

International Conference jointly organised by the ICOFOM (International Committee for Museology, part of the International Council of Museums), the AMEPNC (Association of Museums and Heritage Institutions in New Caledonia), and the University of New Caledonia.

New Caledonia, 16-21 October 2023

Increase visibility and attractiveness of islands' heritage: a 21st-century issue for museology

Call for Papers

Island heritages are inherently more mobile than those of continental spaces. Of course, islands can be stopovers from which things are brought back. Still, island societies, because of their relative isolation and the unavailability of certain resources, have always needed to exchange goods, foodstuffs, materials, and objects made with other populations located beyond the sea. From the time of the Lapita cultural ensemble to the trade routes of the Aegean Sea, via pre-Columbian relations between the islands of the West Indies, the kula of the Trobrianders popularised by Bronislaw Malinowski, or even the maritime traffic of the contemporary era, the ocean space has been a route for the exchange and circulation of both material and immaterial elements. Thus, since ancient times, heritage objects and knowledge have moved, dispersed and left the islands, a phenomenon that has been accentuated since the multiplication of contacts, particularly with the Western world.

The importance of island heritages is therefore based - at least partially - on this scattering. Their rarity should also be taken into account since the populations that created them were often few in number. In the Pacific, in particular, the archipelagos have suffered the full force of epidemic shocks linked to Western contact, and later evangelisation and colonial policies, which are both responsible for the minimisation/negation of island culture and the capture of its most precious, sacred and recognisable artefacts. With the displacement of tangible heritages, intangible knowledge and heritages may have also disappeared. The colonial and missionary periods also contributed to the division into distinct territories of what was once a continent of water, or rather a Sea of islands, as the Tongan-born Fijian writer and anthropologist 'Epeli Hau'ofa put it. This fragmentation has contributed to the image of a division and isolation of island heritages.

The establishment of colonial societies in these "confetti of empire" has also favoured the emergence of new "heritage objects": curios, trade goods, Western-inspired artistic or decorative art productions, graphic arts, military or religious heritage, or shipwrecks. The heritage - or status - of these objects, which are cultural and historical witnesses, still raises questions among island populations today. These examples illustrate the plurality

of island heritage, the complexity of their history and the challenges that their contemporary enhancement may entail.

In addition to these difficulties, there are new threats, starting with climate change, which is taking the form of rising sea levels and the risk of certain islands disappearing in the near future, particularly in the Pacific Ocean. Intangible heritage (languages, know-how, knowledge, etc.), which is currently maintained by an oral tradition that is in danger, is also affected by issues of conservation and transmission. As the decade of indigenous languages has just been proclaimed by UNESCO (2022-2032), how can we deal with these issues?

These issues have an impact on museology, considered here both in terms of museum practices and theories relating to the museum as an institution. How can we promote the attractiveness and visibility of island heritage? How can museums contribute to the conservation, transmission and, above all, the enhancement of these heritages on both local and global scales? Indeed, the geographical scattering is not to be understood here exclusively between "countries"/islands, as it constitutes a local issue within the same archipelago or island. For example, the problems of networks and connections (roads, accessibility, internet, media, etc.) also reflect a form of endangerment of island heritages, in the face of resources often concentrated in capital cities or urban areas.

Proposed lines of focus

The question - in a museological context - of island heritages, which extend well beyond the Pacific Ocean, allows for the exploration of several axes that may be addressed in the proposals for communication:

- **That of transmission:** how, why, and through whom to transmit knowledge, material and immaterial knowledge? How can we facilitate the involvement of young people and their formal or informal education, whatever community they belong to? What forms can intergenerational transmission take within the museum institution? What can be the involvement of heritage actors and the public?
- **Digital and tourist promotion:** How can digital tools be used to create attractive and inclusive mediation? In a global post-pandemic context, which has highlighted both the digital fractures experienced by certain populations or communities and the facilitation of remote exchanges for the rest of the world, is increasing the visibility of island heritage only synonymous with digitisation? Can other forms of visibility be favoured? Furthermore, is the visibility of island heritage dependent on the proper functioning of the tourism sector? What are the economic issues behind the visibility exercise?
- **How can Oceanian specificities be better used, in a perspective of decolonisation of museology?** How can these specificities contribute to rethinking the exhibition, or even conservation, through an Oceanian/insular/indigenous vision of the link to the object? Can insularity itself - since the islands and archipelagos functioned as living networks of exchange and relationship - provide food for thought? Can Oceanian perspectives be echoed in the practices and knowledge of other island or indigenous populations?
- **How does climate change - and natural hazards - influence heritage decisions, whether it be site preservation, emergency conservation operations, or the safeguarding of intangible heritage, while some islands are experiencing uprooting and exodus?** In what ways can raising the visibility and attractiveness of

island heritage contribute to the valorization of natural and cultural heritage assets, increase a 'sense of place' for all generations, and embed local wisdom in decision-making practices for sustainable futures?

This list is non-exhaustive and the proposals for communication could open up to other themes (networks, labelling, publications, merchandising...). Moreover, these reflections are not specific to Oceania; we invite students, researchers and professionals from other regions of the world, whether islands or not, to share their thoughts and experiences. Proposals may be multidisciplinary, theoretical or present practical case studies based on professional experiences. At the end of the discussions, a list of recommendations will be drawn up so that the symposium's summaries can be used by the scientific and museum community of New Caledonia and the Pacific.

Terms of submission

Proposals for papers should be sent before 30 April 2023 to the following address: icofom.pacifique.2023@gmail.com.

Proposals should include a title, an abstract of 250-300 words maximum and a list of authors. They may be written in French or English, which will be the two working languages of the conference, to be held in New Caledonia.

Two formats of communication can be proposed

- Specialists' presentations of 20 minutes maximum;
- Discussions in the form of workshops.

Please specify in the document you send which format is envisaged for your paper proposal.

The proposals will be evaluated by a scientific committee composed of members of AMEPNC, ICOFOM and UNC. Acceptance decisions will be sent by 15 June 2023 at the latest. For accepted papers, the texts, or at least the visual aids, will have to be sent before the conference to help with their simultaneous translation.

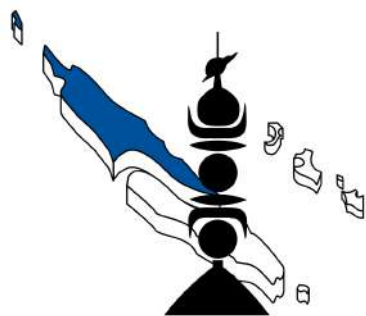
Registration for participation in the conference will be open until 1 September 2023. The registration fee schedule will be announced later. The conference will be held over three days, which will be devoted to keynote presentations and discussion workshops, at the University of New Caledonia in Noumea. The conference will then continue with visits and workshops in the South Province, the North Province and the Islands Province.

More information and partners

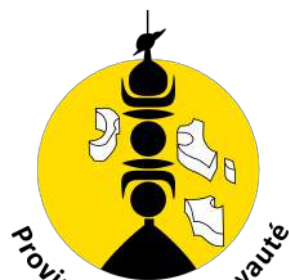
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AMEPNC: <https://museenouvellecaledonie.gouv.nc/le-musee/lassociation-des-musees-et-etablissements-patrimoniaux-amep>

UNC, Laboratoire TROCA : <https://troca.unc.nc/>



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