

**EVALUATION ICOMOS**  
**The Canal Area of Amsterdam (Netherlands)**  
**No 1349**

*Official name as proposed by the State Party:*

The seventeenth-century canal ring area of Amsterdam inside the Singelgracht

*Location:*

City of Amsterdam, North Holland Province The Netherlands

*Brief description:*

The historic urban ensemble of the canal area in Amsterdam was designed at the end of the 16th century and completed in the 17th century. It was a project for a new 'port-city,' to be built around the old town between the old defence canal and the new Singelgracht Canal. A network of canals in concentric arcs forms the main infrastructure, along with radial canals and streets. With its regular building plots, the successive construction campaigns permitted the development of a vast, homogeneous urban ensemble, but one which included a large architectural variety, with gabled houses and numerous monuments. This model town planning, the first truly 'ideal city' in Europe, came about at the peak of the economic, port, cultural, and artistic development of the United Provinces.

*Category of property:*

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *group of buildings*.

In terms of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (January 2008), Annex 3, this is also a *historic town* in the category of *inhabited historic towns*.

## **1. BASIC DATA**

*Included in the Tentative List:* 26 September 1995

*International assistance from the World Heritage Fund for preparing the nomination:* None

*Date received by the World Heritage Centre:* 30 January 2009

*Background:* This is a new nomination.

*Consultations:* ICOMOS has consulted its International Scientific Committee on Historic Towns and Villages and independent experts.

*Literature consulted (selection):*

Agence Nationale pour l'Amélioration de l'Habitat (ANAH). *Les politiques de réhabilitation urbaine en Europe du Nord: Rapport Amsterdam*, ANAH, Brussels, 2003.

Brekelmans, Marijke L.A.J.T. *Hollandse Renaissance als bron van de Nieuwe Kunst*, Koninklijke-Nederlandse Oudheidkundige Bond, Amsterdam, 1989, pp. 22-41.

De Zwaan, J.A. *Amsterdam, Monumentenstad*, Bond Heemschut, Amsterdam, 1975.

Dutch Ministry of Cultural Affairs, *Dutch Arts: Architecture in The Netherlands*, International Information Department of the Dutch

Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Rijswijk (Netherlands), 1991, 62 pp.

HCR, Historical River Centers; *La ville historique et l'eau: Florence, Séville, Strasbourg*, CUS, Strasbourg, 2006.

*Levend/Living Amsterdam, hoe een stad met haar monumenten omgaat/A city protects its historic past*, Stichting Amsterdam, Amsterdam, 1987.

Zantkuyl, H.J., *Restaureren in Amsterdam*, KNOB, Amsterdam, 1975, pp. 80-84.

*Technical evaluation mission:* 23 September-2 October 2009

*Additional information requested and received from the State Party:* ICOMOS sent a letter to the State Party on

18 December 2009 regarding the following points:

- Revision of the property boundaries;
- Information about current development projects;
- Information about issuing building permits;
- Information about possible development projects;
- Implementation and operation of the management system.

The State Party responded on 26 February 2010. The analysis of this documentation is included in the present evaluation.

*Date of ICOMOS approval of this report:* 17 March 2010

## **2. THE PROPERTY**

### **Description**

Amsterdam is a commercial and port-city, dominated by its merchant and middle-class elite, especially in the 16th and 17th centuries. There are virtually no prestigious buildings apart from the large public

edifices, which in any case do not concern the nominated property. The city is organised around its port and the canals that govern its merchant activity. It is divided into districts in which houses and warehouses alternate, expressing a culture and traditions essentially linked to maritime trade. The nominated property aims above all to express these values, within a large-scale hydraulic, urban, and social programme. It was created at the height of the political and economic power of the United Provinces. It represented a town-planning project that was the largest in Europe in its day (see History).

The nominated property corresponds with the urban development of Amsterdam to the west and south of the historic old town and medieval port at the end of the 16th century and throughout the 17th century. It is a vast ring-shaped zone that encircled the old town and it was accompanied by the repositioning inland of the city's fortified boundaries, the Singelgracht. This was a long-term programme that involved extending the city by draining the swampland using a system of canals in concentric arcs and filling in the intermediate spaces.

The canals were linked to the Amstel and the IJ, the confluence of which had provided the site for the city's founding port. The canals then provided interior communication channels connecting with the rivers and the port, while the backfill provided building land for houses, shops, and warehouses for the large maritime companies such as the famous VOC (Dutch East India Company).

Towards the interior, where it meets the old historic centre, the nominated property is limited by the western section of the old 15th–16th century urban boundary, converted into a canal, the Singel. The property includes its embankments and houses. To the south, the internal boundary of the property is extended by a short section of the Binnen-Amstel River, then by the start of the Nieuwe Herengracht canal district.

To the east the property is bordered by a radial section of the Plantage Muidergrecht canal. Then to the south, its boundary doubles back to the Binnen-Amstel via the Nieuwe Achtergracht.

To the west of the river, the entire Prinsengracht ring-shaped canal and the houses that line it form the outer limit of the nominated property.

To the north, beyond the Brouwersgracht radial canal, the property extends as far as Haarlemmerstraat and its houses, on the property side of the railway line.

Within the property the network of canals is extended to include two ring-shaped canals parallel and similar to the

Prinsengracht and the Singel – the Herengracht and the Keizergracht. The main waterways connect via small radial orthogonal canals to the Singelgracht ring canal which delineates the outer buffer zone of the property.

The relatively narrow embankments of the canals form paths, often tree-lined, to allow for circulation, as well as radial streets and numerous bridges at the intersections with the canals. The property includes a certain number of locks, notably the Amstelsluizen built in the 17th century.

This is a large-scale urban programme that was completed in several stages, starting in the later years of the 16th century and continuing throughout the 17th century and beyond for the completion of the built environment. It imposed stringent conditions on purchasers, notably strict regular plot sizes, alignments, facade heights and widths, and free circulation on the embankments in front of the houses.

The urban ensemble forming the property is a dense illustration of 17th century Dutch architecture, along with some later developments. It highlights functional types linked to an urban habitat 'on the water,' combining the requirements of maritime trade and its global warehousing functions. It is evidence of specific urban requirements, such as the merchant's house built on the canal, with its high narrow gable facade, the living areas in the lower levels and storage of goods in the upper parts of the building. Goods were hoisted by pulley directly from the embankment or boat to the attic, through an opening at the top of the gable.

The gable facades are lit and dominated by regular rows of large windows, framed by unadorned brick walls of three to six storeys. The gable pediments vary greatly, bearing the main decorative elements of the building exteriors. They give them an individual, personalised style and are testimony to stylistic changes throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, specific to the architecture of the United Provinces. The stepped facades constitute a point of departure in the architectural history of the gable, anchored in local traditions derived from the Renaissance and the Middle Ages. Baroque and classical European influences then took over, leading to curved, triangular, scroll, and bell-shaped forms matching the attic opening, followed later by cornice pediments. These basic motifs take on a multitude of different compositions, of which the 'neck gable' (*halsgevel*) developed by Philips Vingboons was to become a characteristic and popular trait of Amsterdam architecture that spread to many countries.

While housing largely dominates the urban fabric, it also includes large warehouses that span several plots.

Mainly erected in the 17th century, these sometimes underwent redevelopment in the following centuries.

They are sited between the houses and still retain the principle of gabled facades, giving the ensemble a stylistic continuity.

Churches, generally Protestant, but also of other denominations, are included in the urban ensemble. They sometimes introduce a striking monumental break in terms of volume and/or height because of their bell towers (Westerkerk and Noorderkerk, Krijtberg Catholic church). Nonetheless, these religious buildings and the charitable works associated with them still comply with the general principle of a layout based on plots, the rules for alignment, and the gabled facades in various styles, adding a spiritual and religious personalisation: very late Gothic (Onbevlekt Hart van Maria), Baroque (De Duif), classical cornices (St Ignatius), or more composite facades using an interplay of triangular pediments and circular motifs (Adventskerk).

There are only a few rare, small squares in the canal area, but there are many trees planted along the canals.

This urban extension was the largest and most homogeneous of its time. It led to a hydraulic and urban ensemble in close symbiosis, forming a unique and characteristic urban landscape. Four thousand buildings in this city, which is symbolic of perfectly controlled urban development around its canals, bridges, and locks, are now protected at the national and municipal levels.

### ***History and development***

In the 13th century Amsterdam was a small fishing village on the banks of the Amstel River and its mouth on the IJ, an arm of the Zuiderzee inlet. The name comes from the combination of Amstel and Dam, the latter word indicating a dyke or dam built to hold back the sea. This earth levee was also used to carry traffic and was extended by a bridge over the Amstel, made toll-free by a decision of the Count of Holland, Floris V. Amsterdam was proclaimed a city in 1306, and by the end of the Middle Ages it had become an important centre for maritime trade in northern Holland as its port developed on the river mouth. It mainly traded with the Hanseatic League, which it joined in 1369; but it was Antwerp that still dominated the maritime trade of The Netherlands and the North Sea.

Protected behind its dyke, the city grew around the port and Damplein, but the marshy soil had first to be drained and many houses built on piles. At that time it was restricted inside an initial semi-circular canal, the Singel, designed both for drainage and for military defence. In 1452 a fire destroyed almost all the city's timber-framed buildings, and brick became the most common material for rebuilding the city. The city built fortifications along the Singel at the end of the 15th century.

The Netherlands passed under Spanish rule in 1515 with the accession of Charles V. The country rose in revolt in the 16th century in defence of public freedom and religious tolerance, since much of the population had espoused the Reformation. After a period of wars and compromises, the seven provinces of the northern Netherlands formed the independent United Provinces in 1581. This situation attracted rich Jewish families,

Antwerp traders, and French Huguenots in particular to Amsterdam, the largest city in this relatively dispersed federation without any prince regent. It became a land of refuge and of free-thinking. For two decades the military situation, the naval in particular, with Spain remained tense; there were many conflicts, but maritime trade and warehousing activities developed quickly. The Dutch East India Company (VOC, 1602) and the Dutch West India Company (WIC, 1621) were created to trade with the Indian Ocean and the Americas respectively. The 17th century was a particularly flourishing period for the United Provinces, whose sovereignty, economic importance, and cultural uniqueness were fully recognised by the Treaty of Westphalia (1648).

At the end of the 16th century, Amsterdam developed very rapidly and the port-city soon ran out of space within the medieval confines of the Singel. A vast project, for defence and urban growth, was carried out in the 16th and 17th centuries. The new line of defence based on a new boundary canal, the Singelgracht, designed by Daniel Stalpaert, extended the city outwards by around 800m. The Singel was then transformed into an inland port (1601–1603). The positioning between the latter and the Singelgracht opened up space for a new urban area that still had to be drained and backfilled. The project, conceived by Hendrick Jacobszoon Staets, led to the construction of a new port and trading city, built along a network of three new main canals which made it possible for trading vessels to dock. They were in the form of a series of concentric arcs, parallel to the Singel and adopting the same hydraulic morphology. They were dug simultaneously starting from the IJ, towards the south.

The two first sections took the work as far as the Leidsegracht radial canal, allowing backfilling and building to begin; the third section extended the work to the Amstel around 1620. Following exactly the same principles, a fourth section was undertaken beyond the river towards the 'eastern islands' in the mid-17th century.

However, regular planning following the annular canals stopped at the outermost edge of the three, the Prinsengracht. In its western section, between it and the new Singelgracht defence line, the Jordaan district followed the old plot boundaries of the gardens after which it is named, breaking with the rectilinear pattern of the initial plans. This district, which was originally more working class and inhabited by immigrants, is the only part of the nominated property at its urban boundary with the Prinsengracht Canal.

This planned extension of Amsterdam is the work of the mercantile middle class that ran the city. It managed the projects financially, supervised the drafting of the plans, coordinated the work, issued building regulations, and supervised their application. In meeting the needs of trade, practical functionality and hydraulic and military safety were the driving forces for the project. The general rise in wealth of the city and its inhabitants in the 17th century made it possible for this ambitious urban and port extension to be completed in accordance with the initial project.

Amsterdam's growth made it one of the great European capitals, and its port became the most important for international maritime trade. In 1685 the city's *per capita* income was four times that of Paris, allowing the quantity and quality of the real-estate development along the canals throughout the century. Amsterdam continued to develop its tradition as a mercantile, middle-class, humanist, and tolerant city. It continued to welcome immigrants, notably the French Huguenots after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes and more generally the free-thinkers of Europe. In this way, it enriched its economic and artistic elite, but also its expertise with the arrival of highly skilled craftsmen. At that time Amsterdam was one of the cultural capitals of Europe and among the most brilliant and most dynamic, notable for its printers, whose products were sold throughout the world.

The orderly growth of the city's new districts along its canals became a reference urban model, an image of the ideal city that would be adopted and repeated right across 18th century Europe.

The example of this city, enriched by its maritime trade, defended by its canals, dykes, and locks, and never flooded throughout its entire history, attracted the attention of all the great European builders of the day. It directly influenced civil engineering and town planning in England, Sweden, and Russia, where Peter the Great recruited its craftsmen and engineers to create Saint Petersburg, in similar swampy land on the banks of an estuary.

The end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century saw the prosperity of the city and its port decline.

Wars against France and England undermined its maritime trade. The renewal of the port would come in the 19th century as a result of the creation of canals - the North Holland canal in 1825, followed by the direct connection with the North Sea in 1876. Its traffic is still, however, less than that of Rotterdam, close to the mouths of the Rhine and the Meuse.

A trend towards converting the warehouses into apartments began in the 18th century and gathered pace as time passed, in response to the growing urban population, and then to the city's role as a capital demanding greater services. In the 19th and early 20th centuries office buildings were erected, in harmony with the old context in terms of scale, architecture, and materials. However, the arrival of the railway and the central station on the banks of the IJ cut the city off from its direct contact with the inlet.

In the 20th century Amsterdam became an important administrative and financial centre. It shares the role of political capital of the Kingdom of The Netherlands with The Hague. In World War II around 100,000 Amsterdam Jews were deported, the majority of whom lived in the canal districts. The material damage caused by the war was relatively minor.

Retail shops and growing tourism are reflected in the city's changes in the second half of the 20th century.

### **3. OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE, INTEGRITY AND AUTHENTICITY**

#### ***Comparative analysis***

The nomination includes a detailed comparative analysis with other cities. The comparison begins with other European cities, such as Antwerp, Bruges, Mechelen, and Ghent in the former southern Netherlands (Belgium), Venice, Rome, Palmanova, and Genoa in Italy, Friedrichstadt, Berlin, and Potsdam in Germany, Copenhagen in Denmark, Gdańsk and Toruń in Poland, Saint-Petersburg in Russia, Paris in France, and London in the United Kingdom, along with Québec City in Canada.

In all these cities, urban districts and architectural ensembles were planned and built; some of them had to meet the same economic demands because of their status as commercial ports open to the world or as capital cities. In none of them, however, was there such complex urban development, including canals, streets, and buildings, implemented in as planned a manner or on such a large scale. Here hydraulic engineering goes hand-in-hand with town planning.

The hydraulic engineering applied in Amsterdam was unique in its day and it transcended the geographical constraints of the site, unlike in the other water cities. Bruges, Ghent, and Venice were created around natural waterways, and the canals are often no more than sections of embanked waterways. Only Antwerp, which experienced a similar destiny, albeit on a smaller scale and a century earlier, presents a similar early urban development, although on a smaller scale. For its part, Saint Petersburg was built starting in the early 18th century, closely following the direct example of Amsterdam; it was the capital city of a vast empire, but it had no role as a trading or middle class city. All the grand palaces and the urban development along its canals are very different.

Secondly, a comparison is made with other cities in modern Netherlands, such as Leiden, Delft, and Utrecht.

Whilst in these cities the hydraulic expertise is similar, the scale of the development is far less than that in Amsterdam.

ICOMOS considers that the choice of cities for the comparison is overall well made. However, certain analyses have not been carried through, notably the comparison with Antwerp, a port-city which in terms of history and development most closely resembles Amsterdam. Its port expansion preceded that of Amsterdam and was in all likelihood the source of its inspiration. A network of canals was also drawn up there in the early 17th century, before the Escault was closed for political reasons, and thereby changing North Sea trade in favour of Amsterdam.

The comparison could have been extended to include certain other cities established by the Dutch in their colonies (in Indonesia for example) and ports that were directly influenced by the urban extension of Amsterdam, notably New York (United States) with the urbanisation of Manhattan.

Methodologically, ICOMOS considers that the comparison could have been more coherent by being based on more precise town-planning criteria – townplanning typologies (half-moon or concentric circles); canals, their configuration and surrounds; architecture; and the political, economic, social, and cultural context of the project.

Despite certain remarks about the form and content, ICOMOS notes that the comparative analysis has been made using properties of similar value, whether inscribed on the World Heritage List or not, or listed at the national, regional or international level.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of this property for the World Heritage List.

#### ***Justification of Outstanding Universal Value***

The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value for the following reasons:

- The hydraulic and urban programme for the district inside the Singelgracht in Amsterdam was carried out on the basis of a series of main canals arranged in concentric arcs of a circle around the old town. It was simultaneously a project for drainage and sea and land water management, for the creation of artificial land for urban development, and for the organisation of water transport and port activities that demonstrate the high level of Dutch engineering.
- The urban development of the canal district was entirely carried out in the 17th century. It occupies regular lots drawn up on an overall orthogonal plan formed by the main canals and radial passages. It now includes around 4,000 houses, warehouses, and religious buildings that are listed as historic monuments.
- The district developed from private housing with flat gable facades, with large openings and pediments with a great variety of stylistic forms, including the city's typical neck gable. The architectural and urban ensemble created around the canals is testimony to the flowering of a middle-class and humanist culture based on economic success and tolerance.
- Amsterdam's urban success in the 17th century is attributable to an efficient system of controlled development. It was implemented and administered by the Municipal authorities, representatives of the middle class, and the merchant elite, most of whom had established themselves along the new canals.
- The property presents a fully implemented example of large-scale town planning that was a reference model worldwide from the 17th to the 19th century.

ICOMOS considers that the elements put forward by the State Party to express the value of the nominated property are fully acceptable.

#### ***Integrity and authenticity***

##### ***Integrity***

The overall plan of the canal district inside the Singelgracht in Amsterdam has remained virtually unchanged since its creation in so far as the streets and location of the building plots are concerned. The treelined canal streets are unchanged, as are the majority of the narrow streets that connect the historic centre to the rest of the city. The integrity of the ensemble of streets and the hydraulic network is presented by the State Party as being especially authentic.

However, three radial streets were widened at the end of the 19th century, especially Weesperstraat, which was converted into a major arterial road leading to the city centre; its modern buildings affect the visual integrity of this area of the property.

Almost everywhere the nominated property reveals a unique hydraulic and urban organisation designed to create building land and control water. It includes all the attributes needed to express its value. The hydraulic system still operates in accordance with the same principles. Most of the components of the hydraulic system, locks and timber lifting bridges, have undergone technical modifications and they have sometimes been reconstructed in order to adapt to the modernisation of land and maritime transport. The integrity of the hydraulic ensemble and the associated structures is present in terms of their overall water management; the notion of integrity and hence of authenticity is, on the other hand, relatively weak for the engineering structures viewed individually.

The vast majority of the property's buildings, notably along the Prinsengracht, Keysergracht, Herengracht, and along a good part of the banks of the Singel, correspond with the original constructions, with traditional gabled facades. Few lots have been consolidated to provide larger built units. The external appearance of the buildings has been conserved in the vast majority of cases for this central zone of the nominated property, and the state of conservation of the facades is generally good. The architectural and visual integrity of the heart of the canal district is therefore good. Nonetheless, ICOMOS notes that the situation differs considerably at the south-eastern and northern ends of the property. In addition to the arterial road mentioned above, to the east, the visual integrity of the northern zone is undermined by the close proximity of the large buildings in the Westerdok quarter, in the current port.

ICOMOS considers that the integrity of the property is adequate in so far as the conservation of the canals and the streets is concerned, since they still fully comply with and reflect the original plans. The integrity of the hydraulic operation of the ensemble has also been conserved; for obvious reasons of technical, economic, and urban adaptation, the individual engineering structures have undergone modification. The urban landscape presents a good level of integrity and is well preserved, notably the central part of the main canals; it is less so in the eastern section, because of the arterial road and its anachronistic buildings, and in its northern end, with its lesser landscape interest undermined by the visual presence of the large neighbouring buildings.

#### Authenticity

The same elements that form the bases for or affect the town-planning integrity are found in terms of their authenticity.

The vast majority of the buildings along the canals and radial passages have been retained on their original sites. The gable facades and their decorative elements, generally perceived by the owners to be of value, have been relatively well conserved. The use of the buildings has, however, changed; warehouses have been converted into residences or offices, the attics into apartments, the ground floor into shops, cafes, or small thematic museums. Changes in fashions for colours and certain aspects of external restorations have affected some buildings, but the individual authenticity of many public and private buildings is good, or at worst satisfactory.

On the other hand, the widening and conversion of Weesperstraat into an arterial road in the 1960s went hand-in-hand with the construction of modern buildings that bear little stylistic relationship with the old districts.

The buildings are sometimes quite tall and often massive in proportion. More generally, the zone beyond the Amstel is less authentic because of the presence of taller buildings that bear no relation to the property's value.

Similarly, the new shops and facades on Amstelstraat and Vijzelstraat, as well as the development of Rembrandt Square, no longer bear any resemblance to the characteristics of the initial urban fabric. ICOMOS considers that, despite the transformation that part of the urban structure of the nominated property has undergone throughout its history, it still presents authentic and large-scale testimony to the creation *from the ground up* of a port-city and to its economic and cultural development in the 17th and 18th centuries. In its letter of 18 December 2009 to the State Party, ICOMOS recommended reviewing the perimeter of the nominated zone so that it demonstrates adequate and recognized authenticity.

In its reply of 26 February 2010 the State Party undertook a detailed analysis of the streets, blocks of houses, and visual perspectives affected by the presence of anachronistic buildings, along with the historic justifications provided by old maps. This additional analysis reveals the good quality of the historic urban fabric in the northern section, even though the visual perspectives are affected by buildings located outside the property. The eastern section is a major component of the historic urban development of the 17th and 18th centuries, to which it still bears witness with its many authentic historic buildings, despite the passage of the Weesperstraat, which of course affects the integrity of this zone. For the State Party, the central Binnen Amstel waterway must absolutely remain part of the property and not just the border. However, in order to take account of the buildings that bear no relationship with the property, the State Party suggests two reductions: one at the end of the eastern section and another adjacent to Rembrandt Square.

ICOMOS considers this additional study to be adequate, along with the proposals for the new definition of the boundaries of the property. Nonetheless, the impact of the Weesperstraat arterial road on the visual integrity of the property's northern fringe and to the east is considerable.

ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity and authenticity have been met for the majority of the property with, however, reservations regarding the visual integrity of the northern fringe and the Weesperstraat arterial road.

#### *Criteria under which inscription is proposed*

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (i), (ii), and (iv).

*Criterion (i): represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that it is an entirely new, large-scale 'port city' built around the medieval core of Amsterdam, which had become too small. Conceived at the end of the 16th century, it was scrupulously developed throughout the 17th century. It is a masterpiece at once of hydraulic engineering, of town planning, and of a programme of architectural construction. It constitutes a rational project to convert a swamp and flood-prone area into a vast housing and port trade district. The network of canals creates and defines the structure of an urban landscape into regular plots, the basis for a vast new city forming a homogeneous ensemble in terms of its overall perception but with a great wealth of individual decorative detail. The gabled house developed, a type of building used both as a dwelling and for the family's commercial operations.

The new port-city illustrates the exceptional economic and commercial success of the Amsterdam middle class, and also the success of its humanism and religious and philosophical tolerance. At its peak the city was a refuge in Europe and a prestigious intellectual and artistic capital.

ICOMOS considers that the arguments put forward are acceptable and that the nominated property effectively represents a masterpiece of human creative genius.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been justified.

*Criterion (ii): exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town planning or landscape design;*

The success of the hydraulic, urban, commercial, and port programme for 17th century Amsterdam represents the coming together of a vast set of skills accumulated from Antiquity and the Renaissance in Europe. Its completion, and then its representation on engravings that were distributed throughout the world, make it a renowned example of architecture, town planning, and hydraulic management. It became the symbol of an ideal city and an example worldwide. As a result, it became an especially prolific source of inspiration.

In the 17th century Amsterdam was the world's leading port and warehouse for international trade, in constant contact with all parts of the known world. As a result it became the third largest city in Europe, after London and Paris. The continuous arrival of immigrants and visitors from many countries created a melting pot of ideas; the exchange of influences was continuous and of farreaching, fostered by the human culture and religious and philosophical tolerance of the city. Amsterdam was, especially in the 17th century, an extraordinary intellectual, artistic, and cultural crucible, at the heart of the definition of the values of the modern European world.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property is testimony to a considerable exchange of ideas over a period of almost two centuries, with respect not only to civil engineering, town planning, and architecture but also in a series of technical, maritime, and cultural fields.

In the 17th century Amsterdam was a crucial centre for international trade and intellectual exchange; history describes it at the time as the 'capital of the economyworld' (Fernand Braudel).

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been justified.

*Criterion (iv): be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the geometric plan based on its network of concentric canals and radial passages, the perfectly controlled urban ensemble, the port and commercial role, and the many historic gabled houses bear eloquent witness to an urban, port, and architectural ensemble. It is the most extensive and the most exceptional example of this type ever created in the 17th century.

The drainage and creation of land form a concerted pioneering project in an initially particularly inhospitable environment; it is the creation from the ground up of a large-scale port-city that incorporates an overarching synthesis of the available knowledge and expertise built up from Antiquity and the Renaissance. It was the realisation of the utopian ideal city created in response to economic, social, urban, and geopolitical and aesthetic needs.

ICOMOS considers that the canal district in Amsterdam, built in the 17th century, represents an outstanding type of built urban ensemble that required and illustrated a diverse range of expertise in hydraulics, civil engineering, town planning, and building and architectural techniques. It established the model for the entirely artificial port-city as well as the type of Flemish single neck gabled house. At the time the city was the most accomplished illustration of a significant period in the history of the modern world.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been justified.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property meets criteria (i), (ii), and (iv) and conditions of authenticity and integrity (the surface area of the property requires adapting) and that Outstanding Universal Value has been demonstrated.

*Description of the attributes*

- The canal district of Amsterdam illustrates the high level of human expertise in hydraulics and civil engineering that was required to build the entirely artificial infrastructure of a large-scale port-city in the 17th century.

- The result is exemplary town planning, organised around the main canals in concentric arcs and their radial passages. It is the work of the city's middle class and commercial elite.
- The main architectural characteristics are linked to a type of private house that was also focused on port trade. The built heritage also includes warehouses and religious buildings belonging to various European denominations.
- The facades are aligned and of similar dimensions; they have indented or neck gables, with a large variety of pediments. Along with the canals and the tree-lined embankments they form a very characteristic architectural ensemble and a reference urban landscape.
- Amsterdam, especially its canal district, illustrates the economic and cultural apogee of The Netherlands in the 17th and 18th centuries, along with its international influence. At the time, the city was seen as the realisation of the notion of the ideal city, which was used as an urban and construction model in many places around the world.

#### **4. FACTORS AFFECTING THE PROPERTY**

##### *Development pressures*

The State Party recalls that all urban development within the City of Amsterdam must meet the Municipality's town planning and heritage conservation plans. The city centre Borough includes the property and its buffer zone.

Within the nominated property the use of only a few buildings has changed. A special permit is required to modify or pull down a listed building, and virtually all those contributing to the urban, architectural, and landscape value of the property are listed. Work that may affect the infrastructure is examined in detail and reviewed by the relevant property conservation departments. As a result all urban development within the property is described as being fully controlled, whether for private buildings or the use of public space.

However, the State Party itself draws attention by means of detailed, substantiated descriptions to the fact that Amsterdam is now one of the largest European metropolises, part of the conurbation of the 'green heart' of The Netherlands, one of the most densely populated regions of the world. Major urban development projects affect and will continue to affect Amsterdam and its agglomeration in the years ahead.

The following elements, which are directly related to the value of the nominated property, should in particular be taken into account:

- *The construction of the north-south underground line within the property.* This line is currently being bored at a great depth and will have a station on Vijzelstraat. The State Party indicates that all necessary measures have been taken to protect the long-term integrity of the property at the subterranean level. From a visual point of view the impact of the exits will be minimal; moreover, the integrity of this street had already been affected in the early 20th century when it was widened.
- The underground car park and underground railway, in the buffer zone: this is a potential project aimed at limiting car use in the city centre. In its reply of 26 February 2010 the State Party indicates that this project has been suspended until at least 2017. The World Heritage Centre will be advised if the project is revived.
- The construction of tall buildings in the buffer zone, especially on the northern edge of the city on the IJ in Westerdok, has a direct impact on the line of the horizon in the northern section of the property; the existing buildings already impact adversely on the visual axis of Prinsengracht. The State Party has taken care to include part of this port area that is undergoing major redevelopment in the buffer zone to ensure control of the visual impact on the nominated property. However, there is a legal difficulty, as building permits were granted prior to the Act for the protection and conservation of the central Borough of Amsterdam (1999) being passed. Ibis Tower and Dexia Tower, both in the buffer zone, also have a significant visual impact on a certain number of the visual perspectives of the property.
- Other tall buildings outside the buffer zone occasionally affect the lines of the horizon viewed from the property, both in a northerly direction because of the tall buildings on the northern bank of the IJ, and to the south. Rembrandt Tower is 150m high and is visible from a long way off.
- Large advertising hoardings and giant screens are present throughout the old city, i.e., within the nominated property and its buffer zone. They are temporary or permanent, mounted on large metal scaffolds, and have been authorised by the Municipality in exchange for payment. Since 2003 they have been subject to conditions of use. The institutions in charge of conserving the heritage of the historic city, the local and national press, and citizen associations are strongly against this practice because of the perceived highly negative impact on the visual integrity of the historic sites. After a lengthy period of inaction, the relevant authorities have recently taken action, just before the evaluation of the nomination of the property for inscription on the World Heritage List: sizes have been reduced by 50% and no new advertising sites have been authorised. ICOMOS takes note of the various aspects of urban pressure from construction that already affect the



nominated property and which is liable to affect it even more seriously in the future. It congratulates the State Party for its frankness regarding this point and the well documented submission that raises the issues.

Major challenges for future public policies include control and consideration being given to the visual impact of building development across the entire agglomeration taking into consideration its relationship with the heritage values of the nominated property.

ICOMOS emphasizes the extremely negative impact of large advertising hoardings and screens and their supporting structures on the property's value. This issue seems to have been underestimated by short-term public vision. They are fortunately reversible, and their removal should rapidly be scheduled.

In its reply of 26 February 2010 the State Party indicated that the Executive Committee of the Central Borough of Amsterdam had significantly tightened its policy with regard to advertising displays in 2008 and 2009, with the introduction of stricter rules. Inspections have been increased, as has the policy of consultation with advertisers and local associations. A budget of €400,000 will be used to buy out advertisers willing to remove their advertisements.

Advertising on shop fronts and their exterior lighting are not directly referred to. A 'good conduct charter' on this point would be a welcome development. The same applies to the use of unobtrusive enclosures on working sites that respect the property's values, as practised in many historic cities. ICOMOS considers that it is critical that the State Party should pursue this policy with determination through to its conclusion, in order to guarantee the expression of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property. A precise report on the state of this threat would be essential for the next session of the Committee.

Various urban and social projects are underway in the buffer zone:

- Coalition Project 1012: renovation and social revaluation of the medieval section of the city;
- Chinatown Project: reinforcement and structuring of commercial and tourism activities of the Chinese and Asian communities;
- Kop Singel Building Plan: reconstruction of an old 50m tower and its immediate surroundings;
- The project to extend the Binnengasthuis involves the partial reconstruction and modification of historic buildings to create the University's new Human Sciences Library.

In its letter of 18 December 2009 ICOMOS requested clarification, in particular with regard to the Kop Singel and Binnengasthuis projects which, as they involve extensive reconstruction and restructuring, risk affecting the authenticity of the buffer zone. In its reply of 26 February 2010 the State Party indicated that the Kop Singel project had been suspended. The project involving the university Binnengasthuis site dates back some years and is progressing within a public context concerned with architectural quality in harmony with its environment. Furthermore, the buildings concerned were entirely rebuilt in 1897 and so they do not contribute directly to the value of the property.

Finally, the relatively recent listing decision was taken in 2001 after the university library project was announced; it provides for renovation work to adapt these buildings in conjunction with the heritage services. This procedure has been complied with.

A number of building renovation projects within the property are reported. These include the Prinsengracht Hospital, the conversion of the former Public Library an (historic monument), along with the conversion of the former ABN-AMRO bank building and the Keizersgracht office building into apartments.

ICOMOS notes these urban projects, as presented at the time of the assessment, and encourages the State Party to continue ensuring their high architectural quality, in harmony with the visual expression of the property's value.

#### *Tourism pressures*

Amsterdam and its historic centre are significant tourist attractions. In 2007 tourists accounted for over 4.9 million hotel nights. The number of tourists moves relatively easily on foot along the embankments and streets and in the canal boats. The number of hotel beds is adequate and continues to grow within the property and the buffer zone.

#### *Environmental pressures*

All issues relating to the control of natural river water and seawater have always been well managed by means of the network of canals, locks, and dykes, which was planned and built in the 17th century and has been well maintained ever since. Amsterdam has never been flooded.

#### *Natural disasters*

Fire is a risk, as in any city; but it is limited by the nature of the material used for the old buildings, which is brick in the vast majority of cases.

The Netherlands is in a low seismic risk zone.

#### *Impact of climate change*

If in the future the most negative forecasts for rising sea levels prove to be accurate, Amsterdam and a large part of urban Netherlands would be in danger. However, the expertise and know-how that the

Dutch have acquired over the centuries in large-scale hydraulic works, the management of land subject to flooding, and defence systems against the invasion of the sea mean they have undeniable advantages in coping with the situation.

However, the need for a concerted global policy to combat global warming is a pressing issue, here more than elsewhere.

ICOMOS considers that the main threats to the property are the development of large-scale urban buildings within its environment having a visual impact on its integrity and invasive advertising billboards. The lack of a concerted global policy to combat climate change could endanger the property and the larger part of the coastline of The Netherlands.

## **5. PROTECTION, CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT**

### ***Boundaries of the nominated property and the buffer zone***

The nominated property (see Description) has a surface area of 205ha and a population of 23,708 (2007).

The buffer zone has a surface area of 479ha and a population of 45,691 (2007). It surrounds the nominated property in a coherent manner, and mainly corresponds with the old city of Amsterdam, lying between the IJ and the 17th century defence canal, the Singelgracht, today registered as a national urban site. In this respect the buffer zone is subject to its own specific regulations.

ICOMOS suggested in its letter of 18 December 2009 to the State Party that it should reconsider certain aspects of the boundaries of the property. In a detailed reply, the State Party proposed changes. The State should confirm the surface areas and the population numbers of the areas finally adopted.

ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the nominated property have been clarified in the State Party's 26 February 2010 reply.

ICOMOS considers that the revised boundaries of the nominated property and the buffer zone are adequate.

### ***Ownership***

Individual buildings along the canals are often privately owned and used as dwellings or shops. Property companies also own many of the buildings within the nominated property; De Key (Key Living Foundation) controls over 200 listed buildings alone. A certain number of buildings belong to commercial or industrial companies or banks that have generally converted them into offices or commercial premises.

Religious, philanthropic, or museum institutions own some buildings and dwellings. These are generally open to the public.

Semi-public or non-profit organizations, some of them long-standing, own some buildings. Their aim is to buy and restore threatened historic buildings. For example, the Hendrick de Keyser Society, founded in 1918, owns 85 buildings in old Amsterdam, many of which in the canal district.

The Municipality of Amsterdam (Central Borough) owns a large number of historic public buildings, churches in particular, and listed buildings used for public purposes.

The Government Buildings Agency of the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (*Rijksgebouwendienst*) owns and manages a certain number of listed historic buildings.

### ***Protection***

#### ***Legal protection***

The entire site and its many historic monuments have been legally protected since the early 20th century. Many acts and regulations have subsequently been added to, strengthened, and detailed in respect of both the content of the protection and its method of application.

At the national level, the main texts applicable to the property are:

- *Cultural Heritage Act* (1984).
- *Monuments Act* (1988, revised in 2006) which introduces the individual protection of buildings listed for their historical value. This is the main tool, along with the previous text, used to define and apply heritage conservation policy. They are then detailed in framework texts regarding the management of national cultural heritage monuments and sites. Today these texts enable protection of the monuments and sites on two levels: the list of historic buildings and the list of preserved buildings.
- *Housing Act* (?).
- *Urban Regeneration Act* (2000).
- *Spatial Planning Act* (2006), *Spatial Development Act* (2006), and a series of documents about spatial management.
- *Certification of restoration architects*.
- *Water Boards Act* ( ?).

At the Municipal level some fifty byelaws and regulatory texts are applicable to the preservation of the property.

They cover the definition of local policies for the overall preservation, conservation and management of the historic city, and the definition of the organisations in charge of implementing these policies,

such as the Amsterdam Bureau of Monuments and Archaeology (BMA) and Municipal Historic Buildings and Sites Project (GMP).

The national inventories constitute an additional inventory level known as the Municipal Historic Buildings and Sites Inventory.

The Municipal byelaws covering the property include:

- The *Municipal Building Regulations* (2003, revised in 2006 and in 2008) are the administrative instrument that governs the issue of building permits and issues directives about external restorations.
- *Amsterdam Monuments and Historic Buildings Byelaw* (2005).
- *Additional Heritage Byelaw* (2009).
- *Strategy for water in the city centre* (2005).
- *Port and Waterways Byelaw* (2006).

The spatial administration of the City of Amsterdam is decentralized with fourteen boroughs (byelaw updated in 2006), of which the Central Borough (Historic Centre) is directly in charge of the property.

The protection decisions applicable to the property and its components are the following:

- The City's Central Borough has been designated as the *Urban Conservation Area of Amsterdam situated within the Singelgracht*, under the Dutch Monuments and Historic Buildings Act of 1988, approved by the Municipality in 1997; this decision was published by the Government in 1999. It is a national decision for the protection of the entire urban fabric and its historic characteristics, the practical application of which falls to the Central Borough of Amsterdam.
- The property contains a total of 3,466 buildings protected under the National Inventory and 433 under the Municipal Inventory.

Protection of the buffer zone is almost entirely governed by the decision that created the *Urban Conservation*

*Area of Amsterdam situated within the Singelgracht* managed by the City's Central Borough. The buffer zone includes 3,188 national monuments and 697 Municipal buildings.

ICOMOS considers that the body of protection regulations is the culmination of a long-standing, evolutionary process to take account of the numerous aspects of the protection of the property and the issues at stake, involving a heterogeneous group of owners (see Ownership), within both the property and its buffer zone. This has resulted in a complex regulatory structure, frequently updated, under the overarching control of the Municipality of Amsterdam. Recent trends in terms of regulations seem to focus on moving towards a simplification of these regulations and reinforcing the Municipality's executive powers, notably on the City's Central Borough.

ICOMOS considers that the harmonisation of the texts and coordination between the various departments responsible for its application should guide future protection actions under the Conservation Plan. The State Party is also invited to ensure that the necessary simplification of the regulations does not in fact become a deregulation in the name of arguments that have nothing to do with the protection of a property of outstanding and universal value.

#### *Effectiveness of protection measures*

The nominated property benefits from a very complex body of protection measures, implemented by the various relevant State and Municipal departments (City of Amsterdam and Central Borough). These legal instruments and measures are governed by the principle of an overall approach to historic sites adopted by the Dutch authorities. In this instance, it is applied to the entire old city, that is to say, the property and its buffer zone, without any particular distinction between the two.

Under this general approach, the Executive of the Central Borough of Amsterdam collects and processes all opinions put forward by the various relevant organisations involved in the building permit procedure.

In its letter of 18 December 2010 ICOMOS requested clarification from the State Party about the application procedure for works and building permits. The State Party replied, explaining that the Borough must comply with the opinions of the Amsterdam Bureau of Monuments and Archaeology, which produces a study of the relevant property. This regulation applies to all types of works.

Conservation is a priority for restoration, in accordance with the Historic Monuments and Buildings Act. Conservation decisions are the result of a pragmatic approach to the issues raised and aim to find a consensus, on a case-by-case basis, a long-standing public practice in The Netherlands. Finally, a new Heritage Order is due to enter into effect in 2010; it will strengthen the ties between the protection of buildings and the protection of archaeological components.

ICOMOS considers that the legal protection of the property is appropriate and that it operates satisfactorily.

#### **Conservation**

##### *Inventories, recording, research*

The compilation of descriptive inventories of historic buildings is a long-standing practice in The Netherlands.

It dates back to at least 1928 at the national level and to 1935 for the Municipality of Amsterdam. Work has continued steadily since that time on updating and detailing the descriptions, resulting in a very rich documentary and historical corpus of information.

Additionally, thematic inventories have also been compiled since the 1950s. Compilation of the inventories is the scientific responsibility of the Ministry of Culture's National Service for Archaeology, Cultural Landscape and Monuments (RACM).

Several descriptive inventories and thematic illustrated albums have been published recently, in association with the nomination process for the property.

Most of the inventories have been digitised and they form databases that can be consulted at the Amsterdam Physical Planning Department.

The historic archives, maps and plans, and iconographic documentation concerning the property often form very extensive collections. These are held in both national and local archives departments, public and university libraries, and the various art and history museums.

The specific inventory documents used to guide technical restoration work are held by the Central Borough of Amsterdam, in particular by the Archives Department, Bureau of Monuments and Archaeology (BMA), Town Planning Department, and Lands Department.

Owners, and more particularly companies and foundations, have documentary collections relating to their own properties.

Hydraulic documentation for monitoring the conservation of the technical components of water management is under the responsibility of the Regional Water Boards which in the Netherlands are democratically managed independent organisations in accordance with a longstanding tradition.

The Amsterdam Bureau of Monuments and Archaeology (BMA) coordinates and publishes numerous studies on the conservation, works, and history of Amsterdam, most of which concern the nominated property directly or partially.

#### *Present state of conservation*

In the nomination dossier the State Party first examines the chronological evolution of the principles that have dictated the maintenance of the property's historic monuments and buildings, along with the history of its management. A Municipal department specialising in monitoring conservation was created between the two World Wars along with the Municipal inventory. It was expanded and developed in the 1950s. Today, it is the Bureau of Monuments and Archaeology (BMA), the main scientific and conservation coordination department.

The typological approach and the reporting of recent work reveals the approach adopted for the monuments and various public and private historic buildings.

Numerous restorations have been carried out in recent years, under excellent conditions, in accordance with a flexible organisation system that factors in the diversity of the public or private situations of the buildings concerned (see Ownership).

ICOMOS considers that, despite the great number of buildings concerned by the conservation work and the institutional complexity of the administrative, financial, and technical parties involved, the overall present state of conservation of the property may be described as good.

#### *Active conservation measures*

The general framework is the Borough Built Heritage Programme (2006–2010). Restoration, refurbishment, reallocation, and maintenance operations are scheduled each year, both by the authorities for their public buildings and by the private sector, with assistance when their building is listed on the inventories. These operations are carried out and the buildings are generally in a good state of conservation.

Buildings are restored under various programmes funded by the State, Municipality, or private institutions.

The public–private partnerships that are implemented operate relatively well, and private owners are generally aware of their heritage duties and obligations.

In addition to the various inventory and conservation programmes already mentioned as the basis for conservation knowledge, the other public programmes regarding restoration are:

- Amsterdam Structural Plan: Opting for an Urban Environment, passed in 2005, that includes an Urban Development Council (2006) and an Urban Assessment and Advice Team (STAT) for spatial planning in Amsterdam (2005);
- The City Centre Cultural Policy Document (2005);
- The recommendations of the External Appearance and Historic Buildings Committee (CWM) (since 2005);
- The planned archaeological programme of the BMA (2008–2010).

In its reply of 26 February 2010 the State Party indicated that the Municipality of Amsterdam is examining a guidance document concerning the future development of large buildings within the agglomeration up to 2040. In particular, this document includes a detailed landscape study of the existing situation in order to specify potential visual scenarios within its area so as to assess the

impact fully and define the rules to be applied. The conservation of the property's values will be a major concern under this process.

#### *Effectiveness of conservation measures*

ICOMOS considers that all the conservation measures function well and the general state of conservation is good.

ICOMOS considers that, despite the evident complexity of the property itself and the various forms of intervention, conservation has been effective to date.

#### **Management**

##### *Management structures and processes, including traditional management processes*

The main entities in charge of the nominated property's management are:

The City of Amsterdam, and especially the Central Borough of Amsterdam, which is responsible for general administration, public regulations, especially with regard to building permits, town planning, and safety. They operate through various technical departments, committees, and their elected decision-making bodies.

The Borough also manages the public thoroughfares, which implies maintenance of the streets, embankments, and bridges, and their repair under terms that are compatible with the property's value, and finally public planting, landscaped areas, and lighting.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science operates through the National Service for Archaeology, Cultural Landscape and Built Heritage (RACM).

The Municipal Bureau for Monuments and Archaeology (BMA) and the External Appearance and Historic Buildings Committee (CWM) are the entities responsible for conservation.

The overall hydraulic management is provided by the Amstel, Gooi, and Vecht Water Authority. It is responsible for maintaining the city's protection dykes and locks and the water levels in the canals and rivers, monitoring the aquifer, water quality, and waste-water treatment. Since 2006 it has also been responsible for the visual quality of water in the city.

##### *Policy framework: management plans and arrangements, including visitor management and presentation*

The Management Plan is based on grouping together and harmonising all the operational plans and sector actions. It is a very thorough and comprehensive document produced under the responsibility of the BMA.

It begins by listing all the regulatory texts and programming and planning documents. Next it provides a general overview of the management of the property, focused on its protection conservation and outlook.

Finally it focuses on the operational level by describing the tasks to be completed and the departments responsible for performing them. In particular, the Plan includes a thematic schedule and calendar of operations to be completed in the 2009–2010 transition period.

The management plan has been approved by the property's relevant authorities – the Municipality of Amsterdam and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

In terms of coordinated management organisation, the Management Plan first reasserts the responsibility of each of the stakeholders in their relevant area of expertise as a *sine qua non* for sound overall operation.

The Central Borough of Amsterdam is then presented as the main body responsible for and coordinator of the management of the property. Its tasks and missions are defined in accordance with the existing legislation and as an extension of its other Municipal management tasks for the city centre. It is also tasked with external relations with the relevant authorities, the Municipality of Amsterdam and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

Tourism raises no particular practical problems at present because of the broad and diverse range of services provided by the relevant professional sectors (transport, hotels, restaurants, shops, etc).

The range of cultural and museum activities is very broad in terms of the property's values, in particular the history of Amsterdam in the 17th century and classical Dutch culture and Flemish art in the modern era. There are 35 museums in the city centre, i.e. in the property and its buffer zone. The *Group of the Seven Canal Museums* is directly related to the property. All aspects of tourism are an important economic aspect of the growth of the city.

The BMA has installed an easily accessible digital information system that explains the historic buildings and monuments of Amsterdam.

ICOMOS considers that the proposed Management Plan is very thorough and that it is immediately operational.

Nonetheless, in its letter of 18 December 2009 ICOMOS requested the State Party to clarify the method for its implementation. In its reply, the State Party details the long-standing operations within the Municipal authorities, and the Central Borough in particular. The World Heritage Bureau was established on 1 September 2009 in the Central Borough and is tasked with broadly coordinating the application of the management plan and monitoring the property.

##### *Risk preparedness*

Risks have been correctly analysed and the public services that have to handle them seem to be adequately organised and equipped with the necessary human and technical resources. The management of hydraulic risks is a case in point.

#### *Implication of the local communities*

Owner and citizen associations along with property conservation foundations are organised and active.

There are also many cultural bodies directly involved with presenting the values of the property to visitors. The general sense of awareness of the property's value among the majority of the population is to be noted.

#### *Resources, including staffing levels, expertise and training*

The Management Plan includes a presentation of the public financial responsibilities with regard to the scheduled actions for the property's management and conservation from 2003 to 2011. There is no mention of private investment.

The authorities involved in the management process for historic heritage includes State departments, Central Borough and Municipal departments, the Bureau of Monuments and Archaeology (BMA), cultural and tourism associations, museums and university courses related to the property's values, etc. Then there are the private-sector professionals employed by owners, such as the Association of Architects, the many contractors and tradesmen specialised in building maintenance and restoration, etc. All have human and financial resources at their disposal for conservation and management.

In terms of the expertise required for the property's management, it would be difficult to quote any precise or reliable figures because of the diversity of stakeholders.

However, the skills are clearly available in sufficient numbers and available for employment on specific financially consolidated projects. They are generally of an excellent scientific and professional level. They easily adopt international standards for conservation, and are indeed often involved in defining those standards.

#### *Effectiveness of current management*

The management system is established, it operates well, and everyone knows what is expected of them. The Management Plan is a serious and credible compilation of a coherent ensemble of measures and responsibilities.

ICOMOS considers that the management system for the property and the organisation of this management are adequate. However, the following should be confirmed: a preventive control of large building projects outside the property that may affect its visual value.

## **6. MONITORING**

Monitoring is one of the most important tasks entrusted to the Central Borough of Amsterdam as the coordinating manager for the property. A specific unit for monitoring the property has been established. The actions announced in the Management Plan will be assessed annually, in accordance with a series of key

factors and with a programme referred to as the District's Measurable Policy Programme (2006–2010). The results

will be compiled in an annual report and its conclusions will be used in drawing up the Central Borough's annual

action plan; as a consequence these will be included in the budget.

A series of services and study programmes will be used to enhance the monitoring process, especially by the

Bureau of Monuments and Archaeology (BMA) and the Borough's Construction and Housing Department.

A monitoring matrix has been devised on an annual basis; it includes nine thematic principles broken down into around fifty individual items. Management of the conservation of the built heritage, town planning, risk prevention, and tourism are subjects given particular attention.

In its 26 February 2010 reply, the State Party detailed the list of monitoring indicators applied, their annual frequency, and the organizations responsible for them (Annex F).

ICOMOS considers that the general organization of the monitoring system is adequate.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

ICOMOS recognises the Outstanding Universal Value of the seventeenth-century canal ring area of Amsterdam inside the Singelgracht.

#### ***Recommendations with respect to inscription***

ICOMOS recommends that the seventeenth-century canal ring area of Amsterdam inside the Singelgracht, The

Netherlands, be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of ***criteria (i), (ii), and (iv)***.

Brief synthesis

The Amsterdam Canal District illustrates exemplary hydraulic and urban planning on a large scale through the entirely artificial creation of a large-scale port city.

The gabled facades are characteristic of this middleclass environment, and the dwellings bear witness both to the city's enrichment through maritime trade and the development of a humanist and tolerant culture linked to the Calvinist Reformation. In the 17th and 18th centuries, Amsterdam was seen as the realization of the ideal city that was used as a reference urban model for numerous projects for new cities around the world.

**Criterion (i):** The Amsterdam Canal District is the design at the end of the 16th century and the construction in the 17th century of a new and entirely artificial 'port city.' It is a masterpiece of hydraulic engineering, town planning, and a rational programme of construction and bourgeois architecture. It is a unique and innovative, large-scale but homogeneous urban ensemble.

**Criterion (ii):** The Amsterdam Canal District bears witness to an exchange of considerable influences over almost two centuries, in terms not only of civil engineering, town planning, and architecture, but also of a series of technical, maritime, and cultural fields. In the 17th century Amsterdam was a crucial centre for international commercial trade and intellectual exchange, for the formation and the dissemination of humanist thought; it was the capital of the economyworld in its day.

**Criterion (iv):** The Amsterdam Canal District represents an outstanding example of a built urban ensemble that required and illustrates expertise in hydraulics, civil engineering, town planning, and construction and architectural knowhow. In the 17th century, it established the model for the entirely artificial 'port city' as well as the type of Flemish single dwelling with its 'neck gable'.

The city is testimony, at the highest level, to a significant period in the history of the modern world.

#### Integrity and authenticity

The network of canals in concentric arcs of a circle that forms the basis of the urban layout, along with the radial waterways and streets, survives in its entirety, with its old embankments and historic facade alignments. The majority of the houses erected in the 17th and 18th centuries are still present in a good general state of conservation. This basic situation, fundamentally healthy for an urban ensemble that is still alive and active, needs to be tempered in certain respects. Streets have sometimes been widened and the facade dwellings rebuilt, notably the current Weesperstraat arterial road.

The old civil and hydraulic structures have generally been replaced, tall modern buildings affect some landscape perspectives, especially in the north of the property, and aggressive advertising pollutes the property's visual condition.

#### Management and protection measures

A very large number of buildings and structures are protected by national and municipal heritage listing. The situation with regard to protection seems to be complex, within the context of the operation of the Amsterdam Central Borough (the heart of the city), but the procedures that govern protection are complied with.

Good awareness on the part of those responsible means that the excesses of urban growth that was at times difficult to control in the recent past seem to be increasingly better managed, notably advertising within the property and the visual impact of tall buildings on the urban landscapes of the property.

All the management measures form an effective and coherent system, within the orbit of the Central Borough of Amsterdam and with the guarantee of the Bureau of Monuments. A horizontal management and monitoring body for the property has now been implemented, the Amsterdam World Heritage Bureau.

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

- Pursuing the application of measures to eradicate aggressive advertising hoardings and video screens on scaffolding and work-site fences inside the property and submit a detailed report on the situation of advertising displays within the property for examination at the 34th session of the World Heritage Committee (2011);
- Giving thought to a charter of good conduct between the city and the private commercial sector, defining what is and is not allowed with regard to how buildings are treated, shop fronts, signage and lighting, the occupation of public space, urban furniture, terraces, etc.;
- Making sure that when the Amsterdam Central Borough examines building permits, conservation objectives remain paramount;
- Ensuring effective control over projects for tall buildings within the agglomeration to monitor their architectural quality and ensure that they are in harmony with the visual expression of the value of the property;
- Keeping the World Heritage Committee informed of any development project concerning the property, its buffer zone, and surroundings in conformity with paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*.
- Providing the number of inhabitants and the surface areas of the property and the buffer zone resulting from the newly configured boundaries.