

LEARNING WITH TIZNIT | Designing a Landscape of Care

Project report | African Crossroads 2018 (Marrakech, Morocco, 11 t/m 13 Dec 2018)



This report details the participation of Slow Research Lab at the African Crossroads 2018 conference, which took place in Marrakech, Morocco in December 2018. At the invitation of the Stimuleringsfonds, we developed new ways to present our project-in-progress 'Learning With Tiznit,' which has been awarded two rounds of financing as part of the fund's first Open Call Morocco program (2018-19).

Our contribution to African Crossroads 2018 was threefold:

- 1- **INSTALLATION:** A temporary pavilion comprised of wooden frames and 30sqm hand-dyed textile was installed in the garden of Villa Janna (the location of the conference);
- 2- **GRAPHIC MATERIAL:** A poster introducing our project in Morocco (in four languages) and QR codes linking to photographs and maps relating to our physical focus areas in the city of Tiznit.
- 3- **PUBLIC PRESENTATION:** Participation in a conference session called 'The Future of African Cities,' during which architect and urbanist Nika Jazaei presented our project in Tiznit next to other, similar urban projects from around the African continent.

THE INSTALLATION



The decision to design and create a temporary pavilion with textile resulted in a combined work of art and place-making gesture capturing the multidisciplinary nature of our core project team.

The making of the installation was an opportunity for us to re-read and re-create memories of the urban fabric, as well as for members of our team to develop new skills of textile making that may be applied later in the project.

The colors of the textile were chosen from both photographs and our visual memories of the Tiznit urban fabric, with a focus on the road connecting the city's ancient medina and its green oasis. We sought to express the sensations and textures of a stroll along this road through a long span of hand-dyed, cotton textile – with the long ribbon of fabric symbolically representing the length of the road.

The installation as a whole was conceived by Slow Research Lab director Carolyn F. Strauss together with Nika Jazaei, who was the leader of this project. The textile and color palette were selected by Jazaei in collaboration with designer Marijke Annema, with input from landscape architect Jana Crepon. Once those decisions were finalized, Jazaei and Annema conducted the arduous process of hand-dyeing the vast length of textile. The design and drawings for the wooden support structure of the pavilion were made by Rotterdam-based designer Jonas Lutz. The structure itself was built by Marrakech-based artisan Jamal Ait Hssain, who delivered it to Villa Janna on the day of the installation.



GRAPHIC COMMUNICATION

Apprendre avec Tiznit

Créer un paysage d'affection

Ce programme de recherche urbain multidisciplinaire se concentre sur l'intersection de questions environnementales et sociales dans la ville de Tiznit. Son objectif est de sensibiliser et de stimuler des solutions créatives qui contribuent à associer un mode plus résilient à une ville en pleine urbanisation et à ses habitants.

L'objectif du programme est de révéler l'eau, les plantes indigènes et le patrimoine matériel négligés dans la conscience des citoyens et leur faire vivre une expérience urbaine - rurale, au sein urbain tout en soulignant les problèmes de gestion de l'eau et des déchets qui restent une importante croissante face au changement climatique.

Dans la culture Amazighe, l'eau est synonyme de fertilité, de vie et de renouvellement. A Tiznit, l'étymologie du nom est articulée autour de la racine «achech» qui signifie «eau» en berbère. La ville émergea au 12ème siècle quand une source d'eau fut découverte, donnant naissance au premier noyau du village à une oasis de verdure florissante.

L'eau qui coulait de cette source (Ain Agloul) vers l'oasis (Targu) fut de la ville un paysage dynamique et productif jusqu'au début du XXe siècle. Mais pendant les périodes coloniale et post coloniale, le canal d'eau principal fut systématiquement exploité et détourné, ce qui réduisit l'accès des citoyens aux ressources vitales de l'eau.

Un matériau de textile coloré attire l'attention sur l'ancienne route de l'eau (Ouh Targu), reliant le cœur de la ville à son «poumon vert» original, l'oasis.



تعلم مع تزنيت

تصميم منظر رعاية

يركز هذا البرنامج الحضري، البيئي، متعدد التخصصات، على التقاطع بين القضايا البيئية والاجتماعية في مدينة تزنيت، حيث يهدف إلى رفع الوعي و تطوير حلول إبداعية تساعد على ضمان مستقبل أكثر مرونة خاضعة لمرونة الصحراء ومكثتها. هذا البرنامج مصمم لإثارة تفاعل المواطنين الأحيائية والبيئة مع تسييل المياه على قضايا المياه وإدارة النفايات التي اكتسبت الأهمية بآلية في ظل تغير المناخ.

بالنسبة للثقافة الأمازيغية، المياه تعني الخصوبة والحياة والتجديد. في تزنيت، يتم التعبير عن أصل الاسم حول الجذر «آشعش» الذي يشير إلى جسم من الماء بدأت المدن في القرن الثاني عشر عندما تم اكتشاف منبع ماء حيث بدأت مواد التربة الأولى وامتد شعورهم بمرور الوقت مع تغير المناخ من هذا المصدر القديم (عين الجبل) إلى الواحة (تارغا) إلى جبل للمدينة الحديثة ديناميكية ومنتجة في أوائل القرن العشرين.

إلا أن خلال فترات الاستعمار، تم استغلال قناة المياه الرئيسية بشكل منهجي و تم تحويل مسارها بعيداً مما قلل من حصول المواطنين على هذا الحياة من مياه.

امتداد نسيج منسوج ملون يجذب الانتباه إلى الطريق للماضي القديم (باب تارغا) الذي يربط بين قلب المدينة و «رئيتها الخضراء» الأصلية.



Learning With Tiznit

Designing a landscape of care

This multidisciplinary urban research program focuses on the intersection of environmental and social issues in the city of Tiznit. It aims to raise awareness and stimulate creative solutions that help create a more resilient future for a rapidly urbanizing city and its inhabitants.

The program is designed to reveal water, indigenous plants, and neglected material heritage into citizens' consciousness and urban experience - enhancing the city fabric, while highlighting issues of water and waste management that have gained urgency in the face of climate change. For Amazigh culture, water signifies fertility, life and renewal. In Tiznit, the etymology of the name is articulated around the root «achech» (water) referring to a body of water.

The city began in the 12th century when a spring was discovered, giving birth to the first village nuclei and a thriving green oasis. Water flowing from this ancient source (Ain Agloul) to the oasis (Targu) rendered the city a dynamic, productive landscape well into the early 20th century. However, during colonial and post colonial periods, the main water channel was systematically tapped and diverted away, reducing citizens' access to water & life bearing gifts.

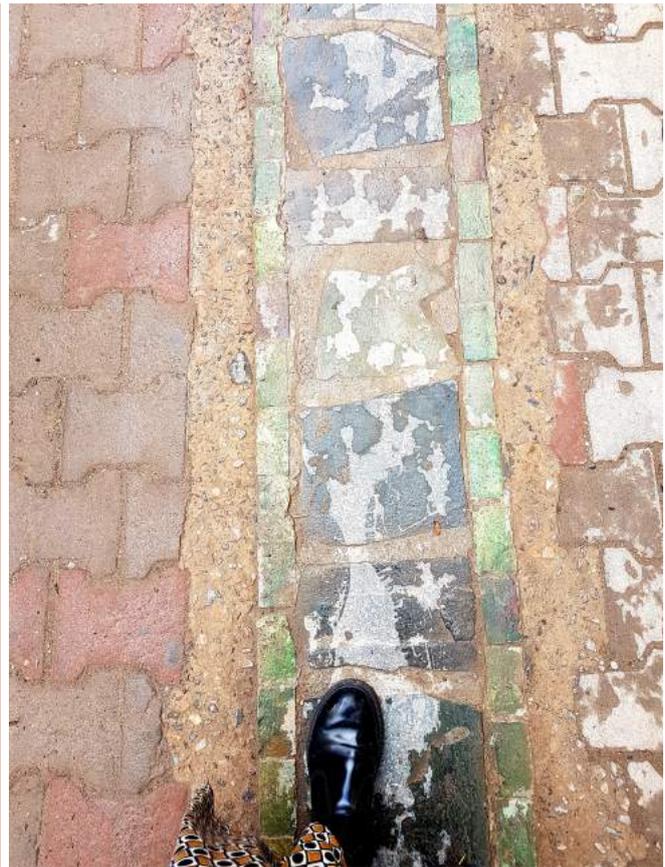
A vibrant span of colored textile brings attention to the ancient water road (Ouh Targu) connecting the heart of the city with its original 'green lung', the oasis.

Core team: Nils Izazi, Marija Anonina, Carolyn Strass, Jani Crepon, Salma Naji, David Gouary

SLOW RESEARCH LAB

Association Almaz

creative industries fund NL



Adjacent to the pavilion installation was a poster with a text introducing our project in four languages (French, Arabic, Amazigh, and English), and also naming our team members and project partners.

Meanwhile, attached to the wooden frames of the installation were QR-code stickers pointing to web pages with images and maps relating to the project's focus locations in the city of Tiznit. Conference attendees remarked to us about the value of this additional information, which in turn led to new and insightful conversations about similar initiatives relating to water and landscape in the MENA region and beyond.



SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCES

Our participation at African Crossroads was designed to share our experiences-to-date in Tiznit on matters of 'Slow' urbanism, including landscape and water management, the preservation of tangible and intangible heritage, questions of social equity, and issues of climate resilience.

During the conference session focused on 'The Future of African Cities,' architect and urbanist Nika Jazaei (who represented our team at African Crossroads 2018) was given time to elaborate about the key elements and challenges of our project. Sharing this with other teams from different countries and disciplines created new awareness and a deepening of understanding for all who participated.

On December 13th, our pavilion installation spontaneously hosted a session on 'Women in Technology,' where young African women working in technology around the world shared their experiences. The choice of our pavilion for this session was especially synchronistic, since the project in Tiznit has a strong focus on women's roles in knowledge exchange within and across generations.



OVERALL IMPRESSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

African Crossroads was a unique opportunity to share our project in Tiznit with a diverse audience from all over the African continent. It allowed us to learn firsthand about a range of exciting initiatives, and enabled exposure to a broader network and set of possibilities for expanding the kind of work we are doing, both in Southern Morocco and elsewhere.

In addition to the many stimulating individuals and organizations we encountered, it was great to make meaningful contact with projects supported by Hivos and Stimuleringsfonds that have a similar focus to ours, including: Omar Nagati's informality project in Cairo and his collaboration with Rene Boer, based in Amsterdam; and Zahira Asmal the founder of 'The City Agency,' a research, publishing and place-making agency that celebrates diversity and debate on a cross-continental scale.

Following the conference, a chain of emails between conference participants ensued, as well as the formation of social media groups. There, new ideas have been discussed and new networks formed, which hopefully can lead to a deepening of relationships and the possibility of future collaborations.

Last but not least...

THE FUTURE OF THE INSTALLATION



After the 3-days of the conference, the installation was taken to our Moroccan partner's base in Tiznit, where a workshop in the Targua oasis was scheduled to begin a few days later. For that purpose, two pieces of the textile were cut and mounted on wooden T-frames to serve as flags/markers of our project's presence in the city. This has now been the case for two successful workshops conducted in the oasis of Tiznit.

The remaining span of textile and the main wooden structure currently are safely stored with our partner in Tiznit. The installation will be re-activated in the city during a large-scale public celebration in April 2019 and again for an exhibition scheduled to open in June 2019.