

## **Conference Report Sharing Cultures 2009**

International Conference on Intangible Heritage PICO-Azores

30 May to 1 June 2009

As 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 ICH, Green Lines Institute (Portugal) organised Sharing Cultures 2009 aiming at gathering in an international event a significant group of experts, researcher and scholars who could contribute to such a debate.

For the purpose of this International Conference Green Lines Institute adopted the definition of ICH presented in the UNESCO Convention; as a consequence, papers were submitted on practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills and on instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith; other papers were on communities, groups and individuals, recognize as part of their cultural heritage. Still under the UNESCO definition, consideration was given solely to intangible cultural heritage that is compatible with existing international human rights, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development, the last being the core subject of Green Lines Institute.

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 organize such an event in Pico Island – Azores was 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” (Holly Ghost) rituals. Still today those rituals are evidence of strong community bounds as the celebration of the festivity in honour of the Holly Ghost proves. Delegates to this Conference had the opportunity to participate in such rituals, as invitees of the local community.

Different approaches were brought to discussion during plenary and parallel sessions, where 79 papers were presented and analyzed, covering the various topics of this Conference: 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 the conference proceedings are also organized according to these topics, ranging a variety of research issues, theoretical approaches and field experiences. 126 Delegates came to Pico Island for the Conference, 88 as Presenters and 38 as Attendants.

Susan Pearce (*Emeritus* Professor, University of Leicester) and Andrew Hall (Member ICOMOS International Executive Committee and President of the International Committee on Intangible Cultural Heritage) were the Keynote Speakers of the event.

Emerald Group Publishing, publisher of the *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research* sponsored a best paper award at the conference. Professor Arch Woodside, the editor of IJCTHR, has chosen two papers as best papers as they were found equally good.

They are: Mitsche, N. *et al*, "*Intangibles - enhancing access to cities cultural heritage through interpretation*" and George, E.W., "*Intangible heritage and tourism, ownership and copyrights: does a community own its intangible cultural heritage?*" Myriam Jansen-Verbeke is member of the scientific committee and presented a paper on '*Territorial embedding of intangible heritage and cultural tourism*'

Conference Proceedings:

Lira,S & al.(eds) *Sharing Culture*. Green Lines Institute for Sustainable Development. Barcelos (Pt) 638p. ISBN 978-989-95671-1-5

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