

FOOTBRIDGES UPON THE WATERS – AESTHETIC INTEGRATION

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Summary

Urban renewal projects focus usually on unused harbors and docklands to transform these neglected areas into attractive urban waterfronts. The most prominent elements of modern waterfronts are bridges. There is a relation between bridge and urban development along the water and without the conceptual link between them – and integration - a successful waterfront cannot be achieved. Aesthetics of pedestrian bridges is particularly important since people are in direct contact with these structures and often the bridges become the symbols of places that have a deep meaning in human minds. This paper introduces aesthetic factors of footbridges and reflects on their meaning. The examples of footbridges at the waterfronts include historical and park bridges upon the waters and bridges the sea-side waterfronts as well, as at the riverfronts. The examined bridges are mostly in Asia (Japan, China and Korea), but there are also examples of bridges in Europe and Australia. The conclusion is that footbridges that are enjoying renaissance and waterfronts influence each other and when bridges are planned with aesthetical considerations and integrated well with their settings, they can greatly enrich the structured landscape in the cities.

Keywords: footbridge; aesthetics; sea-side waterfront, riverfront.

1. Introduction

Modern waterfronts – along the river or the sea – are already well-established elements of urban and cultural landscape in many countries in Europe, as well as in America, Asia and Australia. Waterfront is an area of a city (such as a harbor or dockyard) located alongside a body of water (river, canal or seaside). The reason for creation of waterfronts is the technological development changes a land use and an urban land value. Former ports areas and industrial lands located near the water switched their function due to structural changes in economy and technology or due to urban development; and they found themselves in the city center. Dockyard and harbors often occupy waterfronts. Urban renewal projects focus usually on unused harbors and docklands to transform these neglected areas into attractive urban waterfronts. The most prominent elements of modern waterfronts are bridges. There is a link between bridges and urban developments along the water, which is based on the conceptual relation between them. Aesthetic integration is a key factor for a successful waterfront.

While the redevelopment of post-industrial dockland, riverside and canal-side sites often poses specific challenges in terms of reclamation, environmental enhancement, and land assembly, there is a widespread recognition that the location of development near water holds a timeless charm which can attract increased values. Links can also be made with the recognition of heritage as an asset. Once viewed solely as a location for shipping and industry, urban waterfronts are recognized since 1970s as areas with tremendous potential for economic development, innovative housing, recreational facilities and connections to natural areas and the environment. Waterfront projects recreate bustle and activity of the area and lead to regeneration of historic places. They are landmarks for tourists and they also offer entertainment alternatives to the local communities.

A waterfront is often the face of a city because it is usually the most attractive part of the city. Characteristic features of waterfronts are cutting-edge architecture designed by well-known architects, landmark bridges and various attractions. Concept of the “waterfront development”, which means giving city attractive areas along the water through restructuring of waterfronts, was initiated in Europe and the USA in 1970s. In Japan, the waterfront development started later, in 1980s. While it was based on foreign experience, there were also significant differences. Because Japanese ports are