

Potsdam School of Architecture  
Master of Arts 2026 | 2027

## „LJUBLJANA: City as Landscape“



französischer Kataster, Stadt Laibach\_1826

„Eine kleine Stadt von großer Kultur.“ Jože Plečnik

### The Topic

The Master's project at Potsdam University of Applied Sciences is dedicated to the architecture of the European city and focuses on various major cities with the aim of developing effective strategies for the further development of the European city in diverse cultural, political, and economic contexts. Following Genoa, Belfast, Turin, Madrid, Marseille, Palma de Mallorca, the Hanseatic cities of Hamburg, Bremen, Lübeck, and Stralsund, the Berlin-Brandenburg metropolitan region, Palma, Trieste, Porto, and Syracuse, we will be examining Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, in the coming year, 2026–2027.

The goal of our project is to identify potential conflicts, develop and discuss alternative design concepts, and propose solutions within a historical and theoretical context.

## The City

Ljubljana is located in the heart of Slovenia along the Ljubljanica River and forms the country's political, cultural, and economic center. With approximately 300,000 inhabitants, it is Slovenia's largest city and one of the smallest capital cities in Europe. Despite its relatively small size, Ljubljana boasts an extraordinary historical and urban density, shaped by diverse cultural influences from Central Europe, the Balkans, and the Mediterranean.

The historic city center developed at the foot of Castle Hill around Ljubljanski Grad (Ljubljana Castle), which still dominates the cityscape. The Old Town stretches along the Ljubljanica River and is characterized by a close connection between public space, waterways, and architecture. Numerous bridges—including the famous Tromostovje (Three Bridges)—connect the different districts and define Ljubljana's spatial identity.

The city has a temperate continental climate: winters are cold and foggy, summers warm and relatively humid. Its location in the Ljubljana Basin creates a unique interplay of landscape, water, and urban space that has shaped the city's development over centuries.

Ljubljana's origins date back to Roman times. As early as the 1st century AD, the Roman settlement of Emona was established here, a fortified town with an orthogonal street grid, forum, thermal baths, and city walls. The ancient urban structure still influences the layout of some districts today. After the fall of the Roman Empire, Ljubljana continued to develop in the Middle Ages as a trading and craft center along important European trade routes.

Under Habsburg rule, Ljubljana gained increasing importance and developed into an administrative and cultural center of the Carniola region. Particularly after the devastating earthquake of 1895, the city underwent fundamental modernization. Wide boulevards, new public buildings, and urban squares were created in the spirit of the Vienna Secession and European urban planning of the turn of the century. During this period, the city acquired its characteristic Central European appearance, which it retains to this day.

In the 20th century, Ljubljana was significantly transformed by the architect Jože Plečnik. His interventions—including bridges, markets, squares, parks, and public buildings—combined classical architecture with modern urban concepts, creating a unique spatial identity. Plečnik conceived of the city as a cohesive architectural Gesamtkunstwerk (total work of art) and developed a sensitive interplay between monumentality, public space, and landscape. His work continues to shape Ljubljana today and was recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in 2021.

During the socialist period of Yugoslavia, new residential districts, infrastructure, and public facilities were built according to modernist principles. Large-scale housing complexes expanded the city to the north and east, with functional separation, green spaces, and transportation infrastructure forming key planning principles. At the same time, the historic city center was largely preserved.

Since Slovenia's independence in 1991, Ljubljana has undergone a comprehensive urban transformation. The city is increasingly focusing on sustainable mobility, traffic calming, and the reclaiming of public spaces. Large parts of the city center have been made car-free, riverside promenades along the Ljubljanica have been reorganized, and public squares have been revitalized. Today, Ljubljana is considered one of the most ecologically oriented cities in Europe and was named the European Green Capital in 2016.

The city maintains a close connection between built space, landscape, and history, making it an ideal case study for dealing with historical layers in contemporary urban planning. In this sense, Ljubljana appears as an urban palimpsest: Roman foundations, medieval structures, Habsburg urban expansions, socialist modernism, and contemporary transformations overlap to form a multifaceted urban fabric.

The close relationship between architecture and urban form is clearly evident in the city's layout and individual buildings, reflecting the different historical periods and growth models. This relationship gives rise to both the unity and the diversity of the cityscape, as well as the tension between public and private space, which forms the core of urban life.

The master's project offers the opportunity to explore the themes of urban repair and urban transformation within a multifaceted European capital city that, despite its historical ruptures, has retained its character and exemplifies the challenges and potential of contemporary urban development in the 21st century.

## **Organization**

The two-semester Master's program is based on a specific topic and a real-world location. The Master's project, involving 30 to 35 students, is conducted each academic year by a fixed group of instructors. In 2026–2027, these instructors are: Prof. Peter Eingartner, Prof. Jan Kleihues, and Prof. Dr. Silvia Malcovati. The project is supported and informed by architectural theory and accompanied by project management.

The Master's thesis consists of an analytical research phase (typology – morphological understanding of the city and reflection on the relationship between city and architecture) in the winter semester and an individual design project in the summer semester. The Master's thesis is the synthesis of both phases.

## Schedule

May 13, 2026 at 9:00 a.m. Master's presentation on Zoom

<https://www.fh-potsdam.de/studium-weiterbildung/studiengaenge/architektur-und-staedtebau-ma#section-11107>

May 15, 2026 Application period begins

June 15, 2026 Application deadline

June 24, 2026 Selection interviews for Master's applicants

September 21–25, 2026 Block seminar in Potsdam

September 23–24, 2026 Presentation of Master's theses 2025–2026

October 5, 2026 Semester start: Course presentations in Potsdam

October 12–16, 2026 Mandatory excursion to Ljubljana

End of January 2027 Completion of Part 1 / Presentation of the Atlas Project

End of September 2027 Final Presentation of the Master's Thesis