

CONCEPT PAPER

Second Regional Course on Interpretive Planning at World Heritage properties in Europe

June – October 2022

Introduction

The interpretation and presentation of heritage are becoming increasingly relevant alongside the growing awareness of the crosscutting contribution that the heritage sector can make to society, as well as of the necessity for greater and more inclusive involvement of social actors in heritage management.

Heritage interpretation, as an approach to non-formal learning that promotes the exchange of significant ideas related to heritage, can play a unique role in fostering effective and inclusive heritage management, particularly through ensuring greater alignment with sustainable development goals and introducing participatory approaches.

To promote the transformative potential of heritage interpretation and explore a comprehensive, practical approach in this regard, UNESCO through its Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe launched the capacity-building initiative WH-Interp with the development and organization of a pilot course in 2021.¹ Drawing on the positive experience of the pilot, a second course is organized in 2022.

The WH-Interp course was developed with the technical support of the European Association for Heritage Interpretation (Interpret Europe) and experts in the field of World Heritage. It addressed three main subjects, which were identified as major areas of knowledge and competencies desired for interpretive planners working at World Heritage properties, namely, basics of the World Heritage system, principles and qualities of heritage interpretation, and a comprehensive approach to interpretive planning.

¹ See the report of the pilot training course on interpretive planning at World Heritage properties in Europe (May – November 2021): <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381194.locale=en>

Objectives

The course aims to provide participants with increased competences in planning heritage interpretation more effectively at their respective World Heritage (WH) properties/sites, in line with the priorities of the World Heritage capacity building strategy and other relevant documents. Specifically, the course:

- provides a general understanding of the heritage interpretation discipline, including its principles, practice and planning process;
- promotes understanding of how interpretive planning can help present the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of a World Heritage property, while at the same time revealing how it can be linked to the broader values underpinning UNESCO's mission, such as building peace and fostering sustainable development;
- shows how to encourage people to reflect upon UNESCO's mission and fundamental principles in a way that allows the transfer of findings at heritage sites into their meaningful experience;
- demonstrates how heritage interpretative planning can play a role at World Heritage properties in support of their overall management systems/plans;
- enables participants to concretely contribute to the improvement of interpretive planning at their respective World Heritage properties;
- serves as a forum for participants to share their experiences, learn from each other and reinforce networking and cooperation at the regional level.

Target groups

The course is primarily addressed to the **staff from World Heritage property managing authorities in Europe** who are already engaged in planning heritage interpretation and/or willing to contribute to advancing heritage interpretation at their sites.

Representatives of civil society organizations (community representatives, local associations, NGOs, etc.) and private practitioners (e.g. individuals or companies active in heritage presentation/interpretation, such as tour guides, publishing industries, property owners, etc.) in Europe are also eligible to apply for participation.

Methodology

The course will be delivered through **3 progressive phases**, spread out over the period from June to October in 2022:

Phase 1. Introduction to heritage interpretation in the World Heritage context (distance learning)

Phase 2. Workshop on the interpretive planning process (40 hours, face-to-face learning)

Phase 3. Interpretive planning of one's own case (distance learning)

The programme blends various learning and exchange modalities, including on-site and in-presence lectures, site visits, group and individual exercises in a real-case scenario, written assignments, and individual sessions with the trainers, to ensure effective learning and facilitate the application of the newly gained knowledge and skills. The tentative programme and estimated time frame are as follows:

Phases of the course	Subjects	Modalities	Estimated time-frame
Phase 1	Introduction to heritage interpretation in the World Heritage context	Online webinar	2-hour session(s), June 2022
		Warm-up exercises with distance support of trainers	June-September, 2022
Phase 2	Workshop on the interpretive planning process	Face-to-face workshop with lectures, site visits and on-site exercises	19-23 September, 2022
Phase 3	Interpretive planning on one's own case	Assignment to participants with distance support of trainers	September-October 2022

* Kindly note that the time frame is indicative and subject to change.

Phase 1. Introduction to heritage interpretation in the World Heritage context

Through a series of online presentations, critical reading of relevant materials, and exchange with peers, the webinar will equip participants with an essential understanding of the World Heritage aspirations, obligations and processes, and a basic knowledge of the principles of heritage interpretation discipline.

More specifically, issues addressed in the webinar include:

- What are heritage interpretation and interpretive planning?
- What are the main objectives, concepts, actors and procedures of the World Heritage system?
- What are the interdependencies between the Outstanding Universal Values in the World Heritage Context, other heritage values within the property and in its wider setting, and the broader values underpinning the overall mission of UNESCO? How can we detect them and make good use of them?
- What is the role of communities in the management of World Heritage sites, and how can World Heritage site managing authorities effectively engage and empower local stakeholders?
- How to encourage people to reflect upon UNESCO's mission and fundamental principles in a way that allows the transfer of findings at heritage sites into their meaningful experience?
- How can heritage interpretation support the full integration of all these themes into World Heritage processes?

Following the webinars and as a warm-up to the interpretive planning workshop, individual exercises will be carried out to reinforce participants' understanding of the principles underpinning heritage interpretation. From June to September, participants will be guided by sets of provoking questions, reflecting on the status-quo and potential of heritage interpretation at their own sites.

Phase 2. Workshop on the interpretive planning process

The 5-day face-to-face workshop, tentatively scheduled in Ljubljana, Slovenia, will familiarise participants with main stages of interpretive planning:

1. Reviewing heritage
2. Reviewing interpretive services
3. Developing interpretive services
4. Developing resilience

The World Heritage property “[The works of Jože Plečnik in Ljubljana – Human Centred Urban Design](#)” will serve as a case study during the workshop. Through facilitated group work and discussions, combined with site visits, participants will explore four interpretive qualities in the four overlapping planning phases, through a framework of 16 questions:

Interpretive qualities & planning steps	Reviewing		Developing	
	Heritage	Interpretive services		Resilience
Turning phenomena into experiences	What heritage phenomena can be experienced and how?	How do interpretive services support the heritage experience?	What first-hand experiences does the new plan facilitate?	How will the planned experiences be sustained in the long term?
Provoking resonance and participation	How are stakeholders related to the heritage and to each other?	How do interpretive services on site involve people?	How does the plan help stakeholders relate to the heritage and inspire participation?	How will the participation of stakeholders continue?
Offering paths to deeper meaning	What does the local heritage mean to different people?	Which viewpoints and stories do the interpretive services emphasise (or not)?	How is <i>meaning-making</i> facilitated by the plan?	How can the plan continue to provoke <i>meaning-making</i> in the future?
Fostering stewardship for all heritage	What are the threats to local heritage and its forms of stewardship?	How do interpretive services encourage stewardship for the heritage?	How does the plan support stewardship of the heritage?	How does the plan impact people’s attitude to heritage in general?

Table 1. Interpretive planning framework (Interpret Europe)

Day 1 Day 2 Day 3 Day 4

Grouped in smaller teams and following informed inputs and exercises, participants will draw on their answers to these questions to develop interpretive planning proposals for the World Heritage site, as their main deliverables in Phase 2.

Phase 3. Interpretive Plan on one’s own case

In the third and final part, participants will be tasked with sketching an interpretive plan outline for their respective World Heritage properties or components, applying the knowledge and competences acquired during the course into real-life circumstances to propose interpretive ideas and solutions that can be possibly implemented. During this phase, participants will receive one-on-one distance support from trainers.

Lead trainers

Thorsten Ludwig (M.Sc. Interpretation: Management and Practice) works as interpretive trainer, planner and consultant since 1993. From 2015 to 2021, he has been the Managing Director at Interpret Europe, a role in which he was awarded the EU Altiero Spinelli Prize for the initiative: “Engaging citizens with Europe’s cultural heritage” and is based in Germany.

Valya Stergioti (M.Sc. in Environmental Decision Making) is Interpret Europe’s Training Coordinator since 2016. She works as a freelance interpretive trainer and planner. In 2010, she founded Alli Meria (The Other Side), a heritage interpretation practice especially active in Greece and the Balkans and is based in Greece.

When & Where

The introductory webinar is scheduled in June 2022 (date to be defined).

The face-to-face workshop (Phase 2) of the pilot course is scheduled for 19-23 September 2022, in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

[The works of Jože Plečnik in Ljubljana – Human Centred Urban Design](#), inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2021, will serve as a case study during the workshop.