

## ThesaurUs. Common paths in heritage interpretation

### Project description

The project '*ThesaurUS. Common paths in heritage interpretation*', is a simulation of an educational format, scalable and reproducible, that integrates the methods of *citizen science* with those of *heritage interpretation*, in order to accompany the 'heritage communities' along cognitive paths that from research lead to the interpretation of cultural heritage. At the moment *ThesaurUs* does not yet have its own organic practical experimentation, but it draws inspiration and combines many experiences of educational design gained from the long-time collaboration between 'Vestigia UniCa' (the 'Laboratory of Didactics and Communication' of the University of Cagliari'; <http://people.unica.it/vestigia>; Social Vestigia UniCa: [FB](#), [IG](#), [TW](#), [YT](#)) and the Association 'Imago Mundi Onlus' (e.g. '[Thirty-Feet of the Monuments](#)'; so called '[alternating school-work](#)' project '[The words of beauty](#)'; '[UniCa C'è - The University of Cagliari at Open Monuments](#)'). On another level, it is also inspired by European actions to support participatory governance of cultural heritage, with particular regard to the European Commission's protocols on "[Responsible Research and Innovation](#)" (RRI), able to ensure a balance between research objectives and compliance with social sustainability. The course provides a blended learning, with mixed activities both online and face-to-face.

### Context

The free and widespread access to large amounts of scientific data has contributed as never before to enhance the evidences of the past, responding positively to an increased "need of history". On the other hand, the disintermediation of production and consume processes has also amplified phenomena of political manipulation of the past, conflictual polarization of the audience and extreme dumbing down of the public debate on cultural heritage, which have produced a progressive loss of confidence in the knowledge and skills of traditional epistemic authorities. In a profoundly changed learning environment, education becomes strategic for the diffusion of free and critical thinking, also through the dissemination of the cognitive components of the scientific method, both inside and outside the classrooms. It is often suggested that historical reasoning can be enhanced by historical inquiry activities using primary sources ([van Boxtel C. & van Drie J., 2017: 573](#)). A promising approach to improve historical reasoning is the so-called *dialogic teaching*. Through this method teachers try to create collective and supportive classroom talk and promote higher order contributions of students, including *explanations*, *justifications* and *hypothesis-generation*. Dialogic teaching focuses on learning to think in a context of multiple perspectives and uncertainty. Research reveals positive effects of dialogic teaching for language and general reasoning skills. In addition, in a design-based study, [Hilliard \(2013\)](#) found that history students who were most actively engaged in dialogical peer interaction improved most on argumentative essay writing. In this framework *ThesaurUs* proposes to respond to **3 general goals**:



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1. **Science education:** educating students to extract, manage, analyse and disseminate information on Cultural Heritage, using scientific methods and reliable tools;
2. **Education for research and cooperative interpretation compatible with European values:** introducing students to the construction of research projects aimed to collaborative heritage interpretation, open to the participation of different actors;
3. **Building the heritage community and greater mutual accreditation:** involving the most active parts of the citizenship in the discovery of different cultural values, protecting free access to qualified historical information and sharing responsibilities related to care and maintenance of heritage.

For this simulation, it was decided to test the *ThesaurUs* project with a **second-grade upper class (EQF4), engaged in the preparation actions for the Italian large-scale local engagement event 'Open Monuments'**. This event, since 1994, encourages hundreds of schools and thousands of volunteers to 'adopt' a monument from their own community, and to offer to random visitors their personal guided tours (for a weekend per year). In the preparation of the guided tours, volunteers are asked to reinterpret the cultural heritage entrusted to them in the light of an 'annual theme' suggested by Imago Mundi and inspired by 'European values'.

### Action Field

Although *ThesaurUs* project aimed primarily at an **upper second grade class (EQF4)** it must be thought of as a process of continuous interaction between different types of subjects which forms the local 'heritage community'.

In line with the general objectives, the training course '*ThesaurUS. Common paths in the interpretation of heritage*', is structured in **3 different educational modules (#M)** with specific learning objectives, each of which consists of different educational **actions (#A)**. Each single action is composed according to the same structure, that provides *input, task and feedback*.

**#M1: "THESAURUS AND OTHER OPEN ACCESS INSTRUMENTS FOR HISTORICAL RESEARCH"**. The general objective of this module is to give strength to **science education**. The 'DELPHI' competences that the module aims at are: **Competence n. 1:** *Search for the points of view and values and preferences of potential target groups;* **Competence n. 13:** *Using cultural heritage to develop competence oriented transdisciplinary learning experiences.*

To do this, 5 different educational actions are foreseen:

**#A1.1. 'The past and us'** (Tot. 2h 10'). This action deals with the theme of the conditioning that the composition of a group can exert on the construction of heritage interpretation. After the presentation of the course, each student presents himself or herself (1' each student), the students are divided into 5 groups. Each group is assigned 5 images of objects related to the biography of a monument (the same for all) (40'). Each group, based solely on

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the information that can be deduced, must first arrange the images according to a chronological sequence (20'). Then, will join its own images to a collective timeline (one image for each turn, from the oldest times to the most recent). Finally, starting a cooperative history of the monument, each group add its own portion of the story consistent with the part that preceded it (10' each group = tot. 50').

**#A1.2. ['We and the phenomena'](#)** (Tot. 2h 50'. Media: mobile's shooting and recording tools). On-site survey, focused on the critical evaluation of sensory experiences, knowledge or previous convictions of the students about the monument. After an introductory framework where tools for toponymy research are presented (15'), each group will have to inspect the monument and its surroundings by photographing the points on the site considered most representative (in relation to sensory experiences, knowledge, past beliefs etc.) (1h 50'). At the end, a collective discussion on the captured images will allow the class to identify the most suitable 'stages' (= physical locations linked to the monument) to tell the story of the monument (40').

**#A1.3. ['Who said this?'](#)** (Tot. 55'. Media: *ThesaurUs* or Google suite + Sutori) brings students closer to a general method of source criticism, focused on the distinction between 'facts' and 'meanings'. Presented the open access tools to build a qualified bibliographic research, each group is entrusted with the analysis of a type of document referring to the adopted monument (15'). The task of each group will be to extract 'facts' (factual statements) and, using a set of questions, will be able to frame them critically (20'). Then, through a matching quiz, each group will have to associate the phenomena found in the text with the most suitable places of conservation for their best care (20').

**#A1.4. 'Kinds of sources and where to find them'** (Tot. 55'. Media: *ThesaurUs* or Google suite + Sutori) focuses on the mapping of the 'basins' where useful data for an interpretative construction of the adopted monument is kept. After an introductory methodological framework (15'), the groups will map on the *ThesaurUs* platform the basins of conservation of the sources relevant to the adopted monument, both institutional ([archaeological museums](#), [archives](#), [picture galleries](#), libraries, etc.) and potential (e.g. neighbourhood associations, parish groups, [eyewitnesses of historical events](#), local passionate researchers, [professionals](#)) (20'). Subsequently, the ability of the mapped places to expand knowledge about the monument will be evaluated through *peer review* (20') (according to the method of "who said this" in #A1.3).

**#A1.5. ['The mainstream past within the present'](#)** (Tot. 3h 45'. Media: *ThesaurUs* or Google suite + Sutori). This is a research-action aimed at recording on the *ThesaurUs* platform 'facts' and 'meanings' that in the present contribute to form the dominant interpretation of the monument. Presented simple research tools, available both online and offline, and described the new task (55'), each group is entrusted with the study of a specific chronological horizon of the adopted monument. To this they will have to associate the image of a 'stage' of the monument (see #A1.2), representative of that historical moment. Then they will create a

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short explanatory card of that period, indicating the main 'facts' with the accredited sources that prove it (bibliographical, archival, archaeological, musical, oral etc.) (2h 45').

**#M2: COMMON HISTORIES IN EUROPEAN HISTORY.** The general objective of this module is to introduce students to the construction of collaborative research and heritage interpretation processes, starting from a pre-ordained theme and in line with European values. The 'DELPHI' competences that the module aims at are: **Competence n. 3.** *Present the asset/phenomenon with a focus on how it is related to history, culture and/or European values; **Competence n. 9.** *Focus on inclusion, diversity and equality in the process of co-creative interpretation of a cultural heritage; **Competence n. 10.** *Branding the area/region according to the available (multi)cultural and natural heritage; **Competence n. 11.** *To develop narratives that highlight the intercultural and self-transcendent values found in the tangible and intangible heritage of the territory.****

To do this, 3 different educational actions are foreseen:

**#A2.1. 'Considering hidden facts and meanings of heritage communities'** (Tot. 4h 30').

Media: *ThesaurUs* or Google suite + Sutori) is an action that is expressed through playful and informal encounters between students and the heritage community, in order to educate students to consider the values and meanings of other stakeholders, integrating them into their own vision of the 'adopted' monument. After the presentation of the action (15') students propose to the stakeholders a '*community walk*' to the monument. The whole heritage community (including the class) is invited to bring an object with them (a photo, a etc.) that could resume the story of the monument from a personal perspective. The walk ends with a '*world café*': sitting at a table in front of a coffee, stakeholders answer questions from groups of students to clarify little-known aspects of neighbourhood life (their work, expectations and personal stories about the monument). Students upload the most significant photos and stories to the *ThesaurUs* platform (1h 30').

**#A2.2. Relations between European values and Universals** (Tot. 1h 40', in the classroom).

The aim of this action is to accompany students in understanding the links between universal and European values. This module introduces the theme of mutual relations between different universal values (antagonism, relative importance). Identifying the place of "European values". (20'), each group will be called upon to exercise its own critical abilities, by detecting which universal values can be recognised in the biography of a monument (assigned to them) and identifying, among these, those most compatible with European values (55'). Group discussion (25')

**#A2.3. Following the annual theme of 'Open Monuments'** (Tot. 2h 50', in the classroom).

The action presents students with the annual theme of 'Open Monuments', describing the reasons for it, its link with European values and also showing examples from past years (30'). Subsequently, each group, based on the information recorded on the online platform *ThesaurUs*, identifies possible channels of connection between the adopted monument and European history. Once this link has been built, priority will be given to the 'facts' that can

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satisfy the address proposed by the annual theme of Open Monuments (1h 30'). At the end, given a scale of reference to define deviant and valid opinions, the feedback process takes place in the form of a conference under the coordination of a facilitator.

**#M3: SCHOOL OF 'HERITAGE COMMUNITY' BUILDING AND EMPOWERMENT.** The general objective of this module is to present students with basic methods and tools for building the heritage community, structuring actions to bring together the most active and interested parts of the citizenship to share responsibilities and knowledge, as well as to involve new potential target groups. The 'DELPHI' competences that the module aims at are: **Competence n. 2. To carry out a process of identification of meaning and value with visitors;** **Competence n. 15. Facilitate learning processes for adult learners based on cultural heritage.**

To do this, 3 different educational actions are foreseen:

**#A3.1. 'ThesaurUs. A community-fuelled resource'** (Tot. 4h 30', in-site; Media: ThesaurUs or Google suite + Sutori). The action, conducted on site directly by groups of students, consists of the engagement of the local heritage community in the use of the *ThesaurUs* platform, through a '*Scenario workshop*'. Before the workshop the students show to the participants (with the help of interpretative timelines and comments) how different social and political values can generate a series of alternative scenarios of representation of the monument. The carefully selected participants are invited to read the scenarios in advance. The workshop is led by a facilitator and participants, divided into "working groups", comment on the scenarios based on their opinions, knowledge and experiences, providing positive and negative feedback. Participants continue to work in groups and formulate different visions, considering possible deviant visions. All groups present their ideas in plenary and there is time for discussion, clarification and priority.

**#A3.2. 'Heritage community wise. Show me what you can do for your heritage!'** (Tot. 4h 30', in-site; Media: ThesaurUs or Google suite). The action, conducted on site directly by groups of students, consists of the involvement of the heritage community in the care of cultural values related to heritage through a public 'Citizen wise talk'. The talk is led by a facilitator and participants are associated to 'working groups' in which students also take part. Carefully selected participants will have to present publicly, in 7 minutes, a proposal for the development/valorisation of the monument, stating what their personal commitment consists of (e.g. time, [specific skills](#), stories or unpublished historical knowledge, ...). The intervention proposal is first submitted to a feasibility vote by the '[Heritage Community Grand Jury](#)' (a jury composed of 1 academic, 1 protection professional, 1 private professional, 1 representative of the local community). Then uploaded on the ThesaurUs platform, it is voted by the Heritage Community.

**#A3.3. 'In action! Empowering heritage communities'** (Tot. 4h 30', on site; Media: ThesaurUs or Google suite). The action, coordinated in the field directly by the students, has as its general objective the dissemination of the culture of respect for Cultural Heritage, giving public visibility, e.g. through photographic contests, to maintenance work on monuments (agreed in advance with conservation professionals). The students, through an



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inspection of the site, identify areas to be cleaned. The photographs obtained through the competition of the participants make sure to record on timelines in the ThesaurUs platform the state of the sites over time, taking the form of periodic monitoring (e.g. "Archaeoclean: heritage community at work!"). Task: clean the site and upload your photos to the ThesaurUs platform. Feedback: vote on the platform of the best photo. Reward: a tour of the monument led by a famous specialist for the winner and his family.

### Media

The *ThesaurUs* is also the name of a *heritage crowdsourcing* platform (currently under planning) able to outsource portions of scientific research to a large number of people (crowdsourcing = crowd + outsourcing). In addition to this function, common also to similar platforms (generalist like *Wikipedia*, *Wikimapia*, or more focused on cultural heritage such as *Zooniverse* and *MicroPasts*), *ThesaurUs* sums further tools, suitable for the education and focused on co-creation of heritage interpretation. For this simulation, in the light of the experience already gained, all these different functions are carried out through different providers, with open source programs, mainly the google suite (archiving and collaborative work), the Sutori program for the display of timelines and management of different files. The *ThesaurUs* platform is the place where the relationships between these actors are registered and made visible, to which specific levels of access and tasks correspond: *Administrator*: coordinates educational intervention both online and f2f, assigns roles, coordinates online participation and can add and modify information; *Editor*, each one forms part of the educational community (teachers and students) accredited to use the platform, who can add or modify information; *Commentator*: is a person accredited to comment the information offered by the platform after the registration, is considered part of the "heritage community" and can comment on. It may be a member of a local community, a stakeholder; *Visitor*: is a user generally interested in cultural heritage, who has free access, as a guest (without registration), to the information contained in the platform.



<b>'ThesaurUs' Platform Planning Draft</b> <i>(Research &gt; Analysis &gt; Decision making &gt; Action &gt; Impact)</i>	
<b>Cultural heritage research as crowdsourcing</b> <i>(Requester's task + Platform + Worker = Data)</i>	<b>Heritage Interpretation</b> <i>(Analysis &gt; Decision making &gt; Action &gt; Impact)</i>
<b>Open, expandable, editable archive of historical sources</b> (e.g. <i>Wikipedia, Zooniverse.org, MicroPasts</i> ) to archive (according to uniform standards) sources with different nature and authority (bibliographic, archival, archaeological, oral, photographic, etc.) (Sutori Google suite)	<b>Debate.</b> Moderate the debate on a cultural phenomenon held by a multi-stakeholder audience according to a multilevel approach, respecting the different expertise and sensibilities (Sutori)
<b>Open maps</b> (institutes of conservation of sources, stakeholders, individuals) (Sutori Google maps)	<b>Relational maps.</b> Create relational maps in which places of conservation of sources of different nature and authoritativeness. (Sutori)
<b>Open timelines.</b> Free access to collections of qualified timelines for study purposes (Sutori)	<b>Interpretative timelines.</b> Create and make available different biographies of the phenomenon on the basis of a theme offered by the provider organization. (Sutori)
<b>Monitoring heritage.</b> Passive protection with shared knowledge (Sutori Google maps, Sutori)	<b>Interpretative narratives.</b> Create and make available different readings of the phenomenon on the basis of a theme offered by the provider organization. (Sutori)
<b>Assessment.</b> Data quality, engagement, etc. (Sutori Google suite)	<b>Educational assessment.</b> With verification questionnaires and evaluate the performance of each participant. (Sutori)

## Final results

So far, the final results obtained by different experiences are a general increase in the confidence of local communities in the scientific approach to cultural heritage, greater social cohesion around European values, a significant increase in citizens' empowerment, especially in relation to heritage protection. All these results are assessed mainly with qualitative methods (peer review, questionnaires etc.). From another point of view, the experiences already gained within the project show how mutual recognition and the ability to listen to conflicting stakeholders is the most important step to build the heritage community. Even when this happens, the results are almost never lasting, especially when it comes to political stakeholders.

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Attachment

Sutori

Stories Students Resources

MM



MM Mattia Sanna Montanelli

Present Share ...

## "Memorable experiences": the ancient church of San Saturnino in Cagliari and its heritage community

'Vestigia', il Laboratorio di Didattica e Comunicazione dell'Università di Cagliari, affronta con la classe 4a e 5a del Liceo Classico Europeo "Vittorio Emanuele II" la scoperta della Chiesa di San Saturnino e dell'area in cui sorge, che ha più volte cambiato aspetto nella storia della città di Cagliari e che unisce il ricordo dei luoghi di sepoltura della Karales romana, a monumenti della fede e della cultura medievale, fino agli spazi in continua trasformazione della contemporaneità.

Comment




**Bibliography**

- [Basilica di San Saturnino, Dadea Mauro, <<3: Arcidiocesi di Cagliari>> 1, p. 211-214;](#)

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**Vestigia UniCa on Facebook Watch**

Il Sig. Marco Melis titolare della 'Boutique del gas' (a Sant'Avendrace dal 1956) condivide con i ragazzi di Vestigia Unica Università degli Studi di...

[WWW.FACEBOOK.COM](#)

*Sharing Memorable experiences:* Mr. Marco Melis, owner of the 'Boutique del gas' (in Via Sant'Avendrace since 1956) shares with the students of Vestigia Unica Università degli Studi di Cagliari some personal memories, authentic landscapes of a rapidly changing neighbourhood, proud of his memories. #maperti17 #Vestigia #Cagliari #paesaggio #UnivCa [Video Jessica Abis, Mattia Sanna Montanelli for 'Vestigia Unica' 2017].


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**8 Marzo 2019. La Basilica di San Saturnino rinasce intorno allo splendido crocifisso di Pinuccio Sciola**

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**Intervista all'archeologo Pierfranco Serrelli**

ARCHEOLOGIA URBANA I resti di un antico edificio romano sono emersi durante gli scavi per la realizzazione della nuova rete fognaria a Cagliari, presso...

[WWW.FACEBOOK.COM](#)

*Working with Memorable experiences:* 2016, 8th May. The remains of an ancient Roman building emerged during the excavations for the construction of the new sewerage system in Cagliari, near Piazza Antonio Gramsci. Archaeologist Dr. Pierfranco Serrelli, a historical collaborator of Vestigia Unica, tells us what has been possible to deduce from the excavations that have just...

Sutori. Timelines for Vestigia UniCa

**Quiz: St. Saturno or St. Saturnino? Try to find the institute of conservation of the sources**

Try again!

Mediateca del Mediterraneo (MEM) Cagliari	Kirova T. "La chiesa di San Saturnino"
Biblioteca Universitaria	Documento #25 AD 1468
Biblioteca Cittadella dei Musei	"Passio Sancti Saturni"
Cattedrale di Cagliari	Epigrafe San Saturno
Archivio Storico Diocesano di Cagliari	"Fulgentii Ferrandi Carthaginiensis Ecclesiae diaconi Breviatum canonum", Paris, 1588.
Biblioteca capitolare di Milano	Goffredo da Bussero "Liber Notitiae Sanctorum Mediolani" (1289)

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Sutori. Quiz for Vestigia UniCa