

# SHARING CULTURES 2019

Proceedings of the  
6<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Intangible Heritage



**Edited by**

**Sérgio Lira**

**Cristina Pinheiro**

**Rogério Amoêda**

**Alison McCleery**

**Alistair McCleery**

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*Guimarães, Portugal  
17-19 September*

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## Foreword

Sharing Cultures 2019 - 6<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Intangible Heritage follows the path established by the previous Conferences on Intangible Heritage (Sharing Cultures 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015 and 2017) and aims at pushing even further the studies on Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) under the main topics proposed by the UNESCO Convention. As in previous editions of this event some new fields of discussion, namely on what concerns management and promotion of ICH, educational matters and authenticity were added to the list of topics.

The complete list for this edition of Sharing Cultures included 01- Oral traditions and expressions; 02- Performing arts; 03- Social practices; 04- Traditional craftsmanship; 05- Management and promotion of intangible heritage; 06- Authenticity of intangible heritage; 07- Intangible heritage and education; 08- Special Chapter: Monetising ICH? tourism and business.

The concept of ICH has gained its rightful place among the scientific community during the last two decades and a significant amount of work has been done by a large number of researchers, academics and practitioners, leading to the recognition of ICH as fundamental piece for the comprehension of human societies, organisations and ways of living. It is now possible to consider that after an initial period of conceptual definition ICH has now its framework well-defined. It is within that framework that Sharing Cultures 2019 established its aims and goals as we are convinced that scientific events that gather scholars, researchers and academics with ongoing work on ICH are privileged moments to share experiences, problems, questions and conclusions.

Sharing Cultures always aimed at being one of those events and the publication of the Proceedings proves the quality of the research and of the work that has been done, besides promoting a broader dissemination of the knowledge produced thereof. As for the previous editions all papers were published after double-blind peer-review by at least two referees.

This conference edition was originally planned to be held in Edinburgh and we would like to thank all efforts from our Colleagues Alison McCleery and Alistair McCleery to achieve such a purpose. For various reasons that was not possible, and the conference was transferred to Guimarães and very welcome by the Municipality

Therefore, we would like to express our gratefulness to the Municipality of Guimarães that assisted the Organising Committee in all manners, as well as to the Cultural Centre of Vila Flor and the House of Memory of Guimarães.

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## Language as a common good for the protection of the environment, territory and landscape

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**ABSTRACT:** “Gregor had a shock as he heard his own voice answering hers, unmistakably his own voice, it was true, but with a persistent horrible twittering squeak behind it like an undertone, that left the words in their clear shape only for the first moment” (Franz Kafka, 1915). The first sign of a metamorphosis lies in the language; it dwells in the words making them unvoiced; it seems evident when words are unvoiced exercises. Ildefonso Cerdà was convinced of this when, in 1867, he published the *Teoría General de la Urbanización*. This is the incipit: “I will lead the reader to the study of a completely new, intact, virgin subject. Since everything was new, I had to search and invent new words to express new ideas”.

The act of foundation of urban planning is therefore not marked by formal prefigurations or by projects but by “new words to express new ideas”. Language has always been important for urban planning. Even more so today: the *Nouveau Régime Climatique* (Latour, 2015) has reversed all consolidated knowledge to this point. And it seems a waste of time to linger over its actual existence: “climate change is an agent of metamorphosis” (Beck, 2016). It is an unprecedented challenge that planning disciplines have no terms to give shape to the future. And this condition raises some questions: why is language so important in the fight against climate change? What is the appropriate vocabulary? How can we reduce the distance between the events that happen and the words used to describe them? Urban planning is a social practice that, through language, must orient the population to a conscious use of territory, environment and landscape. This is only possible if the urban planning vocabulary is transparent: «circulation without sediment» (Roland Barthes, 1953). This is one of the reasons why the language must be considered a common good like environment, territory and landscape.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

“Gregor”, a voice called (it was his mother!) “it’s quarter to seven. Don’t you want to be on your way?” The soft voice! Gregor was startled when he heard his voice answering. It was clearly and unmistakably his earlier voice, but in it was intermingled, as if from below, an irrepressibly painful squeaking which left the words positively distinct only in the first moment and distorted them in the reverberation, so that one didn’t know if one had heard correctly” (Kafka, 1915). The first sign of a metamorphosis is found in language, inhabiting its words and making them aphonic, as becomes clear when the terms are mere sound exercises. This is also what is happening across the planning disciplines. And yet there is a tendency to underestimate this aspect, to consider it as an accessory, and almost insignificant one, notably when compared to construction programs, design ideas, and building interventions. This is a terrible mistake: the beginning of the Anthropocene geologic time period (Crutzen, 2005) for example opened up a new phase in history, in which the actions of human beings would have direct repercussions, and unpredictable ones in some cases, on the balance of the Earth. Furthermore, with the urban phenomena: “the boundary between «city» and «nature» has been obliterated: the city of men, once an enclave in the nonhuman



world, spreads over the whole terrestrial nature and usurps its place” (Jonas, 1979). The *Nouveau Régime Climatique* (Latour, 2015) has reversed all consolidated knowledge to this point. And it seems a waste of time to linger over its actual existence: “climate change is an agent of metamorphosis. It has already altered our way of being in the world – the way we live in the world, think about the world, and seek to act upon the world through social action and politics” (Beck, 2016). Urban planners now find themselves lost in these themes because, despite the fact that it is now clear that dealing with the current themes of change within the traditional theoretical framework is a huge mistake, it is hard to consolidate an alternative operating practice.

It is an unprecedented challenge that planning disciplines have no response to; they have no vocabulary to tackle such a completely new situation; no terms to give shape to the future. And this condition raises some questions: why is language so important in the fight against climate change? What is the appropriate vocabulary? How can we reduce the distance between the events that happen and the words used to describe them? These questions are by no means rhetorical for a number of reasons. There are three major reasons in fact. Firstly, disorder in the planning discourse, which is made of a “language having body and hidden depths, existing both as dream and menace” (Barthes, 1953). Secondly, the text is of extraordinary importance because it is hard to imagine a city without some sort of explanatory text; nor a territorial project that can be clarified without certain conditions in place; nor a programme of interventions without the implementing of rules. And instead “the language, especially the one young people read, is reduced to a caption of images” (Steiner, 2003). Finally, it should be noted that, while the environment, territory and landscape of yesterday were used for urban planning, or what could be termed the privileged operating sectors, today they assume a different value: they are increasingly interdependent due to being part of a larger ecological system, on which the balance and living conditions of the earth depend. Based on these reasons, we can affirm that if the environment, territory and landscape are “common properties with «widespread ownership», they belong to everyone and no one, meaning that everyone must have access to them and no one can claim them as exclusive” (Rodotà, 2012). And so likewise, the words used must also be so to safeguard them in order to govern “even in the interest of future generations. In this sense, they are truly the heritage of humanity and everyone must be put in the position to defend them” (Rodotà, 2012).

## 2 NEW INTERPRETATIONS

This is not a new situation: “modern urban planning was not born at the same time as the technical and economic processes that gave rise to and transformed the industrial city, but it developed later, as the quantitative effects of the ongoing transformations became evident and came into conflict with each other, making it inevitable to perform repair actions” (Benevolo, 1963). London is the symbol of these extraordinary, and not only quantitative, transformations. One piece of information alone will suffice to explain this. In 1800, there were 850,000 residents in the capital (Smith, 1974), rising to 2,800,000 in 1861 and exceeding 3,400,000 by 1870 (Bevan, 1879). Although with different figures to London, these demographic changes have affected the whole of Europe. However, it was not until 1867 that urban planning became an autonomous discipline: “Ildefonso Cerdà's *Teoría General de la Urbanización* (General Theory of Urbanization) to base and justify the choice of the layout he adopted in his Plan for the City of Barcelona (1859), is at the same time the earliest and the most fully developed” (Choay, 1986).

*Replete terram* is also located in the frontispiece of the *Teoría General de la Urbanización*. In this way, “Fill the earth” is God’s double blessing. The first of these was bestowed after creating man and woman (Genesis 1, 28). The second when, after the great flood, God spoke to Noah and his children (Genesis 9, 1). It remains a double blessing, giving man the responsibility of Creation. The same responsibility that Cerdà would later feel towards the territory through his fundamental operating principle: “Ruralize the urban: urbanize the rural.” And it is precisely for this reason that Cerdà affirmed that “the word city would not do” (Cerdà, 1867). The inadequacy of language would become the prerequisite for beginning the search for a new vocabulary that adheres more to the overall reality of the territory; reduces the gap with the urban phenomenon; and combines the reasons of etymology with those of planning. “I could have used some derivatives from *civitas*, but all these words were already full of meanings far from what I was trying to express. After having tried to use and abandoned many simple and composed words, I remembered the term

*urbs* which was reserved for Rome the almighty and was not transmitted onto the peoples who adopted its language, and was better suited to my purposes” (Cerdà, 1867).

In the *Teoría*, the word city is not to be found; it would instead become a noun without any existing direct reference; the symbol of an extinct language; and the last remnants of an exhausted vocabulary, one whose language is conceptually unproductive and ineffective. Cerdà realised that the real problem was not in governing the expansion outside the walls but to acknowledge that “*urbs* is a hub in universal viability” (Cerdà, 1867). It is the definitive opening to a borderless territory, with the underlying hypothesis to set the rules of growth, not its limits. Focus on how to do it, and not where to stop. In this way, the opposite categories of city/countryside or centre/suburbs are definitively abandoned. And with them, the idea of a traditional city.

It is a metamorphosis that requires a refoundation process. This is how the *Teoría* begins: “I’ll introduce the reader to a brand new, untouched, virgin knowledge. Because everything is so new, I have had to search out and invent new words to express new ideas for which explanations could not be found in any existing terms” (Cerdà, 1867). A refoundation process which, before any actual planning takes place, starts from “new words to signify new ideas”. The plan is clear: “What I must do, and shall be delighted to do, is explain the significance of the new words as I encounter them, plus the philological and philosophical reasons I had for adopting them” (Cerdà, 1867). It is a declaration of intent that will lead to the construction of a completely renewed urban glossary: urban indicator, intervía, functionomy, transcendental and private roads, suprasoil, knots, stretches, grid pattern, knotting... as just some of the terms incorporated by Cerdà. The semantic renewal and in-depth analysis of etymology are paramount in the *Teoría*: with many pages dedicated to “express, distinguish and designate” (Cerdà, 1867), the new words of urban planning. By adding new words, as well as specifying their meaning, large-scale effort was made to identify the scope of a discipline in its infancy. The overall need to mark the distance between past and present. The will to give an autonomous language to a new subject.

### 3 REVIVALS

A semantic revival is due to the awareness that any evolution of knowledge only comes with a transformation of vocabulary. This is arguably the most important cultural legacy of Cerdà. It is also a necessary reinterpretation, considering the similarities with the current situation.

First of all, this is due to the creation of a divide between the procedures related to the urban planning discourse and the actual situation of the territory as a result of language inadequacy. A range of words have lost their expressive power, evocative nature, and symbolic dimension due to what George Steiner has called the “retreat from the word”. Ultimately, when the vocabulary of a discipline becomes meaningless, the legitimacy and the values of those who represent it are lost: in this way, cultural tradition in which the “spoken, remembered, and written discourse was the backbone of consciousness” (Steiner, 1971) begins to disappear. It is a condition that leads to a paradox: “if today we wrote or read according to the strict etymology, nobody would understand anything anymore, as words have significantly departed from their first and rational meaning” (Dossi, 1912). If this happens, then the word renounces its semantic content, its ability to persuade, or to be a prerequisite for dialogue, and becomes instead a simple acoustic articulation, if not simply a scream or invective. And so it is that we view “reality no longer as the total sum of hard, unavoidable facts, but as a conglomerate of constantly changing events and slogans, where something could be true today, which will already be false tomorrow” (Arendt, 1950).

Moreover, it has been clear for some time now that “a pestilence has struck the human race in its most distinctive faculty—that is, the use of words. It is a plague afflicting language, revealing itself as a loss of cognition and immediacy, an automatism that tends to level out all expression into the most generic, anonymous, and abstract formulas, to dilute meanings, to blunt the edge of expressiveness, extinguishing the spark that shoots out from the collision of words and new circumstances” (Calvino, 1988). This thesis had an immediate diffusion, and not only in the literary field. In fact, immediately after the (posthumous) publication of *Lezioni americane (Six Memos for the Next Millennium)*, it was Giancarlo De Carlo who said: “we are interested in spreading the awareness that architecture too is affected by that plague of language that Calvino describes so masterfully” (De Carlo, 1988). And a little later, he stated that “it becomes necessary to establish that “the environment is everything” and that territory, landscape, countryside, urban suburbs,

cities, historic centers, buildings, squares, streets, etc... are special cases of the environmental universe” (De Carlo, 1991). Bernardo Secchi was to do the same, pointing out that “most of the time the controversy arises from the carelessness and sloppiness with which words and signs are used and understood, from a sort of “plague of language”. We are inattentive to the substance that each term inevitably conveys and stick to one of its possible meanings to build ghosts and with them fight heroic and useless battles” (Secchi, 1989a). It is a significant risk that urban planning cannot take, especially in view of the fact that “environment and reuse are the two major issues on which to build today a new strategy for the city and the territory” (Secchi, 1989b). Since then, conditions have changed. In some cases, for the worse: “If we wish to defend our identities, we are also going to have to identify those stateless migrants known as climate, erosion, pollution, dwindling resources and the destruction of habitat” (Latour, 2018).

Finally, there has been a progressive deterioration of the terms used in urban planning disciplines that essentially blurs one’s gaze: “the intellectual framework, the vocabulary and the most intimate references of our professions [...] the whole complex of ancient values is now ineffective and counterproductive; not only does it no longer work, but it paralyses those who must think the city” (Koolhaas, 2001). This being so, we should not forget that there are words that have marked an era. General Land Use Plan, Standard, Zoning, identified shared values and were precise cultural references for the way in which we think about cities. They were the lenses that allowed for the interpreting of reality. But times change; and so do words. So much so that the old ones become useless tools. Yet it is necessary to remember how those same terms alluded to a consolidated cultural programme, even in the management of interventions to the territory; something which has in fact been abandoned and not been replaced. It is this replacement which is fundamentally the priority we need to set: “Ecology is subversive in that it calls into question the capitalist imaginary that prevails everywhere. It rejects the central leitmotif according to which we are fated to constantly increase production and consumption. It’s not just the irreversible dilapidation of the environment and the squandering of irreplaceable resources. There’s also the anthropological destruction of human beings: so we’re not talking about some bucolic defence of ‘nature,’ but about a struggle to save human beings and their habitat” (Castoriadis, 2005).

#### 4 A NEW VOCABULARY

The deterioration of the terminology, its lack of adherence and the so-called “plague of language” have paved the way in this thesis for the necessity of a new vocabulary. However, pursuing the construction of a lexicon implies the need to dismiss the vocabulary on which modern town planning was built. But this is no easy task: it forces us to critically move away from the past without denying it or, worse still, repudiating it. To dismiss it therefore means to recognize the importance of both the vocabulary and conceptual structure that maintained it, as monuments of Western thought which, however, have come to the end of their time, because “if the qualifications that are given to the word city were a rosary with many grains, it should also be noted that the «lemmas» that describe the ways of «being» of the city cannot remain unchanged, some change their meaning, other emerge, other disappear: the language spoken by the city becomes different” (Indovina, 2006). In the light of these considerations, the idea is to help contribute “to outline the grammar and syntax of this language, the relationships that can be built between the different ways of use and governance of the city” (Indovina, 2006). In *Notions de l’urbanisme par l’usage* (Desjardins, Beaucire, 2015), the conviction is similar. Its aim is to present and discuss some of the main concepts concerning the design or evaluation of urban and territorial projects. To achieve this, the method involves the selection of a number of key words that are explored through essays in scientific literature, the writings of urban planners or literature. From the conclusions drawn, one aspect of great interest is the search for the relationships between the various key words and how these may be interdependent, form part of a broader concept, have an effect on a specific aspect of a given issue or be the prerequisite for another phenomenon to occur. It is the attempt to identify the semantic field of words, to open the boundaries of definitions, and to experiment with analogies and differences between terms. Therefore, the reflection on language is not the only way to renew the vocabulary from an analytical and design point of view, but also to give shape to rights, to identify duties and to extend participation in a public debate as much as possible so as to be able to go beyond the disciplinary field. It is a need that has been felt more and more

frequently, also in regards to the transformations that urban planning has undergone in recent decades both in professional practice and theoretical elaboration. And it is precisely for this reason that “the words of this small critical lexicon are to be understood as an «opening move» to fuel a discussion, thorough but also generous, on the possibilities and limits of the discourse and urban planning, today, in Italy and Europe” (Pasqui, 2017).

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

Overall, it remains the last stage of a process known to all those who, in a number of different ways, deal with the environment, territory and landscape. One of the most lucid and successful writings, as well as from a publishing diffusion point of view, is *Il principio responsabilità (The Imperative of Responsibility)*. In this work, Hans Jonas declares in a clear and unmistakable way that: “The submission of nature for human happiness has launched with its immense success, which now also involves the very nature of man, the greatest challenge that has ever come to the human being from his own actions. Everything here is new, dissimilar the past both in kind and in size: what man is now able to do and, in the irresistible exercise of this ability, is forced to continue to do, has no equal in past experience, which all the traditional wisdom about the right behaviours was based on” (Jonas, 1979). They are words that have remained carved in the most sensitive minds but which, unfortunately, have not produced widespread results; words that have taken root in the silent area of the conscience without transforming into a general cry of alarm; and words that have failed to reach everyone in the world because they are confined to a specialized field which has not been able to duplicate them. Despite this fact, it is now clear that: “If we decide to worry, we will have to do so in the first instance and especially for our human family, because we are the ones most at risk. The Earth has always eliminated waste and errors. Life will go on in its grandeur, but human society, at least with its current crazy activity, may not make it” (Hazen, 2012).

Faced with such an eventuality, only Pope Francis seems to have grasped the fact that “an integral ecology calls for openness to categories which transcend the language of mathematics and biology, and take us to the heart of what it is to be human” (Pope Francis, 2015). And it is precisely through a repertoire of terms within everyone’s reach that the encyclical *Laudato si’* has declared its vision of the future, starting from four closely connected concepts. The alliance with science: “I will begin by briefly reviewing several aspects of the present ecological crisis, with the aim of drawing on the results of the best scientific research available today, letting them touch us deeply and provide a concrete foundation for the ethical and spiritual itinerary that follows” (Pope Francis, 2015). The sense of responsibility: “The natural environment is a collective good, the patrimony of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone. If we make something our own, it is only to administer it for the good of all” (Pope Francis, 2015). Taking care of the Earth as a “common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development” for which “we require a new and universal solidarity” (Pope Francis, 2015). And finally, the invitation to open a “Dialogue among the various sciences, since each can tend to become enclosed in its own language, while specialization leads to a certain isolation and the absolutization of its own field of knowledge. This prevents us from confronting environmental problems effectively” (Pope Francis, 2015).

It is therefore necessary to start again from a shared vocabulary that allows full understanding even by those who do not belong to the scientific community. We need a global dissemination effort that will enable everyone to understand the risks that humanity is facing. We need to speed up the time towards a greater awareness in order that words directly reach the things they represent so that there is no need to reflect on the meaning of the terms. The time has come to cross the borders of all disciplines so that the knowledge gained in each of them can be dissolved into a language that is open and comprehensible not only to specialists in the field. A language that is able to actively contribute to the protection of the ecosystem. A language that can finally become a common good for the environment, territory and landscape.

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# SHARING CULTURES 2019

## 6<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Intangible Heritage

*10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition*

### SHARING CULTURES

#### 6<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Intangible Heritage

follows the path established by the previous Conferences on Intangible Heritage (SHARING CULTURES 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015 and 2017) and aims at pushing further the discussion on Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), under the main topics proposed by the UNESCO Convention adding some new field of discussion, namely on what concerns management and promotion of ICH, educational matters and musealization.

The concept of ICH gained its rightful place among the scientific community during the last three decades and a significant amount of work has been done by a large number of researchers, academics and practitioners, leading to the recognition of ICH as fundamental piece for the comprehension of human societies, organisations and ways of living. Accordingly, scientific events that gather scholars, researchers and academics with on-going work on ICH are privileged moments to share experiences, problems, questions and conclusions. SHARING CULTURES in its 2019 edition aims at consolidating its rightful place among those events.

The Editors