
Ljubljana (Slovenia) No 1643

1 Basic information

State Party

Slovenia

Name of property

The works of Jože Plečnik in Ljubljana – Human Centred Urban Design

Location

City of Ljubljana

Inscription

2021

Brief description

The works of Jože Plečnik in Ljubljana are an example of a human centred urban design that successively changed the identity of the pre-existing city. Following the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Ljubljana changed from a provincial city into a symbolic national capital for the Slovenian people. The architect Jože Plečnik contributed to this transformation with his personal, profoundly human vision for the city. The property consists of a series of public spaces (squares, parks, streets, promenades, bridges) and public institutions (national library, churches, markets, funerary complex) that Plečnik designed throughout the city in the period between the two World Wars. The selected works are sensitively integrated into the pre-existing urban, natural and cultural context and contributed to the city's new identity. This highly contextual and human-scale urbanistic approach, as well as Plečnik's distinctive architectural language, are seen to stand apart from the other predominant modernist principles of his time.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

9 March 2022

2 Issues raised

Background

The interventions designed by the architect Jože Plečnik throughout the city of Ljubljana in the short period between the two World Wars were inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2021 on the basis of criterion (iv) as an outstanding example of successive human-centred urban renewal for the purpose of nation building after the demise of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The interventions are based on a harmonic relationship between the context of the space and its natural possibilities. The city was not built anew but

improved with small- or large-scale interventions – new architectural ensembles, buildings and urban accents. The relationship with the past is established in various ways, from adapting the urban network and incorporating existing structures through architectural reminiscences and by establishing new cityscapes. The new urban space is not limited to a specific use but has various functions and the whole is thus imbued with new meanings.

By Decision 44COM 8B.45, the World Heritage Committee decided to inscribe the property on the World Heritage List, with several recommendations. Among these, it recommended “*submitting a minor boundary modification of the extended buffer zones, when formalised, with an updated map showing the property and the buffer zones’ boundaries, indicating the total area of the buffer zones in hectares*”. It also recommended to consider “*submitting in the future a minor boundary modification with a view to including relevant transversal axes, if their state of conservation could be improved to fully meet the conditions of authenticity and integrity*”. The World Heritage Committee moreover recommended the State Party to undertake “*further detailed identification of the relationships between Plečnik’s interventions and pre-existing buildings and spaces, to allow appropriate protection measures to be put in place for the latter, relative to the role they play in supporting the Outstanding Universal Value*”.

The State Party's request for a minor boundary modification of the property's boundary and its buffer zones addresses these requests in parts and was submitted to the World Heritage Centre in 2022.

The proposed minor boundary modification was already initiated during the nomination process and described to ICOMOS in the additional information provided on February 2021.

Modification

The proposal involves a minimal boundary expansion of the property's component part 4, the Roman Walls in Mirje. Changes to the buffer zones are proposed for five component parts: Trnovo Bridge, Green Promenade along Vegova Street, Roman Walls in Mirje, Church of St. Michael, and Plečnik's Žale – Garden of All Saints. Lastly, the addition of a wider buffer zone in the city centre is proposed. The proposal follows the changes to the legal protection that entered into force in May 2021, namely the Ordinance amending the Ordinance designating the work of the architect Jože Plečnik in Ljubljana as a cultural monument of national importance (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 74/21) of the year 2021.

The minor change to component part 4 adjusts the property boundary north of the pyramid to follow the existing parcel and adds a small rounded parcel at the western corner of the Roman Walls. The component part is thereby slightly enlarged from 0.720 to 0.726 ha as per article 4 of the 2021 Ordinance.

ICOMOS considers that this revision of the property boundary is necessary and contributes to reinforcing the conditions of integrity of the property and hence maintaining its Outstanding Universal Value.

Trnovo Bridge was defined as a separate component part and assigned its own buffer zone as per article 5 of the 2021 Ordinance within the joint buffer zone of component parts 1, 2, 3 and 4. The buffer zone of Trnovo Bridge now encompasses the entire monument of the Gradaščica area which constitutes one of the transversal axes. The joint buffer was enlarged with the addition of the western part of this area.

The buffer zone of component part 2 was extended to the north and west as per article 2 of the 2021 Ordinance. It now includes a series of buildings running from and including the Ursuline Church to the Šubič Grammar School, the crossroads of Slovenska Road and Šubičeva Street in the northwest corner of Zvezda Park, and a series of buildings along the northern side of Zvezda Park from the Kazina Palace to Wolfova Street. These extensions respond to requests from ICOMOS in its Interim Report of December 2020.

The same is the case for the extension of the buffer zone on the western extremities of component part 4 as per article 4 of the 2021 Ordinance. It was extended to the crossroads of Groharjeva and Jamova Streets. The eastern extremities and the southern setting of the Roman Walls in Mirje are protected under the new wider buffer zone of the historic city centre. Nevertheless, ICOMOS recommends that in the future the buffer zone be complemented, through a minor boundary modification request, with the adjacent stretch of Barjanska Street up to Aškerčeva Street as well as extended onto the plots located south of the traffic artery of Mirje on the entire length of the Roman Walls.

As per the State Party's proposal, the joint buffer of component parts 1, 2, 3 and 4 is enlarged from overall 88.592 ha to 109.615 ha.

Likewise, in response to ICOMOS' requests, the buffer zone of component part 5 was extended to the southeast across the road in front of the Church of St. Michael and by parcels on the Ljubljana Marshes. The buffer zone of the component part was thereby enlarged from 12.984 ha to 22.450 ha as per article 1 of the 2021 Ordinance.

Concerns raised by ICOMOS were also addressed with the inclusion of parts of the plots across the roundabouts located southwest of Plečnik's Žale in the component part's buffer zone.

In addition, the boundaries of the buffer zone were adjusted with the inclusion of the land next to the petrol station in the southeast and the green areas in the residential zone to the east. The changes, as per article 3 of the 2021 Ordinance, moreover involve the exclusion of the parcels of the existing active cemetery in the north.

The buffer zone of component part 7 was overall enlarged from 45.752 ha to 48.613 ha.

In addition, the State Party designated a new wider buffer zone for Plečnik's work in the city centre. The boundaries and protection regimes of this new buffer zone as per article 6 of the 2021 Ordinance were defined on the basis of existing municipal acts on designations and spatial acts. It incorporates multi-layered statutory protection regimes for monuments of local and national importance in a single legal act at the state level. It thus strengthens the effectiveness of statutory protection of Plečnik's interventions and of their pre-existing setting.

The expanded and additional buffer zones include the immediate and wider setting of Plečnik's interventions, encompass views or include other areas that are functionally or otherwise important for the protection of the property. ICOMOS considers that these revisions of the buffer zone boundaries and the pertinent legislation, which include stipulations for Heritage Impact Assessments (article 8 of the 2021 Ordinance), effectively adds to protecting the property from development pressures.

As per the information provided by the State Party in January 2022, the proposed modification overall leads to a slight enlargement of the property from 19.122 ha to 19.132 ha. A table included in the proposal moreover indicates the areas of the individual component parts which were renumbered as per the requests of ICOMOS' Interim Report of December 2020. The separated component parts 1 (Trnovo Bridge) and 2 (Green Promenade along Vegova Street) respectively total 0.050 ha and 3.281 ha respectively. Component part 4 (Roman Walls in Mirje) now totals 0.726 ha. For component part 7 a factual error of the nomination dossier was pointed out and the actual area indicated totals 1.326 ha. The entire property is protected by the Ordinance from 2009 designating the work of the architect Jože Plečnik in Ljubljana as a 'cultural monument of national importance' (Official Gazette RS, Nos. 51/09, 88/14, 19/16, 76/17, 17/18 and 74/21).

The buffer zone was enlarged from a total of 178.613 ha to 210.908 ha. The additional new wider buffer zone totals 170.872 ha. The protective regimes of the buffer zones are based on point 9 of Article 56 of the 2009 Ordinance.

The proposed minor boundary modification coincides with the additional information provided on the matter to ICOMOS in February 2021. In summary, ICOMOS considers that the proposed minor boundary modification enhances the property's integrity, complies with the request of Decision 44COM 8B.45 (§ 4.a and f) and should therefore be approved.

3 Recommendations

Recommendation with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the proposed minor modification to the boundary of The works of Jože Plečnik in Ljubljana – Human Centred Urban Design, Slovenia, be **approved**.

ICOMOS recommends that the proposed minor modification to the boundaries of the buffer zones for The works of Jože Plečnik in Ljubljana – Human Centred Urban Design, Slovenia, be **approved**.

Additional recommendations

ICOMOS also recommends that the State Party give consideration to the following:

- a) Considering submitting in the future a minor boundary modification with a view to:
 - i) Including within the property relevant transversal axes, if their state of conservation could be improved to fully meet the conditions of authenticity and integrity,
 - ii) Extending the buffer zone of component part 4 to the stretch of Barjanska Street leading from the Roman Walls up to Aškerčeva Street and onto the plots located south of the traffic artery Mirje on the entire length of the serial component part;

