Focused Conversation
ORID Method

Technology of Participation®

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December 04, 2010   Cynthia Lapp
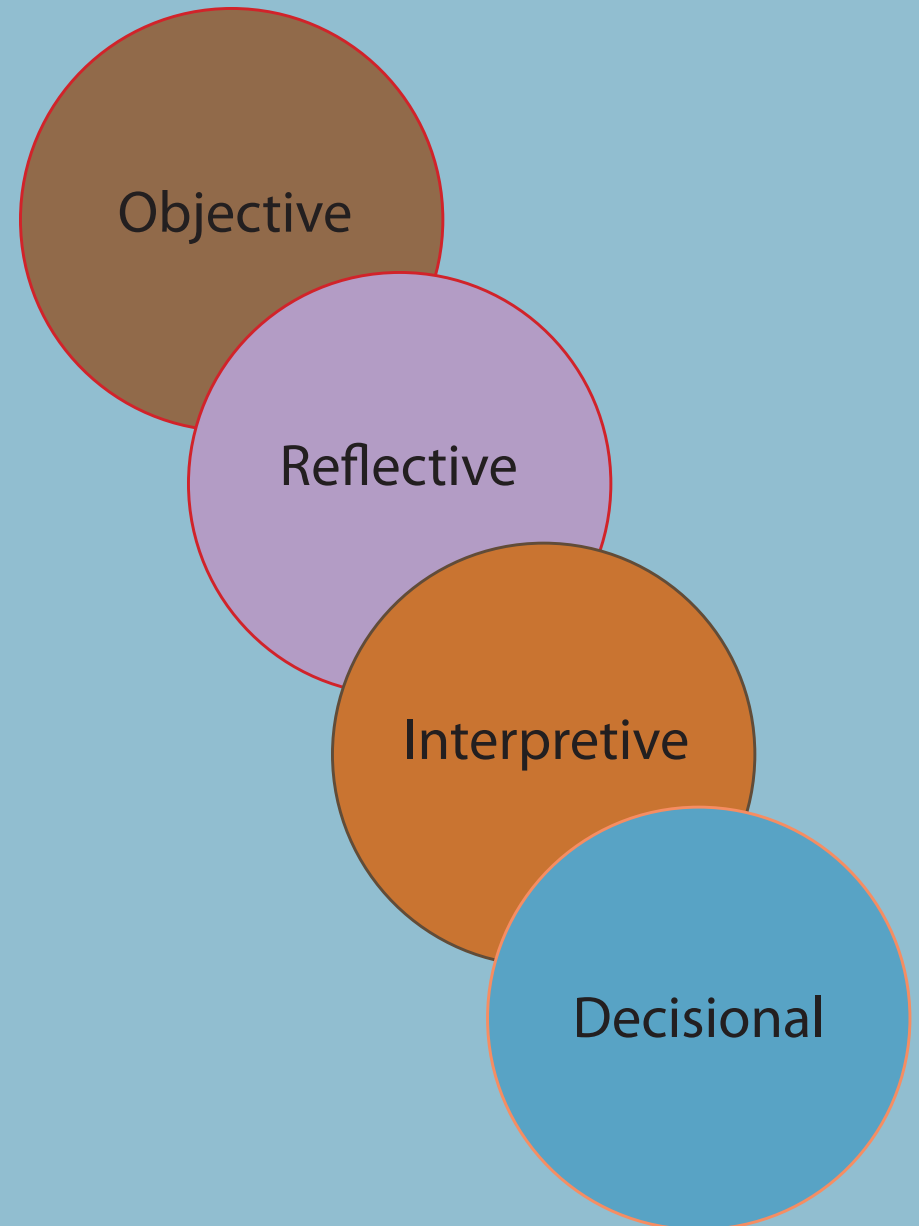
Focused Conversation

ORID Method

When we process information and think clearly, we move through four different modes, sometimes very quickly.

These modes of thinking can be labeled:

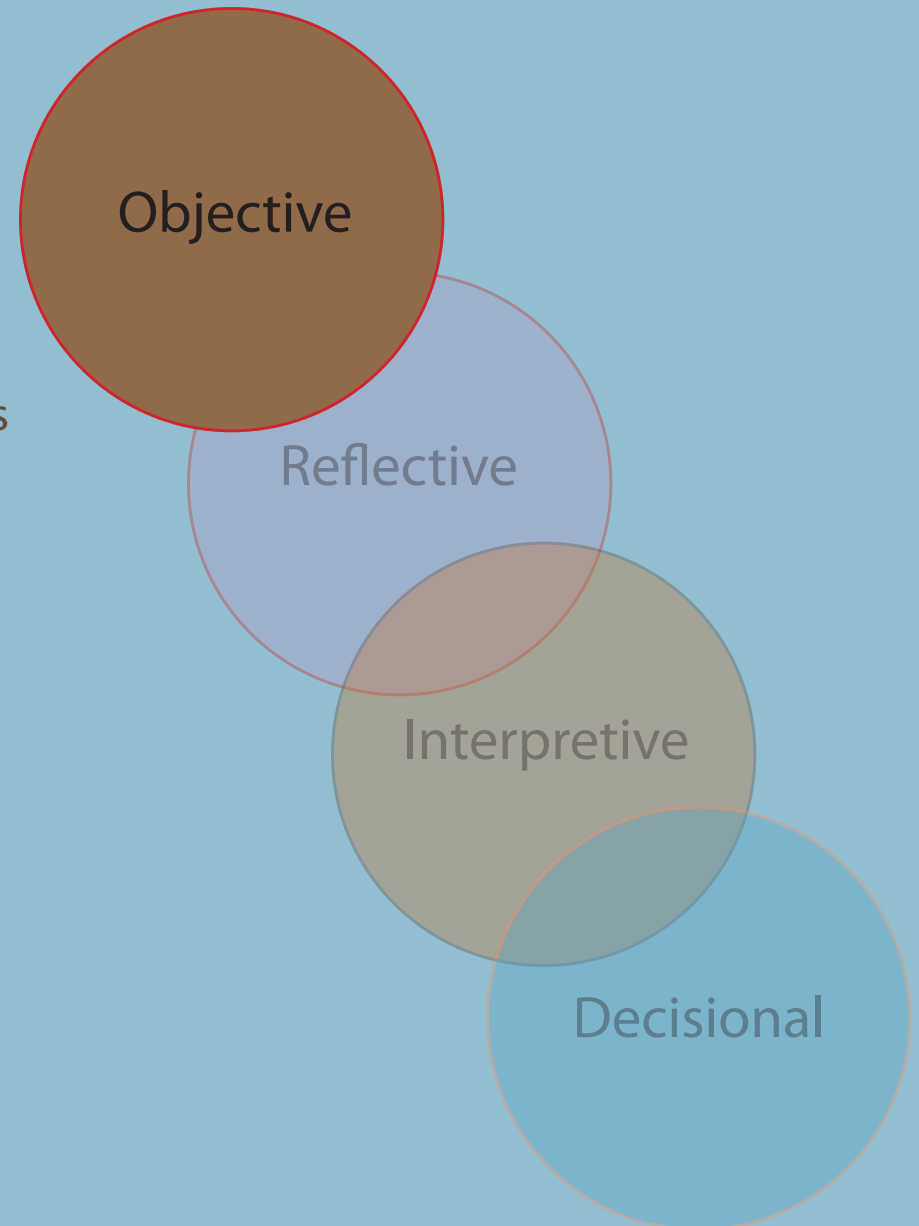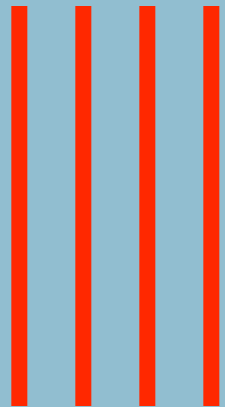- Objective
- Reflective
- Interpretive
- Decisional

Objective

Reflective

Interpretive

Decisional

Focused Conversation

Objective Mode

This is the sensory mode of thinking, where we process "raw" data:

- What we perceive through our body and senses
- Facts and data about the situation
- External/Observable information

Objective

Reflective

Interpretive

Decisional

Focused Conversation

Reflective Mode

This is our immediate response to these data, how we are processing the Objective level internally:

- How we respond to these "raw" data
- What experiences we can relate to these data
- Internal response to external data
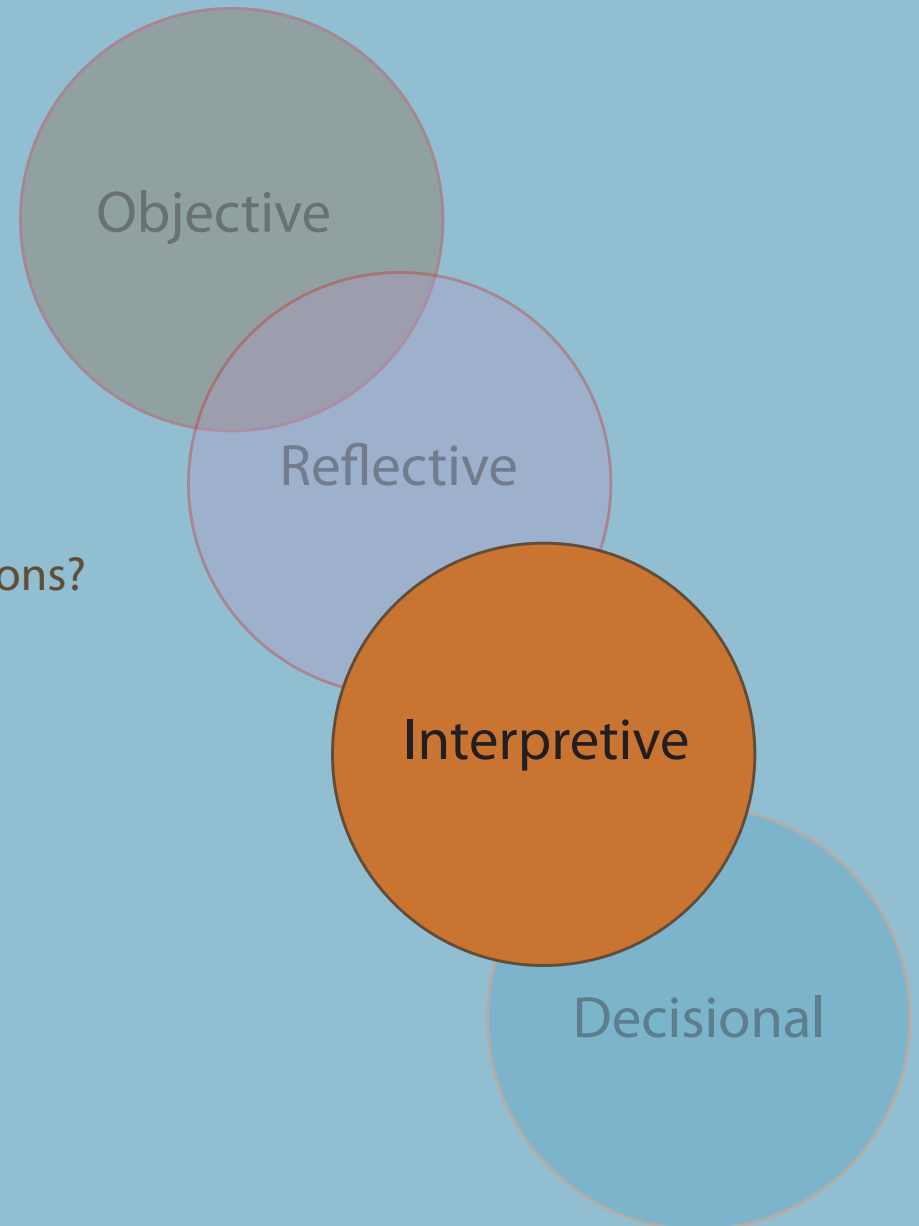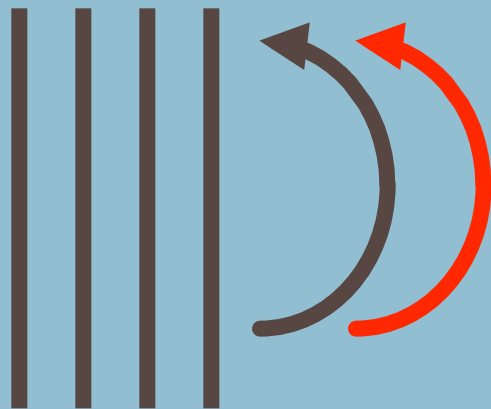- Images, feelings, memories, associations

Objective

Reflective

Interpretive

Decisional
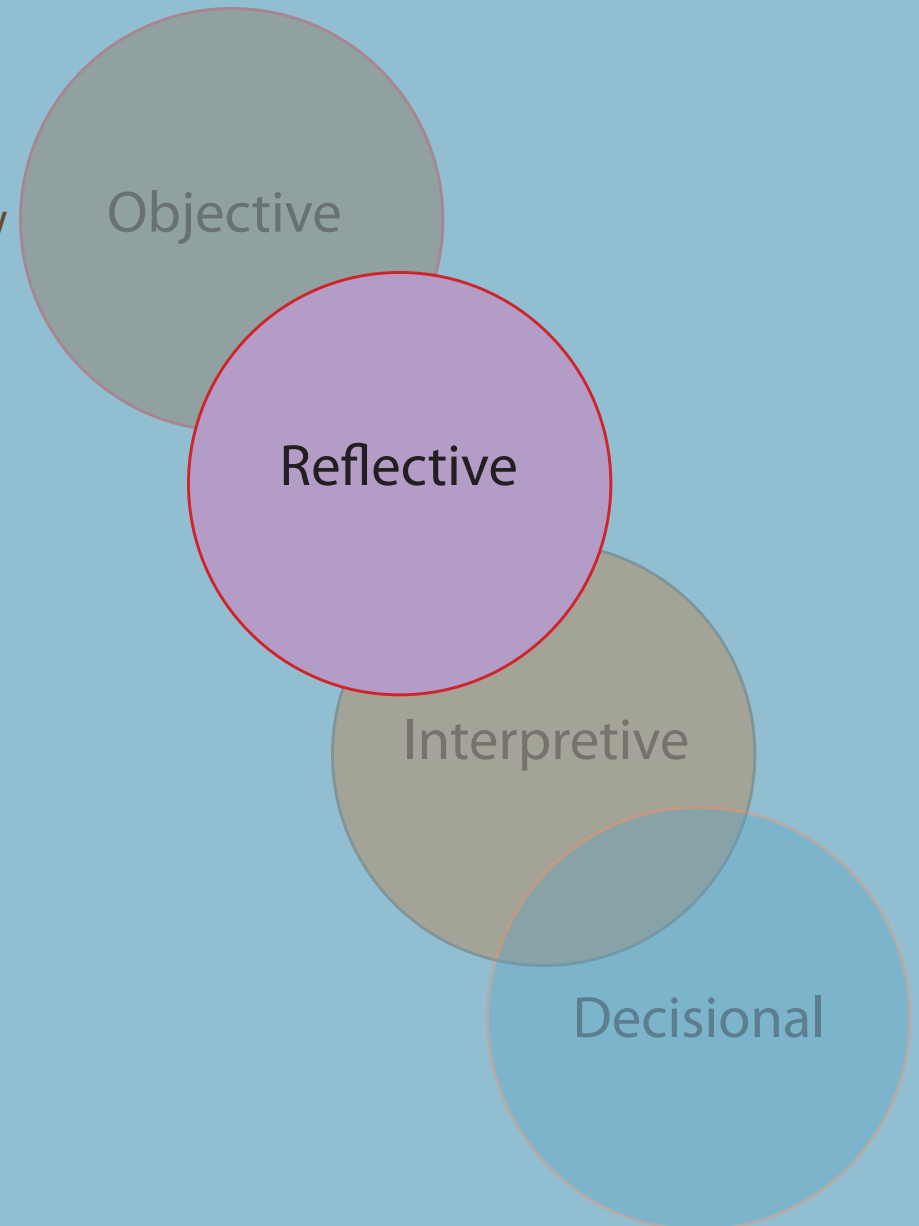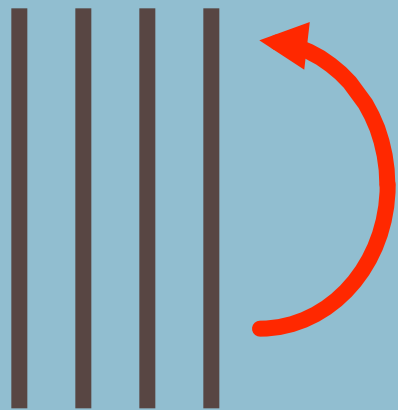
Focused Conversation

Interpretive Mode

This mode is about processing these responses, experiences and associations:

- So what does this mean?

- What values are activated?

- What is the significance? What are the implications?
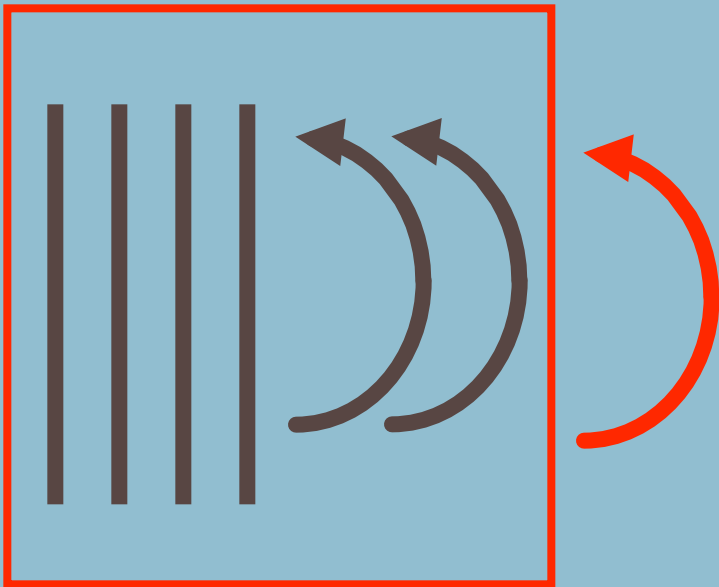
Objective

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Focused Conversation

Decisional Mode

This mode is about making decisions or choosing actions based on the information, its meaning and significance:

- What are the next steps?

- What actions are appropriate?

- What has been learned? What is my commitment?

Objective

Reflective

Interpretive

Decisional
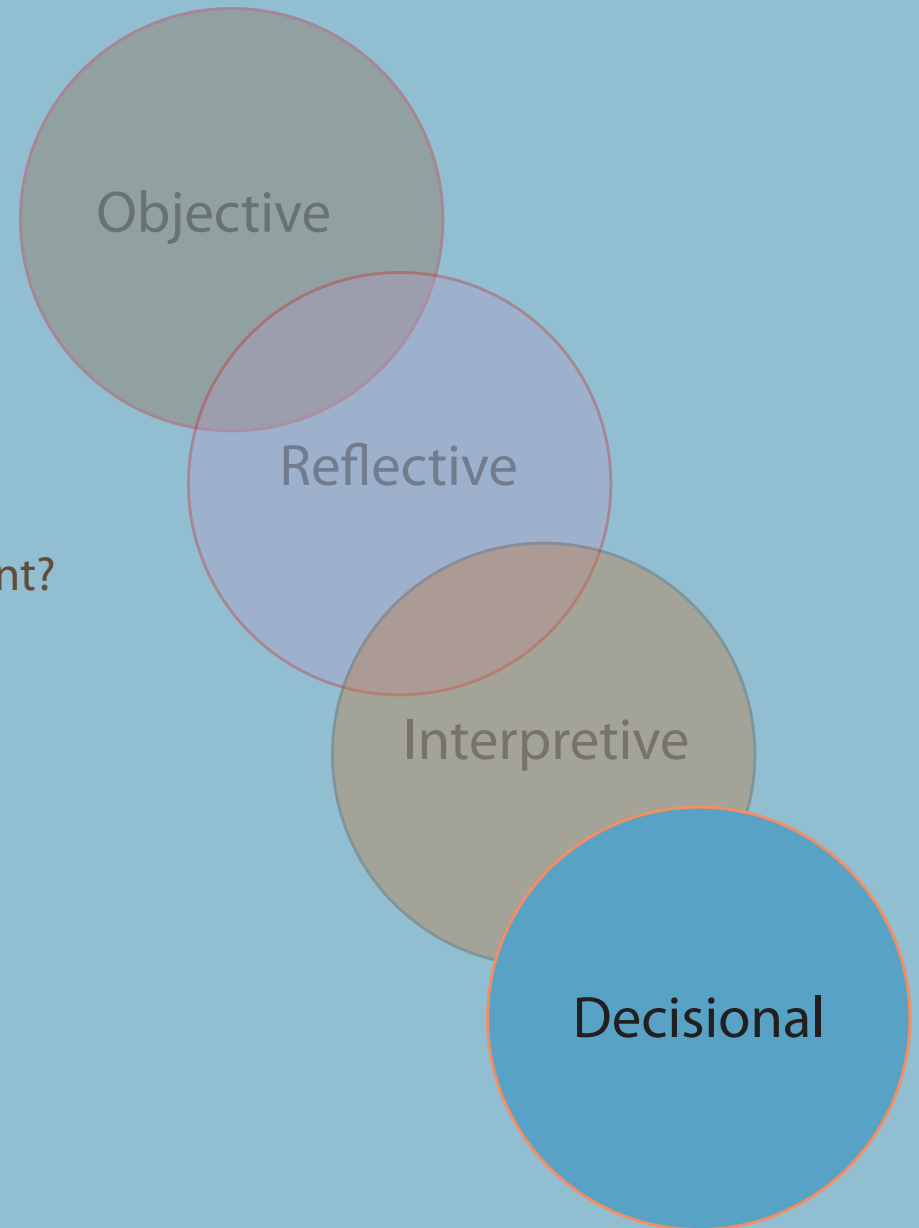
Example: Critique of Visual Work

Objective Mode

These are the "facts" of what you are dealing with. The questions may feel "too obvious" to include, but they are the ground that the interpretation and analysis is built on, and get conversation/thinking going:

- *What do you see?*
- *What colors, forms?*
- *What stands out?*
- *What parts are spatially related? Related by color? Form? Size?*
- *What do you see only after you have looked at it for a while?*

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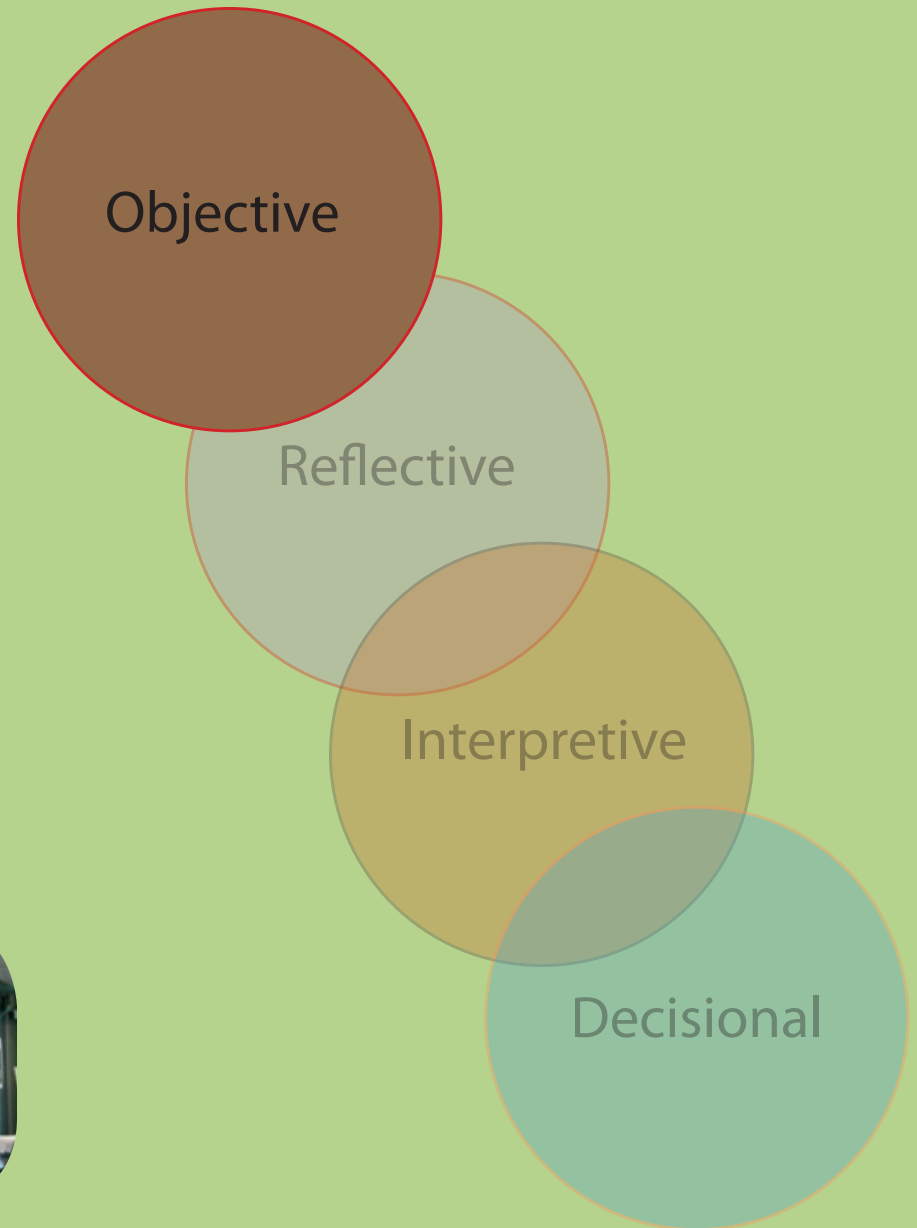
Example: Critique of Visual Work

Reflective Mode

These questions address what responses the work elicits, and ask for your responses to the work:

- *What is the overall feel of the piece?*
- *How do the colors, shapes, spatial relationships interact?*
- *Is there harmony in the work? Dissonance?*
- *How do you respond to it?*

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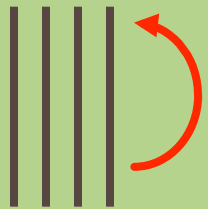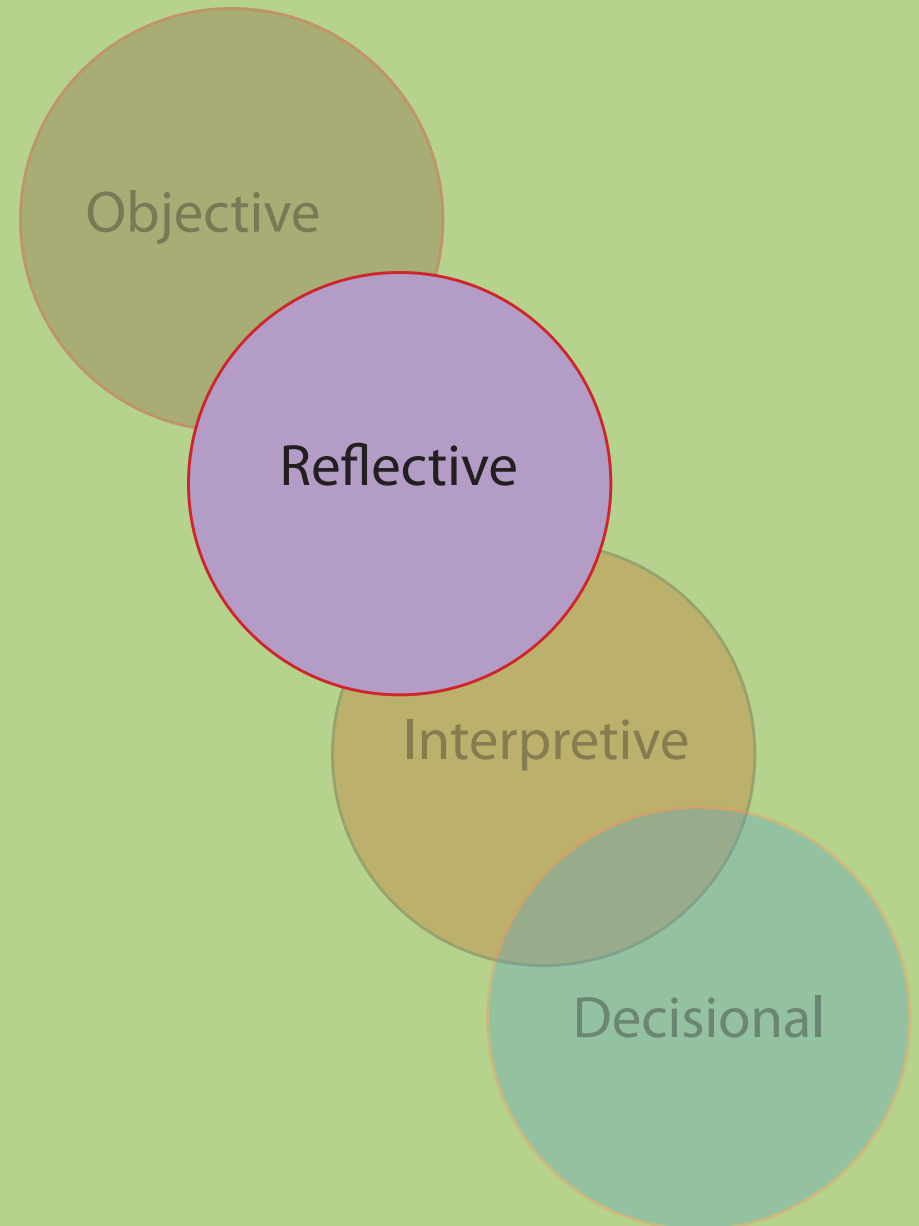
Example: Critique of Visual Work

Interpretive Mode

This is the real "meat" of the analysis--what is working? What isn't? This is often where we want to start, but establishing the Objective and Reflective steps allows for more depth in the interpretation and analysis of the work, and for coherence if working in a group process:

- *What is the piece communicating?*
- *What is the objective of the piece, and where is this "working"?*
- *Where is it not working?*
- *What is the significance?*
- *What are the implications?*

Objective

Reflective

Interpretive
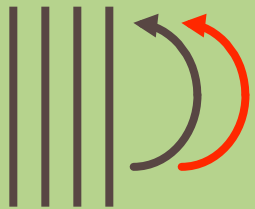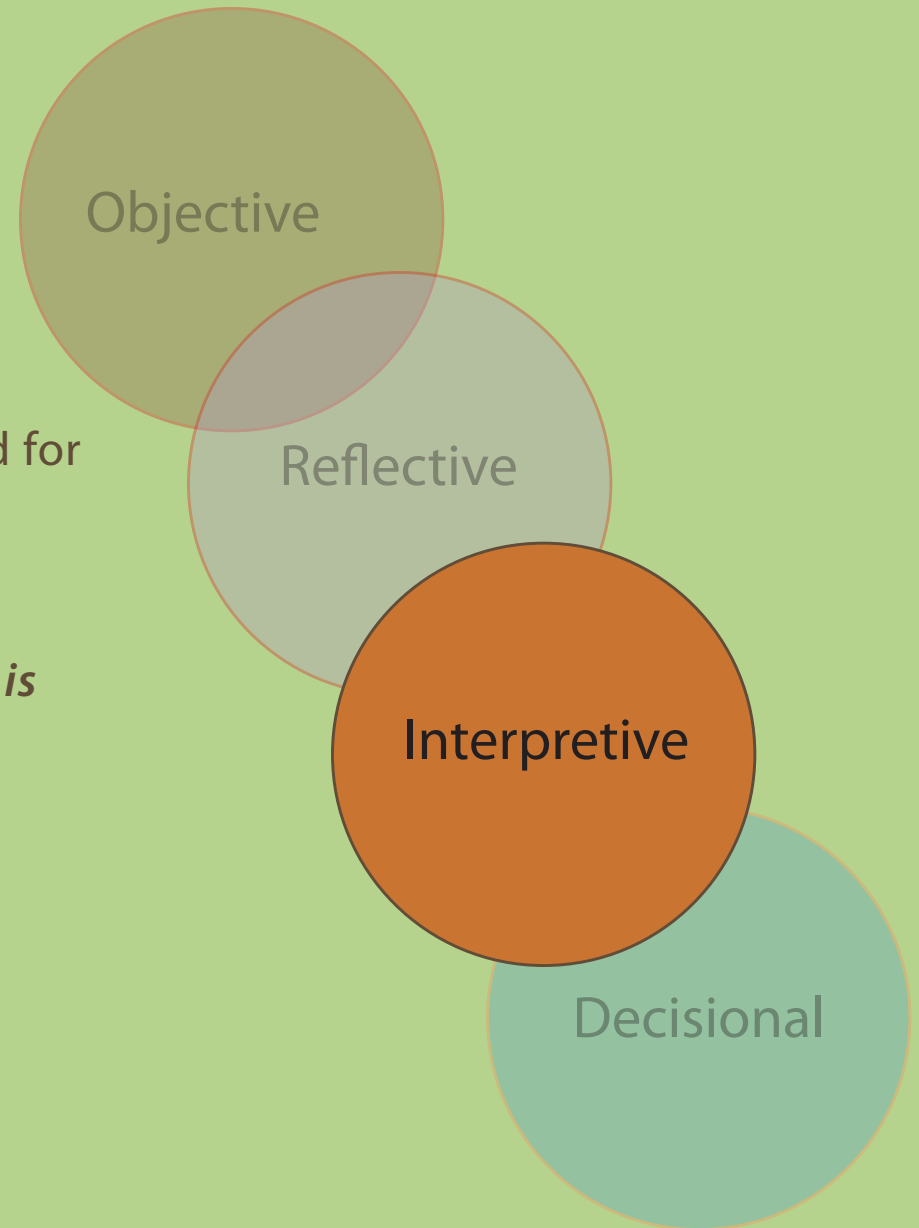
Decisional

Example: Critique of Visual Work

Decisional Mode

This step focuses on the implications of the analysis. What needs to change for the piece to work? Are there larger moves that need to be made? What smaller things can be tweaked? What changes can be made that may not be strictly necessary for what the piece communicates, but would improve it overall?

- *What components have to change to align the piece with its objective?*
- *What does there need to be more of?*
- *What can there be less of?*
- *What changes can be made to strengthen what the piece communicates?*
- *What changes might improve how the piece is experienced?*

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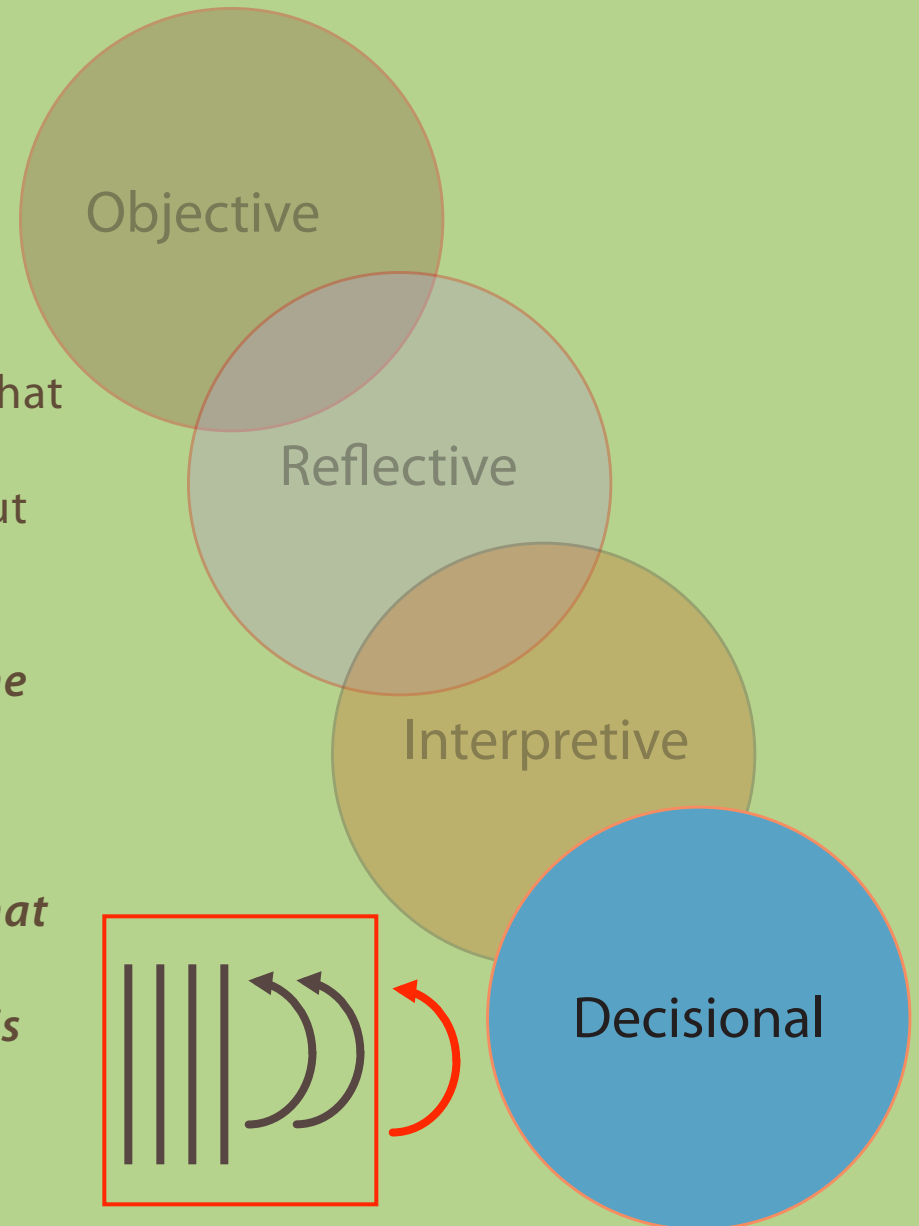
Example: Site Visit Analysis

Objective Mode

These questions plumb the sense experience the observer had of the spaces in question, and begins to sort out the huge amount of data that is taken in on a site visit:

- *What are some highlights from the places we've seen?*
- *What colors, sounds, materials stand out?*
- *What surprised you?*
- *What activities or programming stands out?*
- *What scenes do you remember from the spaces we have been in?*

Objective

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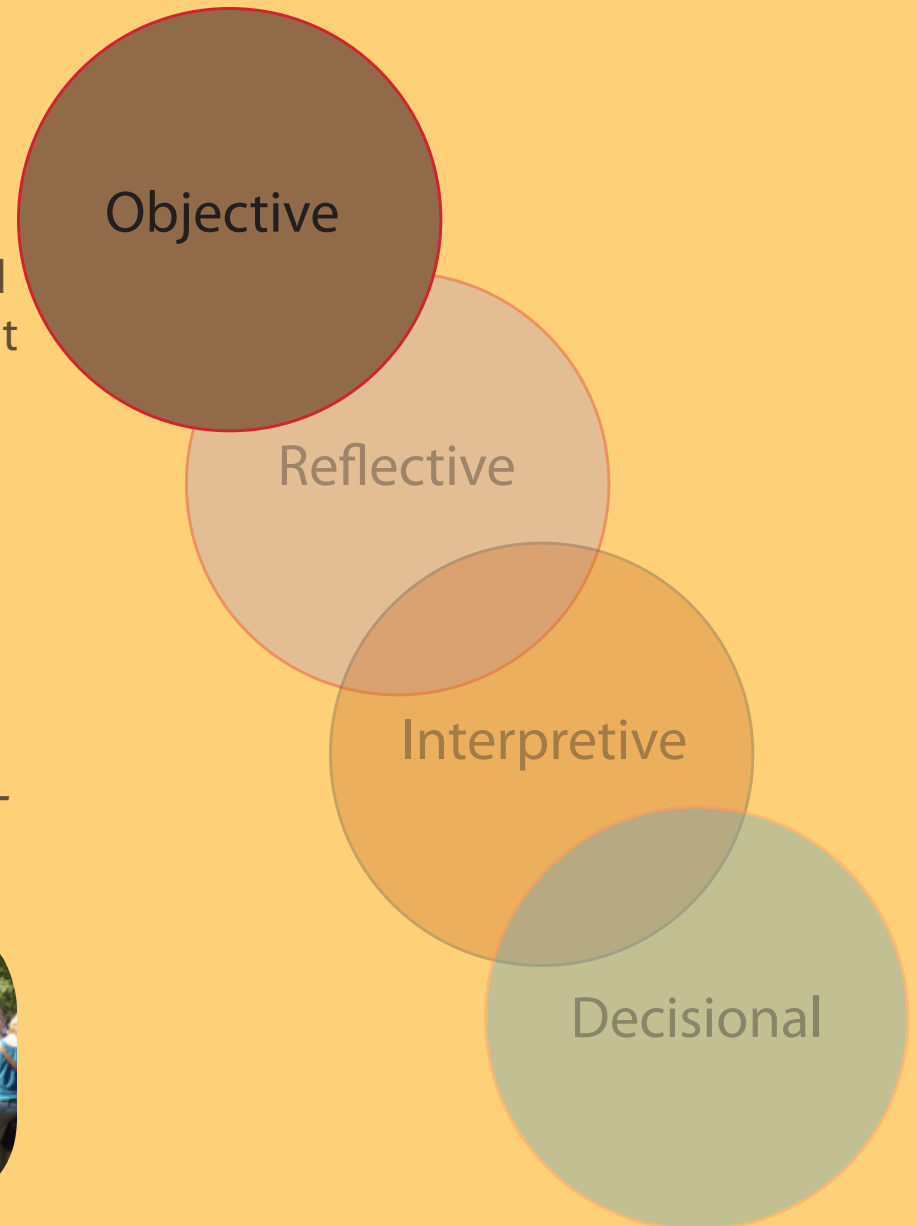
Example: Site Visit Analysis

Reflective Mode

These questions address what the observer brought to the site, and what responses the site elicited in the observer:

- *Where did you feel most interested? Bored?*
- *Where did you experience a specific sense of "place"?*
- *What is the overall feel of the place(s) we saw/have seen?*
- *What was the high point for you? The low point?*

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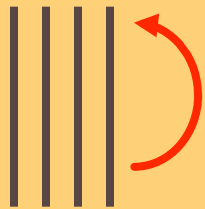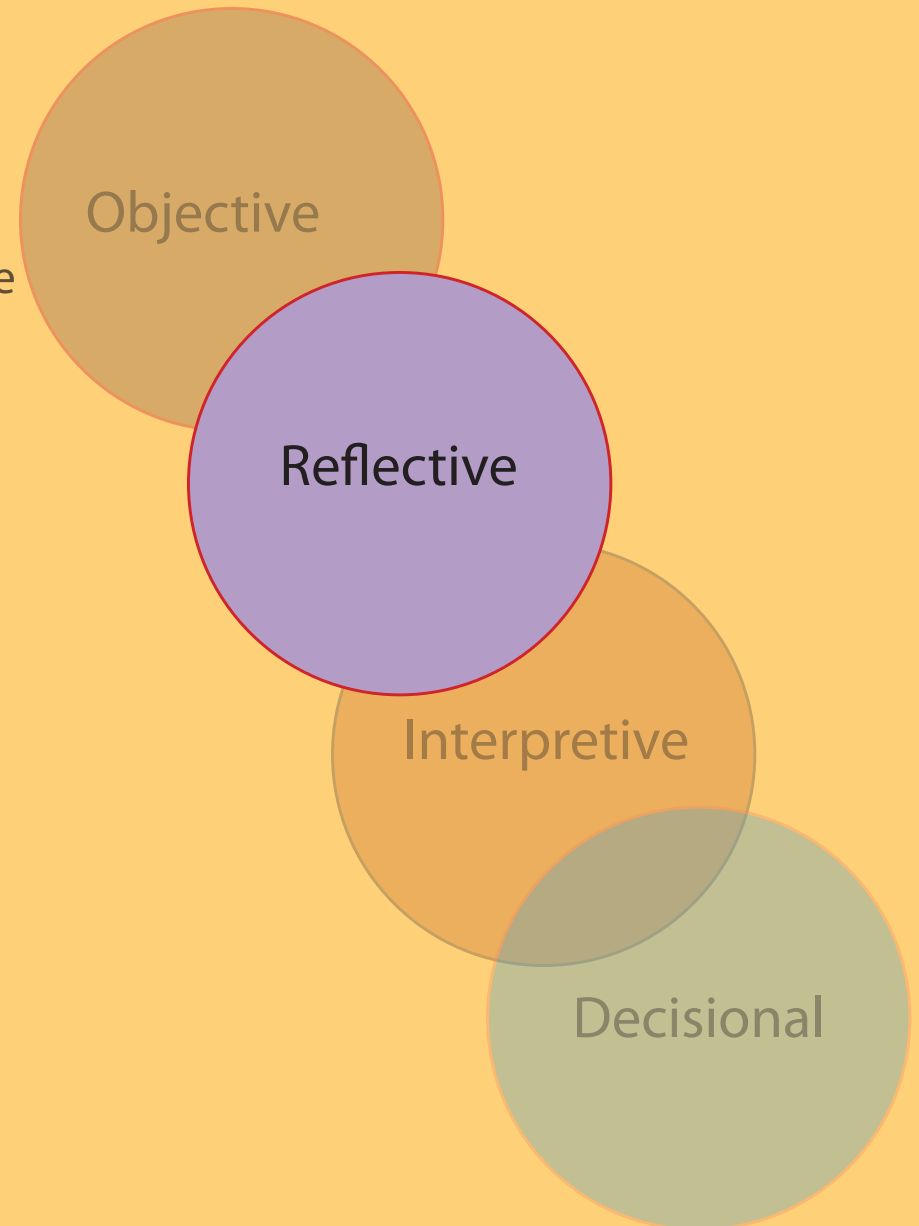
Example: Site Visit Analysis

Interpretive Mode

This, again, is the real "meat" of the analysis--what is working? What isn't? If reflecting on a site visit begins with analysis, the observer can lose the sense data that is so important to the work of a spatial designer:

- *What spaces felt like they "worked"?*
- *What spaces didn't work?*
- *Where did things feel the most connected?*
- *Where did things feel disjointed?*
- *Who/what is being served in these spaces?*
- *Who/what has been left out?*
- *What does there need to be more of?*
- *What can there be less of?*

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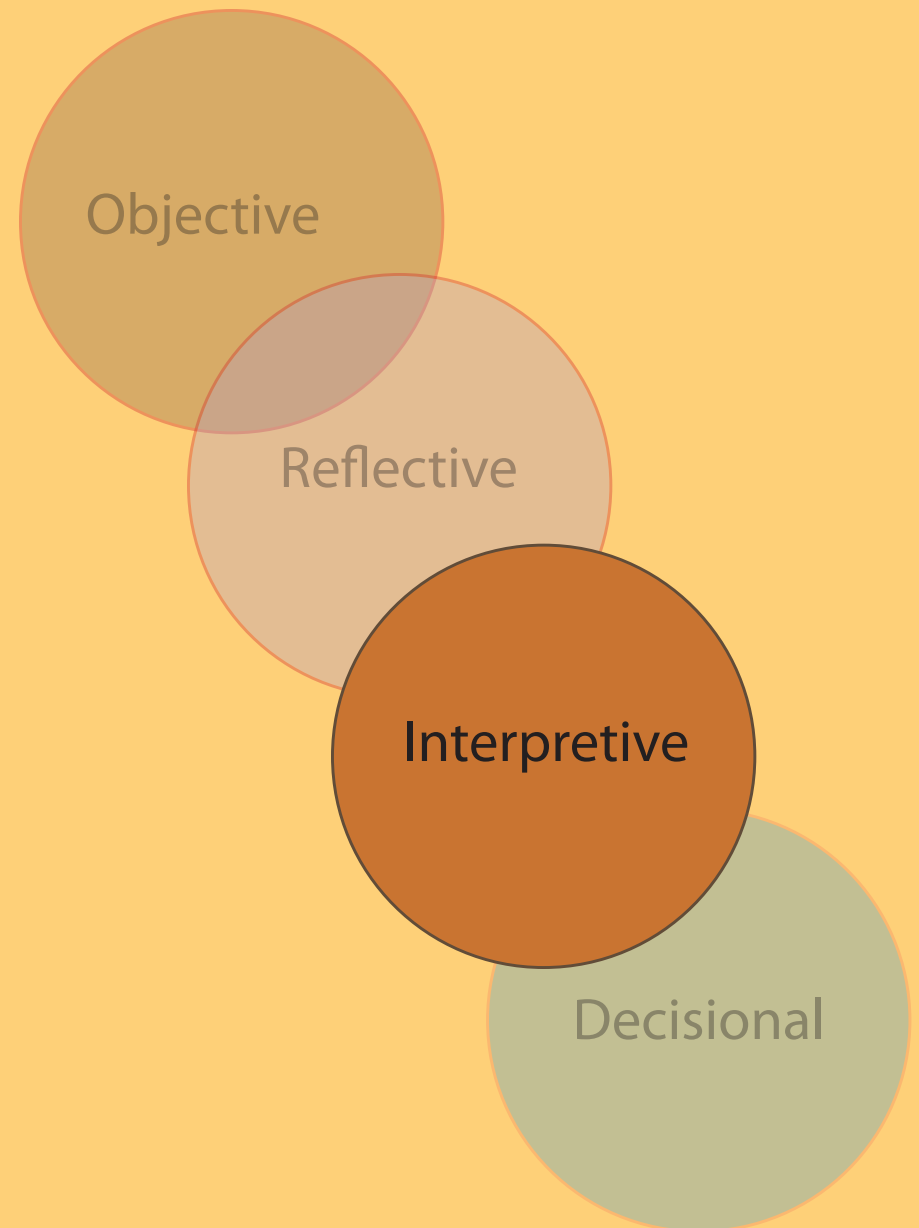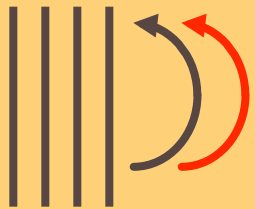
Decisional

Example: Site Visit Analysis

Decisional Mode

This step activates the observer on a deeper level--What is really going on here? What opportunities have been missed? Where is this happening in my city? What would I like to engage in?

- *What would you name this part of town?*
- *What needs to happen next to benefit human use? Ecology? Sustainability?*
- *Which issues/spaces/solutions could be transferred to your city? Where?*
- *What would you like to work on in this space?*

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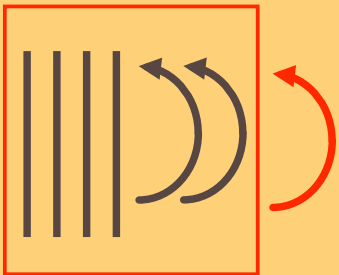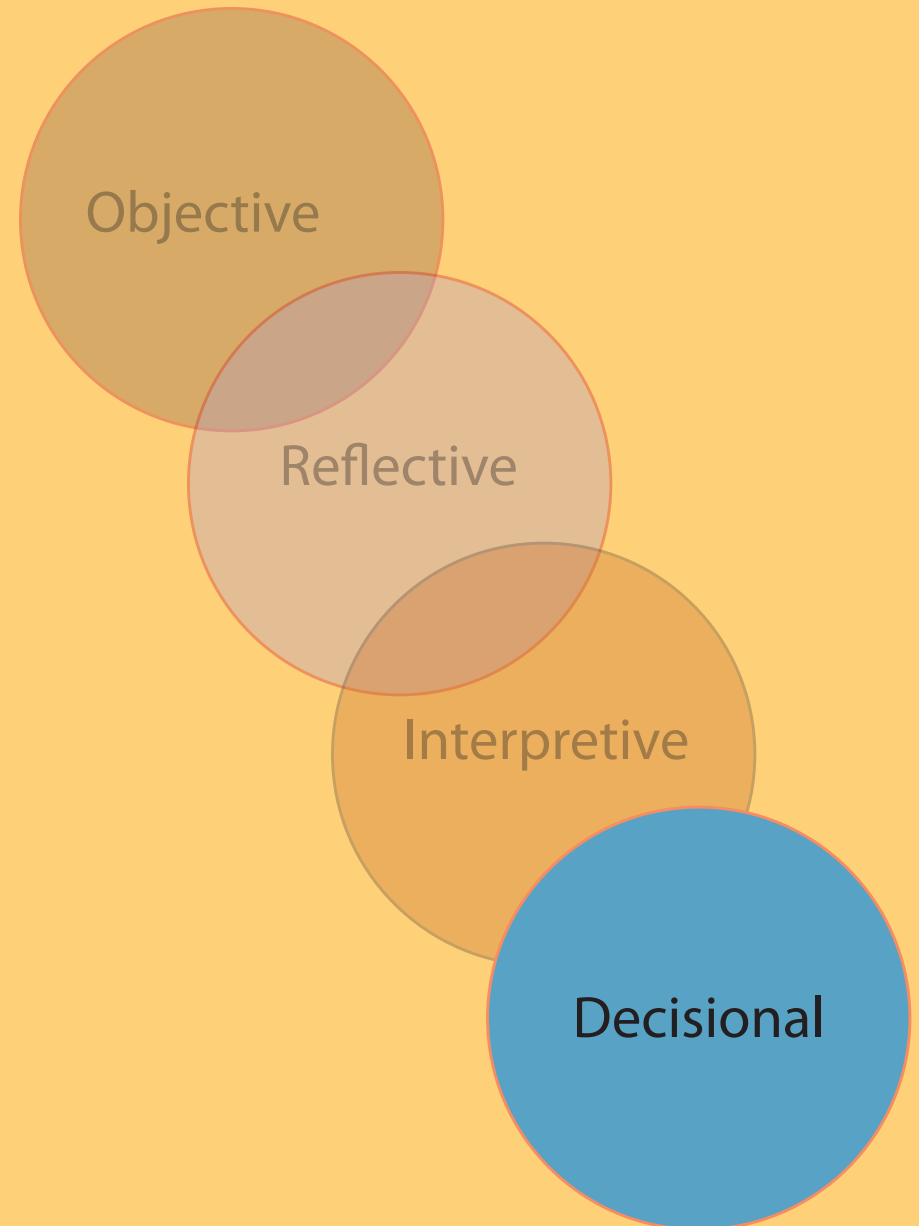
Credits

ICA Associates CANADA "ORID Slideshow" powerpoint for some language and the neat arrow graphics

ICA-USA *ToP® Facilitation Methods Manual*, 2000

Stanfield, R. Brian, ed. *The Art of Focused Conversation*, New Society Publishing, 2000