

Introducing Interpretive Agents

Thorsten Ludwig, 20.12.13

While the ParcInterp programme covers all fields of personal and non-personal interpretation aligned to the requirements of sustainable development, HeriQ is focusing explicitly on interpretive guiding. According to the project proposal, there will be a one-week course for 7 disseminators in 2014. The participants of this course are intended to transmit the content to 3x15 mountain and museum guides within three own courses, which they will run in 2015 in Bulgaria, France and Greece.

Following ParcInterp regulations, participating in a one-week course does not allow to be certified as an interpretive trainer. It therefore was one prior requirement of the German ParcInterp partner organisations that the term 'trainer' will not be used within HeriQ. On the other hand, a need for people was stated, who convince decision-makers to invest in interpretation and sustainability. For those reasons, interpretive agents (instead of trainers) will be trained and certified who themselves will be able to:

- train and certify interpretive guides meeting ParcInterp standards;
- spread interpretation and sustainability among stakeholders.

Interpretive agents are intended to be change agents. The term 'change agent' is usually traced back to Everett Rogers. In his seminal work *Diffusion of Innovations* (Rogers 2003, first published in 1962), Rogers did explore the process of change in society, basically regarding health care. He later applied his findings to communication processes in general (Rogers and Shoemaker 1971). Beside other areas, his approach was transferred to education (e.g. by Havelock 1973, Havelock and Havelock 1973, or Havelock and Zlotolow 1995). In terms of sustainable transformation, it was picked up e.g. by AtKisson (1999 and 2011) and by the German Advisory Council of Global Change (WBGU 2011). In 2012, it became part of ParcInterp, when research was done on implementing the ParcInterp programme (Ludwig 2013).

Interpretive agents in the sense of ParcInterp are change agents who:

- support values and competences for the transformation to sustainability;
- convince of the importance of respectful heritage experiences for change;
- highlight key phenomena and key frames of sustainable development;
- campaign for the profession of the heritage interpreter as a facilitator;
- perform inspiring interpretive talks and know how to teach this qualification.

As an expert in non-formal learning, a good interpreter as such already fulfills many requirements of a change agent. Interpreters as well as change agents should know how to:

- provoke;
- relate;
- reveal;
- share;
- empathize;
- mediate;
- inspire;
- respect.

Heritage interpreters are ‘masters of frames’ and specialists in setting the stage for exchange and participation while connecting people and places. But they might have to improve their skills in order to:

- gain knowledge of and access to stakeholders;
- set up stakeholder and interpretive agent networks to spread the idea of interpretation;
- encourage the purchase of values and competences that advance the transition into a more sustainable world.

Regarding the training course for interpretive agents that will take place in summer 2014, it is important to know, to what degree the ParInterp qualities for interpretive guiding are known and practiced in Bulgaria, France and Greece, and what are the main obstacles, interpretive agents have to overcome when transferring them to their countries. We are looking forward to use those findings and the competences of all partners to choose candidates for the interpretive agent training and to optimise the interaction of lectures and workshops, exercises and excursions during that training to a synergistic manner.

List of References

- AtKisson, Alan (1999) *Believing Cassandra*. White River Junction: Chelsea Green Publishing
- AtKisson, Alan (2011) *The Sustainability Transformation*. London: Earthscan
- Havelock, R. G. (1973) *The Change Agent's Guide to Innovation in Education*. Englewood Cliffs: Educational Technology Publications
- Havelock, R. G. and Havelock, M. C. (1973) *Training for Change Agents*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan
- Havelock, R. G. and Zlotolow, S. (1995) *The Change Agent's Guide*. 2nd edn. Englewood Cliffs: Educational Technology Publications
- Ludwig, T. (2013) *The Feasibility of Implementing National Training Standards for German Protected Areas*. Perth: University of the Highlands and Islands
- Rogers, E. M. (2003) *Diffusion of Innovations*. 5th edn. New York: Free Press
- Rogers, E. M. and Shoemaker, F. F. (1971) *Communication of Innovations*. New York: Free Press
- WBGU - Wissenschaftlicher Beirat der Bundesregierung Globale Umweltveränderungen (2011) *World in Transition – A Social Contract for Sustainability*. Berlin: WBGU Sekretariat