



Culture Sector
Division for Heritage

United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

H.E. Mrs Vincenza Lomonaco
Ambassador
Permanent Delegate of Italy to
UNESCO
Hôtel de Gallifet
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Ref.: CLT/HER/WHC/7960/IT/AS/KR 27 May 2015

Subject: **ICOMOS technical review of the report on the state of conservation of the World Heritage property "Historic Centre of Florence"**

Dear Ambassador,

In addition to our previous letter of 6 May last, please find enclosed a technical review by ICOMOS of the report on the state of conservation of the World Heritage property "Historic Centre of Florence", submitted by the Italian authorities to the World Heritage Centre on 30 January 2015.

Following this review, ICOMOS recommends that further documents, including technical details and impact assessments for all infrastructure projects which may have impact on the property or its immediate setting, be submitted by the Italian authorities, as soon as possible, in order for ICOMOS to assess these projects in detail.

ICOMOS further considers that, depending on the information provided, the State Party may wish to invite an Advisory mission to the property to allow the ICOMOS experts to review possible mitigation measures and, in particular, measures to address vibration and flooding for the underground constructions.

May I ask the Italian authorities to submit to the World Heritage Centre all requested documents and information which could allow ICOMOS to assess the state of conservation of the property.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your cooperation and support in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

Please accept, dear Ambassador, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Kishore Rao
Director
World Heritage Centre

Annex I

cc: National Commission of Italy for UNESCO
National Focal Point for World Heritage
ICOMOS International

ICOMOS Technical Review

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|-------------------------|--|
| Property | Historic Centre of Florence |
| State Party | Italy |
| Property ID | 174 |
| Date inscription | 1982 |
| Criteria | (i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(vi) |
| Project | January 2015 state of conservation report |

1. Identification

Historic Centre of Florence, Italy, inscribed in 1982 under criteria (i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(vi)

The projects/issues under evaluation in this technical review concern:

- the realisation of the tramway lines passing through the Historic Centre of Florence;
- the realisation of the High Speed Train tunnels beneath the city of Florence;
- the sale of monumental public or semi-public complexes (palaces, convents as well as the Brunelleschi's Rotunda) to private stakeholders and their change of use (i.e., for residential purposes);
- the construction of two underground parking facilities;
- the planned realisation of the underground tramway crossing the property.

2. Background

The retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value was adopted in 2014 at the 38th Session of the World Heritage Committee and stated that: "The Historic Centre of Florence can be perceived as a unique social and urban achievement, the result of persistent and long-lasting creativity, which includes museums, churches, buildings and artworks of immeasurable worth. Florence had an overwhelming influence on the development of architecture and the fine arts, first in Italy, and then in Europe. It is within the context of Florence that the concept of the Renaissance came to be. This heritage bestows upon Florence unique historical and aesthetic qualities."

Summary of projects under evaluation/issues raised

Since early 2014, letters were received by the World Heritage Centre concerning different issues affecting the property, these include:

- the construction of the tramway lines n. 2 and 3, which would pass close to some important monuments, namely the Fortezza da Basso, San Marco Square with the Church and the Convent, the area of the Gallerie dell'Accademia;
- the plans for an underground tramway or "mini-metro" under the historic centre (stops envisaged at the major interest points of the historic centre);
- the construction of the tunnels for the High Speed Train connecting Naples to Milan. The trajectory of the tunnels crosses the World Heritage property under the bastions of the Fortezza da Basso and continues along the boundary of the property for some kilometres;
- excessive tourism pressure, insufficient management of tourists and absence of a tourist strategy which addresses the different types of visitors, reportedly around 16 million tourists yearly;
- the sale and change of use/subdivision of many historic palaces or complexes under public or semi-public ownership, and particularly of the Convent of Santa Maria degli Angeli, an important multi-layered complex with a prominent Renaissance phase to which is attached the Brunelleschi Rotunda, an experimental prototype at a reduced scale for the dome of Santa Maria del Fiore.

Documentation consulted for this technical review

In addition to the documentation received from the World Heritage Centre in February 2015, ICOMOS has examined Section II of the periodic report questionnaire and the management plan for the WH property. Additionally, in order to gain some more details on the projects, the tourism pressure and the sale and transformation of publicly owned monumental complexes within the World Heritage property, ICOMOS has also consulted the following web resources:

<http://centrostuditoristicifirenze.it/blog/turismo-nella-citta-metropolitana-di-firenze-nel-2014/>

<http://mobilita.comune.fi.it/tramvia/>

http://www.comune.fi.it/materiali/tramvia/0092_C11-PE-PMA-RL-003_r04_POMA.o.pdf

<http://osservatorioambientale.nododifirenze.it>

http://pianostrutturale.comune.fi.it/progetto_parcheggio_brunelleschi.html

http://firenze.repubblica.it/cronaca/2015/01/06/news/renzi_avanti_col_tram_sotto_il_centro_nardella_resta_anche_la_soluzione_viali-104409576/

<http://notavfirenze.blogspot.it/>

Finally ICOMOS would like to note that the images included in the State of Conservation report submitted by the State Party are of very low definition which makes the reading of the graphic documentation difficult and it was therefore necessary for ICOMOS to seek additional information.

3. Analysis

The tramway lines 2 and 3

The project was already publicly known in 2008, when a municipal referendum was held to understand the positions of the citizens with regard to the tramway project. Works for the construction commenced in May 2014. One of the tramways - line 2 - will cross through the World Heritage property near the Fortezza da Basso, continue along the ring boulevard (coinciding with the boundary for the property) to arrive close to the Accademia, through via la Pira, Piazza San Marco and Via Cavour. On the other hand, line 3 will stop at Santa Maria Novella Station without entering the property but bordering it in along the Fortezza da Basso.

The State Party reports that the present solution for the tramway line 2 is the result of a modification to the original project, which was originally planned to pass close to the Battistero and the Duomo, in order to avoid the very core of the historic centre, following the request to submit alternatives made by an Inter-ministerial Commission responsible for the funds.

ICOMOS also notes that, on the grounds of the information reported in the letter to UNESCO dated 10 March 2015, and confirmed by the information on the web site <http://mobilita.comune.fi.it/tramvia/>, the route of the tramway includes underground tracts.

ICOMOS notes that the historic centre of Florence is prone to flooding and the letter of 10 March 2015 also informs that the hydro-geological situation of large parts of the city, including the city centre, are classified as having a very high risk rate (R4). These particularly risky conditions are reported in the relevant thematic and spatial planning documents as well as in the geological, hydro-geological, and hydraulic reports annexed to the projects for the tramway and for the high-speed train tunnels (see below).

Further details need to be provided for this project including technical details and impact assessments, in order to allow a full assessment of impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

The project for the underground tramway or mini-metro

The letter from a group of citizens sent in March 2015 to the World Heritage Centre also mentions the existence of plans for constructing an underground tramway passing under the historic centre of Florence; the Italian press confirms that these plans do exist even if no further details are available. The press also reports that alternatives exist for the underground tramway that would avoid the historic centre, preferring

instead the route of the ring boulevards.

ICOMOS considers that such a project, particularly in conjunction with the others already approved and being implemented, may have potential negative impacts on the WH property, due to the substantial excavations under the historic centre of Florence necessary for the project, which would add to the significant ones already scheduled and partly realised for the high – speed train tunnels, as well as for vehicular traffic and the tramway. The degree of impact currently seems unknown.

ICOMOS also notes that planning further large excavations underneath the historic centre of Florence, in addition to the ones already planned (near the Fortezza da Basso, and under the inner ring boulevards) could be a threat to the stability of Florentine monuments both during the works and afterwards due to vibrations, but particularly due to the modification of the hydrological and geological systems and balances, unless adequate anti-vibration measures are planned.

Further details need to be provided for this project including technical details and impact assessments, in order to allow a full assessment of impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

The High Speed tunnels and new railway station

The proposed tunnels are linked to the construction of a new station for the high-speed trains separated from the Santa Maria Novella Station, from where the high-speed trains also arrive and depart today.

ICOMOS notes that the work on the tunnel for the high-speed train has already considered the potential impact on the integrity of parts of the Fortezza da Basso, and for portions of its bastions either continuous monitoring or examination of the structural state before the beginning of the excavations is planned (see technical drawings at <http://osservatorioambientale.nododifirenze.it/>). The State Party informs that currently the works have been stopped due to judiciary inquiries as well as technical problems.

Additionally, various committees who are against the development have been active in Florence, in an attempt to stop the works and to propose detailed alternative solutions for the passage of the high-speed train in Florence.

ICOMOS considers that the halt imposed by the inquiries and by the technical issues could certainly be an opportunity for the State Party to provide details, including technical information for this project, as well as impact assessments, in order to allow a full assessment of potential impacts on buildings within the property and overall on the OUV of the property before work re-commences.

The tourism pressure and the change of ownership and use of publicly owned monumental complexes

In the letter sent in March 2015, it is also reported that 13 large historic buildings are on sale or have been sold, including the Brunelleschi Rotunda, and that the Structural Plan for Florence (2010 – 2014) allows for substantial transformations, change of use and subdivision of large palaces or former religious convents: apparently the surfaces subject to transformation within the historic centre exceed 110.000 sqm and may reach 200.000 sqm.

Such transformation could have a negative impact on the integrity of these buildings and on the understanding of their original uses and contribution to the overall urban landscape of Florence. ICOMOS considers that as Florence was inscribed under criterion (i) as a “unique artistic realization”, and due to the way it reflects the development of architectural principles that have had world-wide influence, many of its major buildings need to be seen as masterpieces of architecture that should be preserved as monuments.

Further details need to be provided as to what the vision is for the overall property in terms of approaches to the uses of individual buildings and how the integrity of its masterpieces will be ensured.

Summary of the analysis

ICOMOS observes that several large scale and medium size projects with the potential to impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage property, its attributes, integrity and authenticity, have been planned since long ago and/or initiated without informing in advance the World Heritage Committee via its Secretariat, as is required by paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*.

ICOMOS notes that a large number of these infrastructural projects relate to underground work. Some of the projects are directly under important monuments (i.e. the Fortezza da Basso), while other envisaged projects (the mini-metro) are planned to cross underneath the property.

From the information provided, it is not possible to fully assess these projects. ICOMOS considers that full details, including technical details and impact assessments, should be submitted as soon as possible for all infrastructure projects which impact on the property or its immediate setting. ICOMOS further considers that, depending on the information provided, it could be helpful for an Advisory mission to be undertaken in order to allow experts to be provided with full detail of proposed mitigation measures and, in particular, measures to address vibration and flooding for the underground constructions.

4. Recommendation

On the grounds of the results of the analysis of the issues and related documentation available, and considering that the Committee has not been informed about these projects by the State Party, ICOMOS considers that there is an urgent need to receive further detailed information on the above-mentioned projects, including adequate technical documentation and impact assessments, as well as proposed measures for mitigation for the underground projects, to address vibration and flooding issues in particular, in order to allow for a more detailed assessment to be undertaken.

In relation to proposals to sell major monuments to the private sector, ICOMOS considers that further details need to be provided on the overall vision for the property in relation to how the integrity of these masterpieces of architecture will be maintained, and on the specific details for individual monuments.

Finally, ICOMOS observes that, depending on the further details provided, an Advisory mission to the property may be desirable to allow relevant experts to fully assess these complex projects and proposals.

ICOMOS expresses its availability and willingness to assist the State Party in this regard.

ICOMOS, Charenton-le-Pont
May 2015