
Old City of Dubrovnik (Croatia) No 95bis

1 Basic data

State Party

Croatia

Name of property

Old City of Dubrovnik

Location

County of Dubrovnik-Neretva, Adriatic Coast
Croatia

Inscription

1979

Brief description

The 'Pearl of the Adriatic', situated on the Dalmatian coast, became an important Mediterranean sea-power from the 13th century onwards. Although severely damaged by an earthquake in 1667, Dubrovnik managed to preserve its beautiful Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque churches, monasteries, palaces and fountains. Damaged again in the 1990s by armed conflict, it is now the focus of a major restoration programme coordinated by UNESCO.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

14 March 2018

2 Issues raised

Background

The World Heritage property of the Old City of Dubrovnik, comprising an area of 24.7 ha, was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1979 under criteria (i), (iii) and (iv), initially with no buffer zone.

The boundaries were modified in 1994 when the property was extended to 96.7 ha to include areas outside the city walls: the Pile medieval industrial suburb, the Lovrijenac Fortress, the Lazarets, the Kase moles, the Revelin Fortress, and the island of Lokrum to the south-east of Dubrovnik, some 500 metres from the coast, and a small buffer zone comprising 53.7 ha was established.

Due to serious damage during the Croatian War of Independence (1991-1995), the property was inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger from 1991 to 1998.

Despite the 1994 extension, several State of Conservation (SOC) reports and the second cycle Periodic Reporting (2014) indicated the need for extension of the buffer zone

in order to better present the property in its wider setting, including the immediate and important areas that are functionally important to the property, and to effectively provide an added layer of protection to the property from the growing pressures of development and tourism.

After receiving information from civil society, the World Heritage Centre requested that the State Party provide clarification on a large resort project in the vicinity of the World Heritage property, as well as on progress in the regulation of cruise ship tourism. On 28 January 2014, the State Party submitted a SOC report providing details regarding the potential impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value of cruise ship tourism, as well as on the planned sport and recreation centre with a golf course and tourist village. The State Party reported that the proposed recreational centre would cover an area of protected forest of some 359 ha on the plateau of Mount Srđ and Bosanka, situated directly above the City of Dubrovnik. The proposal included the construction of two golf courses, a sports centre, two hotels, 240 villas, 408 apartments, an amphitheatre, equestrian club, parks, promenades and other facilities. Some of the villas would be constructed at the edge of the escarpment giving them views over the Old City.

At its 38th session (Decision 38 COM 7B.25, Doha, 2014), the World Heritage Committee took note of the information submitted by the State Party regarding the large project planned for the plateau of Mount Srđ and Bosanka in the vicinity of the World Heritage property and requested the State Party to provide the project documentation and the respective Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA), in line with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*, before any development works started and any final decision had been taken.

The documents provided by the State Party demonstrated that the large size of the development project could have an irreversible impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value. The development project would eradicate the clear distinction that has historically existed between the urban complex of Dubrovnik, as a unique creation of medieval architecture and town planning, its landscape and rural environment setting. The analytical documentation annexed to the SOC report provided by the State Party did not assess the proposed development in terms of its potential impacts on the attributes that sustain the Old City of Dubrovnik's Outstanding Universal Value. Given the situation, the World Heritage Committee requested the State Party to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS reactive monitoring mission to assess the current conditions at the property, including the evaluation of potential development impacts and identify options for development proposals in the light of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property (Decision 38 COM 7B.25), especially in regard to the large project planned for the plateau of Mount Srđ and Bosanka.

Following development plans submitted by the State Party to the World Heritage Centre and Decision 38 COM 7B.25, a World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS

reactive monitoring mission took place between 27 October and 1 November 2015. With regards to the boundary issues, the Mission recommended that the State Party consider the development and submission to the World Heritage Centre of a minor boundary modification proposal for an extension of the buffer zone to include the west facing slopes of Mount Srđ, the sea area around the Island of Lokrum and the fortress landscape of the Srđ plateau.

At its 40th session (Istanbul, 2016), the World Heritage Committee decided a range of matters, including to endorse the recommendations of the 2015 mission. It also requested the State Party submit to the World Heritage Centre by 1 February 2017 a minor boundary modification proposal with a view to expanding the buffer zone as recommended by the 2015 joint UNESCO/ ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission (40 COM 7B.50).

The State Party submitted a minor boundary modification proposal in 2017, which was considered at the subsequent session of the World Heritage Committee. The Committee decided to refer the proposal back to the State Party.

Decision 41 COM 8B.41:

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Documents WHC/17/41.COM/8B.Add and WHC/17/41.COM/INF.8B1.Add,*

2. *Refers the proposed minor modification to the boundaries of Old City of Dubrovnik, Croatia, back to the State Party in order to allow it to:*

- a) *Explain in detail the methodological framework and rationale for the delineation of the buffer zone, also through cartographic, graphic and photographic documentation, in particular with regard to the protection of the relevant visual links of the inscribed property with the surrounding setting,*
- b) *Clarify how and by when the Management Plan will be finalised and amended so as to include the necessary regulatory and management measures to allow the buffer zone to effectively act as an added layer of protection for the inscribed property,*
- c) *Limit the passage and mooring of boats, ships and yachts (except the passage of small boats transporting the visitors to the Lokrum Island) in the coastal area between the old city and Lokrum Island.*

Modification

The proposed minor modification of boundaries consists of an extension of the buffer zone from the existing 53.7 ha to 1,188.6 ha, while the boundaries of the inscribed property remain unchanged.

According to the State Party, the proposed extended buffer zone is defined partly by administrative boundaries of the city, and partly following the topography of the terrain in order to preserve important views: in the east, the boundary corresponds with the administrative boundary of the city where it rises from the coastline to the Žarkovica peak, then continuing towards the northwest along the ridge of Mount Srđ ending in the River of

Dubrovnik. The boundary then crosses the Gruž bay and continues parallel to the southern coast to the Montovjerna hill, and then descends to the bay of Danče. From there, the boundary continues encompassing waters of the old city and island of Lokrum and it returns to the coast at the Bay Orsula.

The State Party holds that the enlarged buffer zone aims at incorporating surrounding urban and landscape areas, embracing all the inseparable areas attached to the old town, namely: east and west suburbs, the slopes of Mount Srđ and waters in front of the old harbour and the island of Lokrum. The extension of the existing buffer zone is justified by the State Party on the grounds that adding areas of urban and natural landscape as inseparable integral areas will enhance the Outstanding Universal Value of the Old City of Dubrovnik. All of these areas of the proposed new buffer zone complement and highlight the historical functional urban identity and integrity of the property.

In response to Decision 41 COM 8B.41, the State Party provided additional information about the methodological framework and rationale for the buffer zone. Relevant documentation analysed in developing the proposal included a range of mapping, spatial planning documents, analytical studies for the golf project on Mount Srđ, the 2015 mission report, HIA documents and other heritage studies.

The 2015 mission recommended inclusion of the Srđ plateau in the extended buffer zone. The State Party notes that the plateau is not directly visible from the property, and given the outcome of the HIA for the proposed golf course in this area, it considers the plateau should not be included in the proposed buffer zone. None the less, a 50-metre-wide section of the plateau from the hill ridgeline towards the hinterland is included in the proposed buffer zone, which is in line with the World Heritage Committee decision 40 COM 7B.50 item 6, which requested the State Party to “ensure that no construction is to take place within a minimum distance of 50m from the edges of the plateau”.

ICOMOS considers that the general reasons and overall methodology for establishing a buffer zone for the Old City of Dubrovnik have been clearly explained.

None the less, the State Party should be sensitive to the possibility of development outside the buffer zone which may still have an adverse impact on the property, including development on the Srđ plateau and within Bosanka.

According to the State Party, the whole area of the inscribed property together with the proposed buffer zone is currently regulated by spatial planning documents including the General Urban Plan of the City of Dubrovnik. This includes requirements for spatial development, improvement and protection of natural, cultural and historical values. The State Party also advises that after adoption of the proposed buffer zone, a new study

document based on the HIA methodology will be drafted and the urban planning documents will be revised to include provisions for the better preservation of the property.

The proposed buffer zone will also be within the scope of the Management Plan that is currently being developed. The process of preparing the Management Plan for the property started in 2014 and the Institute for Restoration of Dubrovnik has been appointed to co-ordinate the elaboration of the Management Plan. A draft Management Plan should be available by the end of 2018. ICOMOS believes that the prompt finalisation, approval and effective implementation of the Management Plan for the property is of utmost importance as a means of ensuring that the buffer zone is able to provide effective protection for the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

There are a range of laws that regulate and protect the proposed buffer zone, in addition to the spatial planning documents noted above. Parts of the proposed buffer zone are also listed in the national Cultural Heritage Register. This includes special conservation requirements and approval is required for every intervention in the listed area.

The State Party indicates that protection measures will be recommended in all physical planning documents for the proposed buffer zone. HIA will be obligatory for all significant development that could impact on Outstanding Universal Value.

With regard to tourism development and the regulation of cruising tourism for the city area, a strategy is being prepared in coordination with the Management Plan. After adoption of the proposed buffer zone, legal documents will be introduced to limit the navigation or to prescribe special conditions for navigation in order to protect human lives, coasts, environment and other goods in the maritime area included in the buffer zone.

As previously stated, ICOMOS is of the view that it would be desirable to have legislation which limits, or prohibits, the passage and mooring of boats, ships and yachts (except for the passage of small boats transporting visitors to the island of Lokrum) in the coastal area between the old city and Lokrum island, in accordance with the proposed revision of the boundaries by extension of the buffer zone.

ICOMOS considers the protection of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property will be enhanced through inclusion of the historically and naturally significant context of the city beyond its walls, including the Bay of Gruž, and that the proposed buffer zone appears to be satisfactory. None the less, complete protection of the property will require finalisation of an effective Management Plan, tourism strategy and maritime navigation regulations, all of which should be submitted to the World Heritage Committee for consideration.

3 ICOMOS Recommendations

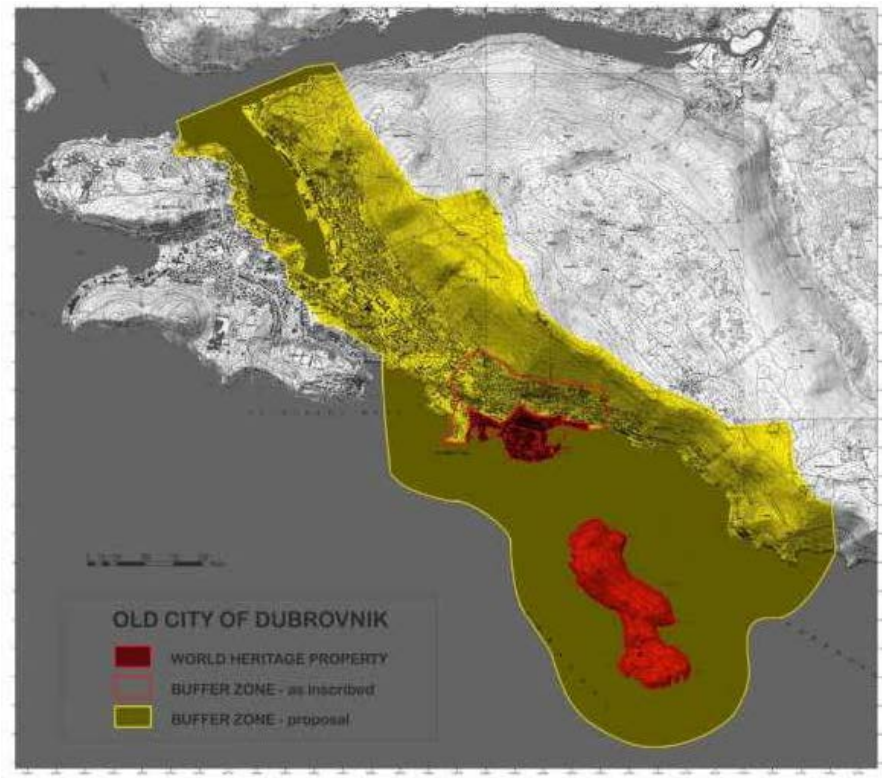
Recommendation with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the proposed buffer zone for the Old City of Dubrovnik, Croatia, be **approved**.

Additional recommendations

ICOMOS further recommends that the State Party give consideration to the following points:

- a) Taking into account the fact that development outside the buffer zone may still have an adverse impact on the property, including development on the Srđ plateau and within Bosanka, consistent with paragraph 112 of the *Operational Guidelines*,
- b) Finalising, approving and implementing the Management Plan for the property to ensure that the buffer zone is able to provide effective protection for the Outstanding Universal Value of the property,
- c) Introducing legislation which limits, or prohibits, the passage and mooring of boats, ships and yachts (except for the passage of small boats transporting visitors to the island of Lokrum) in the coastal area between the old city and Lokrum island, in accordance with the proposed revision of the boundaries of the buffer zone,
- d) Submit the Management Plan, tourism strategy and maritime navigation regulations, when available, to the World Heritage Centre for consideration.



Map showing the revised boundaries of the buffer zone