

The study trip also included several excursions: 1930's Modern Architecture in Pärnu (an elegant late 19<sup>th</sup> sea resort on the white Baltic coast), historic Tallinn, Soviet architecture in and around Tallinn and Pärnu and finally a weekend in Riga (Latvia) with an intensive visit of the World Heritage listed art nouveau neighbourhoods, guided by prof. Janis Krastins, and a visit of the Andrejsala Riga port area redevelopment, a project by Rem Koolhaas.

(reported by Luc Verpoest, Staff – all photographs © Sara Van Rompaey)

## ... And Going South to Mali... Terra!



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In the first week of February Neža Čebtron Lipovec participated in the **International Conference on Earthen Architecture in Bamako, Mali**. The Malian capital Bamako hosted more than 400 experts, from more than 75 countries, working in the domain of earthen architecture and its preservation. Organized by Getty Conservation Institute and the Malian Ministry of Culture, the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the “Terra” conference for the first time took place in Africa, so to allow a larger focus on African issues in earthen architecture.

The seven sessions tried to enlighten the different aspects of the main topic, which spanned from regional specificities of earthen architecture, to its physical properties and seismic behaviour. Discussions were raised on topical managerial quests and on the expanding need for addressing the local communities and their know-how, so to preserve both the tangible and intangible values of this patrimony. Paper presentations, posters and workgroup sessions also provided insights on recent advances in research, the challenges and opportunities of conservation and development, training and formation. The conference attempted to encompass both stocks of earthen architecture, i.e. the historic and the new structures, so as to finally provide guidelines for each of them.

The ultimate overall conclusions of the conference actually questioned the topical problem of the conservation sector in general: the position of the earthen architecture as heritage in the modernizing, globalised society. In this regard, the hosting continent opened most of the questions, mainly

concerning the intangible components of earthen architecture: the religious ceremonies that take place in the buildings, the social events that they serve, the traditional maintenance techniques that are losing their role as social cohesive (see *photographs*). The traditional re-facing of the mosque of Djenné, the ancient mosques of Ndinghe in Ivory Coast or the Na-yiri of Kokologho in Burkina Faso are emblematic. Thus, the implementation of a participative management, the request for proactive attitudes in all fields and the enhancing of dissemination constituted the final guidelines of the five-day worldwide gathering.



We can state that the 10<sup>th</sup> Terra conference definitely raised a general awareness on the significance of the “historic treasure” of earth-constructed architecture that represents about 20 percent of architecture of the World Heritage List today, especially thanks to the presence of a great number of young African students. This fact gives great hope on larger scale. Considering that “nearly one half of the world’s population—about three billion people on six continents—lives or works in buildings constructed of earth”, the uplift in its appreciation by younger generations is of utmost importance: to preserve the historic structures and to allow new buildings to be built in traditional materials and techniques.

**Read the detailed report on <http://www.archiafrika.org/terra2008.asp>**



**(Reported by Neža Čebon Lipovec, Staff)**