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WHAT'S NEWS

THE ICOMOS-EPWG AFRICA MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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EDITORIAL

Alyssa K. Barry

Dear Readers,

It's a new year and we are delighted to start it with a new format for our beloved Newsletter!

While a new year often means new resolutions, our objectives for this Newsletter remain the same: to bring together, share and show(case). Our wish remains to continue to promote African cultural heritage and those who bring it to life as we did in 2022, and as many of our elders have been doing for so many years already.

This is notably the case of Lazare Eloundou Assomo, today at the head of the World Heritage Centre, who has done us the honour of contributing to this first issue of the year through an exclusive interview in which he looks back on his career and on UNESCO's objectives with regard to World Heritage.

From Algeria to Congo, via (among others) Senegal, Cameroon or Zimbabwe, young emerging professionals are also present in this issue, and we are happy to be able to continue to give them a voice.

As you can see, we are more motivated than ever to continue our momentum and are ready to take up the challenges and opportunities that this new year will bring us, always keeping in mind the rich heritage that drives us.

Happy New Year to all!

5 QUESTIONS TO TINHINANE BACHIR CHERIF

Interviewed by Avenir G. Meikengang



Algerian-born and a specialist in earthen architecture, who is Tinhinane Bachir-Cherif?

Born in Tamanrasset, a wonderful city in the Algerian desert, I have a degree in architecture from the Farhat Abbes University in Sétif, a master's degree in urban planning from the University of Constantine 3 in Algeria, and a passion for heritage.

I have always had such a thirst for discovery, learning, reading and exchange. A scientific career thus answered these deep aspirations, since I passed the doctorate competition in the same university in heritage - a different specialty from that of my master's degree - which allows me today to quench my thirst in this vast field.

You are currently completing your doctorate in urban and landscape architectural heritage at the University Salah Boubnider Constantine 3 in Algeria. Can you tell us about your work and the choice of your research theme?

My research focuses on architectural heritage, especially on earthen architecture and community cultures. My thesis focuses on the development of earthen construction know-how in the south-western region of Algeria. Born in the desert, I have always been fascinated by the earthen architecture of the region, by these ingenious oasis earthen villages "the ksour". However, during my architecture course, we were not taught much about local materials and traditional architecture, except in a few history classes. In the workshops, we were much more oriented towards the so-called "modern" materials like concrete. Until I took part in the archi'terre festival in Algiers on earthen architecture and the techniques incorporated in it. I was fascinated to see other architects from all over the world using this material for contemporary projects, but I was also angry and wondered why our cities were being uprooted from their context; why we were looking for alternatives to build our cities when the solution is right under our feet and moreover it is environmentally friendly, ecological, sustainable and recyclable. At the beginning, my thesis subject did not really attract the people in charge of our doctoral training, but I stuck with it. For me, it is not only a research project, but rather a philosophy and a life project.

You are a member of an international research team led by Oussouby Sacko. Can you tell us what the project is about and what is at stake for Africa?

This is an international project financed by Kyoto Seika University in Japan on the same theme as my thesis project "the valorisation of earthen know-how", but this project is on a wider scale covering countries in North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa: Algeria, Morocco, Mali, Senegal, Mauritania and Côte d'Ivoire. It aims to analyse the conservation strategies adopted in the region and to map the different earthen construction cultures. However, the main objective remains to create a real dialogue between the North and the South through this common heritage.

As a visiting lecturer and research associate at the African Centre at Kyoto Seika University in Japan, you were recently awarded 2nd prize in a competition organised by the Francophone University Agency (AUF) North. Can you tell us in a few words about the initiative that enabled you to win this prize?

As I mentioned earlier, everything I am doing now is related to earthen material. Once my thesis is finished, I would like to share it with the community.

And while looking for ways to make the transition from academic research to action research, I came across these "doctoriales de l'entrepreneuriat" organised by the AUF, a bootcamp rich in training led by experts, whose objective is to collaborate with other colleagues by working on a concrete start-up project and to learn how to ensure this transition towards entrepreneurship and openness to the socio-economic world. Our winning project was to create a start-up on the valorization of earthen material and the know-how associated with it to produce a more ecological and sustainable architecture while involving the community. This edition was not my first participation, during the 2021 edition, our project around the same theme was among the 3 winning projects.

A message to the young African professionals?

Dream big! Be yourself! Be happy! Be effective!

Dare to be... ! Dare to be... ! Dare to be... !



SENIORS' VOICE

Interviewed by Alyssa K. Barry

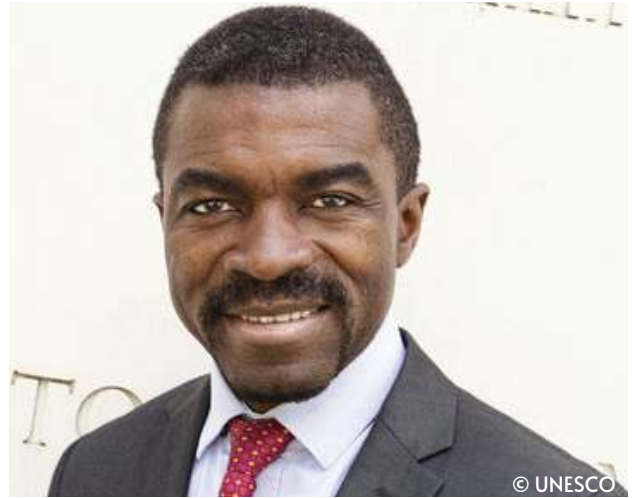
- **From being an architect to a World Heritage Director... What were the main steps in your career, Lazare Eloundou Assomo?**

After graduating as an architect in 1992, I specialized in earthen architecture and in town planning. Then I started working as a researcher at the Centre for Earthen Construction of the Grenoble School of Architecture (CRAterre) in 1996, where I oversaw the implementation of several low-cost housing projects in Africa. Building for the disadvantaged communities in countries like Cameroon, Eritrea and South Africa, made me pay more attention to communities' cultural heritage and traditional knowledge. This particular interest in cultural heritage led me to coordinate (from the year 2000) the AFRICA 2009 programme, a cultural heritage conservation capacity-building programme set up by UNESCO's World Heritage Centre (WHC), ICCROM and CRAterre.

With my solid experience in cultural heritage conservation and management, I joined the Africa Unit of the WHC, in 2003, where I contributed to creating the African World Heritage Fund and developing the World Heritage Earthen Architecture Programme (WHEAP).

From 2008 to 2013, I was promoted to the Head of the Africa Unit of the WHC. During this time, I coordinated the cooperation with African countries on World Heritage issues and implemented several restoration projects in Mozambique, Uganda, Benin, and Mali. It is during this period that I co-authored the book 'African World Heritage: A Remarkable Diversity', with Ishanlosen Odiava published by UNESCO, on the occasion of the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the World Heritage Convention.

In 2013, when Mali was hit by a violent armed conflict in the northern part of the country, I joined the UNESCO office in Bamako and became UNESCO's head representative in Mali in 2014. Among my responsibilities were the protection of Mali's cultural heritage, which was being affected, and the coordination of the reconstruction of the Timbuktu mausoleums and the safeguarding of ancient manuscripts



As you know, Timbuktu is a UNESCO World Heritage site which was an intellectual and spiritual capital in the 15th and 16th centuries. It is a precious African site, and its preservation is as important as ever for humanity.

I then returned to UNESCO Headquarters in Paris in 2016, initially as Deputy Director of the Heritage Division and the WHC. In 2018, I became Director of Culture and Emergencies, coordinating emergency conservation responses to heritage affected by conflicts and disasters as well as the restitution of cultural property under the 1970 Convention.

In December 2021, I was appointed Director of World Heritage by Audrey Azoulay, the Director-General of UNESCO. Now you know all about me!

- **What were the main challenges and lessons learned?**

The main lesson that I learnt in my career is that issues of cultural and natural heritage conservation cannot be dealt with without placing the communities at the center of any preservation approach. Another significant challenge for the Convention that I observed, is the recurrent difficulty that African countries face to ensure the appropriate conservation and sustainable management of their cultural and natural sites, in the face of ever-increasing development pressures.

Young people in Africa are key players in the life of communities who are aware that cultural heritage is not only a thing of the past but also an essential part of their identity.



Making sure that the sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List are protected the way that they should be, especially their unique values which made them join this List, is the best way they will reveal the importance of Africa's history and contribute to the social development of local communities that have been their caretakers for many centuries.

Despite awareness-raising about the importance of the World Heritage Convention, many countries have not yet had the opportunity to inscribe a site on the UNESCO World Heritage List, and professionals and decision-makers still need to be capacitated on the importance of safeguarding heritage and the benefits that can come from it for development. Undoubtedly these benefits have a positive impact at the local and national levels and especially for local communities, as we have been observing in other parts of the world.

- **AFRICA 2009 program is still cited today as a reference for the advancement of African heritage. Can you tell us more about this project and the main results?**

Indeed AFRICA 2009 is a reference for two reasons. First, at the time it was innovative to bring together site managers from Africa and give them the opportunity to learn from others' experiences. The spirit of the World Heritage Convention is to work together through international cooperation, and the programme enhanced the idea of shared heritage in Africa.

Second, the programme built a foundation of expertise in Africa for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, which contributed to inscribing many African sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List. This programme gave African professionals the opportunity to discuss their common challenges of sustainable conservation and effective management, so it provided them the needed tools for applying good conservation practices for the benefit of local communities and economic development. Finally, with the help of this capacity-building programme, some of the trained African experts in World Heritage have today become leaders of many cultural and natural heritage institutions, which augmented Africa's capacity to prepare policies for heritage protection across the continent. Additionally, two training institutions (the School of African Heritage in Benin, and the Centre for Heritage Development in Kenya) were supported to host training activities. Let me take this opportunity to sincerely thank Sweden and Norway who have been the funders of the programme. Unfortunately, the programme was terminated before the whole capacity-building strategy was well established to ensure a continuous renewal of expertise. This is the reason why we at UNESCO plan to institutionalize World Heritage training process in universities and higher learning institutions for sustainability.

- The theme of this year's celebration of the 50th anniversary of the World Heritage Convention was "The next 50 years: World Heritage as a source of resilience, humanity and innovation". What is your vision for World Heritage in Africa for the next 50 years?

On 16 November 2022, we celebrated in Delphi (Greece) the 50th anniversary of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention. This anniversary celebration in 2022 was an opportunity to look back at the many advances we owe to this Convention but also to look to the future. Africa was at the forefront of the celebration with an international event organized in October 2022 in Yaoundé (Cameroon), where a Call to Action for World Heritage in Africa was made by Ministers in charge of cultural and natural heritage.

Concerning African heritage in particular, the celebration has enabled the development of a roadmap with three main priorities, which the UNESCO Director-General highlighted in her opening speech in Delphi: representativity, capacity-building and conservation. These are also priorities of UNESCO underlined in its Flagship programme for Priority Africa. For the next years to come, our objectives are to give a new impetus in order to improve the representation of the African continent on the UNESCO World Heritage List and to adapt the protection of African sites to the new challenges of our century: notably climate change, but also urban development and urban sprawl. For that, capacity-building is key. This new Strategy for World Heritage in Africa to address these heritage issues on the African continent with specific targets for lasting impact will soon be published.

- Your message for African youth?

In Africa, young people make up a large percentage of the continent's population. As the future custodians of our heritage and the largest demographic group in Africa, their role is crucial.

Young people are agents of change through their energy, inventiveness, and ability to mobilize their peers. Young people are the decision-makers of tomorrow and will be responsible for the future of our vast and diverse heritage. The youth in Africa are essential actors in the life of communities who are aware that cultural heritage is not only a thing of the past but also an essential part of their identity.

I would like to assure African youth that UNESCO considers them to be partners and stakeholders. They can be a bridge between cultures and serve as key agents in promoting peace and intercultural understanding. Their intellectual and human potential, their curiosity, creativity and natural ability to connect beyond themselves position them as powerful agents of social change for generations to come. UNESCO will continue to promote critical thinking and an identity open to understanding others to support the protection, preservation and conservation of World Heritage among young people.

UNESCO's actions enhance the educational potential of heritage by strengthening traditional knowledge and integrating heritage into formal and non-formal education. UNESCO has integrated young people into all its programmes and activities to raise awareness among the younger generations of the importance of heritage in all its forms, as a link to the past, but especially as a resource for the future.

African youth can look to Robben Island in South Africa, and Nelson Mandela, the most famous inmate there when it was a prison as an example of African heritage. The buildings there, particularly the former maximum-security prison for political prisoners, are considered to be a testimony to the triumph of democracy and freedom over oppression and racism. African youth, I am sure, will continue to carry forward this spirit of determination and equality.

Lastly, the future of UNESCO World Heritage includes African heritage - I believe that the future of our common heritage in Africa is in good hands. I encourage African youth to follow our programme and take the opportunity we are offering them to learn about their heritage and the role they can play in protecting it. They are essential to this.



OUR WISHES FOR HERITAGE IN 2023

collected by Affoh Guenneguez & Jean-Paul Lawson

As every year marks a year of hope, I also look forward to three wishes for the African heritage in 2023. I would like to see an improved recognition and valuing of the African heritage by us African people so that it can contribute to the generation of revenue within the emerging economic diversification of our continent. I believe this can provide a clear economic gain to our various communities from the rich and diverse cultures. It can subsequently place our cultural and natural heritage resources amongst priority sectors of the economy. This will also ensure influence to nomination of some of our heritage sites to the World Heritage List.

I also wish for African heritage in 2023 to further contribute to strengthening diplomacy through cultural relations between our African governments and the entire world. This will further foster a mutual understanding between Africa and other continents. I wish for our African governments to use our rich and diverse heritage as a tool to strengthen the continent's level of integration in the international platforms and to reinforce cooperation amongst governments.

In addition, I wish for the African heritage to continue enhancing our sense of identity and a feeling of connection as people of Africa. It is important to ensure that knowledge of our cultural and heritage resources are well understood and shared with the new generations and those to come. This can significantly enhance the level of understanding of our social, economic and political lifestyles as African communities and how it has developed over years by making connections between the past and the future.

Tscholofelo Kenathetswe (Botswana)

As the year 2023 begins, the UNESCO convention's next 50 on African heritage countdown also begins and my wish for this year is the more clear practical involvement/engagement of youth and related communities in active African Heritage management

Tatenda Tavingeyi (Zimbabwe)

For this year 2023 which is launched, I wish all heritage lovers an excellent year full of health. To us, the young people who have chosen this profession of passion that is the management of cultural heritage as a whole, may this year be fruitful in opportunities, in meetings, in exchanges, in collaborations, and especially that we can develop ideas and innovative projects, make our voice heard and make a place for ourselves. To African heritage, I wish that it continues to make known its existence, its place and its capital importance in the construction of our contemporary societies. May 2023 be a year in which heritage becomes a pillar of development, especially "sustainable" development.

Maeva D. Pimo (Cameroon)

I wish to all my colleagues working on African heritage a happy and successful year ahead. Africa is a real treasure filled with examples of cultural and natural heritage, each one being a testament to the rich heritage and culture of the continent. May African heritage find the support it needs to keep on blooming in the world and may African inhabitants be proud and enjoy their extraordinary legacy to humankind. Happy New year!

Sofia Fonseca (Portugal)

DID YOU KNOW? CONGOLESE RUMBA

Florentine Okoni



It was an important event of the year 2021 that you have surely followed closely. During its 16th session, the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, inscribed Congolese rumba on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This emblematic inscription has been celebrated all over the world because it is the first inscription for the Democratic Republic of the Congo as well as for the Republic of the Congo on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, but also because the Congolese rumba is a world famous and appreciated musical style that has influenced many artists and musical styles around the world.

The origins of the Congolese rumba can be traced back to the nkumba dance practiced by many populations within the Kingdom of the Kongo which then covered the current Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo and Angola.

The Congolese rumba is above all a realm in which fits the musical style of the rumba, its popular dance, its dresscode, its charisma or its religious importance. It plays a very important role in the history of the two Congos, particularly in political fight such as the fight for independence, but it has also been able to export itself internationally thanks to singers such as Franco Luambo, Grand Kallé, Papa Wemba, Mbilia Bel, Tabu Ley Rochereau and many others. One of the particularities of Congolese rumba is that it is appreciated by both the elder and the youngest generations who revisit it by mixing it with other musical styles such as hip hop or electro music for example. The economy that surrounds the Congolese rumba helps to encourage the creativity and innovation of its artists. Beyond the duty of memory and perpetuity implied by the inscription of the rumba on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, this also encourages the authorities to support entrepreneurship as well as training in cultural professions that surround Congolese rumba. One of the most recent initiatives undertaken to safeguard the history of rumba is the creation of its museum in the former home of the artist Papa Wemba in Kinshasa in April 2022.

The inscription of the Congolese rumba on the List of Intangible Heritage as well as the projects surrounding this inscription should be followed closely since they represent an admirable cooperation between two Central African countries around the common heritage of their populations. The Congolese rumba reminds us that intangible heritage does not follow political borders. Especially on the African continent where cultural practices and communities span national borders. This type of multinational inscription is therefore to be encouraged both for its link with the cultural and creative industries, the safeguarding of the history of an intangible heritage or its link with historic cultural sites.



HIGHLIGHTS ON THE YOUTH MUSEUM FORUM "TRAVELLING EXHIBITIONS"

Alyssa K. Barry

WEBINAIRE

EXPOSITIONS ITINÉRANTES

TRAVELING EXHIBITIONS

16 Décembre 2022 / 16th December 2022
16.00 – 18.00 GMT+1

SCAN QR CODE
ID de réunion : 893 0133 6508
Code secret : 29387659

SPEAKERS / PANÉLISTES

FAJR BETTANI
Entrepreneur culturel, Président Fondateur de "Studio des Arts Visuels"
Cultural Entrepreneur, Founding President of the "Studio des Arts Visuels"

EILEEN MUSUNDI
Responsable des expositions au Musée National de Nairobi, au Kenya
Exhibitions lead at National Museum in Nairobi, Kenya

NICOLAS-ETIENNE SOHOO NGANI
Ingénieur culturel, Président de l'Association ACCI - BUI
Cultural engineer, President of the ACCI - BUI association

YOUTH MUSEUM FORUM

Travelling exhibitions can be an alternative way to reconnect the African public with its cultural heritage (tangible and intangible). They would allow the implementation of the new definition of the museum as an open space connected to the public. The African public is not used to visiting museums, so it is necessary to raise awareness by bringing museums to societies through travelling exhibitions that would place the public at the heart of the scenography. In this way, the public could interact with the collections to exhibit elements of intangible heritage (song, dance, initiation, storytelling, divination, etc.).



Mouhamadou Dieye



Mtenguzi Zuhura

I think taking museums to the public will help a lot build a strong bond between communities and museum staffs and the level of engagement in museums will also be improved. For example, in Botswana and Rwanda the national museum has started to learn more from local communities and encourage the participation of the communities in their activities through a mobile exhibition. Mobile museum will also help to know the need of the communities in the museum because through this, communities will also be in a good position in challenging the museums on what they have been doing and the museums will also be in position of collecting their mistakes.

Travelling exhibitions are an excellent way of promoting the collections within the museum walls, particularly through exchanges of exhibitions between museums and those outside the museum walls, and through the use of educational suitcases or kits to reach schools. However, this form of exhibition is hardly used because the actors in the field do not master its realization. I think that African museums should go in this direction.



Brice k. Lankoande



Tscholofelo Kenathetswe

I think the travelling exhibitions have the potential to build long lasting relationships between communities, they can pave way to creating new and potential networking opportunities through heritage. They will provide numerous opportunities for growth in terms of donor engagement.

Travelling exhibitions will also help our African museums to engage more with the public. I believe the exhibitions will give our museums an opportunity to challenge their creative approach and how they communicate our historical/heritage knowledge and information to the diverse audience.

The travelling exhibition is one of the main forms of heritage promotion. The travelling exhibition, which is one of the three types of exhibitions that exist, allows the museum to diversify its offer, to make the heritage of one country known in another, to bring the locals to know their heritage better. It also allows the museum to establish partnerships with other museum institutions and to increase its reputation.

Furthermore, the production of a travelling exhibition requires certain arrangements to be made. This means insuring the objects against any damage that may occur, preserving the objects by providing them with an adequate environment from transport to the dismantling of the exhibition, etc. All of this requires material and financial resources, but our African countries have a major financial problem that hinders many activities.



Brunelle Dossouhui



INITIATIVE OF THE MONTH: ARCHEO-GROUP

Ladji Dianifaba



Archeo-Group's Logo © M. Thioub. 2020

The ARCHEO-GROUP platform was born during the first confinement (2020). Indeed, France, like many countries throughout the world, decreed a total confinement of its population following the explosion of the cases of contamination of COVID-19. This was a necessary evil, as we were on the last line of our PhD archaeology thesis. After several days spent locked up with this thesis, the urge to chat and catch up with friends and colleagues crossed our minds. A meeting was organised on "jitsi meet". After the success of this one, in consultation with friends such as Maguèye Thioub (doctoral student at the University of Paris 1), Moussa Wélé (doctoral student at the University Cheikh Anta Diop of Dakar) and Aicha Touré (teacher at the University Félix Houphouët Boigny), we decided to set up ARCHEO-GROUPE to better structure and organise the meetings. The Zoom link was created and we now have to meet twice a month, then once each time as the internet connection could be too expensive for some. Since 2022, a Whatsapp group has been created to facilitate communication.

1- Objectives

- To create a space for discussion between African and international students
- To discuss research topics for theses and dissertations
- To share field experiences.

2- Activities (past and future)

Thirty-four (34) presentations (22 students/doctoral students, 08 teachers/researchers, and 04 heritage professionals) took place on Zoom between 22 April 2020 and November 2022.

3- Some perspectives

- Continue the Zoom presentations by inviting more and more students to participate;
- After two years of existence, we think that it is perhaps time to structure the platform well by setting up an executive committee to better organise and improve it;
- Organise a colloquium on youth engagement in research in Africa.

To contact us: dianifaba36@yahoo.fr

DIARY OF THE MONTH

World Heritage Futures Lab: Southern and Eastern Africa Edition

The "World Heritage Futures Lab: Southern and Eastern Africa Edition" was conceived in the framework of "The Next 50", a year-long interdisciplinary reflection on the future of World Heritage organized in the context of the 50th anniversary celebrations of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention.

To find out more about this event, <https://bit.ly/3GEZmU7>.



Monthly meeting of the ICOMOS working group of the "Our Common Dignity" Initiative - Rights-based approaches within ICOMOS

It will take place on 30 January 2023 starting at 3pm GMT+1. To join, <https://tinyurl.com/4sebnew7>.

LATEST OPPORTUNITIES

- Jean Walter-Zellidja Fellowships 2023

Each year, the Académie Française awards Jean Walter-Zellidja grants for doctoral mobility which can reach several thousand euros. For more information on the conditions of application and to submit your application, contact antoine.scotto@univ-paris1.fr . Deadline: 31th January 2023.

- MIDAS - Call for thematic issues

The journal MIDAS - Museum Interdisciplinary Studies invites proposals for thematic issues on original and innovative topics in museum theory and practice, to be published in 2024. To submit an article proposal, please write to revistamidas@gmail.com. Deadline: 15th January 2023.

MASTHEAD

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