

UNISCAPE En-Route International Seminar

Recovering river landscape

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The growth of the city in Wallonia (BE) is often closely connected to the river traces (A.Corboz 2001). In the case of Liège, the Maas river and its tributaries narrate the history of a progressive control of the water. The industrialization, insinuating itself in the narrow valleys of the Ourthe and Vesdre and then along the banks of the Maas river, forms new artificial landscapes.

These sites, built by the bourgeois society, offered dual sceneries: walls, harbors and chimneys among the smokes in the suburbs and parks with green walks and quality architecture in the center. From the cessation of the industrial activity, resurface canalized rivers. They flow in silence among the outlines of abandoned places. The river and its relationships with modern city seem to have been forgotten.

Only operations of new observation, recognition and explanation of what is still present in places allow to recover elements that even the people have anymore the awareness to exist. The study of the equilibrium of the Maas river waters is presented in relation to the characters of the domination and the reconstruction of river artifacts that have already bent the natural elements in order to re-generate.

The waterways, initially treated as normal infrastructure, at the same level of roads and railways, formed a network of rivers channeled used only for the transport, and new sites or islands that have often lost all connection with the river resource. Sometimes however, the rivers flow in residual spaces that line the back of long

linear urban fronts. Here the character of the worker housing, now in decay, acts as an opaque forgetful scene of past narratives landscapes.

The reinterpretation of the interrelations between river and lands or the infrastructural islands artificially created can bring out new reasons useful for the landscape project.

We have to highlight the importance of observation and selective design of elements (A.FOXLEY 2010) that make up the landscape and serve to bring out the dormant memories and collective stories on which is possible to relaunch project practices (D.A.SCHÖN 2011) to share and to accompany over time: observation and explanation of the reasons which have led to the sedimentation and the mutation of the landscape within their formation process become the essential elements for making a lasting and sustainable recovery.

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