



United Nations
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UNESCO Chair in Intangible Heritage
and Traditional Know-How: Linking Heritage
University of Évora

Heritages and Memories from the Sea

1st International Conference of the UNESCO Chair in
Intangible Heritage and Traditional Know-How: Linking Heritage
14-16 January 2015. Évora. Portugal
Conference Proceedings

Filipe Themudo Barata and João Magalhães Rocha (Eds.)



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Organization and Scientific Committee

University of Évora, CIDEHUS and Department of Architecture, Portugal
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OPENING KEYNOTE LECTURE

TIAGO CASTELA

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It is an honor for me to present this reflection at the start of the first international conference *Heritages and Memories from the Sea*. As João Rocha told you, I am an urban historian and my work focuses on the history of urban planning knowledge in late 20th-century Portugal and its then colonies. I aim at articulating a critical conception of space through my historical research. My objective is to promote future modes of urban planning knowledge that are not inimical to political democratization as a process. My perspective on the issue of intangible heritage is thus informed by this concern with a theory of space, as a way of foregrounding an understanding of the built environment not as a geometrical space, but instead as a plural assemblage of spatial representations, practices, and imaginations.

INTRODUCTION: SEA SPACE AS INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

I thus start this brief reflection by asking: Can sea space – which I will later attempt to define – be understood as an intangible heritage, beyond the conventional definition of so-called “cultural spaces associated” with intangible heritage (UNESCO 2003, 2)? And if there are ways in which sea space – including the built environments associated with the sea – can be understood as an intangible heritage in itself, how can we do research on the intangible heritage of sea space with theoretical perspectives and methodological tools that acknowledge the specificities of sea space?

My reflection will start by exploring the idea of a science – i.e., a knowledge – of sea space. I will draw explicitly from the writings of two French philosophers in the 1970s, Henri Lefebvre and Gilles Deleuze, as well as implicitly from coeval debates on the future of urban planning by architects like José Forjaz and Júlio Carrilho in newly independent Mozambique. From Lefebvre, I recall the idea of the social production of social space, and the project of a science of space, notably introduced in the book *The Production of Space*, published in the French language in 1974 (Lefebvre 1991). Regarding Deleuze, I evoke the idea of “nomad science,” as opposed to a science serving the state apparatus; as well as the concept of the sea as a territory both “smooth” – i.e., stateless – and in process of “striation” by state apparatuses, addressed in the book *A Thousand Plateaus* co-authored with psychoanalyst Félix Guattari and published in the French language in 1980 (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Both philosophers wrote following the end of the late French Empire, due to defeat in various wars, which was part of the end of the global hegemony of Atlantic European states and the emergence of subordination of all of the states of the European region to two other imperial states at the time: the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. As the Berkeley geographer Richard Walker noted at the 2010 conference *Spaces of History / Histories of Space* I organized with a group of colleagues while at Berkeley, perhaps because of this loss of an actual occupation of space, there was an emergence of highly innovative thought regarding space in 1970s France.¹

¹ Walker suggested this in his unpublished commentary as a moderator of the first keynote session of the conference. Richard Walker (commentary on keynote session #1, *Spaces of History / Histories of Space* conference, Berkeley, CA, 30 April–1 May 2010).

I would add that such contributions by Lefebvre and Deleuze unknowingly dialogued with similarly innovative experiments in the professional field of urban planning in late 1970s Mozambique proposing a future decolonization of spatial knowledge, i.e., a disarticulation of modes of spatial knowledge from the persistent logic of colonialism. I argue in work I have presented elsewhere that such experiments centered on the need for the state planning apparatus to acknowledge plural spatialities, i.e., diverse modes of practicing space, for a decolonized life.² In addition, we may interpret the contributions by Lefebvre and Deleuze as heralding a decolonization of spatial knowledge that started being explicitly and thoroughly theorized in English-speaking universities 30 years later, in the 2000s, by scholars like geographer Jennifer Robinson (2002; 2006), urbanist Abdoumalig Simone (2004), and urban planner Ananya Roy (2004; 2011).

I thus believe that it is useful for us to recall these 40-year-old texts by Lefebvre and Deleuze today as potential theoretical points of departure for a knowledge of sea space as an intangible heritage that is freed from colonial rationality, that is to say, disenthralled from a mode of reason that emerged from the colonial project, was integral to its maintenance, and possibly hinders political democratization in postcolonial times, both in Europe and elsewhere.

After exploring the idea of a science of sea space, I will briefly and in a fragmental manner interrogate the concept of heritage as defined in the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO) by remembering the diverse conceptualizations of “heritage” developed within tradition studies during the 1990s, including Nezar AlSayyad’s exploration of the role of “manufacturing heritage” in state formation (2001), Nelson Graburn’s defense of a research attentive to situated definitions of heritage (2001), and Dell Upton’s argument for studies that address “episodes of encounter and transformation” (1993, 14).

I will conclude by arguing that a science of sea space as an intangible heritage can be a “nomad science,” a practice of knowledge creation that enables citizens in their situated struggles regarding sea space, that can help experts working for state apparatuses to consider the distinction between technical and political questions regarding the sea, and that can support an understanding of state heritage that is integral to political democratization, instead of fostering normative inventions of national communities. For such a “nomad science,” it is crucial to deploy research methods drawing from various disciplinary fields that address sea space as a plural assemblage of spatial representations, practices, and imaginations.

Let me end this introductory section by recalling the words of Alvina, a fisherwoman from Northern Portugal, as recorded by anthropologist Sally Cole in her 1991 book *Women of the Praia*, in order to convey what I mean by an understanding of state heritage that is integral to political democratization. This would be a state heritage based on the idea that in our states there are no sea spaces without history:

² Tiago Castela, “Peripheries in a history of urban futures: Planning for the government of informal spaces in late colonial Mozambique” (paper presented at the 16th International Planning History Society conference, Saint Augustine, FLA, 20–23 July 2014).

I always wanted to work on the sea, and when I was 14 and old enough I persuaded my father to take me into Vila do Conde to the Capitania [Captaincy] for my license . . . For the test I had to swim across the Rio Ave [the Ave River], but I didn't know how to swim, so my father gave the man from the Capitania a coin and I got my license. After that I fished with my father and my brother, and when the weather was too bad for fishing I worked with my mother and sisters for the *lavradores* [the farmers] in the fields . . . And that was my life day in and day out until my marriage. (Cole 1991, 29)

THE SEA AS SOCIAL SPACE AND ITS KNOWLEDGE AS A NOMAD SCIENCE

So, what do I mean by “space”? Following Lefebvre's 1974 work *The Production of Space*, I conceive space not as a geometrical space, but as a social space that is socially produced (1991, 26). Please note that the idea of socially “producing space” implies that it is disabling to conceive an aprioristic space, supposedly empty, that is then animated or filled through the social. Social space exists in and through its social practice. In order to research this social space as a plural assemblage, it can be concluded from Lefebvre's work that we need to go beyond the limitations of disciplinary perspectives (1991, 41), with architectural history focusing exclusively on professional representations of space through formal analysis, anthropology foregrounding more permanent symbolic orderings of spaces, and actual, everyday spatial practice (which includes experience) being usually neglected in research.

Taking Lefebvre into account, what then can the sea be as social space? It may be many spaces, both actual and virtual, and all of the following may be plurally researched by focusing on representations, symbolic orders, and practice:

- the liquid space inhabited by human bodies – spaces themselves – directly and fleetingly, for example at the beach;
- a territory crossed by mobile spaces like boats or ships on everyday commutes, or on long oceanic journeys for commerce, war, travel, or migration;
- island spaces, bounded and isolated like moored mobile spaces, where the sea as a territory is a permanent presence too;
- harbor spaces or other social spaces adjacent to the sea, interfaces between the land and the sea as a territory; and
- the sea as a virtual space of the imagination.

In all these cases, the sea as a social space can also be understood through the frame of intangible heritage. Many of the papers at this conference address such sea spaces. Presentations about travel writing explore sea space as a space of state warfare and state formation (in the case of the paper by Fabiana Dimpflmeier or the keynote lecture by Hiram

Morgan), or reveal island spaces as nodes in networks of unequal power relations, formed through the passage of mobile spaces for migration and commerce (like in the work of Miguel Moniz). Papers on island life explore both representations of the state apparatus and memories of everyday practice and symbolic orderings (like the papers by Vicente Benítez Cabrera or by Margarida Donas Botto and Sofia Salema). In addition, island life is also examined through a valuable attention to diverse expertises and situated conceptions of heritages of the sea (like the paper by Alison Neilson, Carlos de Bulhão Pato, and their co-authors at the University of the Azores). Sea spaces are also addressed in the conference in relation to other broad topics:

- the sea as a space of fishing, encompassing forms of industrialization, discourses on national culture, or situated religious practices;
- the sea as a space of knowledge formation; and
- the sea as a space of war.

It must be noted that researching contrasting perspectives on sea space is in itself evidently not a new idea, although the issue has been rarely addressed explicitly in the literature. For example, in the 1995 article titled “The Water is not Empty” Australian geographer Sue Jackson argued that research had hitherto neglected the ways in which the Aboriginal idea of “caring for country” also encompassed sea space, an aspect neglected by a legal apparatus originated in the European occupation of Australia (1995). Nevertheless, I argue that reading Lefebvre’s critical conception of social space and of its “lived, conceived and perceived realms” (1991, 40) in relation to Deleuze’s notion of “nomad science” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 368) entails methodological implications for a truly plural research on sea space that goes beyond dichotomies of supposedly bounded domains of the cultural.

How did Deleuze conceptualize the sea in relation to “nomad science,” and what did Deleuze mean by “nomad science”? As I mentioned previously, in *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze conceptualized the sea as a territory that is “smooth,” or beyond the control of states and state apparatuses, and in process of “striation,” described thus by Deleuze: “But the sea is also, of all the smooth spaces, the first one attempts were made to striate, to transform into a dependency of the land, with its fixed routes, constant directions, relative movements, a whole counterhydraulic of channels and conduits” (ibid., 387).

Deleuze goes on to argue that contemporary state apparatuses have reconstituted “smooth space” through the formation of a “worldwide war machine whose organization exceeds the state apparatuses and passes into energy, military-industrial, and multinational complexes” (ibid.). Thus, while Deleuze defends a “nomad science” as opposed to a science serving a state apparatus characterized by persistencies of authoritarian and colonial regimes, he also provides us with a warning regarding the purported benevolence of a nomad science.

For Deleuze, “the way in which a science . . . participates in the organization of the social field, and in particular induces a division of labor, is part of that science itself” (ibid., 368). Indeed, what Deleuze calls “royal science . . . derives from a society divided into governors and governed, and later, intellectuals and manual laborers” (ibid., 369; emphasis added). In contrast, “nomad science” imagines “another organization of work, and of the social field through work,” searching not for laws or constants, but “seiz[ing] or determin[ing] singularities in the matter” (ibid.). He adds that “nomad sciences do not destine science to take on an autonomous power” (ibid., 373). I suggest that we can collectively reflect on a concept of a science of sea space that is a “nomad science,” albeit one that does not serve the “worldwide war machine” that has reconstituted sea space. Instead, a science of sea space can create knowledge through work with subjects as fellow experts on sea space, a space continuously produced through practices that are intangible. What are the ways in which we can frame such practices as heritage?

THREE PROPOSALS FOR HERITAGE RESEARCH WITHIN TRADITION STUDIES

Let us return to the definition of “heritage” in the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage:

The “intangible cultural heritage” means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledges, 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 (UNESCO 2003, 2; emphasis added)

As I suggested previously, I believe that it can be enabling for us to reflect on this definition by recalling and deploying the diverse conceptualizations of heritage developed within tradition studies at Berkeley and elsewhere during the 1990s, including the exploration by architectural and urban historian Nezar AlSayyad of the role of “manufacturing heritage” in state formation (2001), the defense by anthropologist Nelson Graburn of a research attentive to situated definitions of heritage (2001), and the argument by architectural historian Dell Upton on future vernacular landscape studies that address “episodes of encounter and transformation” (1993, 14). While this 1990s debate on heritage within tradition studies does not necessarily challenge the later UNESCO definition, recalling may present some challenging questions for present-day research. In the 1993 article “The Tradition of Change,” Upton reflected on two disabling categories in vernacular landscape studies: “the vernacular as a static category of experience” and “a belief

in the authenticity of the object” (ibid., 9). He defended that “we should turn our attention away from a search for the authentic, the characteristic, the enduring and the pure, and immerse ourselves in the active, the evanescent and the impure, seeking settings that are ambiguous, multiple, often contested, and examining points of contact and transformation – in the market, at the edge, in the new and the decaying” (ibid., 14).

Paraphrasing Upton, I ask: How can a science of sea space focus on “episodes of encounter and transformation”? How can we explore “intangible heritage” as necessarily contested?

By 2001, in the introduction to the edited volume *Global Norms and Urban Forms in the Age of Tourism: Manufacturing Heritage, Consuming Tradition*, AlSayyad provided one response to Upton’s challenge: an attention to the role of “manufacturing heritage” in contemporary state formation, notably by postcolonial state apparatuses. AlSayyad argued that “many nations . . . are resorting to heritage preservation, the invention of tradition, and the rewriting of history as forms of self-definition” (2001, 2), noting that “if tradition is about the absence of choice, as Yu-Fu Tuan argued some years ago, heritage then is the deliberate embrace of a single choice as a means of defining the past in relationship to the future” (ibid., 14).

Inspired by AlSayyad, we can ask: How can a science of sea space then foster the imagination of plural heritages while acknowledging the productive role of heritage preservation in the political autonomization of states and of individuals? How is heritage preservation political? Whose lives are benefitted, and are certain modes of living endangered through actual preservation practices, since modes of living are “constantly recreated,” as the conventional definition rightly notes?

In the same volume, Graburn provided a contrasting proposal regarding plural heritages based on the anthropological project, by defending an ethnographic perspective on heritage inspired by psychoanalysis. Graburn defended an attention both to “the individual level of the personal story of heritage and tradition” (2001, 68) and an exposition of “the sources and variety of attitudes towards those things called heritage in the modern world” (ibid., 81). We can thus ask: To what extent is the UNESCO definition of heritage understandable as part of a situated epistemology that is framed as universal? Can we draw inspiration from a comparative exercise regarding languages and even epistemologies, an exercise that may problematize heritage? As an example, Indonesian architectural historians like Abidin Kusno and Rina Priyani are currently contributing to this discussion with valuable work on the ways in which translations and mistranslations illuminate the messiness of manufacturing heritage in Southeast Asia.³

³ Abidin Kusno, “In whose tradition? Jakarta meets the new governor” (keynote lecture, biennial conference of the International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 14–17 December 2014). Rina Priyani, “Postcolonial architecture in urban Indonesia: Jengki architecture and the Chinese–Indonesian builders” (paper presented at the above-mentioned biennial conference).

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A SCIENCE OF SEA SPACE

In conclusion: I have begun by arguing that the sea can be understood as a social space, including a diverse set of sea spaces that can be

researched as intangible heritage in themselves, not as mere “cultural spaces” associated with intangible heritage. I have also argued that knowledge of such sea spaces can correspond to what Deleuze called a “nomad science,” a form of knowledge that aims at deploying theories and methods that emerge from the specificities of the representations, practices, and imaginations that constitute sea spaces. Such a science of sea space can be enabling for those involved in disputes around sea spaces. Finally, I have argued that recalling debates within tradition studies on heritage is one of the ways in which we can work together towards a theorization of an intangible heritage of the sea that is a necessarily contested domain; as a kind of shipwreck characterized both by damage and treasures. I will thus finish with the words of the late Adrienne Rich, in her 1972 poem “Diving into the Wreck” (2008, 100):

I came to explore the wreck.

The words are purposes.

The words are maps.

I came to see the damage that was done
and the treasures that prevail.

Thank you.

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