

Sharing Cultures

2009

Edited by

Sérgio Lira
Rogério Amoêda
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João Pinheiro
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International Conference on Intangible Heritage
Pico Island, Azores, Portugal

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Ana Maria Longras Pinheiro

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Foreword

The organisation of *Sharing Cultures 2009* by Green Lines Institute aimed at gathering in an international event a significant group of experts, researcher and scholars interested in Cultural and Intangible Heritage. The UNESCO approval of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the correspondent Operational Directives opened the opportunity to promote discussion on these relevant issues.

For the purpose of this International Conference Green Lines Institute adopted the definition of Intangible Cultural Heritage presented in the UNESCO Convention: "The «intangible cultural heritage» means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. For the purposes of this Convention, consideration will be given solely to such intangible cultural heritage as is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development."

This official recognition of the importance and meaning of intangible heritage and the amount of research undertaken during these last decades throughout significant field work and research projects gave intangible heritage scientific recognition. The safeguarding of this fragile heritage has become one of the priorities of international cooperation, the role of UNESCO being of major importance in this process. Also ICOM, ICOMOS, and other international and national organizations have been emphasising the need to preserve and study intangible heritage and to include it as a concern in professional practices, and to adopt accurate methodologies and guidelines.

Following the definition endorsed by UNESCO, one of the main goals of *Sharing Cultures 2009* was to bring into discussion research work on "living expressions and traditions that countless groups and communities worldwide have inherited from their ancestors and transmit to their descendants, in most cases orally". Moreover, considering that culture cannot be reduced to its material aspects alone and that intangible heritage must be addressed in innovative-sustainable ways as a source of inspiration and a vast and rich territory of identity, Green Lines Institute faced the challenge of inviting experts, scholars and researchers from all over the World to present their recent works and broadly discuss this thematic.

The decision to organise such an event in Pico Island – Azores is closely linked to the importance of the UNESCO World Heritage Site - Landscape of the Pico Island Vineyard Culture. In fact, growing grapes in this lava land is an extraordinary deed and the intangible heritage of such site is only fully perceived *in loco*. Other expressions of local intangible heritage are also of high interest, as the “Espírito Santo” rituals. Still today those rituals are evidence of strong community bounds and numerous emigrant families come back to the islands, during summer months, to celebrate the festivity in honour of the “Espírito Santo”. Delegates to this Conference had the opportunity to participate in such rituals, as invitees of the local community.

The main topics of the Conference were defined as: Selecting, Gathering and Preserving Intangible Heritage, Intangible Heritage Practices, Intangible Heritage: Local and Global, Intangible Heritage and Sustainable Development, Intangible Heritage and Cultural Tourism, Intangible Heritage and Museums, Intangible Heritage and Education, Intangible Heritage and Living Communities and Intangible Heritage of Tangible Heritage. Papers in this book are also organised according to these topics, ranging a variety of research issues, theoretical approaches and field experiences.

We would like to express our gratitude to our Partners and Sponsors that helped in many different ways, promoting, supporting and endorsing this event. Finally, we would like to address a special word of recognition to the Government of Azores, that supported this event throughout the *Secretaria Regional do Ambiente e do Mar* and the *Direcção Regional de Turismo*.

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