

Interpretive Master Plan Development at Public Gardens

Three Case Studies from Finland, Australia
and the United States.

BGCI's 9th International Congress on education in Botanic Gardens
May 1 2015, St.Louis, Missouri

Who are we?

A pair of blue and white gloves hanging on a clothesline with wooden clothespins against a dark background. The gloves are blue with white cuffs and palms. The clothesline is a thin white cord. There are three wooden clothespins: one on the left, one in the middle, and one on the right holding the gloves. The background is a solid dark brown.

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What are we going to explore today?

- What is Interpretation and Interpretation Master Planning
- Three case studies:
 - Kaisaniemi Botanic Garden, Finland
 - The Australian Garden, Australia
 - Washington Park Arboretum, USA
- Work Session: World Wide Experience Sharing
- Introducing Interpretation Toolkit & Summarizing Outcomes



Photo: Mikko Paartola

What is Interpretation?

“The job of interpretation is to open the minds of people so they can receive the interesting signals that the world is constantly sending. And the messages sent, when added up, tell what the world is all about”.

Knudson, Cable & Beck (1999)

What is Interpretation Planning?

“A decision making process that blends management needs and resource consideration with visitors desire and ability to play to determine the most effective way to communicate the message to targeted markets”.

National Association for Interpretation (NAI)

Interpretation is **POETRY**

Purposeful

Organized

Enjoyable/Engaging

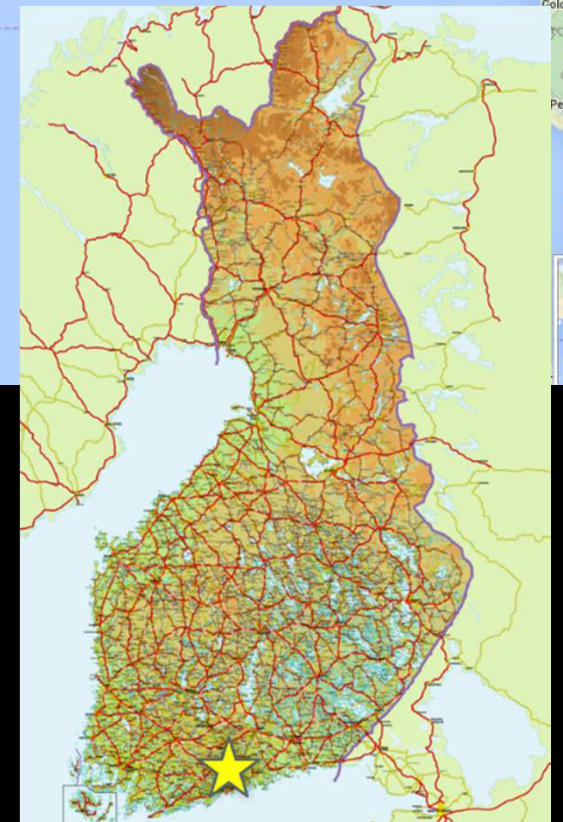
Thematic

Relevant

You



Photo: Mikko Paartola



Case Studies

1. Kaisaniemi Botanic Garden, Helsinki, Finland.
2. Australian Garden, Melbourne, Australia.
3. Washington Park Arboretum, USA.

Getting started...

Lessons learned in Kaisaniemi Botanic Garden

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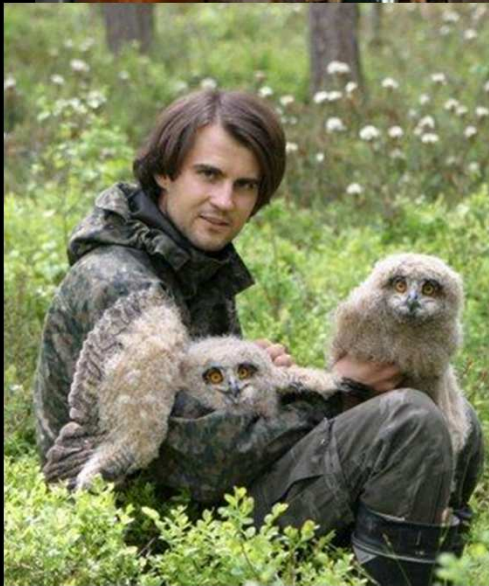
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Photo: Pertti Pehkonen





LUOMUS

FINNISH MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

= 1 NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM
+ 2 BOTANIC GARDENS
(KUMPULA & KAISANIEMI)





**Once upon a time...
Kaisaniemi Botanic Garden looked like this.**



Change is in the air...

“Interpretation is about knowing your audience and exploring how to reach out to them. It is about responding to their needs, answering their questions and providing interpretation when and where it is needed.”

How to investigate your audience?

Helsinki example & useful points



1. Who are our existing visitors?



Photo: Emilia Kurila

2. Why do they visit?

“What do you expect from your visit today?”

Personal Meaning Mapping -method

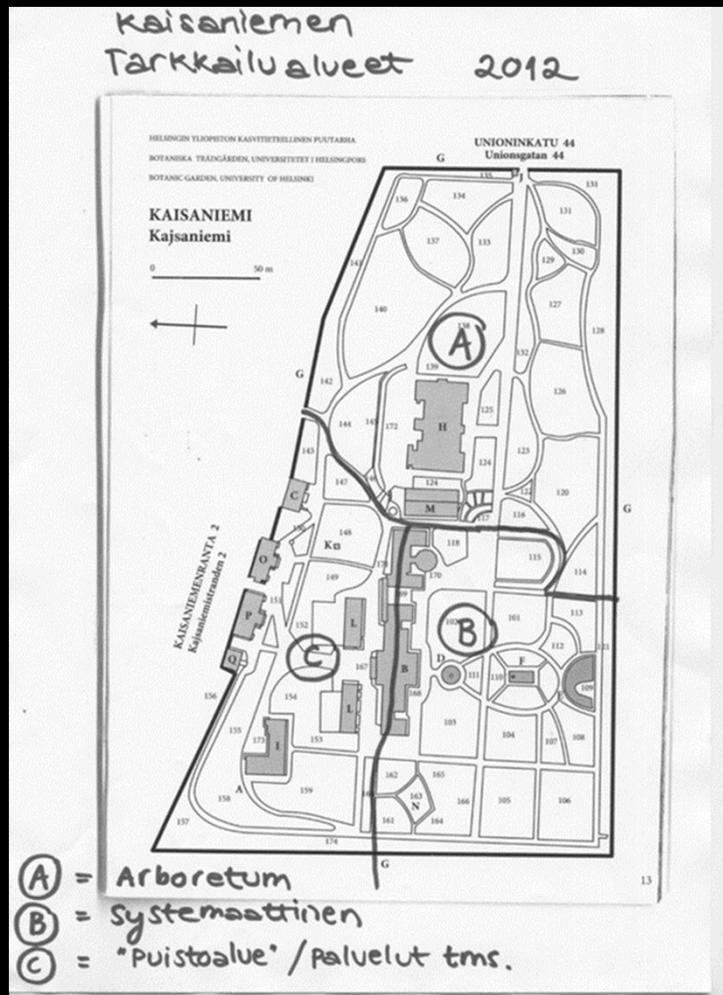
Most important motive	First time visitor	Repeat visitor	All visitors
Recharger	30 %	51 %	44 %
Experience seeker	10 %	0 %	3 %
Professional/Hobbyist	25 %	26 %	25 %
Facilitator	0 %	9 %	6 %
Explorer	35 %	7 %	16 %
Unknown	0 %	7 %	5 %
	100 %	100 %	100 %
	n=20	n=43	n=63

Delightfully lost

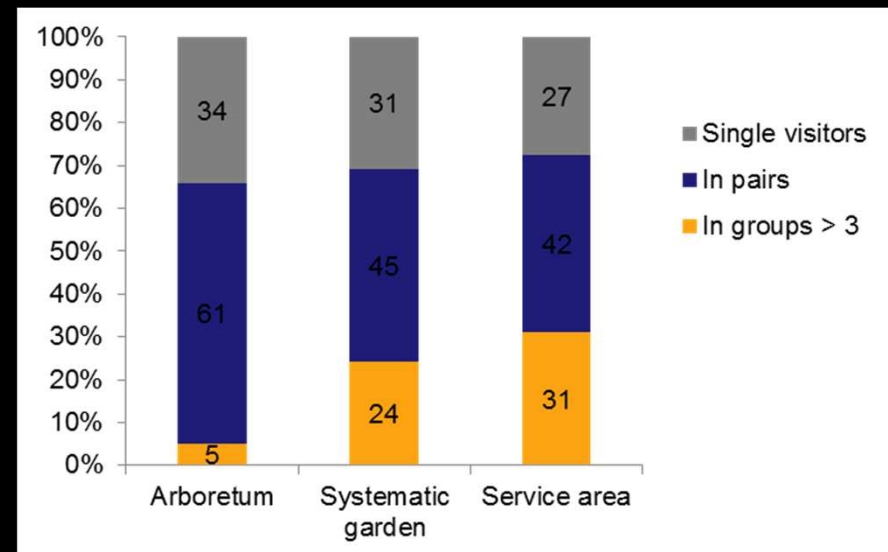
“Visitors do not necessarily come hoping to find out more – but they do learn more than they expect – and they love the sense of unguided exploration, discoveries and pleasant surprises that they encounter in the gardens.”

Waterson & Saunders (2012)

3. How do they use our garden at the moment?

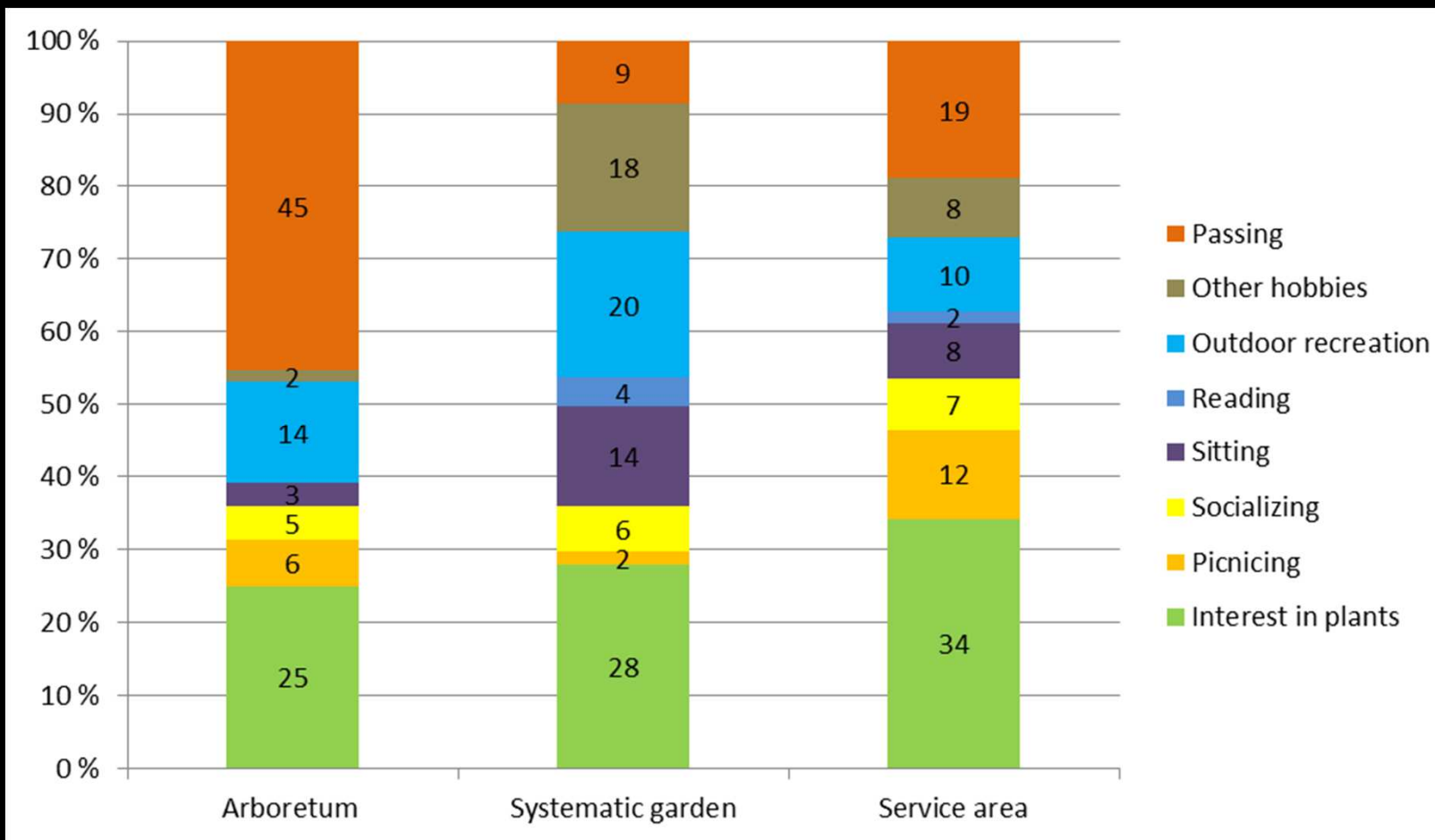


Observing visitor behaviour



Social patterns in observation areas, %

Observed activities in different sectors, %



Guidelines for our interpretation masterplan

1) Better quality visitor experience for our current visitors

- Visitor surveys revealed that most of our visitors are repeat visitors instead of first time visitors.

2) Broadening audiences and targeting to new groups

- **by supporting sense of exploration** and by including interactive elements in the gardens.
- to appeal to first time visitors, men and families/ groups with mixed ages

3) Creating different types of visitor experiences by zoning

How does our masterplan look like at this point?



Western zone – “pedagogical garden”:
Insights and basics for those eager to learn
(esp. groups & families)

Eastern zone – Arboretum of discovery
Zone for contemplation and
recharging emotional batteries

Middle zone - Science & systematics:
Inspiration for plant hobbyists
and garden enthusiasts

Interactions
between plants and animals:
Protective structures, chemical warfare
& warning systems

Interactions
between plants and animals:
Plant reproduction & pollinator garden

Traditional domestic
garden species

Sustainable gardening solutions
(changing installation)

Moss & lichen
garden

Life of a Tree
(arboretum trail)

Climate change &
protecting threatened plants
(seed banking, assisted migration)

Sensory Garden

Stone garden & geology trail:
“The landscapes of the lost world/
ancient Finland”

Tree of evolution:
Systematic garden

Biodiversity area

What do plants do?

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STEP 1 in action



Systematic garden in Kaisaniemi, June 2014.



Idea starts to take form, September 2014.



Tree of evolution, structure ready December 2014.

April 2015: First focus groups have shared their visions with us... **Planning continues!**



There is a need for a thorough discussion about the diverse issues of interpretation. And it calls for frank and open dialogue.

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