

Modern Railway Stations as New Sophisticated Urban Spaces

Ewa Maria KIDO
PhD Architect Eng.
CTI Engineering Co., Ltd.
Tokyo, JAPAN
kido@ctie.co.jp



Ewa Maria Kido received her master degree in architecture from the Gdansk University of Technology and the doctor degree in engineering from the University of Tokyo. She worked at the Institute for Transport Policy Studies in Tokyo and currently works at the CTI Engineering Co., Ltd. in Tokyo. Her main area of research is related to aesthetics of civil engineering structures, railway stations, as well as to landscape design and modern architecture.

Summary

Railway stations are important elements of the urban infrastructure exerting a substantial influence on the image of the city. The paper shows several examples of new railway stations with innovative structures that have a great impact on their urban surrounding. Such modern stations have appeared as a result of the “station renaissance” trend, promoted by the railway companies. The reinvented rail travel conferred upon the railway stations several new physical and meaningful dimensions. New urban spaces shaped by the new stations have the size of large metropolitan “station cities”, with attractive architecture and urban links, connected by high-speed railways. The paper examines these stations on the example of Europe and Japan, and concludes that these new transport facilities are not only changing the cityscape, but also are becoming the new diversified urban city centres.

Keywords: Railway station; station city; station building, landmark station; station renaissance; aesthetics; urban space.

1. Introduction

A railway station can be defined as a place where trains load or unload passengers and recently very rarely - goods. It usually consists of the combination of a platform and a station building or shelter, or only one of either. Usually every station has a platform to allow the passengers to get on and off the train but smaller stations may not have a station building or shelter. In the past, large railway halls for the train terminals built in all major European cities were top achievements among the engineering structures that flourished in the 19th century. Today, along with the “station renaissance”, some of these splendid stations have been modernized and adapted for high-speed trains (HST). Also, the last decade saw a development of impressive large-size stations that have been built to respond to the re-urbanization of large cities and to the development of the high-speed train networks.

As engineering structures clearly visible within the cityscape, the railway terminals and stations need to have aesthetic qualities and their structures to satisfy the requirements of structural art. This paper describes these aesthetic qualities on the example of several mega-stations in Europe and Japan: Leipzig Hauptbahnhof, Berlin Hauptbahnhof, Dresden Hauptbahnhof, St Pancras Station, Nagoya Station, Osaka Station City, JR Hakata City, and Tokyo Station City. The paper underlines that these large stations, containing innovative structures, became the focal points in the city and important city centres that have reshaped the existing urban space.

Leipzig Hauptbahnhof (1997) is one of the most successful renovation projects realized with respect to the cultural heritage and the requirements of modern railway stations. Berlin Hauptbahnhof