

Interviewing Tayyibi Abdelghani¹

1. **Prof. Dr Tayyibi Abdelghani, as Director of the National School of Architecture of Marrakech and Representative of the UNESCO ATCCDD Chair, could you explain the important event that is Al Mi'Mâr?**

Al Mi'mâr is a programme of meetings and educational, scientific, artistic and cultural events, organised to promote and share best practices around built heritage and architectural and construction cultures, but also reflections on the themes of the city and rural space. This programme, aimed at the consolidation of pedagogical partnerships and training in eco-responsible architecture in Morocco, is organised annually by the National School of Architecture of Marrakech in partnership with the Marrakech-Safi Region, between February and October.

Strengthened by its position within Marrakech, a city known worldwide for the richness and diversity of its tangible and intangible heritage, Al Mi'Mâr wishes to raise awareness of the architectural and landscape heritage in its local, regional and national components, of its primordial role in the economic and social development of the country and of the interest in preserving and rehabilitating it for the benefit of humanity.

The initiative taken by the Ecole Marrakechi stems from its concern to accompany the implementation of some strategic axes of its supervisory *Ministère de tutelle en charge de l'Aménagement du Territoire National, de l'Urbanisme, de l'Habitat et de la Politique de la Ville*. This strategy includes the enhancement of the architectural and landscape heritage, the encouragement of ecological building cultures and eco-responsible practices as well as the promotion of the teaching of ecological transition in architecture, urban planning and landscape projects.

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This meeting is held in partnership with the Marrakech-Safi region and benefits from the support of local, national and international institutional partners, the Association of Student Architects of Marrakech and the UNESCO Chair «*Architectures de Terre, Cultures Constructives et Développement Durable*» (ATCCDD), with which other players from the business community and civil society are associated.

In addition to raising awareness of heritage issues and the need to mitigate the physical and anthropic influences that affect it, other actions are taken into account. These include both knowledge and skills, works of art and architecture as well as natural and landscape sites.

This hugely important event is growing every year. It is sparking the enthusiasm of the scientific community, in Morocco and abroad, and attracting more and more partners, both public and private, as well as a growing number of citizens.

2. The main theme of this year's Al Mi'Mâr is that of frugality, in which the social, economic and ecological issues that affect the theme of building and city construction are of great importance. What are the first results that are emerging?

The 6th edition of Al Mi'Mâr celebrates frugal architecture and territorial planning through Morocco's rich heritage and the creative international contemporary variations that are emerging. These include international seminars associated with ENAM Architecture Workshops, international cycles of ongoing education, and a study tour of experts to the architectural hot spots of southern Morocco, which pay tribute to local knowledge and know-how.

Several advances have already been made in the first phase of this international forum:

- a) Scientific and popular debates in the cultured spheres, but above all in the citizen's sphere, have emerged on themes linked to training and practical spheres concerning built heritage, architecture, housing, construction and cities committed to an environmental and social approach.
- b) Forming of a constructive dialogue between the different players of spatial planning: engineers, architects,

university professors and national and international governmental and non-governmental organisations. The objective is to exchange successful experiences and share best practices in order to move forward more quickly together towards the necessary ecological and societal transition.

- c) Raising current issues concerning Morocco in general, and in particular the city of Marrakech and its region, considered a window on contemporary Africa. It is the diversity of its cultures and ancestral architectural styles, witnesses to the richness of its history, which earned Marrakech the title of Cultural Capital of Africa.
- d) Project presentations, in-depth seminars and expert conferences will offer multiple opportunities for exchange and debate, notably on heritage trades, traditional know-how and the social, welfare, ecological and economic challenges of frugal construction.
- e) Holding of consultation workshops, with various regional players, associations and cooperatives related to the building trade, traditional builders and student architects who were able to work jointly and collectively and thus cross sectorial expectations in common and frugal reflections. The aim of these workshops is to contribute not only to the formation of a collective and participative vision, but also to the qualification of the Maâllems. The valorisation of their skills, the reinforcement of their knowledge and their effective integration in training programmes will guarantee the preservation of built heritage and the dissemination of best practices to extend the use of bio-sourced and geo-sourced materials in contemporary architecture. This work is in line with several regional meetings, which have underlined the need to consider the rehabilitation of heritage as a lever for social and economic development, and to value the place of crafts in this cultural heritage.
- f) To confirm and consolidate the richness of Morocco's architectural heritage, and in particular that of the Marrakech-Safi region, which is internationally recognised in this field.
- g) Integration of the themes raised in the basic training curriculum of Moroccan and sub-Saharan student architects

registered in Morocco, by organising these meetings within the ENAM educational programme. The Al Mi'Mâr events in its sixth edition on Frugality has broadened their knowledge and made them aware of the societal and environmental issues related to architecture and land use planning.

3. Cities and buildings affect human well-being; sustainable development must be understood as environmentally friendly but also in harmony with people's lives, how important is the relationship between social well-being and good places to live and work?

The objectives in acts of spatial, architectural and building planning are to achieve individual and collective social welfare. These sectors organise social needs and interests in terms of fulfilment and quality of life, they prepare for the future and they are the privileged tool for it. In my opinion, there is also a strong correlation between democracy as a value and social well-being, and thus the capacity of the living environment to ensure this link and to make it possible, which is extremely difficult to achieve in our modern societies. Collective happiness and/or individual well-being, which are very much in vogue today in speeches and on advertising visuals and the like, is a matter for everyone, which challenges us in our actions, and does indeed require complementarity in what we do on a daily basis, which is supported by an approach of co-responsibility and more inclusive governance in a context of globalisation, which does not make it easy.

This is why our school project and its evolution, which we defend in our internal practices at the school, at our supervisory Ministry and with our partners, has been working since our appointment and on different scales of action to restore to architectural education and to the architecture of living and working places what they have been deprived of for decades, i.e. culture in a general way. The cultural dimension is often lacking in the practice of architecture and deprives it of its capacity to project itself into the future in a creative way by keeping the memory of places and people

alive. ENAM is working on this with a vision and various processes by revisiting teaching methods, educational content, networking, cooperation and openness to others, but also the sense of innovation and creativity. The Al Mi'Mâr forum that we set up in our first year of founding the School in 2016 is one concrete example.

It seems clear to us today that forming and building are essential contextual acts which, depending on how they accompany the evolution of society's way of life, will either facilitate vertical and horizontal integration or consecrate the divisions that will destroy it. Architecture is at the centre of the «existential» concerns of the majority of the population. It is a product of culture. It requires the integration of multiple fields of knowledge that are indispensable to the development of projects. Whether it is a question of public health or the safety of daily life, we can say that architecture is a national cause in the same way as medicine or education. Technological and economic changes are strong in Morocco and in the world, and tend to evolve towards globalisation and standardisation. These transformations are rarely accompanied by a reflection on the social role in the mitigation of spatial differentiations and the creation of a balanced living environment.

The preponderant role of the architect in the balance of territories, the cohesion of cities and the challenges of housing requires a national and higher education establishment, as a reference and guarantor of the value of a diploma, to constantly enhance it by offering solid teaching enriched by the integration of new knowledge, particularly in the area of well-being. This specificity in the case of a school of Architecture, requires permanent renewal, and confers to training in Architecture a wide opening on the trades of the building and the city, but also on art and creation.

The supervision of the *Ministère de tutelle en charge de l'Aménagement du Territoire National, de l'Urbanisme, de l'Habitat et de la Politique de la Ville* confers on the institution a civic vocation and commitment, in particular in urban culture, the urban and regional project and the city, which are in reality factors of social cohesion and collective happiness, so important for the future of Moroccan society in particular and societies in a more global way.

- 4. As the director of one of the most important schools of architecture in a continent that is constantly expanding and changing, how important is it for students to study and live in a school where they can achieve psychological and physical well-being? I know that the school has new spaces, with classrooms, gardens and meeting spaces.**

Taking the well-being and fulfilment of student architects to heart requires constant concern regarding the quality of teaching and extracurricular activities, but also regarding student life and the physical and organisational framework presented by the institution as designed and built architecture, as well as that regarding the ability to articulate them.

In the service of the new generations of Moroccan architects who are graduating in Marrakech, we take special care and effort to exceed existing standards. We have relied on a process of innovation and continuous improvement since the creation of the National School of Architecture of Marrakech (ENAM) and its autonomy in September 2012 and January 2016 respectively. Our objective is to prioritise the support, well-being and care that they are provided with and to make it an individual and collective responsibility.

More generally, ENAM wishes to position itself as a reference in terms of caring approaches and educational offers related to services and the built environment dedicated to students. To this end, we facilitate and encourage all new initiatives that lead to success and excellence. Our mission is to promote education as well as to support students in their journey towards professional life.

The success of ENAM students within the school, as well as in the various projects they are associated with or undertake, demonstrates the success of these participatory social and cultural approaches, and reassures us about the future of this new generation of Moroccan architects.