

The Architectural Heritage of Timbuktu and Local Community Participation to its Reconstruction



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ABSTRACT

“For some people, when you say Timbuktu it is like the end of the world, but that is not true. I am from Timbuktu, and I can tell you that we are right at the heart of the World”, Ali Farka Toure, musician, Mali.Africa, the cradle of humanity, holds secrets amongst its uncountable cultural treasures. Timbuktu, a city of scholarship in Mali and inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1988, remains one of those treasures. Timbuktu is a city of earthen architecture, with three main mosques and sixteen saint mausoleums. The Timbuktu WH site is known for its participatory management approach, initiated by the Timbuktu Cultural Mission. To achieve expanded involvement of local communities and improved management tools are some of the challenges for this outstanding World Heritage Site. In order to manage and monitor the World Heritage site the Malian Ministry of Culture established the Cultural Mission of Timbuktu (Decree 93-203 / PR.M. dated 11 June 1993). The institution is mainly in charge of heritage management of the WH property, and to ensure continuous dialogue and collaboration with community organizations such as the religious leaders and the master craftsmen. One of our goals is to strengthen local community capacity by providing training in heritage management, the Word Heritage Convention, management systems and guidelines. Indeed, the Timbuktu Cultural Mission is responsible for the monitoring and implementation of the World Heritage Convention in Timbuktu. Despite solid traditions, know-how and awareness the participatory management process needs to be improved, and special attention needs to be given to local community participation. Since January 2012 the northern part of Mali is occupied by fundamentalist armed groups who had destroyed eleven mausoleums and have damaged deux mosqs of the three recognized as world heritage property. That brings international community to put the property on both WH site in danger and monitoring reinforcement system. Our concerns are mainly, in one hand to share the conservation experience we had in with the Timbuktu local community, and on the other hand to facing the new situation of Timbuktu heritage reconstruction destroyed by fundamentalist and djihadist since April 2012.

Keywords: Heritage, local, community, reconstruction.