

Dresden Elbe Valley (Germany)

No 1156

1. BASIC DATA

State Party: Federal Republic of Germany

Name of property: Dresden Elbe Valley

Location: Free State of Saxony, City of Dresden

Date received: 30 January 2003

Category of property:

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *site*. In terms of *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage List*, this is a *continuing cultural landscape*.

Brief description:

The cultural landscape of Dresden Elbe Valley results from the developments in the 18th and 19th century by the Electors of Saxony. The river valley has retained its characteristic low meadows, and is crowned by the monumental centre of Dresden and the Pillnitz Palace with its gardens, well illustrated in the panoramas of Canaletto. The landscape was integrated by suburban villas and gardens, built on terraced river sides by wealthy merchants of the 19th century.

2. THE PROPERTY

Description

The cultural landscape of Dresden Elbe Valley extends some 18 km along the river from the Übigau Palace and Ostragehege fields in the north-west to the Pillnitz Palace and the Elbe River Island in the south-east. The width of the area varies from ca 500 m to 3 km. The area is characterised by its cultural values, but it has also valuable natural features and protected biotopes. The river valley has low-land *meadows*, 50-100 m wide. These were the flooding area of the river and were never constructed, apart from the *Ostragehege* area in the north-west. The *Elbe Island* near Pillnitz is a nature protection area, and not open for visitors. On the sides of the river, land rises gradually in terraces to form the surrounding *Elbe hillsides*. In the past, these used to be cultivated as *vineyards*. Some of them still remain today, i.e. the *Schönfelder Hochland and Elbhänge Dresden-Pirna Protected landscape area*, *Pillnitz* and *Dinglinger vineyards*. There are *old villages*, which have retained their historic structure, e.g. in Laubegast and Loschwitz. Most of the vineyard areas were transformed into wealthy *bourgeois villas, gardens and parks* in the 19th century. On the north side of the river, there are the *Preussisches Viertel* and the *Loschwitz*, on the south side the *Blasewitz* area, which have well retained their integrity of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The most important buildings include three villas on the *Loschwitz Hill*. *Schloss Albrechtsburg* and *Villa Stockhausen* with their parks

(1850-1854) refer to English prototypes in the style of Late Berlin Classicism, adopting Italian Renaissance ideas. *Eckberg Palace* (1859-1861) represents late Romanticism. Later periods are represented by *Tolkewitz Crematorium* and urn grove, built in 1909-1911.

With the incoming industrial revolution, the navigability of the river was improved, and the landscape obtained its current appearance. This period has left various elements, including the *steel bridge* (the 'Blue Wonder', a span of 147 m, built in 1891-1893), the single-rail *suspension cable railway* (1898-1901), and the *funicular railway* (1894-1895) all in Loschwitz. The historic *steamships* (the oldest from 1879) and the *shipyard* (ca 1900), built for passenger traffic on the Elbe, are still in regular use.

The fairly large *Ostragehege* area at the west end of the landscape area is defined by the river bend on the north side and a flood canal in the south. A deer park in the 16th-17th centuries, it became a municipal stockyard and abattoir in 1902-1910, then the most advanced in Europe. The rest of the area was reserved for a city park. Today, the abattoir is being rehabilitated for international fairs.

The main focal point on the river is the *historic centre of Dresden*, the capital of the Electors of Saxony. This fortified city grew from the Middle Ages with its main part on the south side of the river. From the 16th century, it became the capital of the Saxon Electors. When Frederick Augustus I became the king of Poland, in 1697, the town was thoroughly renovated. The old fortifications were demolished apart from the Brühl Terrace that remained as a monumental balcony overlooking the river. The city obtained its characteristic landscape, illustrated by painters such as Canaletto in the 18th century,

The main monuments include the Royal Residence Palace (1548-1593), the Zwinger (1710-1732) created by M. D. Pöppelmann and the sculptor Balthasar Permoser. The principal Protestant church, *Frauenkirche* (1726-1738), was designed by G. Bähr with a dome in stone to underline its position vs St. Peter's in Rome, the Catholic Court Church, *Hofkirche* (1739-1751) by G. Chiaveri. The Royal Court Theatre (1871-1878), the *Semperoper*, was designed by Gottfried and Manfred Semper. The urban space opens toward the river as an integral part of the landscape. Two modern buildings are included in the nomination: a small synagogue, and the new Saxon Parliament House.

Opposite to the monumental centre, on the north side of the river, there developed the *Neustadt*. The series of public buildings include the *Japanese Palace* with its gardens, built as an integral part of the royal ensemble of Dresden in the 18th century. The *Neustadt* extends further to the north and east, and has retained a substantial amount of urban fabric from the 18th and 19th centuries.

A second focal point in the river landscape is the *Pillnitz Palace* with its parks and vineyards, at the eastern limit of the landscape area, built starting in the 1720s. It became the summer residence of Elector Frederick Augustus III after 1778. It is characterised by curved roof lines, and a monumental staircase opening to the river. It has a large baroque *garden* with various pavilions and features, including gardens in different styles (English, Dutch, Chinese). Pillnitz was significant for the *horticultural*

interests of the Saxon Electors, who had a large collection of plants, e.g. the first Japanese Camellia in Europe.

At the west end of the Elbe Valley area there is another small royal palace complex, the *Übigau Palace* with its baroque park, built in 1724-1726, and forming the counter part to Pillnitz Palace.

History

The region of Dresden was inhabited since the 14th century BCE. Settlements were built above the flood levels of the Elbe river, while the river remained in its natural condition. The people lived on fishing, farming and wine growing. The town originated as a Slav village, called Drezdzany ('Forest Dwellers on the Plain') on the north bank of the river. The town on the south bank was founded as a German colony, first recorded in the 13th century.

In 1270 Dresden became the capital of Margrave Henry the Illustrious. It then belonged to the king of Bohemia and the margrave of Brandenburg. It was restored to the margraves of Meissen in 1319. In 1485 it became the residence and capital of a branch of the Wettin dynasty, later electors and kings of Saxony. The town was rebuilt and fortified after a fire in 1491. It was the first German Land to accept the Protestant Reformation in 1539. From 1547, Dresden was the capital of the Electorate of Saxony, which became one of the wealthiest Germany lands from the end of the 16th.

After a fire in late 17th century, the electors Augustus I and Augustus II modernized the city in baroque and rococo styles, including the Zwinger, rebuilding *Neustadt* and founding *Friedrichstadt*, northwest of *Altstadt*. The north bank became known as *Neustadt* ('New Town') and the German town on the south bank as *Altstadt* ('Old Town'). After the Seven Years' War (1756-1763), Dresden's fortifications were dismantled. From the end of the 18th century, the importance of the river for shipping increased rapidly. Tow-paths (*Leinpfad*) were made on its sides for towing ships; these paths still exist.

The economy of the town developed rapidly in the 19th century also due to the completion of railway connections to Berlin and Leipzig. This led to improving the navigability of the river (act of 1844). The small Elbe islands, except the Pillnitz Island, and sand banks were removed. Dykes were built, and old river arms were cut off from the main river. Today, these old river arms, however, continue to be an important part of the ecological system of Elbe. The farmed fields gradually changed into meadows and gardens. New suburban areas and residential villas were built in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The values of the resulting river landscape were officially recognised in the 1930s, and legally protected in 1941.

At the end of the Second World War, in 1945, the historic town centre of Dresden was subject to heavy destruction by bombing. After the war, as part of the German Democratic Republic and then of the Federal Republic of Germany, the remaining historic buildings have been restored and rebuilt, including the Castle, the Opera, and the Court Church. The reconstruction of the Frauenkirche is being completed. It is noted that Dresden has the lowest unemployment level in eastern Germany. The population

is slowly increasing – while many other parts of the country have experienced the contrary.

Management regime

Legal provision:

The area of the property has several levels of protection, subject to the character and ownership of each area or structure, including cultural properties, conservation areas, natural properties, nature reserves, and landscape areas. There are different legal instruments: Saxon law on the conservation and upkeep of cultural properties (1993), Saxon law on nature conservation and preservation of the countryside (1995), Law on nature conservation and landscape preservation (1998), Forest law for the Free State of Saxony (1992), Federal law on water supply management (1996), Saxon water law (1998), Building law (1997), and Saxon building regulations (1998).

Management structure:

The proposed 'Dresden Elbe Valley' is contained within the municipal area of the city of Dresden. Most of the principal historic buildings, as well as the meadows, nature protection areas and some vineyards are owned by the Free State of Saxony. Other public owners include the Federal Republic of Germany and the City of Dresden. The properties in the villa district are mainly in private ownership.

Several administrations co-operate in the management of the Dresden Elbe Valley. Conservation of historic buildings, the protection of nature and water resources are the competence of the Free State of Saxony. The Saxon State Ministry of Internal Affairs is the 'supreme authority' in the field of culture, and the Ministry for Environment and Land Development in nature conservation. The other levels are: the District Government of Dresden as the 'higher authority' and the District-Free Town of Dresden as the 'lower authority'.

The entire landscape area is included in the territorial land-use plan (FNP) of the Capital of Saxony. This plan is legally binding, and takes into account the significance and values of the protected area. All sensitive zones have special protection plans, including meadows, vineyards, and villa areas. No traffic arteries are planned in this area, though there is the possibility for new bridges. In addition to the general master plan, there are detailed, legally binding plans and regulations for specified areas (by-plans). There are also development and engineering plans.

The City of Dresden has designated preservation areas in the form of individual statutes, applied to specified areas, such as the old villages and suburban areas. Furthermore, the Elbe Valley landscape has been articulated in 14 homogenous areas according to their spatial character, i.e. open landscape, river embankment, post-mining landscape, allotment gardens, and areas for the preservation of species and biotopes.

Resources:

The financial resources for the management of the property come from different sources, including the budget of the Free State of Saxony and the City of Dresden. The regional conservation authority has expertise and long

experience in conservation. Dresden also has training programmes for conservation professionals.

Justification by the State Party (summary)

Criterion ii: The landscape and architecture in the Elbe Valley have developed in an unusually close and harmonious connection. Thus, a cultural site of high aesthetic and artistic value has been created.

Criterion iii: Unique testimonies of the culture of court architecture and festivities of the baroque and famous examples of middle-class architecture of the 19th century are to be found in the cultural site. The ancient cultural tradition of wine-growing is still carried out by the winegrowers as a craftsman's work as well as being preserved in the remains of buildings.

Criterion iv: The Dresden Elbe Valley is an excellent example of a continuously existing cultural site which has been formed by the landscape, which especially during the baroque time and in the 19th century was influenced by the outstanding role of the river and its neighbouring areas for the functions as seat of the government, earning one's living and life of the citizens. This is still today reflected in its structures and monuments.

Criterion v: The Dresden Elbe Valley is an outstanding example of the form of settlement of a European residence developed through the centuries, which, with suburbs and surrounding villages, including wine-growing hills and fields, grows together into a big city. The inner town, historic residential districts, village centres as well as former and still agriculturally used fields can be even today recognised and form an unmistakable sequence within the whole region.

3. ICOMOS EVALUATION

Actions by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited the site in September 2003.

ICOMOS has also consulted its International Scientific Committee on Historic Town and Villages.

The Baroque Ensemble of Dresden, consisting of the ancient city centre, was proposed for inscription in 1989. ICOMOS recognised the great cultural value of Dresden. The doctrinal and technical importance of the reconstruction generated much reflection within the international community, and the ICOMOS *Declaration of Dresden* (1982) was taken as a guideline for restoration. Yet, the proposal to inscribe the ensemble was rejected referring to the WH Committee decision re Warsaw.

Conservation

Conservation history:

The main aspect of the Dresden Elbe Valley is given by the areas built from the 18th and 19th centuries. Dresden has been one of the principal cultural centres of the German lands, and one of the places where conservation consciousness developed already in the 19th century. The Elbe valley has legal protection since 1941.

In 1945, Dresden was heavily bombed by the Allied Powers, and a large part of the Old Town was destroyed. Nevertheless, fortunately, most of the Neustadt and the suburban areas were not damaged. Therefore, the integrity of the nominated cultural landscape was not affected by this bombardment.

After the war, as part of the German Democratic Republic, the destroyed areas have been subject to restoration and reconstruction, which still continues. The nomination includes the Frauenkirche, the reconstruction of which is expected to be completed in 2005/6.

A recent problem was caused by the flood of Elbe in 2002, causing damage even areas far from the river. These problems have now been repaired.

State of conservation:

Most of the suburban villas and the villages are in good condition. Much of the Neustadt area, in the buffer zone, has also been rehabilitated.

The meadows and nature protection areas are in their natural condition. The existing vineyards are regularly cultivated by private groups of people.

Most of the remaining monumental buildings in the centre of Dresden damaged during the Second World War have been restored and partly rebuilt. The reconstruction of the Frauenkirche and of the Castle will be completed in 2006.

Management:

The conservation and management of the Elbe Valley is the responsibility of the different public authorities. There is a legally binding territorial master plan for the whole area. There are also adequate legal instruments, plans and guidelines for the various specified areas, according to their nature and requirements.

While the management system and plans already exist, the authorities are in the process of establishing a World Heritage site management commission and office.

The construction of a new bridge is foreseen 5 km down the river from the centre. Its design results from an international competition. The profile has been kept slender and low in order to reduce impact on landscape.

Risk analysis:

The principal natural risk will be from the flooding of the Elbe River, as in the summer 2002, when the water covered part of the old town area. However, measures have been taken to reduce this risk.

In addition to works carried out during GDR period, much work has been done since the 1990s in the restoration and rehabilitation. Many properties have been returned to private owners, but a part of the building stock in the suburban areas is not yet rehabilitated. After the German unification, there was much pressure for change, but the authorities were able to control the changes. There is still a risk of change of destination, which might cause changes in the building as well.

The development pressures may also affect natural areas. Furthermore, the river has been heavily polluted (grade III), but steps have now been taken to gradually improve this and to achieve a level of less pollution (grade II).

Authenticity and integrity

The Dresden Elbe Valley has been defined as a continuing cultural landscape. Its historical stratigraphy has layers from different periods, mainly from the 18th and 19th centuries. Through these interventions the meadows and river sides were kept free of constructions and the essential qualities of the landscape were established, including the focal points: the monumental centre of Dresden and the palaces.

The historic city centre was bombed at the end of the Second World War, but the remaining buildings continue to have an important role in the panorama. The suburban areas were saved from destruction and have retained their integrity. In reconstruction, the principle has been to limit it to areas with sufficient evidence. This is helped by excellent documentation, including drawings and good photographs. The principles have been based on guidelines established by ICOMOS. The most damaged building of the monumental group was the *Frauenkirche*. About 40 % of the original stones have been recovered, and the work is based on exceptionally complete records.

There are few modern constructions in the nominated area, except for a small synagogue on the site of the destroyed building, and the recent extension to the Saxon Parliament, a relatively low building with glass walls. Two post-war buildings will be demolished, as not considered harmonious with the character of the landscape.

While recognising the unfortunate losses in the historic city centre during the Second World War, the Dresden Elbe Valley, defined as a continuing cultural landscape, has retained the overall historical authenticity and integrity in its distinctive character and components.

Comparative evaluation

The Dresden Elbe Valley is exceptional in the way it has developed over centuries, and the way nature has been retained an essential part of the site. Dresden has major cultural qualities, especially since it became the capital of the wealthy Saxon Electorate. It was the first German land to accept Protestantism in 1539. Its fame as a cultural centre was based on achievements in the 18th century, its Baroque architecture, its collections of antiquities and works of art. The architecture of Dresden influenced developments in Central Europe and particularly in Poland. It is noted that e.g. Sans-Souci in Potsdam is of later date. The *Pillnitz Palace* is one of the most important examples of Chinese fashion in 18th-century Europe. The suburban villa areas of the 18th-19th centuries have retained their integrity to an exceptional degree. The Elbe villas and the Prussian Quarter with gardens and landscape architecture are rare examples of such suburban areas. The industrial heritage consisting of the remarkable steel bridge, the rare historic railways and the historic steamships complements the ensemble.

The process of restoration and reconstruction after the destruction of the Second World War continues, but in the current nomination this only concerns a small part of the site. It is noted that the policy applied in this process defers from that of Warsaw. In Dresden the work is based on a critical selection of the most significant and well documented buildings, creating a system of references for

memory. The process has been based on internationally accepted principles and ICOMOS guidelines.

Outstanding universal value

General statement:

The cultural landscape of Dresden Elbe Valley is an outstanding example of urban and suburban development from the 18th through the 19th centuries, representing land-use during the process of early industrialisation in Central Europe.

Being the capital of the Saxon Kings, then also kings of Poland, Dresden benefited from exceptional cultural and economic resources, resulting to high quality building practice. It was an important cultural capital in Europe, exercising significant influence on the development of architecture, culture and sciences.

The river landscape was used as an essential artistic element already in town planning in the 18th century, as recorded by celebrated painters, such as Bernardo Bellotto called Canaletto, as well as by writers and poets. The Elbe Valley was also important in the development of Romantic landscape painting in the 19th century.

The qualities of the landscape were retained as critical issues in the territorial planning of 19th and early 20th centuries, and the previously established vistas retained their key role as part of the new development. Due to the efforts of conscious protection, the qualities of this landscape have been exceptionally well preserved.

Evaluation of criteria:

Criterion ii: The city of Dresden and the landscape of the Elbe valley have been central to cultural development in Europe. Dresden was at the cultural crossroads in Europe related to various fields; it was the first German state to introduce Protestantism as a state religion; the technique porcelain was elaborated here for production at Meissen; its collections were an asset; its architecture, gardens, and landscape features became an important reference especially for Central Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Criterion iii: The Dresden Elbe Valley is an exceptionally well preserved example of an urban landscape integrated with natural features. It contains some unique testimonies of court architecture and festivities, including the fine pleasure gardens, arboretums, and botanical gardens of the Pillnitz Palace, as well as renowned examples of middle-class architecture and industrial heritage of the 19th century. The ancient wine-growing tradition is still being carried on.

Criterion iv: The Dresden Elbe Valley is an outstanding cultural landscape, which represents the development of a celebrated baroque setting into a suburban garden city of high architectural quality. The landscape integrates these features with the river landscape into an artistic whole that has been celebrated by writers and painters over the centuries.

Criterion v: The Dresden Elbe Valley is an outstanding example of land use, involving the Baroque ensembles, the 19th century villa-garden areas, industrial heritage, and the agricultural fields, representing an exceptional development of a major Central-European city and cultural

capital. This cultural landscape has survived through the Second World War, and the subsequent development. This cultural landscape has long been recognized, which has contributed to the preservation and survival of its qualities, even though it is now under new pressures for change.

4. ICOMOS RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation with respect to inscription

That the property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria ii, iii, iv and v*:

Criterion ii: The Dresden Elbe valley has been the crossroads in Europe, in culture, science and technology. Its art collections, architecture, gardens, and landscape features have been an important reference for Central European developments in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Criterion iii: The Dresden Elbe Valley contains exceptional testimonies of court architecture and festivities, as well as renowned examples of middle-class architecture and industrial heritage representing European urban development into the modern industrial era.

Criterion iv: The Dresden Elbe Valley is an outstanding cultural landscape, an ensemble that integrates the celebrated baroque setting and suburban garden city into an artistic whole within the river valley.

Criterion v: The Dresden Elbe Valley is an outstanding example of land use, representing an exceptional development of a major Central-European city. The value of this cultural landscape has long been recognized, but it is now under new pressures for change.

ICOMOS, March 2004