

## Reconceptualizing cultural heritage in the semiosphere

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Preoccupation with *heritage* seems to be quite recent – as Lowenthal points out, the term entered the worldwide scene only in the 1980s. Within the epistemological dimension, ‘heritage’ should be set in opposition to ‘history’ since the two rely on antithetical stances: history’s asset is preoccupation with truth and revealing falsehood, while heritage, immune to critical reassessment, “exaggerates and omits, invents and frankly forgets, and thrives on ignorance and error” (Lowenthal, 1996: 121). Such a dichotomization unavoidably entails the dimension of interpretation and contact, which can be analytically grasped through semiotic study.

This thematic session intends to bring together scholars working within various research paradigms and with a plethora of visual, written and multimodal data, to explore semiotic aspects of tangible and intangible heritage in the urbanscape. ‘Heritage’ semantically can be positioned at the crisscrossing of several cultural and cognitive dimensions: small group dynamics, collective identities, tradition, materiality, national identities and the politics of memory. All of them can involve contact, sometimes transgression, or multiethnicity. In this respect, reconceptualizing heritage inscribes into the *leitmotif* of this year’s edition of 13th World Congress of Semiotics, in the area of tracing the intersection of various types of relations.

During the session, we would like to interrogate semiotic implications of these aspects and their interplay, as evolving in semiosphere. As Yuri Lotman pointed out, semantic systems function only by virtue of “being immersed in a specific semiotic continuum, which is filled with multi-variant semiotic models situated at a range of hierarchical levels” (Lotman ([1992]: 2005). This stipulation creates a vibrant area of investigation – both as far as the development of new semiotic models within various structured hierarchies are concerned, and with regard to pragmatic reflections of the growing heritage industry. With the *leitmotif* of this year’ edition of the Congress, the session will focus on, but will not be confined to the following foci:

- semiotic reconceptualizations of heritage;
- heritage from the multimodal perspective;
- heritage and identity in the light of local communities (small group dynamics) and *glocatization*;

- material heritage and tradition: sculpture, architecture, painting as artefacts relating to group dynamics;
- heritage in multiethnic environment;
- museums as an encapsulated embodiment and multilayered emergent signage: The topology of the museum space, semiotics of memory sites, audience studies, museum collections as indexing power relations in a society, deployment of audio and visual material as a semiotic web;
- religious and ritualistic aspects of heritage (sacrosanct heritage, analyses of sacrosphere, rites of passage as intangible heritage);
- Meaning-making mechanisms related to tradition.

We encourage semiotic, discursive and anthropological analyses of all sorts of multimodal data related to heritage: verbal, visual, paralinguistic and audio (including artistic discourse).

### **Sample references**

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