Riverine Urban Heritage: A Basis for Green Infrastructure

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Abstract : The radical reformation that Greek urban space, has undergone over the last century, due to the socio-historical developments, technological development and political-geographic factors, has left its imprint on the urban landscape. While the big cities struggle to regain urban landscape balance, small towns are considered to offer high quality lifescapes, ensuring sustainable development potential. However, their unplanned urbanization process led to the loss of significant areas of nature, lack of essential infrastructure, chaotic built environment, incompatible land uses and urban cohesiveness. Natural environment reference points, such as springs, streams, rivers, forests, suburban greenbelts, and etc.; seems to be detached from urban space, while the public, open and green spaces, unequally distributed in the built environment, they are no longer able to offer a complete experience of nature in the city. This study focuses on Greek mainland, a small town Elassona, and aims to restore spatial coherence between the city's homonymous river and its urban space surroundings. The existence of a linear aquatic ecosystem, is considered a precious greenway, also referred as blueway, able to initiate natural penetrations and ecosystems empowering. The integration of disconnected natural ecosystems forms the basis of a strategic intervention scheme, where the river becomes the urban integration tool / feature, constituting the main urban corridor and an indispensible part of a wider green network that connects open and green spaces, ensuring the function of all the established networks (transportation, commercial, social) of the town. The proposed intervention, introduces a green network highlighting the old stone bridge at the 'entrance' of the river in the town and expanding throughout the town with strategic uses and activities, providing accessibility for all the users. The methodology used, is based on the collection of design tools used in related urban river-design interventions around the world. The reinstallation/reactivation of the balance between natural and urban landscape, besides the environmental benefits, contributes decisively to the illustration/projection of urban green identity and re-enhancement of the quality of lifescape qualities and social interaction.

Keywords : green network, rehabilitation scheme, urban landscape, urban streams

Conference Title : ICELD 2018 : International Conference on Environment and Landscape Design

Conference Location : Prague, Czechia

Conference Dates : July 09-10, 2018

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