

ITALY

Ferrara, City of the Renaissance, and its Po Delta

Brief description

Ferrara, which grew up around a ford over the River Po, became an intellectual and artistic centre that attracted the greatest minds of the Italian Renaissance in the 15th and 16th centuries. Here, Piero della Francesca, Jacopo Bellini and Andrea Mantegna decorated the palaces of the House of Este. The humanist concept of the 'ideal city' came to life here in the neighborhoods built from 1492 onwards by Biagio Rossetti according to the new principles of perspective. The completion of this project marked the birth of modern town planning and influenced its subsequent development.

1. Introduction

Year(s) of Inscription

1995

Agency responsible for site management

- Municipality of Ferrara
Piazza Castello 1
44100 Ferrara
Veneto
Emilia Romagna, Italy
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2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria

C (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi)

Justification provided by the State Party

Criterion (i) Represent a unique artistic and aesthetic achievement

Ferrara is an ancient capital city with one of the most important urbanistic designs of Europe.

It is the only one amongst the great Italian cities, to have an original city plan not deriving from the Roman scheme (developing outwards from a center) but from a "linear" axis along the banks of the river Po, with longitudinal streets and many side roads around which the medieval city developed.

The most relevant peculiarity of the urbanistic history of Ferrara lies in the fact that since the 14th century it has developed- first in Europe- through

planning regulations which are nowadays common to "all modern cities".

This development was called "Addizione" and the third example was realized in 1492, which made Ferrara the only Renaissance planned to be completed.

In comparison with Pienza and Urbino where the Renaissance style of renovation was only architectural; or Rome where the renovation was only an infrastructural one; or with later examples such as Sabbioneta, planned but not sufficiently completed; Ferrara as Bruno Zevi says, "has an implant realized in all the three dimensions".

The road networks and the walls are closely connected to the palaces, churches and gardens.

Jacob Burckhardt stated that FERRARA WAS THE FIRST EUROPEAN MODERN CITY.

All through the 16th century the city the town was planned as a future "capital city".

The development of the city stopped after the 17th century under the Papal government and was not to expand for nearly three centuries. It was (and still is) medieval and Renaissance with a more recently added suburban area and green quarter. All of them respect the original 16th century plan.

As a consequence today Ferrara still coincides with its historical center. In the present period Ferrara is engaged in a planning operation which is the continuation of its tradition in this field. Its objective is the social reclamation and evaluation of the of its architectural and urban property in a project involving the whole territory.

This urbanistic policy has made Ferrara a "model" which has been studied by ICCROM in its specialization courses for more than fifteen years.

As stated above in 1492 Ferrara had a planning scheme that aimed to double the land area of the city which had expanded up to that moment only to the south of the castle. This expansion was completed by the building of a new and extremely updated defensive system with secure keeps, walls and ramparts: "the most important military work of the 15th century".

The image of the city was completely altered through ail of these changes, new perpendicular streets were created and innovatory buildings were realized. The fortified system that was partially renovated after the 16th century is unique as it shows peculiarities of all the most significant periods of military architecture and is not a homogeneous system because it has elements of

different building typologies. It is thus considered the only complete version of the “Italian Bastion System”. The system was not however built following an abstract scheme, or constructed separate from the context of the city, but was on the contrary well integrated in the urban complex. In Renaissance Ferrara the symmetry between the city and its territory was considered of extreme importance. Both areas inside (see the road network scheme) and outside (see the agricultural plan) the walls were asked “to cooperate” with the defensive system.

Such an urbanistic and military far-sightedness was also made possible by the relationship between Ferrara and the great masters of the 15th and 16th century, such as Francesco di Giorgio Martini, Antonio da Sangallo il Giovane, Michele Sanmicheli and Michelangelo Buonarroti. These architects (famous then in the military field) visited Ferrara, which was considered to have a much updated defensive system: they could in this way compare their scientific knowledge with what they saw achieved in the city of the Este family.

These exchanges of information and ideas were fundamental to the development of the walls of Ferrara, while the city itself was always a model and inspiration for all artists.

The walls of Ferrara are neither homogeneous medieval walls (as in Montagnana) nor a “modern bastion system” (as in Lucca) but rather a combination of different wall types.

Before the current restoration they were in a state of utter neglect and entirely covered with weeds—such conditions were obviously an obstacle in the appreciation in this extremely interesting monument.

Criterion (ii) Have exerted considerable influence over a span of time.

Ferrara has always had a great influence over town planning and planned preservation. It was the birthplace of the concept of “Urban Perspective”: the value of architecture was related to the location of the building in the city instead of being confined to its formal design. This incredible aspect has been preserved through the years and makes Ferrara spectacular, even when there are no impressive buildings to be seen.

Ferrara was the first city to be planned as a capital following urbanistic criteria used again only centuries later in renovated or newly built cities like Paris, Vienna, Berlin, etc. The influence of Ferrara was due to its urban design, walls and fortress, a model not only for those listed above, but also for

the impressive Fortress of Amsterdam. The Ferrarese architectural school (Biagio Rosetti; Girolamo da Carpi; Giambattista Aleotti; Domenico Tristani, etc) exported these new views into the planning of other Italian and European cities. In addition to this some architects (like Antoonelli, Alghisi, or Domenico Rosetti) constructed “new cities” in America, Africa and Asia. Architects such as Michelangelo, Peruzzi, Vignola and Sansovino visited Ferrara in order to learn from its structure. Leon Battista Alberti wrote his treatise of architecture in Ferrara; Luca Barbaro dedicated his commentary on Vitruvius, illustrated by Palladius to the Este family. Furthermore after the Renaissance, Ferrara was studied by other architects (like Floriani etc) who were in the process of planning new fortifications.

Nowadays Ferrara is internationally famous for the way its cultural properties are preserved. International organizations such as ICCROM and ITARC or foreign universities (Zurich, Philadelphia, Oslo, Calcutta, etc) organize annual seminars on the planning of this city.

European and world conferences on the problems of preservation have taken place yearly with the cooperation of ICOMOS, ICOM and UNESCO.

Criterion (iv) Among the most characteristic examples of a type of structure, the type representing.

Ferrara was equally important in other artistic fields in the Renaissance period. The Ferrarese Painting School “Officina Ferrarese” is famous worldwide and all major museums have rooms dedicated to it.

Foreign painters attended the Court of Ferrara and worked for it. They included Piero della Francesca, Mantegna and Michelangelo. The Flemish artist Van Eyck introduced oil painting at the court when it was still an unknown technique in Italy.

The Estes created the first art gallery which became a model for the Medici and the Pope. They also built such masterpieces as the “Alabaster Rooms” of Alfonso I. In Literature of note are the humanists like Bembo, Ciraldi and Guarini, as indeed are poets like Boiardo, Ariosto and Tasso, creators of the Italian epic poetry and the Italian comedy.

Ferrara was also a reference point for Boany: many exotic plants were imported and grown here, like the “Rosa Ordorosa” imported from China and the Tulip and the “Rosa Pomaria” (the potato) imported from America. The herbariums of the Estes are among the most precious and assorted in existence.

The design of the gardens was so famous that it was copied by the Pope when he took possession of the city in 1598. These gardens have now disappeared but they are about to be recreated as part of the walls "restoration plan". The influence of these gardens can still be seen in those of Villa D'Este in Tivoli and Villa D'Este in Lake Maggiore.

A great development of Science took place in the university, founded in 1391 where Copernico, Paracelsus and other illustrious scientists studied or taught.

The schools of Astrology and Medicine had outstanding developments both under the Este and Papal governments.

In the field of Music Ferrara was the birthplace of melodrama and polyphonic music was started here by Frescobaldi.

As far as military science is concerned the Estes invented and produced some of the biggest and freest Renaissance fue-arms.

Finally Ferrarese cooking influenced the taste of Europe and indeed the world. Caterina de'Medici brought to France the book by Messisbugo, the court cook of the Este family, thus making a significant contribution to the birth of modern cooking. Many modern dishes still show the influence of the Ferrarese Renaissance cooking.

The contribution of Ferrara to art and culture was not however felt only in the Renaissance, but also through the following centuries. In fact the city's contribution to art and culture has remained significant despite its economic and political decline.

Modern artistic movements like the so called "metaphysical painting" (De Chirico and Morandi) or the "existential painting" (De Pisis) as well as the cinema (Antonioni, Vancini, etc.) and as the literature (Bassani) are all evidence of the city's continuing cultural links.

Criterion (vi) most importantly associated with persons of outstanding historical importance.

The history of the Renaissance city is closely bound to the ESTE FAMILY and their rule.

The city had been an important medieval center, a free city with its own laws and even its own mint, but only under the Estes was it to become a world famous capital.

The Este court was indeed splendid and for two centuries could equal cities like Florence and Venice or great European courts such as the ones of France and Spain.

The Popes either considered the Estes as dangerous enemies or useful friends.

The European courts maintained contact with Ferrara throughout this period.

The far-sighted patronage of the Estes attracted all the best artists of that time. The Estes always played a major role in European political life as their state was a screen between northern and southern Italy and consequently between the Papacy and Empire.

This open-mindedness was a characteristic of the Estes, not only in the field of art, but also in the economy, ideology and religion.

The Jewish community has always enjoyed relative freedom to live in the city. Duke Ercole I even invited the exiled Spanish Jews to come and reside in the city.

Prominent female figures of the Este family such as (Beatrice Isabella d'Este or Lucrezia Borgia) contributed to make the court even more prestigious. Protestantism and Calvinism were protected by Renata di Francis.

Machiavelli was inspired by Ercole I d'Este in writing his famous treatise about the virtues of the perfect Renaissance prince.

As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

(1996): That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria (ii), (iv) and (vi)*:

Ferrara is an outstanding planned Renaissance city which has retained its urban fabric virtually intact. The developments in town planning expressed in Ferrara were to have a profound influence on the development of urban design throughout the succeeding centuries. The brilliant court of the Este family attracted a constellation of outstanding artists, poets, and philosophers, particularly the new humanists of Renaissance Italy, during the two seminal centuries of the Renaissance.

(1999): The site that is being proposed as a World Heritage nomination can be articulated in four parts:

1. the area connected with the estate of the Diamantina to the west of Ferrara;
2. an area extending to the north, and including the estate of Fossadalbero;
3. the old river of Po di Volano extending from Ferrara to the sea, including the monastery of Pomposa, the castle of Mesola, and the related Boschetto, as well as the estate of La Mensa;

4. the old waterways extending from Ferrara, first to the south, including the estates of Belriguardo, Venvignante, and Verginese, and then continuing to the east to Comacchio.

All the territory connecting the above areas and extending to the present-day course of the Po in the north is defined as the buffer zone. The proposed areas together with the buffer zone characterize the area well. The main emphasis in the nomination is on the territorial infrastructure, with the waterways and land connections. The architectural features, the delizie, and other historic buildings and settlements express the visible part of the nomination, as well as reflecting the historical stratigraphy of the place.

Recommendation

That this extension should be *approved*, with the addition of *criteria (iii) and (v)* to the existing criteria (ii), (iv), and (vi):

Criterion (iii) The Este ducal residences in the Po Delta illustrate the influence of Renaissance culture on the natural landscape in an exceptional manner.

Criterion (v) The Po Delta is an outstanding planned cultural landscape which retains its original form to a remarkable extent.

Committee Decision

Bureau (July 1995): The Bureau recommended the Committee to inscribe the nominated property on the basis of criteria (ii), (iv) and (vi) considering that the site is of outstanding universal value, being a Renaissance city, remarkably planned, which has retained its urban fabric virtually intact. The developments in town planning expressed in Ferrara were to have a profound influence on the development of urban design throughout the succeeding centuries. The brilliant court of the Este family attracted a constellation of outstanding artists, poets, and philosophers, particularly the new humanists of Renaissance Italy, during the two seminal centuries of the Renaissance.

Session (1995): The Committee decided to inscribe the property on the basis of criteria (ii), (iv) and (vi) considering that the site is of outstanding universal value, being a Renaissance city, remarkably planned, which has retained its urban fabric virtually intact. The developments in town planning expressed in Ferrara were to have a profound influence on the development of urban design throughout the succeeding centuries.

Bureau (July 1999): The Bureau recommended the Committee to extend the inscribed property of the City of Ferrara and to inscribe this site on the World

Heritage List on the basis of criteria (iii) and (v), in addition to the already existing criteria (ii), (iv) and (vi):

Criterion (iii): The Este ducal residences in the Po Delta illustrate the influence of Renaissance culture on the natural landscape in an exceptional manner.

Criterion (v): The Po Delta is an outstanding planned cultural landscape that retains its original form to a remarkable extent.

Furthermore the Bureau recommended that the name of the inscribed property be changed to "Ferrara: City of the Renaissance and its Po Delta" as requested by the State Party.

Session (1999): The Committee approved this extension to the World Heritage site of the City of Ferrara and to inscribe this site on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria (iii) and (v), in addition to the already existing criteria (ii), (iv) and (vi):

Criterion (iii): The Este ducal residences in the Po Delta illustrate the influence of Renaissance culture on the natural landscape in an exceptional manner.

Criterion (v): The Po Delta is an outstanding planned cultural landscape that retains its original form to a remarkable extent.

As requested by the State Party, the Committee decided to change the name of the inscribed property to "Ferrara, City of the Renaissance and its Po Delta".

- Statement of Significance adequately defines the outstanding universal value of the site
- UNESCO's official description of the site is not satisfactory for the State Party
- Proposal for text has been made by State Party

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: adequate
- Buffer zone: adequate
- The primary objective of the buffer zone is to protect the views over the World Heritage property, giving particular importance to related interventions. The buffer zones protect the historic centre of the city and the fortified system comprising walls and ramparts. The buffer zone includes the most important ancient beds of the river that are still visible on the ground, as well as the historic network of roads and waterways that completes the scheme of the territory of Ferrara outlined between the Middle Ages and the Modern Age. The formations of land resulting from the great mechanical reclamation works carried out in the

second half of the 19th Century, and the area generated by the presence/action of the River Reno or other rivers flowing from the Apennines (southern part of the Province of Ferrara), are included neither in the property nor in the buffer zone. It is not excluded need for a better definition of the delimitation of the southern part of the buffer zone and, in general, a better identification of the protection needs of the area

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- Integrity of the property
- The conservation of the historic centre of Ferrara has been and remains a major objective, which involves the inhabitants and private bodies as well as the official services. The earliest restoration works were undertaken in the 16th century following an earthquake in 1570. Since the 17th century specialist services, such as the Civil Board for Decoration (1860) and the Regional Bureau for the Conservation of the Monuments of Emilia-Romagna (beginning of the 20th century), and private organizations, such as Ferrariae Decus (1906), have undertaken the restoration of monuments and streets, and also the urban fabric. Authenticity In the case of Ferrara should be seen first of all in relation to the urban fabric representing the Renaissance city. The city planning office has carried out extensive comparative studies on the changes in form of the city over the centuries since the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, through the 19th and 20th centuries. This shows that the urban fabric has maintained all its significant features over the centuries. The overall urban image can be well understood as still reflecting the authenticity of the Renaissance planning ideals, and the citizens are clearly proud of this inheritance
- The Management Plan of the Property is currently at drawing-up stage –as the general revision of the landscape part of the Territorial Plan of Provincial Coordination. It will identify pressures on the property and their consequences. However, it could already state that the property will be affected by the creation of different infrastructures at national and international level along the north-south axis. These infrastructures will intersect both the western part of the property (interregional road system) and the eastern part (road E55 – international value); these changes could affect the values of integrity of some areas of the property, without undermining its authenticity

3. Protection

Legislative and Administrative Arrangements

- The whole property and the buffer zones are covered by the Territorial Plan for Provincial Coordination, drawn up in conformity with Act.141/1990 and Regional Act 6/1996, approved and in force since 1997. It serves as landscape plan for the enforcement of Law 431/1988. It envisages the safeguard of the historic landscape of the Provincial territory and identifies 10 Landscape Units that cover the whole Province. The Plan is currently under revision to comply with the new Regional Law 20/2000 (safeguard of the territories) and the new provisions for the protection of historic and cultural heritage. The revision should be completed by mid 2006. The urban area of the City of Ferrara is regulated by the General Urban Development Plan and the Planning Regulation adopted in 1995 and currently in force. A new town-planning tool currently at the drafting stage is the Municipal Structural Plan, in conformity with the provisions of Regional Act 20/2000. Following the attention devoted to the city of Ferrara by local society, economic actors and policy makers in recent years, singling out some issues and themes, the Municipal Structural Plan identifies some “sensitive areas” for which further reflection and projects are deemed necessary
- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

4. Management

Use of site/property

- Urban centre, protected natural areas (Regional Park of the Po Delta), cultural landscape, particularly near ancient architectural structures

Management /Administrative Body

- No steering group; the Provincial and Municipal Authorities of Ferrara launched actions of operational coordination on management plan issues. Although the need to set up a Steering Committee has been agreed upon, its composition and mandate are still to be decided
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: local; Regional Po Delta Park
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

Actions proposed:

- Drawing up a management plan. All the Municipalities of the Province of Ferrara-

although at different levels - are interested in and affected by the property's management plan, since the implementation of common policies for the protection, promotion and valorisation of the property can contribute to the valorisation of the whole territory of the Province, be it subject to safeguard, included in the buffer zones, or part of the "extended territory" of the property. Moreover, the complexity of the property involves the lawgiving and managing competences of many local and State institutions. Thus the need to identify the promoters of the management plan of the property in the first place. Subsequently, we can set up a Steering Committee, coordinated by the Provincial Authority and composed of the institutional representatives of the promoters. The Committee shall outline the strategies and the actions necessary to pursue the above-mentioned objectives. The Committee, in turn, shall set up an interdisciplinary, institutional working group, which shall draw up the management plan, developing the different themes through the work of subgroups

5. Management Plan

- Management plan under preparation
- Implementation commence: 01/2005
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: at the moment, the Municipality and the Province of Ferrara are coordinating the drawing up of the Management Plan and will certainly be involved in implementation and monitoring together with other institutions

6. Financial Resources

Financial situation

- State Budget, regional Funds
- European Bank
- Insufficient

7. Staffing Levels

Rate of access to adequate professional staff across the following disciplines:

- Very good: conservation, management, promotion; interpretation; education; visitor management
- There is a lack of professionals specialised in drawing up projects (and evaluate them), counting upon multi-disciplinary expertise that

could enable them to identify and counteract the repercussions of the project on the territory/landscape. The same is true for the ability to highlight the typical features of the local landscape and form both local public opinion oriented towards the correct management of the property and new expertise in the maintenance of the territory

8. Sources of Expertise and Training in Conservation and Management Techniques

- The property offers different kinds of expertise for the training of operators. Among public structures, libraries, archives, Museums and the Municipal Theatre are the most important. All organise seminars, educational activities and specific training courses. The remaining training activities can be divided in three main groups: - University of Ferrara; - Research Institutes, postgraduate courses; - Training institutions and cultural associations
- Training available to stakeholders

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: 7.527.597 (data collecting in compliance with the procedures established by the National Institute for Statistics), 2003; fluctuating
- Visitor facilities: Tourist information Offices; Bookshops, guided tours, multimedia information counters, audiovisuals available in museums; Free publication and circulation of information material in four languages (Italian, English, French and German) – annual information update; Travel agencies; Consortia; Call-centres; Mobility centres (services for disabled); Multipurpose cards

10. Scientific Studies

- Risk assessment, studies related to the value of the site, monitoring exercises, condition surveys, archaeological surveys, transportation studies
- Many studies were carried out in recent years. These are mainly publications carried out or sponsored by institutions, foundations, and cultural associations, national and local publishing houses. These publications enhance and disseminate the knowledge of urban and territorial development of the property and deal with its further evaluation

- Research programmes were used both as starting point for the definition of methods and as supporting tools in the operational phases, in planning and carrying out management and conservation interventions on the property

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- Not enough number of signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem used on some publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: local communities, local authorities
- Need for awareness raising: educational and training programmes for operators; Educational and valorisation programmes for schools; Organisation of events and exhibitions; Creation of a property museum; Tourist / visitor management plan
- During 2003-2004 organised events focusing on the WH status of the property, such as: International workshop sponsored by the World Heritage Centre - UNESCO, entitled Territorial Transformation and landscape production: the case study of Ferrara World Heritage property. 8° Tourist exhibition of 100 Italian Artistic Cities, which included the 4° European Forum on World Heritage Properties and the first International Assembly of the representatives of the World Heritage European Association; Since 2000, the annual exhibition on Restoration and Conservation of Cultural Heritage hosts a stand dedicated to the property. The ninth exhibition also hosted a congress and an exhibition on Management Plans of UNESCO properties; There is a plan to set up a permanent exhibition on the property in four rooms of the Este Castle of Ferrara
- Web site available

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- N/A

Conservation interventions

- The following conservation and re-qualification interventions have been carried out in recent years: Restoration of the structures covering different buildings to safeguard and protect them; Assessment of the damage and the cracks present on the buildings in order to identify worrying destructive phenomena;

Interventions to update devices, in particular special devices such as river monitoring devices, fire-extinguishing devices, burglar alarms, video security to prevent thefts and vandalism; Environmental monitoring for the optimal conservation of the artistic works kept in the buildings; Selective and anti-vegetative interventions with chemical herbicides to protect masonries; Restoration of vacant historic buildings for ecologically sound reuse as museums, libraries, conference rooms, University departments, hotels, etc; Interventions for structural consolidation also in line with the new Earthquake legislation; Project for the recovery and re-qualification of the City Park Parco Urbano in Ferrara, the ancient Park of the Este family Restoration of the Este Castle to turn some of its rooms into a museum Restoration of the courtyard of the Este Castle in Mesola Cycling routes, alternative routes that allow the discovery of our rural water landscape

- Present state of conservation: Patchy

Threats and Risks to site

- Development pressures; environmental pressure; natural disasters; new main roads
- Specific issues: Seaside tourism on the coast of the Lidi di Ferrara; hydraulic risk; seismic risk; risk of fires in woods

Emergency measures taken:

- Management Plan. The definition of the PTCP, together with the Management Plan will also identify recognisable changes and current or planned transformations. It will define the list of risks of jeopardy. It will also identify the (mandatory) active conservation and safeguard objectives and the objectives of recovery and regeneration of landscapes/ specific features deemed significant. Attaining these objectives is an obligation of the Municipal Planning and the ensuing projects

13. Monitoring

- No formal monitoring programme
- Measures taken/planned: The Management Plan, currently at drawing up stage, shall include the definition of key indicators to monitor the level of presentation of the universal value of the property

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: management; more visibility; more cooperation in management and awareness of the need for assessment criteria

- Strengths/Weaknesses of management: the complexity and size of the property and the involvement of many different institutions make it difficult to outline a homogeneous framework of action