

# RiverLinks



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## RIVERLINKS AUDIT'S BOOK

"A Selection of Advanced River Cities in Europe"

author: Biagio Guccione

Recently the "river park" has become one of the more significant themes of contemporary landscape culture. European examples, even when referred to as "river parks", do not necessarily have a common methodological approach but are more likely to be influenced by context and often have very little to do with river parks.

Just how different the results of these interventions can be is shown by two classic examples: Lee Valley Park and Valencia. The English solution, which served as a model for traditional river parks for many years, has certainly proved positive, but it is very much linked to the typical English relationship with rivers and the use of river corridors for touristic, commercial and recreational purposes, always in tune with nature conservation.

This is possible in a country where water is never scarce and there is not even a temporary lack in the summer, and where extensive woodland and parkland abound. The other example, the experience of Riccardo Bofill in Valencia, is the negation of a river park, diametrically opposed to the former solution, partly due to different environmental conditions. It is far removed from a river park in its search for original, though hardly plausible, results and certainly not comparable with other situations. When examining recent cases, the way in which the relationship between many European cities and their rivers has been resolved clearly shows how the more interesting examples are rarely organic plans involving the urban structure but are more likely to be limited interventions beside the river for enjoyment, experimenting with different typologies. Different case studies and details are discussed:

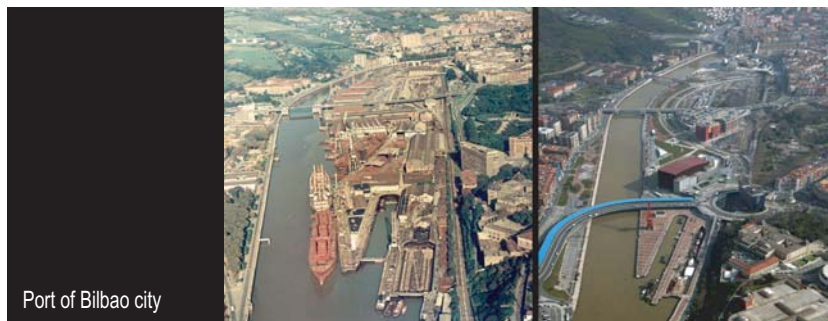
at Aarhu, Denmark, the relationship with the river is the pretext for strengthening the pedestrian and cycle system in the city; at Nancy, France, the main objective is to "integrate the embankments into the urban scene, not only as technical structures but also as links between river and city"; in London, the recurring theme of the relationship with the Thames and its coexistence with the city offers a wide range of solutions according to context.

Many plans for territorial parks exist along rivers which we can call "nature reserves", undoubtedly interesting although tied to situations where naturalistic values prevail, even where the river runs through large city centres, such as the Ticino Park in Italy.

The RiverLinks approach begins with different premises to the above-mentioned experiences. Here the specific objective is clearly identified and,

as in all the Interreg projects, involves shared methodology which can be experimented and applied by the participants and can also be used for many similar European situations. This requires a reference framework for the experiences being studied or already tested in Europe. This book deals with sixteen selected cases where the city-river relationship has been resolved with originality. Many famous and worthwhile examples have not been illustrated, but in our view the cases cited show how a methodical approach can be useful in implementing successful connections between the city and the river.

The information is gathered according to a prearranged scheme in order to allow easy comparison between the experiences examined.



After a brief introduction to each case study the method of intervention is described, the objectives explained and the results obtained are illustrated. At the end of each report the facilities available along the river banks in the city are mentioned. This information is laid out in a final schematic summary for easy consultation. It is obvious that the main objectives sought in each case differ according to available conditions, which can be divided into four main groups:

- The first group includes the cities which have tackled food problems: Cologne, Regensburg, Vienna, Prague and Budapest;
- The second deals with the experiences involving the reclamation of industrial areas: Bilbao, Lisbon and Porto;
- The third contains all the interventions of landscape development for recreation purposes, giving rise to the classical river parks, as visualised in the collective imagination: Lyons confluence, Lyons Miribel and Strasbourg;
- The last group includes the proposals to revitalise historic centres through the revival of the relationship with the river, previously often ignored or neglected - Turin, Rome, Padua and Bremen - as well as the ephemeral experiences in Paris.

It is obvious that these subdivisions are used for convenience since all the cited cases contain characteristics which also belong to the other groups.

Apart from this classification into groups each example is characterised by a particular way of relating to the river.

The first group of cities which tried to tackle the food problem shows very varied solutions: Cologne, even though it drew up a very prudent plan and constructed adequate overflow systems, "decided to use a mobile protection system to solve the problem. These water controlling elements can be mounted very quickly and



The river landscape in the Roman countryside



problem. These water controlling elements can be mounted very quickly and dismantled after the high waters have receded. The same method has been adopted in Regensburg, even though the strategy here is based on citizen involvement in decision making.

Budapest and Vienna have in common the fact that they are crossed by the same river and have both signed the "Convention for the protection of the Danube", even if the solutions are different. The studies conducted in Prague are interesting for the mathematical models used to simulate floods. The most incisive and striking interventions are those in which industrial areas have been restored along river banks creating high quality urban landscapes, ). Bilbao, Porto and Lisbon have invested heavily in these areas and have redefined the city-river relationship, where the memory of past industrial activities is only fleeting thanks to a few surviving traces restored by the designers.

The creation of recreational river parks in Lyons (Confluence and Miribel) and Strasbourg provide an important experimental base where the designers have come up with different solutions. Lyons Miribel has four main objectives: to preserve the drinking water supply, restore the overflow basin, protect natural resources and to develop open-air activities. Lyons "Confluence" furthers the attempt to adapt the solution to the natural site conformation, a special space with evocative shapes in the confluence of the rivers.

The Strasbourg Park follows a similar trend, where a pedestrian bridge is used to connect Germany and France in an area with very little personality. The common denominator in the last four cases, grouped under the title of convenience "experiences in reviving historic centres", is the process which takes the critical environmental and ecological situation into account, using urban ecology and landscape methods and instruments. A programmed plan of construction was devised for Turin's open spaces on a territorial scale; in Rome upgrading interventions in the city and the urban landscape were chosen; in Padua the restoration of the organic system of urban and suburban surface waters resuscitated the old canals; in Bremen a new area dedicated to cooking and marine activities was created with great success. In Paris the idea of creating temporary beaches along the Seine was very successful with the public, even though it had its critics.

From these examples the six cities that gave rise to the RiverLinks project (Florence, Bordeaux, Bremen, Dresden, Seville and Tallin) have provided useful lessons in drawing up shared operational proposals, which could serve as valid models for other European situations. With this in mind the book begins with the illustration of the city-river relationship of the six pilot cities, so that the experiences shown, including debate as well as cultural, technical and scientific comparison between these six very different European cities, though very close in their goals, can give exemplary examples of how to develop a truly excellent river-city relationship.

Biagio Guccione