

Internships

Ethiopian cultural heritage project in Gondar

From July to September 2006, Neža Čebroň Lipovec participated as an intern in the Conservation and Site planning project in the [Royal Compound of Fasil Ghebbi in Gondar \(Ethiopia\)](#). Collaborating as a volunteer in the [Ethiopian Cultural Heritage Project \(ECHP\)](#), she worked with the team of experts of the Italian company Hydea s.r.l. The project mainly consisted in the designing of a master plan for site conservation for the royal compound “Fasil Ghebbi”.

Balderas Berr, Fasil Ghebbi, Gondar – © Denise Gallino



This World Heritage Site (1979) comprises eight still standing palaces, and additional structures, surrounded by three churches, all embraced by a wall with some surviving parts of former bridges (see photograph above). The different structures were built between 1632 and 1755 by the Abyssinian kings, then thoroughly restored during the Italian occupation (1935-1941) as well as during one of the first major UNESCO restoration campaigns between 1968-1973 under the leadership of the Italian architect Sandro Angelini.

Apart from the written document of the master plan, the project included pilot conservation activities and community involvement activities. The team in close collaboration consisted of two RLICC alumni, the team-leader architect Silvia Cravero (RLICC'97) and architect Andrea Baldioli (RLICC'97), an architecture student from Torino, Denise Gallino, as well as of three local surveyors Alemayehu Kidie, Andom Tsegay and Seid Gebiyaw, and a local facilitator Mengesha Zewdu.



Neža and Andom Tsegay in the ECHP office, Gondar –
© Denise Gallino

During the two-month stay Neža dealt with several issues, making good use of her art-historical background. As there are almost no comprehensive overviews of recent changes in the compound, her work consisted primarily in the preparation of the inventory and careful reading of the scanned drawings and photographs of the site, done by the architect Sandro Angelini and his team during the 1968-1973 UNESCO restoration campaign as well as of his complete written documents on the Gondar campaign (correspondence, work diaries, orders, etc.). This way a clearer understanding of the actual situation of the site could have been arrived at.



Seid Gebiyew, Neža, Andom Tsegay, Alemayehu Kide

Together with the Ethiopian historian, dr. Hailu Habtu she tried to update and correct the existing list of names (English, Italian, French) of the different buildings and remains, since a lot of confusion has been created through time. While preparing the “building identity cards” of each building, to be integrated in the masterplan, historical and Bauforschung analysis were prepared together with Denise Gallino and arch. Cravero. Finally, together with the arch. Andrea Baldioli, coordinator of local pilot activities, they drafted the proposal of an **exhibition on “Gondarine imperial architecture”**, foreseen to take place in the Fasil Castle with the aim to stimulate interest within the local community and raise awareness on heritage and history.

The internship provided a critical frame for testing the freshly acquired knowledge in conservation in non-European context and on World Heritage Sites. The resulting amount and depth of the work as well as the remaining strong link with all collaborators proved its basic meaning.



Dr. Hailu Habtu in the ECHP office, Gondar



Alumna Silvia Cravero, team leader, and Dr. Hailu Habtu

(Next page) Iyasu Castle, Fasil Ghebbi, Gondar –
© Denise Gallino

(Reported by Neža Čebtron Lipovec, Staff – all photographs author unless otherwise indicated)