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Improving Visual Attractiveness to Enhance City–River Integration—A Methodological Approach for Ongoing Evaluation

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Abstract

The relationship between rivers and cities has evolved from a natural coexistence and interdependence to a progressive relationship of segregation and disintegration. This article uses a planning experiment to explore and discuss some concerns about visual attractiveness of city–river landscapes in promoting spatial integration of cities and rivers. It presents a methodological approach integrating expert opinions and public perception questionnaires. This is a contribution to making operational an ongoing aesthetic assessment of different dimensions and viewpoints at the city scale. This approach is illustrated with a case-study in the Lisbon metropolitan area and its main assessment results are integrated in a city–river profile that can be useful in ongoing evaluation processes of river landscapes and urban planning practice.

Introduction

The Need for City–River Integration

The relationship between rivers and the cities they cross, in Portugal, like in other countries, has evolved from an almost natural relationship of interdependence, with direct influence on the pattern of urban settlements, to a progressive relationship of segregation according to the increasing degree of urbanization. Many urban rivers have been heavily modified and some have even been channelized without considering the mutual benefits both for the riparian ecosystems of rivers and for the vitality and attractiveness of the cities.

Landscapes embracing cities and their rivers are excellent contexts to analyze and improve integration in planning, which is an ‘anchoring notion’ of sustainable urban development (Pieterse, 2004: 24). There are many reasons that explain

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