

Amphibious Architecture in the Vistula Riverbanks' Revitalization in Warsaw, Poland

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Abstract

The semi-wild character of the Vistula River in Warsaw is rare among rivers passing through the European capital cities: The Vistula has preserved natural features of a braided river like numerous islands, oxbow lakes and side channels. Despite the environmental value, this unusual situation of a semi-wild river in the city center has a serious drawback of building restrictions imposed by the nature preservation and flood risk. The highly variable water flow in Warsaw with an annual level fluctuations reaching 8m characterizes two periods of floods: a longer and more intense in spring after the snow thawing and shorter in the summer after heavy rains. To reconcile the opposite demands for nature conservation and rapid city growth, Warsaw municipality has reached for the design paradigm of living with the river cycle and employed some water focused development rules in the Vistula city area. This paper presents three examples of amphibious architecture realized in Warsaw between 2013 and 2017 during revitalization of the riverbanks: (1) Beach Pavilion by Ponadto Studio, a service building on piles erected on the wild east riverbank; (2) Boulevard Pavilion by Artchitecture Studio, one of nine can-float multifunction buildings located on the periodically inundated boulevard on the west channelized riverbank and (3) Floating Water Tram Pier by BPSP Studio, one of four floating buildings mooring from spring to autumn along the west bank. The case studies of these different structures, capable of resisting the rapid inundation as well as operating during low water levels, comprise problems of context, program, architectural expression and technology.

Keywords: amphibious architecture; floating architecture; Polish architecture; the Vistula River;

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