

Transnational Island Museologies



Materials for discussion

Edited by
Karen Brown, Jamie Allan Brown
and Ana S. González Rueda

ICOFOFOM ICOM
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ICOFOM Materials for Discussion

Transnational island museologies

ICOFOM MATERIALS FOR DISCUSSION

This publication brings together papers submitted for the 47th symposium organised by ICOFOM under the theme Transnational Island Museologies, to be held at the University of St Andrews, Scotland, 5-7 June, 2024.

The Materials for Discussion collection brings together, in an inclusive spirit, contributions selected for the symposium in the form of short articles, to prepare the ICOFOM Symposium. This publication has been made available before the symposium, in a very short time frame. In spite of the care given to the publication, some mistakes may remain.

ICOFOM Study Series and Materials for Discussion General Editor: M. Elizabeth Weiser (Ohio State University)

The Transnational Island Museologies International Conference has been funded by Shared Island Stories, a project selected by the European Research Council (ERC) and funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) with reference EP/X023036/1. It is coordinated by the School of Art History at the University of St Andrews.



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Guest Editors / Editoras / Rédacteurs

Karen Brown
University of St Andrews, Scotland

Jamie Allan Brown
University of St Andrews, Scotland

Ana S. González Rueda
University of St Andrews, Scotland

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ISBN: 978-2-491997-84-7

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Published by ICOFOM, Paris, in 2024

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Tides of transformation: How young changemakers are redefining the role of museums and heritage organisations to address the climate emergency

Jamie Allan Brown

University of St Andrews – Scotland

The time for action is now. As the climate emergency intensifies, young people around the world are rising up, demanding urgent change. This unprecedented mobilisation of youth-led movements has become a powerful tidal wave, pressuring governments and society to address the existential threat of climate change. Yet the young voices of those on the frontlines – such as Small Island Developing States (SIDS) like Barbados, the Cayman Islands and in the Pacific Island Region, as well as coastal and island communities such as the Outer Hebrides in Scotland – are disproportionately impacted by the effects of the planet’s ongoing climate crisis and all too often underrepresented (Cunningham, 2019; Kelman, 2014, 2018). Furthermore, museum and heritage policies that tend to emphasise youth engagement and outreach in cultural activity fail to encourage young people to participate, and, therefore, they often remain excluded (Madgin et al., 2016).

As custodians of our cultural heritage and catalysts for social change, museums occupy a critical juncture in this pivotal moment of global challenges. It is time for these revered institutions to heed the next generation’s clarion call, harness the energy and vision of young changemakers and position themselves as champions of sustainability and resilience. Hilda Flavia Nakabuye, a youth and environmental activist and founder of Fridays for Future (FFF) Uganda, made the call to action during her standing ovation keynote speech at the International Council of Museums (ICOM)’s 26th General Conference in Prague, Czechia, stating that museums have the power to take action to stop climate change and encourage people to take care of the environment and youth should be included in ICOM processes to shape the future. (IcomOfficiel, 2022)

Nakabuye stressed the need for youth to be more involved in museums to directly foster climate justice and to have a role in the governance of ICOM and museums in general to further sustainability and resilience (Hardaker, 2022).

We safeguard our shared future by forging deep connections between youth, museums and the climate emergency. The 47th International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM) Annual Assembly and *Transnational Island Museologies* International Conference, 5-7 June 2024, comes at a vital moment for youth movements such as Fridays for Future, as the realities of the shared global challenges get ever greater. It will provide a platform for youth voices to be heard. Presently, Fridays for Future has reported that the youth movement has involved more than 14 million people in its campaign, taking to streets across 7,500 cities in what is considered to be the single most significant youth-climate movement in history (FFF, 2024; Kowalkowska, 2022). The actual number of

participants is likely even higher. Nakabuye will present a keynote at the conference and co-facilitate a youth workshop in collaboration with museum experts, young people and knowledge holders. Her call to action for museum professionals has been heard by conference co-hosts the University of St Andrews and ICOFOM via collaborative research initiatives.

Shared Island Stories



Figure 1. Young people participating in the first transnational youth exchange visit to Barbados. Photo © University of St Andrews, 2023

The European Research Council (ERC)-selected/UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)-funded Shared Island Stories between Scotland and the Caribbean: Past, Present, Future research project has placed young people at the forefront of its research into the future relationship between Scotland and the Caribbean. Primarily through a transformative transnational youth exchange between Barbados and the island communities of the Outer Hebrides, the project seeks to answer what the intergenerational transmission of Indigenous and traditional knowledge brings to debates on climate justice, especially as they relate to the role of young people. How can this intergenerational transmission from the elderly to the young be best valued as a resource for preserving memories of environmental and cultural conditions?

The *Future* aspect of the project has facilitated youth-based workshops in collaboration with the Barbados Museum & Historical Society, Barbados Community College and the community-led West Harris Trust on the Isle of Harris, Scotland, featuring numerous invited speakers and knowledge holders. Young people explore the role of community heritage in sustainability, co-author a youth-focused cultural heritage resource toolkit and participate in two physical in-person exchanges reflecting on the shared stories between Barbados and Scotland while holding debates and discussions to seek solutions to the shared challenges of the present day and future.

Through a critical pedagogy approach, the anticipated outcomes include enhancing the participating young people's social, digital, and oral history skills. The project aims to empower these young changemakers to become active contributors to solutions and adaptations within their local communities. This approach aligns with respective national education strategies in Barbados and Scotland and builds on the evidence of the importance of these skills for youth empowerment

and community engagement (Shor, 2012). Crucially, the importance of engaging young people in critical analysis of social, political and environmental issues will foster them to become “youth ambassadors” for cultural heritage and climate change in their respective schools, community groups, countries and internationally through the conference (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2001). Bem Wallace, a young participant from Barbados, shares his experience:

We’ve investigated the shared problems of both nations that are of increasing concern to the youth today, such as coastal erosion through rising sea levels; storm intensification due to climate change; economic difficulties, depopulation and inappropriate tourism development. (Wallace, 2024, p. 1)

The outcomes of the youth in-person visits and participation within the transnational youth exchange program will inform the co-development of a youth-focused toolkit. This resource, created by young people for young people, aims to catalyse robust debate and discussions among coastal and island-based youth. The ultimate goal is to empower other young people to take tangible action within their respective communities, addressing shared climate-related challenges. The youth-focused toolkit aspires to inspire and mobilise other young people to become changemakers in addressing the pressing climate emergency challenges facing their locales.

Young people shaping the future of museology through the lens of the UN Sustainable Development Goals

The ICOFOM-led global youth workshop series, a special project funded by ICOM’s Strategic Allocation Review Committee (SAREC), has embraced Nakabuye’s call to action for museum professionals to seek positive collective climate action between young people and museum decision-makers (Kleres & Wettergren, 2017; Nairn, 2019). ICOFOM is facilitating a platform for young people and those working with them to debate the role that museums can play in addressing climate change and achieving the United Nations Agenda 2030, particularly in underrepresented countries and communities that are not on track to fulfil the promises that were agreed upon in the Paris Agreement (UNEP, 2024).

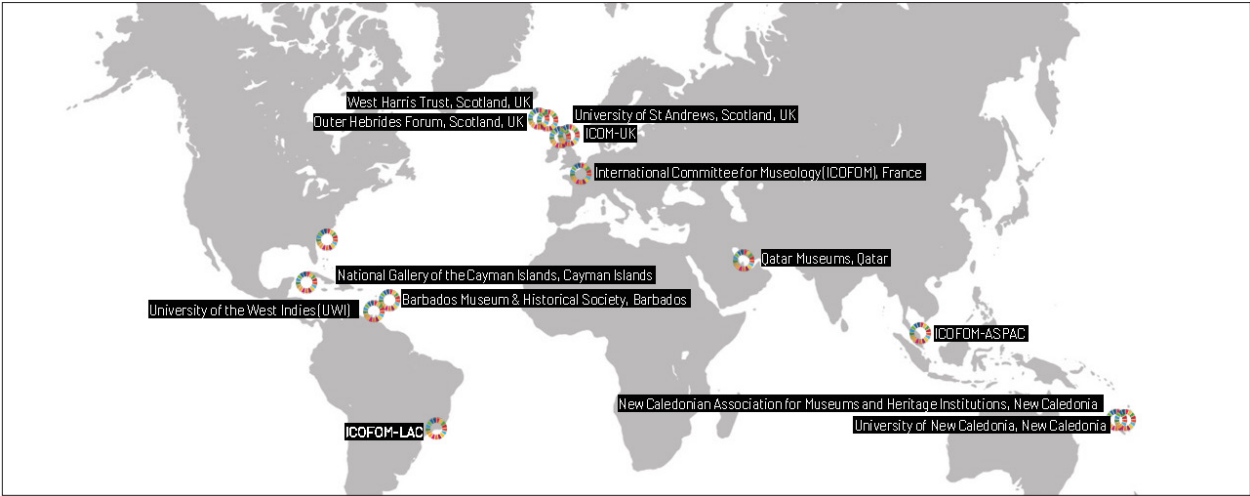


Figure 2. Map of ICOFOM-led youth workshops as of March 2024, © ICOFOM

The project applies the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) while acknowledging the presence of alternative contexts for sustainable development, conducting a series of co-facilitated workshops between ICOFOM and the local collaborative partners:

- Aotearoa New Zealand - *Te Herenga Waka* Victoria University of Wellington;
- Barbados – Barbados Museum & Historical Society;
- Brazil – ICOM-LAC;
- Cayman Islands – National Gallery of the Cayman Islands;
- Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad & Tobago (virtual) – University of the West Indies (UWI) and the University of St Andrews;
- Malaysia - ICOFOM-ASPAC, ICOM Malaysia and the Department of Museums Malaysia;
- New Caledonia - University of New Caledonia and the Association des Musées et Établissements Patrimoniaux de Nouvelle-Calédonie;
- Qatar – Qatar Museums; and
- Scotland, UK – University of St Andrews and ICOM-UK.

ICOFOM believes that the museum’s social impact can be more greatly achieved by positioning the museum as a place for the active participation of young people at the centre of climate action debates and discussions (ICOFOM, 2023). It empowers participants to examine, exhibit and promote the intergenerational transmission of traditional knowledge from community elders and knowledge holders across museum communities and climate action contexts. This approach is particularly important in decolonising euro-centric understandings of museums and promoting polyvocal perspectives that amplify the diverse narratives and experiences of underrepresented and marginalised communities (Onciul, 2015; Onciul et al., 2017).

The upcoming conference will host the Scottish workshop as part of its proceedings, and will welcome, in addition to Nakabuye, Peter Davis, author of *Ecomuseums: A Sense of Place*; Kaye Hall, education and outreach officer at the Barbados Museum & Historical Society; and Lucy Neville, climate officer at Museums Galleries Scotland. This diverse line-up of speakers and experts will explore the critical intersections between museums, island communities and the climate emergency, offering valuable insights and perspectives to youth participants.

The workshop series overall seeks to produce a youth-led climate-focused recommendation for the ICOM 27th General Conference in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in 2025.

Through initiatives like ICOFOM’s youth workshop series and the Shared Island Stories between Scotland and the Caribbean: Past, Present, Future project’s transnational youth exchange, young people are empowered to become active young changemakers inspired by Hilda Flavia Nakabuye to work for cultural heritage protection within the climate emergency.

As the tides of transformation rise, museums must rise to meet the challenges facing our young people. The *Transnational Island Museologies* International Conference and 47th ICOFOM Annual Assembly provide a vital platform for these critical dialogues and collaborative initiatives to unfold,

empowering young voices to shape the future of museology in the historical setting of Scotland's first university.

Acknowledgements

The youth workshop and associated research presented at the upcoming conference on *Transnational Island Museologies* would not have been possible without the knowledge, commitment and enthusiasm of all young people, communities, traditional knowledge holders, collaborators and partner organisations involved.

Shared Island Stories between Scotland and the Caribbean: Past, Present, Future is a five-year research project selected by the European Research Council (ERC) and funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) with reference EP/X023036/1. It is coordinated by the School of Art History at the University of St Andrews.

Young People Shaping the Future of Museology through the Lens of the SDGs is an International Council of Museums (ICOM) special project funded by its Strategic Allocation Review Committee (SAREC) and led by its International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM).

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