) talked about art (The school of The Hague & The school of Barbizon), architecture, family-relations, the etiquette, women's emancipation (Aletta Jacobs) and their ways of entertaining themselves. The French cook talked about food and drinks in the nineteenth century, while preparing an excellent nineteenth century meal (in a modern kitchen). Aaltje, the servant told the public about her life and family, and her daily duties in the household of Wiggers van Kerchem, while at the same time performing those duties such as serving, cleaning, and polishing silver.

Figure 28: Historical Characters, Project: the taste of the nineteenth century

Family cards were given to the visitors, and some of them included a personal invitation of Madame Wiggers van Kerchem to join her and her friend Miss Le Poole at the table for lunch (see Figure 30-33). For every course a new 'couple' was invited to the table. These members of the public were given a 'role-card' to perform a historical character themselves. On these role cards information was given about the historical characters sex, age, martial status, children and occupation. The following characters were performed by the public with great enthusiasm and surprising skill:

- Emilie Knappert
- Arnolda Antonia Knappert
- Adrianus Knappert
- W.C. Mulder
- Floris Verster
- Heike Kamerlingh Onnes

Figure 29: Open Monuments Day 2010: The Taste of the Nineteenth Century. First person interpretation of the characters Michelina Wiggers van Kerchem and Wilhelmine Le Poole (Photo: W.J. Schipper).

Figure 30-33: Open Monuments Day 2010: The Taste of the Nineteenth Century. The public joins at the table with Michelina Wiggers van Kerchem and Wilhelmine Le Poole (Photo: Martijn Hakkeling, 2010)

- Menso Kamerlingh Onnes
- Gustaaf Le Poole
- Fanny Berlinerblau

Some members of the public quickly googled for extra information on their characters and some even went home to change clothing so they felt better suited to the historical company. For the public and the historical interpreters this project was the most engaging, most interactive, and most positively challenging, that we have experienced in the past three years. The public members played their roles so vividly and the historical interpreters were challenged to convey almost 90% of the information they had researched and prepared for this project. Our average experience is that you prepare 100% and you can often only use 10% to convey to the public.

The experience was definitely highlighted by the excellent food that was prepared by our French cook.

Menu on the Saturday
Petits pâtés en croûte à la Lyonnaise
Velouté de légumes & croustade aux oeufs
Boudin blanc au Porto & legumes à la Saint Germain
Crème renversée à la vanille & canelés Bordelais

Menu on the Sunday
Mise en bouche: Pruneaux lardés sautés à la poële & Beaume de Venise
Consommé: Bisque de homard aux coutons aillés
Plat de resistance: Cailles farcies, sauce aux raisins de Corinthe et Marsala, et riz à l'italienne
Dessert: Charlotte au chocolat et sabayon au Champagne
Thés et Cafés accompagnés de langues de chat gourmandes (caramel, figue), macarons, meringues, biscuits à la cuillère

To get an even better impression of the program, take a look at the short movie on youtube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cFleXwRlw7A&feature=related.

To end this article, I encourage all museums and heritage sites to work with this fascinating method of first person interpretation. With just one warning: when you do it, do it right: make sure there is enough budget and time for thorough research and preparation. This method can give the public a most engaging experience, when properly done.

Additional note, April 2014 – a note on the future

The conference of Interpret Europe in 2011 that led to this publication planted a seed for further development of live costumed interpretation of history and heritage on a European scale. At the moment, together with different partners from all over Europe we are creating a team which will focus on European history from the different perspectives of the participating countries, showing a broader, unique and coherent view on European history. Our wish is to merge academic research with European projects on site to improve the quality of our work; develop a methodology and quality standards for future work; train (young) people in this field and take live heritage interpretation to the next level.

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Films
Stijn Coninx, 'Daens' (film)
Robert Zemeckis, 'Beowulf' (film)

Author
Martine Teunissen is director and owner of the company 'Beleef Het Verleden' / 'Experience The Past' (Historical Events & Consultancy). She received her M.Phil in February 2008 at Leiden University after completing her thesis on the representation of the past in public spheres. Examining the different examples of European and American open air museums, with a main focus on Colonial Williamsburg, gave inspiration to start bringing this knowledge into practice. In May 2008 she created 'Beleef Het Verleden'. It is her mission to educate people through costumed live interpretation, an exciting and interactive way to experience history as it might have been. She works with a team of professional freelancers who perform both in first and third person interpretation, providing live interpretation for several museums, schools, castles and heritage centres. As an academic historian she does the research on these sites and their historical characters to enable her team of interpreters to make a memorable event that is historically as authentic as possible. She also takes the role of organiser and theatre maker and helps the client from A-Z to give a worthwhile experience of the past to the visitor of the site.

Museums building community:
Meaning-making and place-making[1] through "Domestic Integrities"© project

by Gail Vander Stoep, Laura Johnson and Cadi Fung

Abstract
As museum roles have expanded beyond archiving/curating collections and displaying artifacts in glass cases, interpreters are recognizing museums' roles in building community, addressing controversial and sensitive issues, and reaching out to underserved populations. This paper explores how museums can offer programs that help build community connections and facilitate meaning-making for visitors, particularly residents. To illustrate this potential, a community-based, interactive museum-hosted program – Domestic Integrities, a community art project directed by Los Angeles artist Fritz Haeg – is described. The program is linked to literature-based goals of meaning-making and community development and is supported by comments from participants. This project, hosted by the Edith and Eli Broad Museum at Michigan State University (MSU), began with community members who, while sipping soup and creating a crocheted rug using discarded textiles, engaged in conversation, sharing, and creative handwork. The growing rug later served as a display venue for local, seasonal harvest and natural items, and served as a gathering space for other community-building activities. Student-generated ideas for extending events associated with the rug to further enhance community engagement and meaning-making are presented.

The Need: Connecting People, Building Community, Finding Meaning

How many "friends" do you have on Facebook? Are you "trending"? How many re-Tweets has your most recent Twitter comment had? The metrics of relationships and community building often seem to be reduced to numbers, with the goal being to collect as many Friends, Tweets, or other tallies as possible – a modern version of hoping your elementary school class valentine box had more valentines than anyone else's in class. Many youth seem reluctant to speak directly with others, particularly adults, either via phone or face-to-face, preferring text messaging and other non-personal forms of communication. Using these social media, meeting new people and connecting is easy . . . but what is the depth, quality, or longevity of these connections? As referenced in a recent article on the use of media for small business, "According to Cornell University's Steven Strogatz, social media sites can make it more difficult for us to distinguish between the meaningful relationships we foster in the real world, and the numerous casual relationships formed through social media. By focusing so much of our time and psychic energy on these less meaningful relationships, our most important connections, he fears, will weaken." (Jung n.d.) Many others are lamenting the loss of identity, languages, cultures, ecosystems – those things that make various places in the world and groups of people unique. Some lament the loss of connection with place-based community. The media is rife with questions and controversy about the impact of technology and social media on today's society. Of course, benefits are numerous, too. The point of this paper is not to debate, support, or refute any particular position. But in the midst of frequently expressed concerns about weakening of social connections and community, an opportunity for community organizations arises: to find and provide ways to bring people together in physical spaces in meaningful ways, and to strengthen a sense of community through communication and activity.

[1] Place-making as related to this project will be explored in more depth in a forthcoming manuscript.

The word *community* itself has diverse definitions, and is described in both biological and sociological contexts. In the sociological context, community is a "construct" rather than a tangible "thing," and it is more than a collection of people who comprise the community – whether that community is geophysically identified, a network of human relationships, or simply a group of people having a common interest (Bryant and Peck 2007; Bartle 2011). According to Bartle (2011), community is "a set of interactions, human behaviours that have meaning and expectations between its members. Not just action, but actions based on shared expectations, values, beliefs and meanings between individuals." Every community has a wide array of organizations and institutions – government, non-government and non-profit organizations, private – that offer products, services, and experiential opportunities. Museums in their many forms are some of those resources, and have a particular advantage in addressing and facilitating discourse about topics that involve human values, beliefs, and meanings.

The Museum: How Museums and Other Interpretive Sites Can Address the Need

In recent years museums have been shifting and expanding their roles from those of simply serving as archival storehouses of objects and research collections. By international definition, as revised most recently in 2007, "[a] museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment" (International Council of Museums 2011). This definition recognizes and promotes expanded, diversified purposes of museums, yet it still does not highlight functions of social interaction and engagement in helping make museums more relevant, particularly to host communities. In fact, much focus – particularly with large museums – is to serve as economic generators for their communities by participating actively in the tourism sector and catering to tourist, rather than local community, demands. A recent article published by *The Telegraph*, in its Luxury section (O'Ceallaigh 2014), describes a trend in the growth of mega-museums. As one example, the British Museum that hosted 5,000 visitors during its inaugural year of 1759 received 6.5 million visitors in 2013. In response, it will be opening an adjacent nine-story extension (costing 135 million British pounds) called the World Conservation and Exhibition Centre. Even the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum, on the Michigan State University (MSU) campus (the case study museum for this paper), with an estimated project cost of 45 million US-Dollar, was created in part to become an attraction for tourists.

Yet even with an eye toward global prominence and tourism attractiveness, museums still reside within communities and should have some obligation to those communities. Accordingly, museum accreditation standards in the United States, as developed by the American Association of Museums (AAM) in 1996 and revised in 2005, now require community engagement and collaboration, as illustrated by the following criterion: The museum must engage in ongoing, reflective institutional planning that includes audience and community involvement (American Association of Museums 2004; American Association of Museums 2005). The expansion of museum roles to address community issues also is reflected in new journals such as *Museums and Social Issues* (Left Coast Press 2011). Since 2006, among contemporary issues addressed by museums as presented in that journal are: evolution; sustainability; race and gender identity; and immigration and the immigrant experience. Surely all of these issues are ones that should be discussed within communities as ways to build mutual understanding, build community, and create meanings for visitors as well as the community.

A Construct: Meaning-Making

To understand the role of museums in facilitating meaning-making in the process of building community, we must understand a bit about the construct and processes of meaning-making. A theory of meaning-making, introduced in 1982 (Kegan), is based on a constructivist perspective, whereby active construction of meaning by individuals is a result of new experiences understood and processed against a backdrop of personal knowledge, values, and beliefs (Baumeister and Vohs 2002; Ignelzi 2000). As quoted by Noh in her draft dissertation that explores the construct of meaning-making (n.d.):

> "… [E]xperiencing starts to make sense as [a] person performs his or her psychological functioning of translating it into how he or she thinks and feels. It is individuals' subjectivity, or phenomenological world, that forms the very core for meaning origination and evolvement. People have a freedom to choose meaning (McArthur, 1958) through their interactive experiencing with various internal and external contexts (Chen, 2001). As such, meaning is the underlying motivation behind thoughts, actions, and even the interpretation and application of knowledge" (Krauss 2005: 762-763).

Museums and other interpretive sites of all types can provide spaces, programs, and opportunities for citizens to engage, to connect, to create meaning, to build community. To be effective, meaning-making must be the result of engaged processing – cognitive, physical, and/or emotional/affective – that is itself the result of a form of negotiation between provider/programmer and the participant/visitor (Beck and Cable 2002). It is not, as previously thought and taught, simply a transfer of information about an object, event, or person that includes statements about why it should be important. This shifts the role of museum professional or interpreter to that of a facilitator of experiences and meaning-making rather than as simply a transmitter of knowledge (Falk and Dierking 1992; Silverman 1995).

By definition, then, meaning-making is part of a learning process that involves active engagement by the participant. This engagement is grounded in participants' previous knowledge, beliefs, and interests – which impacts to which information they attend or pay attention, and to which they link new information or experiences. Additionally, it is influenced by both the physical and social contexts within which a new experience occurs. Falk and Dierking (2000) propose a contextual learning model that includes all three of these contexts: personal, socio-cultural, and physical. Barrie (2001) studied the concept of meaning-making with visitors to two types of interpretive sites – a museum and a national park. Her findings reinforce the premise that meaning-making, in both form and degree of importance, is a subjective phenomena that results from interactions between an experience and a person's values, beliefs, and the degree of personal significance they place on the experience. For meaning-making to have any possibility of occurring, a person first must attend to the experience. To facilitate attention, an interpreter must include opportunities for personal engagement (physical, cognitive, emotional), which then allows an individual to connect the experience to personal constructs. All are critical to meaning-making. As illustrative, this case study focuses on a museum-based program that actively invited and facilitated personal involvement around a contemporary need – reconnecting people with their environment and community – in a way that created both individual and community meaning.

The Context: The Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum

The Broad Art Museum, with its innovative design inconsistent with surrounding university buildings, was designed in part to make a bold statement about the university, and to attract attention as well as visitors to the mid-Michigan region. Additionally, its intent is to work ". . . in partnerships with various schools and institutes on campus and in the surrounding area, [to] develop projects that move beyond the traditional boundaries of object-based practice to investigate pressing contemporary issues and engage the public . . ." (ArtDaily.org 2012). This partnership approach is critical to another intent, to help connect the university community and the host community, to serve as a visible and active link between "town and gown." Even its physical design, created by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Zaha Hadid – with its modern façade of pleated stainless steel and glass – incorporates entrances on both the community and university sides. The museum is described as "a place where artists' ideas, words, and actions create a vibrant center for questioning and understanding the modern world" (Broad Museum 2013). To integrate these various goals, museum staff have created programs that intentionally have moved beyond the walls of the museum and into the community, going where the people already are comfortable within the community and inviting their involvement.

One program, offered even before the official museum opening, was created in a pop-up museum – a temporary exhibition in a community-based, unused space. Using this art exhibition installed in a vacant former bar in Lansing's Old Town neighborhood to illustrate a museum philosophy, Director Michael Rush said, 'As a new museum, we have opportunities to push boundaries. Repurposing an underutilized building into an exhibition space for Kristin Cammermeyer's work is an example of the kinds of programming we will continue to do" (Sutton 2012). Another example of a community-located program was the launch event for a residency program, called "The Land Grant," for artists working around topics of land use, food, and urban development, with a focus on sustainability. The event, hosted in a closed former bookstore, included a documentary film, a mini-farmers market, and a music fest (Bucqueroux 2012). Another strategy, to extend the Broad Art Museum's reach to an international community, is the creation of a Virtual Museum. "[It is] its own entity in which there are interactive projects created by artists that anyone throughout the world can access, can enhance the projects, can participate in the projects" (Guerra 2012).

Further, Director Rush said, "one of his priorities as director was to reach out to students and get them involved – as interns or docents, for example. He also expressed interest in having a student committee for the museum to help organize student events. 'I want this to be a hub for students, a place for them to bring their laptops and hang out, a place where they feel welcome and feel at home and also feel challenged by some of the things that go on there.'" (Guerra 2012) This interest in connecting with students presented an entry point for students in a MSU graduate course, focused on the role of culture and cultural entities in community development and heritage tourism, to become engaged as participant observers to explore the processes of meaning-making, place-making, and community-building as a result of a specific museum-based program.

The Program: "Domestic Integrities"©

The Domestic Integrities© project is one of a trilogy of creative brainchildren of Fritz Haeg, a California-based artist who was invited to be one of the inaugural artists-in-residence with "The Land Grant" program at MSU. Domestic integrities, as described by Haeg (n.d.), are the "officially selected and presented items that local residents have arranged / assembled / baked / built / canned / concocted / composed / cooked / created / dried / made / pickled / preserved / spun / stewed / woven / etc. from material harvested, foraged, gathered, scavenged, or found in their environment." Collecting and creating these integrities insists on personal involvement and, because individuals would choose to do these activities, it is assumed they place some sort of value on and personal connection with them. But any of these activities could take place entirely within the confines of one's home. The project strategy to extend the sharing and meaning-making to help build community was to create, then use domestic integrity fields on which to publicly display these seasonally-contributed integrities. These fields are described as "crocheted rugs of local textiles upon which the project is presented, functioning as charged sites for testing, performing, and presenting how we want to live. These spirally stitched circular rugs (see Figure 1) gradually expand as they travel from city to city. Local resident collaborators responding to an open call make periodic visits bringing their Domestic Integrities to place them ceremoniously on low pedestals on the crocheted rug. Some may remain on display for weeks while others may change daily, but there is always something fresh to drink and eat. Visitors to the rug are invited to take off their shoes and make themselves at home, to sit down and inspect, touch, taste, and smell that day's various Domestic Integrities, which provide a 'live broadcast' of what is happening outside and in people's homes at that moment, in that place, in that season" (Haeg n.d.).

Figure 1: Spiral rug, a domestic field, created in East Lansing, Michigan during fall 2012.

A MSU graduate class was involved with other community volunteers in the creation of the crocheted rug. Importantly, even the rug creation was designed as a process for building community, sharing recollections of existing meanings, and creating new meanings based on the shared experience and discussion of issues of interest to community crocheters. Rug-makers were volunteer community members who, while sipping homemade soup or tea and munching on artisanal bread, created a rug using discarded textiles collected from multiple sources. Most were donated – old clothes, fabric scraps left over from making clothes, fabrics that never quite got made into their intended projects, and discontinued fabric samples. Participants were shown how to cut what resembled strips out of various fabric shapes, then how to weave the pieces into the slowly growing rug. Conversation among strangers often started with helpful hints about the cutting/crocheting process, then moved to sharing stories associated with known fabric pieces and speculating on stories about others (e.g., Grandma's flannel pajamas, Suzi's frilly prom gown, Mikey's old T-ball uniform, Sarah's graduation gown). Slowly, strangers would begin to connect with each other – around shared stories, common past experiences, and personal interests. Often conversations would address more serious issues facing the community, or small groups within the larger community. Thus, the communal eating, crocheting, and discussing would create new meanings and begin to create small links among people, a start at community-building (see Figure 2).

Eventually the rug was moved from the vacant former bookstore-turned-community-gathering-place-and-impromptu-art-studio to the Broad Art Museum, as one of the anchor exhibits for the museum's grand opening. Yet the community-building, rug-making, and meaning-making did not end. Volunteers continued to work on the rug, sharing stories with each other and with visitors, even as the first museum visitors began to explore the exhibit and make their own meanings. Numerous comments that represented personal meanings, both with newly created meanings related to the rug-making process (e.g., "I put that one in; I chose that piece because…"; "This piece was so soft;" "That piece was really hard to crochet! Made my fingers hurt.") as well as reflecting on or speculating about previous meanings associated with the textile pieces (e.g., "That was my favorite scarf; I'm so glad it has an extended life here;" "I remember Grannie reading me books when she was wearing that nightie.") were overheard during rug construction, movement of the rug to the museum,

Figure 2: The process of creating a domestic integrity field rug: (a) sorting donated textiles by color; (b) cutting textiles into strips for crocheting; (c) Fritz Haeg teaching a volunteer how to crochet; (d) volunteers working (with tea, soup, bread on table in background, and inset of homemade lentil-vegetable soup).

and as people viewed the "installed" exhibition. After the grand opening, the integrities displayed on the rug changed regularly, providing additional triggers for meaning-making and community-building. Visitors were invited to enter the rug via a small placard that said, "Please remove your shoes before entering the rug." This further invited audience engagement, up close and personal, by using their multiple senses (kinesthetic and tactile as well as visual and olfactory) to explore the rug and its displayed integrities (See Figure 3).

The Result: What the Project Meant to Community Members

Comments from some of the participants helped us (my class participants and me) better understand our own experiences with and observations made during the Domestic Integrities Project. Their comments reflect personal motivation for participation and their subsequent meaning-making, and include the following:

> "The philosophy of the project, which revolved around community-building and appreciation of the materials."

> "Participating in the project . . . would make us all feel creative again."

> "By collecting forms of materials from the community and then creating a new entity of warmth, the rug becomes the soul of East Lansing."

> "Participating in the process has challenged the way I think as well, things such as my personal views on art and how to bring communities together."

Comments reflecting an interest specifically in community-building, including encouraging young family members to connect with community, include the following:

> "I was thrilled to be invited to participate in a project that would bridge the East Lansing community and the [MSU] Broad Museum."

> "Involving my 5-year-old grandson in a community outreach project."

> "The project brings together pieces and artifacts from lives to create a space that is created and used by different people. The space becomes a place for stories and talking. It is made by and creates a community."

Figure 3: Rug is installed in the Broad Art Museum: (a) rug-making continues as integrities are displayed on the rug; (b) visitors view and explore the rug and the local objects presented on it.

Some comments reflected and connected things that had personal meaning with the process of community-building, such as the following:

> "I'm really interested in community art projects and breaking down the barrier between art-maker and art-viewer. I think art is a powerful tool for brining communities together."

Although the assessment was cursory, comments of participants certainly support the premise that museums can provide spaces and opportunities through which to help residents and other visitors create personal meanings and, in small ways, reconceive what it means to be a community member. Opportunities for further use of the *integrities field* could result in additional community connections, sharing of stories and values, and exploration of things that matter to residents. Students developed ideas that would r[2]lect the intent of the project and structure of the rug[1] (Brown et al. 2012). The first program idea, *From Lamps to Lights: The Evolution of Electricity in Communities and Art,* would use the rug as a gathering place on which to stage an interactive program, incorporating art elements, to help residents of all ages explore the impacts of electricity as a light source – on daily living, learning, and art production and display. Such a program would integrate art and science as well as provide an opportunity for community discussion about the topics. A subsequent and related program, Festival of Lights, to be conducted around the time of winter solstice, would celebrate light, its various cultural meanings and symbolism, and focus on creation of lighting as part of a broader plan to develop sustainable power sources within communities. Candle-making, informal conversation circles, and other activities for engaging the audience would be incorporated.

Another program, *Creative Word Workshop*, would provide a variety of semi-structured opportunities for youth of all grade levels to use the rug space for storytelling, reading circles, poetry and other creative writing opportunities. Inspiration for student writing could come from the various integrities (and associated stories or messages) displayed on the rug. By inviting students onto the rug, program facilitators would encourage a sense of community as well as provide multi-sensory inputs to stimulate creative writing. The program could be extended by linking art concepts to creative writing – for example, by having book illustrators talk about their work and help with art workshops. To maintain the integrity of the domestic integrities theme, participants could be guided to focus on local ecosystems, food production systems, harvest, seasons, and other relevant topics about things "going on in the world just outside their doors." Sharing of the young writers' creative works – both art and writing – would be integral to the experience, and a reflection of how young people make meaning of their world.

[2] Molly Brown and Karl Schwinghamer, students in the course, are credited with these program ideas.

A Challenge

A challenge to all readers of this paper is to think about ways in which your museum or interpretive site can be used to engage community residents beyond the site itself, to think about, engage in discourse about, and become involved with others around topics or issues relevant to their own communities. The challenge is to think about becoming facilitators of meaning-making and community-building rather than simply being information disseminators.

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