

Stuttgart, Achilles Ahimbisibwe, 2018

## **Interview with TSA Fellows:**

### **Going back one year or may be a bit longer:**

#### **How did you hear about Transsolar Academy and what convinced you to apply?**

I heard about Transsolar through an email from Jan Van Lint of BTC, we had collaborated on a student design competition for student housing in Uganda colleges. It was serendipitous that Jan then invited Transsolar for a project where Nadir and I went back to see these same Uganda colleges.

#### **What did you hope for when you started, what was your aim for the TSA Fellowship year?**

I sought to launch my career forward by improving my grasp of the science behind climate engineering. I now appreciate that this approach can enhance building performance and architecture in Uganda.

#### **Were your expectations met? If so, how? Was there anything surprising?**

Yes, my expectations were met. I learned the basics of the engineering and calculations involved, then applied the tools on actual projects. I was happy to learn about the database of past Transsolar projects as well as to visit existing buildings with these systems. I was astonished to find out that user behavior can interfere with the proper functioning of the systems.

#### **Please try to describe your TSA Fellowship experience in one sentence:**

The TSA experience makes me feel optimistic about the future.

#### **How would you describe the most important impact of the Transsolar Academy?**

The most important impact is expulsion of mystery, suspense and confusion surrounding various subjects. Living with a new family, working closely with dynamic personalities, and meeting new people in a new city has significantly reoriented various biases and assumptions I had before this Academy.

#### **What were some of the most useful experiences during your Fellowship?**

Living in the academy house and participating on project day each pushed me out of my comfort bubble, but also made me feel accepted as part of something special.

#### **What was your favorite project? Why?**

Tulum Mexico project was my favorite. It was a blank canvas and we had to do research, suggest approaches then use numeric projections to appraise each system. I liked the collaborative effort where we dealt with materials, waste management, water systems and other unexpected facets of the context responsive design.

#### **What did you like the most in the year?**

I liked the AKA /IUSD collaboration part of the academy. We were modest in our understanding of climate consultation but had to deal with complex projects coupled with

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divergent group dynamics. This challenge pushed the fellows closer together as we sought to motivate each other, compete against each other but also depend on each other to present the best information for our assigned teams.

**What did you find difficult?**

I was hit by a severe bout of loneliness, fortunately I talked to a few others; it helped.

**What will you take with you from the Transsolar Academy Fellowship?**

This academy helped me understand the need to be humble and more approachable. I was used to a top-down communication approach, but now understand that open dialogue motivates the learner to seek help, instead of struggling in silence and this gets work done more efficiently.

**What are your next steps? And in what way does the Academy experience support these steps?**

I have applied for Phd opportunities as well as positions in energy and environment related departments. I was also invited to present my rammed earth project in Egypt in April and look forward to network with Anna Heringer then participate on one of her earth construction projects in India or Bangladesh.

**How can Transsolar support you in future?**

I look forward to remaining in touch with Transsolar, so that I can easily approach the company when opportunities arise.

**What would you change for TSA Fellows in the future?**

I would suggest a Mid-term one-to-one recap session to reignite the flame, discuss aspirations or re-motivate the fellows individually to remember why they applied. It felt like somewhere along the way we got absorbed in too many things then got confused.

**Do you think the program is replicable as an educational program? What could be the format? Would it be worthwhile?**

Absolutely, the Aka/IUSD collaboration demonstrates the relevance of the TSA to both architecture and urban planning curriculum. Though a standalone program can be developed, I believe that interaction with architecture and urban planning courses shall initiate further opportunities because learners on both sides would recognize a need for these collaborations.