Lessons in Remote Infrastructure: Connecting People and Landscape to Promote Economic Vitality & Create Social Value

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Abstract

Transportation systems offer opportunities to connect rural communities with economic possibility. Intentional infrastructure interventions connect citizens with resources and reduce travel time between remote and urban areas – creating sustainable value for entire economic regions. Remote infrastructure presents a tension between creating social value without destroying environmental value.

Presenting two multi-bridge infrastructure projects in Norway and South Africa, Dissing+Weitling explores the opportunity for a design team to partner with local authorities to provide aesthetic interventions that align with environmental protection goals, increase connectivity for rural communities, and balance social value creation with the preservation of landscapes with high natural value.

Keywords: rural; remote; logistics; biodiversity preservation; landscape; large-scale; environmental impact; social value creation; national authorities; integrated planning

1 Introduction

Infrastructure is vital in connecting urban and rural environments within geographically disperse and diverse countries. Regional planning teams must respond to the tension between biodiversity preservation, environmental impact mitigation, local stakeholder engagement within a change process, and maximization of economic impact.

For rural communities, new road systems create gateways to access and economic vitality – while simultaneously challenging long-standing ways of living, working, and being in community with each other and nature. A key challenge for the development of remote infrastructure is to respond to these trade-offs and tensions – and to use the architectural design process as a gateway to maximize sustainable value creation across the triple bottom line.

Dissing+Weitling offers two multi-bridge remote infrastructure projects in South Africa and Norway to demonstrate how design team partnership and stakeholder engagement can strengthen project outcomes. In embracing the site-specific contexts of each unique bridge – mobility architecture offers a pathway to ensuring sustainable infrastructure: aligning with environmental protection goals set forth by national authorities and providing economic empowerment to remote communities by strengthening their connectivity to urban centres.

https://doi.org/10.2749/newdelhi.2023.0100