Chapter 12: Seafronts, beaches, lakesides and promenades

Simon Bell, Himansu S. Mishra, Anna Wilczyńska and Jekaterina Balicka

Introduction

When we think of obtaining the health benefits of blue spaces, we cannot help but think of the role that visiting the seaside and spending time on the beach or strolling along a promenade has had over several centuries. Visiting the seaside and sea-bathing has a history stretching back to the 18th century, when the wealthy upper and growing new upper-middle classes of the time began their obsession with health which had begun with the idea of taking water at spas. These had been set up by medical doctors on the basis of the claimed medical benefits of mineral water and hot springs (of course, visiting spas and drinking mineral water are still important sectors of the wellness industry today), which themselves went back to Roman times at least (with *Aquae Sulis* or Bath in England being one famous example). There were also older sea-bathing traditions in parts of Europe where the August tides were thought to have prophylactic properties.

The first examples of polite society taking up sea-bathing can be found in Yorkshire, at the fishing town of Whitby and then the spa town of Scarborough, today still popular holiday resorts (Walton, 1983). The year 1720 seems to be the start date for this transformation, but until the advent of the railways, travel to the seaside from London became synonymous with the south coast of England. Bath and its waters remained popular, but once the Prince Regent (the future King George IV) took up the habit, it was inevitable that Brighton would become the focus, together with lesser resorts to its east and west. This fashionable resort became the centre for a hedonistic lifestyle. The prince built the famous Moorish-style Pavilion, and the town expanded dramatically – between 1821 and 1831, it was one of the fastest-growing towns in England (the other being Bradford). The fashionable ladies and gentlemen spent their summer days strolling along the edge of the beach (promenading) and entering huts on wheels (bathing machines) which were drawn into the sea so that they could immerse themselves in the water for their health. The town also featured stylish houses, ballrooms and shops. In the same period, the idea of the picturesque and the sublime in landscape became popular trends, with mountains becoming popular places to visit (on the Grand Tour crossing the Alps) and the dramatic seascape also taking on a role.

By the 1840s, railway mania had taken hold in Britain, and this led to several social changes. First, travel to more distant places became much quicker, so that other towns on the extensive British coast could find a market as resorts. The second aspect was the possibility for the middle and then the working classes to travel by train to the seaside. The middle classes could afford to spend a week or so at a boarding house or hotel, while at first, the working classes could only make a day trip. This developed so that Blackpool became the first resort with a predominantly working-class clientele, accompanied by beach activities, fish and chips, amusement arcades and the Tower ballroom (Barton, 2005). Numerous other towns also became larger or smaller resorts, catering to holidays right through until the 1960s, when Spanish beach resorts became more affordable. Promenades to facilitate strolling, social interaction,

Figure 12.1

"Brighton: the front and the chain pier seen in the distance," by Frederick William Woledge (active 1840)

(Source: Public domain image courtesy of the Paul Mellon Collection, Yale Center for British Art, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut)

Figure 12.2

Brighton beach with a view to the promenade and then the buildings lining it

(Source: Public domain photograph)

being seen and as a place to sit and enjoy the sunshine were one of the main investments, together with the pier, whose technical solution came with the development of cast-iron structures (Walton, 2000).

From its British origins in the 18th century, the modern seaside resort gradually assumed a global character. The concept has undergone many developments and reinventions over time and has generated stiff competition for the British market, a competition intensified in recent years as a result of cheaper travel on budget airlines.

Surprisingly, however, despite its highs and lows, it has remained a popular and valued feature of tourism, and during the crash of the late 2000s, it was to some extent reinvented for “staycations”. Some notable reinvestments in promenades and other infrastructure can also be seen, rebranding and upgrading some once-tired towns.

Seaside resorts also began to appear on the French Channel coast and in the Low Countries (now Belgium and the Netherlands) by the late 18th century. From the early 19th century, Normandy and southwest France – centred on Biarritz – but also northern Germany and even parts of Scandinavia became developed for the national markets as the bourgeoisie of those countries increased in number and wealth and wanted to emulate the British middle classes (Corbin, 1995). Later on, the Spanish Atlantic coast also saw the introduction of seaside resorts. The Mediterranean, now synonymous with beach holidays, developed rather later. The French and Italian Riviera first saw developments based on the restoration of health through climate – especially in the wake of epidemics of tuberculosis, where warm climates could slow the progress of the disease – rather than sea-bathing. However, by the mid-19th century, some important Italian resorts had grown up on the Adriatic coast, where German and especially Austrian visitors formed the key market, since these territories were, at the time, part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and newly accessible by train. Rimini was one among several such resorts established by the end of the 19th century. Up to this time, the seaside resort was for healthy air, taking the waters, immersion in the sea for health and other social activities.

The Mediterranean as the premier maritime tourist playground of today – the French Riviera and Côte d’Azur in particular – was established by the fashionable sets of the 1920s and 1930s with the new vogue for sunbathing and personal display on warm and languid beaches (Boyer, 2002). While the benefits of sunshine for health were identified in the early 20th century, it was the 1920s when fashion designer Coco Chanel accidentally got sunburnt while visiting the French Riviera. When she arrived back in Paris, she sported a suntan; her friends liked the look and started to adopt darker skin tones themselves. Tanned skin also became a trend because of Coco’s status and the longing for her lifestyle by other members of society. In addition, Parisians also fell in love with Josephine Baker, a “caramel-skinned” singer in Paris in the 1920s, and idolised her dark skin. These two women were leading figures of the transformation that tanned skin underwent, in which it became perceived as fashionable, healthy and luxurious. Jean Patou capitalised on the new tanning fad, launching the first suntan oil, “Huile de Chaldée”, in 1927. From this, the modern beach holiday developed (Cross and Walton, 2005). European resorts also developed features to distinguish them from their British origins. There were more relaxed attitudes to bathing (including issues surrounding modesty and the mingling of the sexes on the beach), casino gambling, drinking, Sunday observance and public dancing than were to be found in Britain. The popularity of Spanish beaches and the development of the Costas was delayed by the Civil War until the 1950s and 1960s. Greece also followed a little later, and Turkey has become the latest Mediterranean coastline to be developed, especially attracting tourists from Russia and Eastern Europe.

Promenades or esplanades have for a long time been the typical structure marking the division between beach and urban area in most sea coastal resorts. As a general rule, there is a long row of beachfront hotels, guest houses, restaurants and bars separated from the promenade by a road, then a long, continuous wide walking path with steps and ramps leading down to the beach. A very good example of this can be found in Tel Aviv, where the entire Mediterranean frontage of the city comprises a well-provisioned promenade. In tidal seas, the extent of sand varies through the day, and the esplanade may increasingly function as a flood defence and to hold back storms. There are other types of promenade with a backdrop of parks or more natural landscapes, and in cities with cliffs instead of beaches, access to the sea is facilitated with more engineered structures. Countries with dangerous waters – for example, due to currents or the presence of sharks – have also developed methods of enabling visitors to get in contact with the sea through indirect means.

Figure 12.3

Part of the promenade at Tel Aviv, Israel

(Source: Simon Bell)

Why the cases were chosen

For the selection of cases to present in this chapter and to show the range of recent examples of the interface between the sea or lakes and different types of urban coastline or seaside, we looked for originality in concept and design, variety of location and type and something extra which makes them stand out. We also looked for examples which to some extent offer continuity in the tradition of the beachfront or seaside promenade, as well as unique solutions to specific problems. We consider that water bodies such as the ocean, sea or lakes often provide similar features – beaches (whether sandy, shingly or rocky) and cliffs which may be linked directly to the urban fabric or connected to a park or more natural area yet still within the urban context. The ocean or sea may at times present significant dangers through strong currents, waves, tides or storms or possibly risks from sharks. Thus, the cases present a set of different ways in which problems and opportunities have been combined in unique solutions. We have three main categories of projects: beaches, water access in the absence of safe beaches and a small category of solutions to gain access under difficult physical constraints.

Beaches

We start with the most traditional of seaside experiences, the sandy beach used for sunbathing and sea or lake swimming. These are perennially attractive, but it is often the junction between the beach and the edge of the city or other landscape which needs most attention. This may be the archetypal promenade, as discussed in the introduction, or it may be backed by a busy road or even a railway. Accessibility is often, therefore, the main issue to be solved. Protection of vulnerable habitats may also be necessary and the provision of facilities to mediate between people and landscape, to relieve pressure of numbers of people on sites with limited capacity. The projects included in this section are as follows:

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- Dover Esplanade, Dover, England, United Kingdom
- Playa de Poniente, Benidorm, Spain
- Vinaròs promenade, Vinaròs, Spain
- Amager Beach, Copenhagen, Denmark
- Sea Park, Saulkrasti, Latvia
- Myrtle Edwards Park, Seattle, United States

Projects providing access, safe swimming and artificial beaches

The next set of projects use a lot of construction to create safe, accessible places where people can enjoy proximity to the sea or lake without facing a range of risks. They also provide unique ways of experiencing the blue spaces. These projects supply opportunities and solutions to problems which need imagination and creativity. They also include cultural and historical connections. The projects included in this section are as follows:

- Veules-les-Roses, France
- Sugar Beach, Toronto, Canada
- Cairns Esplanade-Swimming Lagoon, Cairns, Australia
- Paprocany Waterfront, Tychy, Poland
- Sjövikstorget, Stockholm, Sweden
- Sea Organ, Zadar, Croatia

Visual and physical access to the water landscape

The last and smallest category of projects includes cases where obtaining direct access to the water – the sea or lake – is especially challenging, mainly due to steep terrain. The solutions may not be able to overcome all the challenges for all possible users as a result, but they provide some spectacular opportunities for views out over the water. The projects included in this section are as follows:

- Bondi Bronte coastal walk, Sydney Australia
- Concordia University lakeshore, Concordia University, Wisconsin

Each project is briefly described (based on information from a range of sources, often the designer or articles, as well as what the authors have seen). It is then illustrated with a photograph of a typical view, assessed for project quality based on the factors presented in Chapter 10 and illustrated using a set of sketches designed to bring out the key aspects which make the project special and inspirational. These are presented as annotated images, and they aim to complement the text visually, so there is no additional description in the text, only the captions.

Beaches: Dover Esplanade, Dover, Kent, England

This project is essentially a reworking of a traditional seaside promenade concept to provide a clear edge between the beach of the English Channel and Dover town as well as to enable universal access and shelter and, above all, to create a new sense of identity and place through the use of sculptural elements integral to the design – in fact, combining design and art through the exploration of the wave form. The project was designed by Tonkin Liu for a group of clients including the Dover Harbour Board, Dover District Council, Kent County Council, SEEDA and English Heritage. It was completed and opened in 2010. The project was conceived as three artworks known as the Lifting Wave, the Resting Wave and the Lighting Wave and was the winner of a design competition. The project consists

Figure 12.4

A view along the Dover promenade showing the different waves which form the design

(Source: Courtesy of Tonkin Liu)

of a new 3,500-m² promenade to connect Dover's eastern and western docks and includes a Sea Sports Centre and a crossing linked to a tunnel connecting the seafront to the central town square. The designers used a method they call "asking, looking, playing, making" to investigate the character and potential of the place, the three sculpture/promenade elements being the result.

The Lifting Wave is a repeated set of pre-cast white concrete ramps and steps to connect the Esplanade to the lower shingle beach. It includes a surface that catches the light as well as being universally accessible. Plants and a rainwater collector follow the ramps downwards. The Resting Wave is a retaining wall that runs the length of the Esplanade. It is notable for providing bays with seating, giving shelter and sun together. The surface of the wall creates shadows and prevents glare. The Lighting Wave is a line of white columns with artwork to follow the form of the sea wall and terrace as well as to improve lighting. The designers claim that the three waves each refer to place, respond to the seafront and fulfil social functions.

Project quality rating assessment

This project is particularly strong in accessibility, except for the visibility of the site (and therefore its visual accessibility), which is a little hidden due to its lower elevation. The design quality is also excellent, although the project may be a little costly to maintain. The range of facilities is good, although shade and especially shelter are weaker due to the exposed south-facing location. For health and well-being, it shows weakness in the sense of being away (it is backed by the urban setting and has views of ferry terminals) and contact with nature, being in a very built environment. It also rates generally highly for accessibility and connection to water but lacks safety equipment. Physical activity opportunities are generally good for most informal types but not for formal ones. Overall, it is a very good project. Figure 12.5a–c shows the interpretation of the design using drawings.

Figure 12.5a–c

a) The design concept of the Dover promenade wave construction not only reflects the idea of the sea but also forms very effective benches providing shelter. The sketch brings out the design of the marine-themed lighting and also the beach path with its wavy shape, providing a strong sense of unity; b) the three-dimensional form of the wave wall with the integral benches offering sheltered, sociable seating; c) a section across the promenade from the street to the beach demonstrating how it accommodates changes in level and tidal variation

Playa de Poniente, Benidorm, Spain

This project is another reworking of a promenade along the extremely busy beach at the bustling resort of Benidorm, designed by Carlos Ferrater at the Office of Architecture Barcelona and completed in 2009. A four-lane highway and lots of car parks with only limited access points down to the beach has been transformed by constructing a wave-like promenade with better access and also shade while reducing the traffic. Benidorm has long since been a resort which has recently wished to improve its image and to move upmarket. Improving the beachfront and esplanade has been central to this.

The promenade therefore forms a new transitional space between the built city and the natural sea and beach (Figure 12.6). The architect designed it not as a frontier/borderline but as an intermediary space for a permeable transition. It is designed to be a dynamic space for strolling and observing the sea and includes different stopping and relaxing points. The promenade functions by channelling longitudinal and transverse circulations and allows easy access to the beach. In ways similar to the design at Dover, a series of sinuous interwoven lines is used to

Figure 12.6

A typical view along the Playa de Poniente showing the distinctive colour themes, waving profile and overhanging walls, with the dense urban fabric immediately behind

(Source: Carlos Ferrater and Xavier Martí, OAB)

create a form which evokes natural and organic shapes similar to the motion of waves and tides and also the fractal structure of a cliff. The promenade follows a three-layer structure: the first uses white concrete to establish the perimeter line, the second uses paving in different colours and the third layer comprises the street furniture and the water and vegetation. All these contribute to a unified and harmonious whole. The place is also functional, as explained by the designer and clearly visible in the design: all aspects being brought together: the promenade, rest and relaxation area, vantage points, transition to the beach, architectural barriers, direct access to parking, rainwater collectors, beach lighting, road communication, integration of street furniture, services infrastructure and so on.

Project quality rating assessment

This project has excellent accessibility, apart from its visibility from a distance and for car parking – deliberately reduced as one of the main design aims, so not a negative aspect here. The design quality is good, although it includes few cultural heritage aspects due to the fact that there are none to take into account. It may also be rather costly to maintain. It is well endowed with facilities, although for such an extensive promenade, the amount of seating seems to be rather low, it lacks shade in such a sun-exposed area and some areas may not be well lit at night. For health and well-being, being a very busy and urban place, it has limitations in a sense of being away and may be a place with some risk to safety, such as from crime, due to the large numbers of relaxed visitors there. Water accessibility is very good, except for access from the water (no jetties) and activities in the water – swimming, of course, but not a lot else. The amount of safety equipment appears to be rather limited for such a busy beach. There are plenty of physical activities possible on the beach and also walking and jogging and so on along the promenade itself. A very iconic and original design which creates a new image and strong genius loci. Figure 12.7a–d shows the interpretation of the design using drawings.

Figure 12.7a–d

a) General overview of the Playa de Poniente showing how the promenade acts as a connector, viewing deck and shelter simultaneously. It also depicts the spectral gradient of the colours used in the surfacing; b) the access points showing how the stairs are integrated into the structure; c) the watercourse flows beneath the promenade and across the beach to the sea; d) detail of the ramp providing universal access down to the beach

Vinaròs promenade, Vinaròs, Spain

This project dates to 2007 and was designed for the town of Vinaròs, the most northerly town in the Valencia region in Spain, by Guallart Architects, following the design winning first prize in a national competition. During the 20th century, urban growth led to the construction of a seafront promenade that was a focus of attraction for the 1960s Spanish tourist boom. By avoiding the huge developments of the 1980s onwards, it was possible to revitalise the area without having to demolish such developments. Rejuvenating the promenade presented an opportunity to define the desired standards of urban quality in the town. The main objective was to convert the promenade for pedestrian use and to maximise the tourist and civic potential. It was possible, at the planning stage, to reroute the traffic to exclude it from the promenade for part of the way and to provide a tunnel for the rest together with an underground car park. Removing the concrete wall separating the beach from the promenade allows the whole area to be seen as a continuous space (Figure 12.8). Compared to the Dover and Benidorm examples, the promenade here runs in a dead straight line. The promenade was also levelled, and a series of tiers are used to change the level from the top down to the beach. The design combines paving in stone, decking and the beach, with some ramps leading down from the upper parts for easy access to the beach. The steps also incorporate planted trees – palms – and the decking includes a series of wooden sculptural forms. Metal elements such as railings, lighting standards and ramps are painted red. Cafes spread their tables out onto the upper paved area.

Figure 12.8

A typical view of the Vinaròs promenade showing the decking, steps and wooden “rocks”

(Source: Guallart Architects)

Project quality rating assessment

This project can be judged extremely well for accessibility in all aspects. Design quality is good, apart from the cultural heritage aspects, which do not feature in the project. Facilities are reasonably well provided, although the site is quite exposed to wind and lacks shade. Health and well-being aspects are also generally well provided for, and the place functions very well for access and interaction with the water and for physical activity. An excellent project with great imagination and sensitivity to site. Figure 12.9a–e shows the interpretation of the design using drawings.

Amager Beach, Copenhagen, Denmark

This project was completed in 2005 and designed by the firm of Haslov and Kjaersgaard Planners and Architects on an artificial island next to the coastline in the Copenhagen district of Amager. The site is a large-scale landscape which provides a contrast to the density of the rest of the Copenhagen waterfront, where an open sky and wide horizon offer special experiences. The first ideas for this project emerged in the early 1980s from local grassroots organisations and other stakeholders. People involved in promoting the project wanted to ensure that openness would be the main quality in the area, and the edge of the existing beach was to be moved further out to form a better one. This was achieved by creating a 2-km-long artificial island which is separated from the original beach by a lagoon which is crossed by three bridges. The beach is organised into two sections. The northern section comprises a natural beach environment of winding paths, broad sandy beaches and low dunes. The southern section is the so-called *city beach*, where there is a wide promenade and areas for playing games or picnicking (Figure 12.10). At the southern end, there is a small marina and car parking. The lagoon has shallow, sheltered areas safe for children and a 1000-m swimming course. The architectural structure focuses on the meeting between the linear coastal road and the building lines in the flat landscape of the island of Amager and the new coastline. Long sight lines run through the beach park. The coastline is laid out to take account of the dynamics of wind, waves and currents. There are focal points: the point at the extreme east (that governs the main orientation of the two beaches) and the two jetties to the north and the south. The “beach stations” have a special character to help to create the sense of place. They follow the lines of the landscape and form artificial cliffs for people to walk on and around.

Project quality rating assessment

This project is rated very highly for accessibility in all aspects. The design quality is also very good, apart from the lack of reference to cultural heritage, which, given its origins as a new landscape, is no surprise. It provides many facilities, apart from the lack of shade across the site. It also has potential for promoting health and well-being while performing very well for water connection and activities, less so for formal sports. An all-round excellent example which showcases the high reputation of Scandinavian landscape architecture. Figure 12.11a–i shows the interpretation of the design using drawings.

Sea Park, Saulkrasti, Latvia

This is in many ways the most natural of the projects in this section, completed in 2014 and designed by Substance SIA, architect Arnis Dimiņš. The small Latvian town of Saulkrasti, a little way up the Baltic Sea coast from Riga, is popular for summer activities. The town was looking for its place among Latvian seaside towns and decided to focus on tourism, recreation and various annual events. The idea to improve the central part of the beach and to create the Sea Park emerged as a result. The project area consists of primary and secondary dune ramparts with flatter dune slacks between the dunes. The key design element is the network of wooden footbridges and boardwalks right across the area – allowing access while protecting the fragile dunes (Figure 12.12). The wooden deck planks are reinforced vertically with slits corresponding to the thickness of the boards. As a result, the wooden decking becomes a unifying theme which can integrate all of the small elements such as benches, loungers, bicycle racks and waste

Figure 12.9a–e

a) The entire Vinaròs promenade has a rich diversity of elements, offering many affordances yet at the same time possessing a strong sense of design unity; b) the ramp providing inclusive access to the beach; c) the multi-functional wooden “rocks”; d) the use of the red colour and same materials is a feature of the promenade furniture; e) a section providing a detail of how the promenade links the street to the beach

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Figure 12.9a–e (continued)

Figure 12.10

A view along the promenade section at Amager Beach with one of the raised building platforms in the background
(Source: Mads Farsö)

bins, also made entirely out of wood. As the sea character varies according to the weather and seasons, ranging from completely peaceful and quiet to loud and billowing, the exit points of the wooden footbridges on the beach were designed to form wedges to break the waves. The triangular form thus became a key element as the best geometric form for stability against external forces. Only wooden surfacing is used in the park, while metal elements are only used for lighting and fitness equipment. The sea park includes two beach volleyball courts with small, two-level terraces/podiums, outdoor fitness area, beach showers, gymnastic equipment and children's playgrounds.

Project quality rating assessment

Accessibility is generally excellent, apart from car parking, which is less satisfactory. The site visibility is low, as it is hidden behind trees – this gives screening and segregation from the rest of the nearby landscape, however. For design quality, it also rates well, except for its likely maintenance costs – due to the fact that a lot of wood has been used which will need replacement and also the risk of sand covering surfaces and needing to be removed. References to cultural heritage are low, since there are none to be made. Facilities also rate highly, although the site is rather exposed to the sun, with little shade available, except along the edges, where there are trees. For all aspects of health and well-being, it is also very good. Water access and activities are mixed – access from the water and water sports are not really very possible, and there is a lack of water safety equipment. Figure 12.13 shows the analysis of the project in sketches.

Figure 12.11a-i

a) Overview of the extensive Amager Beach highlighting the division of the extensive site into a series of different zones with a variety of functions and affordances; b) the lido located in the sea, providing safe bathing and swimming opportunities together with one of the buildings which acts as a viewing platform; c) the artificial dunes, which are designed to mimic natural forms; d) the small kayak rental and anchoring site in the lagoon; e) a section across the island showing the artificial dunes and exposure to both sea and lagoon; f) the concrete jetty section of the promenade, with the elevated elements providing views over the otherwise flat site and ending in a small lighthouse; g) a section of the steps with access down to the sea at the end of the jetty; h) the cross-section of the jetty with riprap protection against wave action; i) the access to the kayak rental centre and marina

Figure 12.11a-i (continued)

Figure 12.12

A view of Saulkrasti Sea Park showing the decking, seating and equipment

(Source: Jekaterina Balicka)

Myrtle Edwards Park, Seattle, United States

This extensive park system in Seattle, Washington, United States, comprises the Olympic Sculpture Park, Elliott Bay Trail, Myrtle Edwards Park, Centennial Park and Elliott Bay Park and was constructed between 2001 and 2007. The designs were created by Charles Anderson Landscape Architects and Architecture Design Team for the consortium of Seattle Art Museum, Seattle Parks and Recreation and the Port of Seattle. A series of sub-parks starts at the Olympic Sculpture Park and ends with the Elliott Bay Park. This connected park system connects with the dense urban fabric at the northern and southern ends but is (or was) completely cut off from the city itself by railway tracks that run parallel to it. The connection has been improved since the original completion by the construction of the Olympic Sculpture Park. This is the main point where the park connects with the city structure to allow pedestrians and cyclists access over a bridge across the railway tracks. The layout of the park, which is generally narrow and linear, consists of a separate, winding asphalt pedestrian and cycle path, equipped with resting and viewing points, lawns, sculptures and benches (Figure 12.14). The water edge consists of riprap forming small bays with gravel or shingle beaches between which driftwood was placed to create a habitat for fish and invertebrates at high tide. The terrestrial part includes viewing points, a rose garden, groups of trees, a cafeteria and shelters good for bird watching. The various points of attraction provide opportunities to linger, obtain direct contact with water and relax. There are unobstructed distant views of the bay. The main activities the site promotes are walking by the bay, jogging, cycling, picnicking, photography, fishing, dog walking and exercising.

Figure 12.13a–e

a) Overview of Saulkrasti showing the relationship of all the elements according to different functional zones and their relationship to the forest, sand dunes and sea; b) the wooden paving using logs set into the sand;

c) the reclining seats are integrated into the decking; d) one of the functional zones – the play area – with one of the variations of the seating design, also integrated into the decking; e) a section across the site from sea to forest showing the spatial relationships

Figure 12.14

An evening view along the shore at Myrtle Edwards Park showing the grassy slopes, large rocks on plinths as sitting spots, the natural vegetation and the views back to the industrial remains

(Source: Courtesy of Seattle Parks)

Project quality rating assessment

The assessment of this project shows that access to the park has limitations due to the railway line immediately behind it, and it is not very visible from the city side. The design quality does not have the kind of unique originality of some examples we have looked at but is fine otherwise. The cultural heritage aspects are rated less due to the lack of any elements to include which would make such a connection. The park is not especially full of facilities but does not need them to be successful given its location. It has little lighting and is rather exposed. It performs very well for health and well-being potential, apart from the sense of being away, given its industrial location. The water connection is mainly visual, as the sea is not suitable for activities, and access to and from the water is limited. It has plenty of opportunities for physical activity but not formal sports or water sports. Overall, it is a fine example of an informal park making good use of a place to enhance the natural qualities but does not have the cachet of the other promenades featured here, which is why in some respects it is lower rated. Figure 12.15 shows how it has been analysed using sketches.

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Figure 12.15 a-h

a) Overview of the entire Myrtle Edwards Park site highlighting its location and relationship between the railway line and the water as well as the different character areas; b) the sculpture plaza with seating and riprap edging to the water; c) the promenade along the water and also some dense natural vegetation contrasting with the managed

Figure 12.15 a–h (continued)

grass areas; d) the pedestrian bridge across the railway enabling access to the park; e) the driftwood placed on the beach to offer informal seating, a reference to nature and also the spontaneous vegetation around the beach; f) the situation along the path where riprap is used to protect the shoreline, with benches on the grassy areas behind; g) a section across the beach with driftwood along it parallel to the path, providing informal seating; h) a platform next to the building, with seating along the water providing opportunities for contemplation of the water

Figure 12.16

A view of Veules-les-Roses showing the structures above the beach

(Source: Jekaterina Balicka)

Projects providing access, safe swimming and artificial beaches: Veules-les-Roses, France

This project, constructed sequentially between 2001 and 2013 and designed by Atelier Ruelle for the City of Veules-les-Roses and Communauté de Commune de la Côte d'Albâtre, restores some seaside activities and presence in an unusual way. This small resort of Veules-les-Roses suffered from bomb damage during the Second World War and then from the post-war reconstruction, which included channelling the river and covering it with car parking. The small-scale opening to the sea descends down the narrow valley of the small river and is squeezed between chalk cliffs. The project comprises two main sections. The first, the main part of the design, consists of a large wooden deck, designed to be evocative of an ocean liner, constructed on top of the sea wall. This has two elements inserted into it – an open-air paddling pool and a sand-covered children's play area – needed due to the steep shingle beach and strong waves, which make the sea rather dangerous (Figure 12.16). Behind the decking and between it and the town is the re-exposed river with a small park on either bank, before it flows beneath the decking and through the sea wall into the sea. The decking overlooks the beach, which is also used for many activities in and out of the water. This decking then continues across a concrete promenade, which also projects over the seawall. There are numerous benches, a viewpoint on a pier which extends from the decking into the sea, playgrounds and paddling pool for children. The last phase of the project uncovered the river.

Project quality rating assessment

This project performs very highly for accessibility; design, especially for circulation; views; and cultural heritage. The facilities are also very good, apart from the site being exposed to wind and sun. It is assessed very highly for all aspects of health and well-being and has excellent water connections. For physical activity, it is especially good for children's play – the paddling pool being a special feature here. It is not so strong for water-sports other than some sailing due to the nature of the sea. Figure 12.17 shows how it has been analysed using sketches.

Figure 12.17a–e

a) Overview of the whole Veules-les-Roses site as well as the division into two main zones – the elevated play and recreational area on the deck, with a view over the water, and the small estuary of the river, with lush vegetation, as it flows beneath the deck to the sea; b) the green area on the estuary; c) detail of one of the play areas and the bathing pool for small children within the play and recreational zone; d) the relationship between the raised deck and the stream flowing beneath, where the water is visible in three places: over the edge to the vegetated estuary, through a hole in the deck and from the deck down to the beach and final outflow; e) the previously inaccessible or dangerous water has been made safer for small children through the provision of the shallow pool

Figure 12.17a-e (continued)

Sugar Beach, Toronto, Canada

This popular project, located on Toronto's East Bayfront on Lake Ontario, was constructed in 2010 from designs by Claude Cormier Landscape Architecture. Sugar Beach is an imaginatively designed park of some 8500 m² that transformed a surface car park in a former industrial area into a contemporary urban beachfront – the first public space visitors see if they travel along Queens Quay from the central waterfront. The design reflects and gained inspiration from the industrial heritage of the area, especially its relationship to the neighbouring Redpath Sugar factory. The layout of the park comprises three distinct sections: an artificial urban beach created from imported sand; an open multi-functional plaza space; and a tree-lined promenade which is aligned diagonally through the park and provides a shady route to the water's edge, providing visitors with many opportunities to sit and enjoy views to the lake, beach or plaza. It also contains a dynamic water feature for playing in, in the shape of the Canadian maple leaf. Grass-covered earth mounds and the tree grove will eventually hide the view of the beach from the main street. The most iconic and identifiable features of the park are the bright pink beach umbrellas, which double as lighting at nighttime, and candy-striped rock outcrops (Figure 12.18). The main activities which take place are typical of a beach: sunbathing, playing, walking, relaxing, socialising and public events. People stroll through the park along a granite cobblestone with a maple leaf mosaic pattern. Access to the beach is provided by an extended wooden boardwalk to the beach.

Project quality rating assessment

This project performs very well for accessibility. It has a limited relationship to cultural heritage. It is generally well provided with facilities, apart from the exposed nature of the site. It is assessed well for health and well-being potential, apart from contact with nature – it being an artificial landscape down at the docks, while water connection is good – due to the presence of a play fountain, apart from the activities on or in the water, which are limited here (no

Figure 12.18

A view of Sugar Beach showing the dock edge, sand, trees and pink umbrellas – the trademark of the project

(Source: Raysonho Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication)

Figure 12.19a-f

a) Overview of the Sugar Beach site, where it is divided into two main zones – the sand-covered artificial beach and the grass-covered hillocks, separated by a path and tree allée; **b)** one of the grassy hillocks used for sunbathing; **c)** the large granite boulder, which provides a range of affordances, including children's play; **d)** the otherwise inaccessible water is brought to people in the form of the maple-leaf fountain; **e)** a cross-section from the larger hillock, over the path and on to the water; **f)** the beach extending from the path to the dock edge and featuring the iconic pink umbrellas

Figure 12.19a–f (continued)

swimming allowed). Physical activity opportunities are more averagely rated due to the location and size of the site. Overall, a very good project which has captured the imagination of many people, making it an iconic contemporary landscape. Figure 12.19 shows how it has been analysed using sketches.

Cairns Esplanade-Swimming Lagoon, Cairns, Australia

This ambitious project was completed in 2003 to designs by landscape architects Tract Consultants following a national design competition. Cairns is located on the northern coast of Australia and between the Great Barrier Reef and lush rainforest. The site as a public space reflects the activity and character of the two types of landscape. The project links blue space with green space and provides swimming facilities by the creation of an artificial lagoon on the former tidal mud flats. The shallow lagoon is flanked by shady gardens, trees and shade structures, necessary in a tropical climate, and provides safe swimming free from the risk of crocodiles or marine stingers (Figure 12.20). There is a range of swimming spaces varying in water depth from 30 cm to 1.6 m. A wooden promenade connects this project with other spaces and observation decks that project into the sea at intervals to give extensive views to the sea, island and reefs beyond. The lagoon can accommodate hundreds of swimmers at a time. There is also a sand beach for families as well as pockets of wet seating areas for couples and groups. Floating timber sunning decks also offer shelter and picnic spaces. The sea wall that contains the lagoon functions as a walking and jogging track, but not for cycling. This is an interesting example of a project where serious risks of venturing into the sea have been avoided, yet the atmosphere and the views allow users to maintain a strong connection with the sea. It is a project that has put Cairns on the map.

Figure 12.20

A view over the Cairns Esplanade artificial lagoon out to the urban area beyond

(Source: Alex Monckton, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license)

Figure 12.21a–f

a) An overview of the Cairns Esplanade to show the relationship of the plaza, pool and promenade which separates the site from the ocean, demonstrating the gradient from urban to ocean and the gradient in pool depth; **b)** the wooden decks and roof structures extend over the pool, shading both land and water; **c)** the shady wooden deck; **d)** a section from the grassy lawn with tall, shady trees and a shade structure to the pool; **e)** a cross-section

Figure 12.21a-f (continued)

through the pool and across the promenade separating it from the ocean, highlighting how bathing is safe for everyone in terms of water depth and protection from crocodiles; f) a section showing the transformation from tree shade and shade structure to the gently sloping pool

Project quality rating assessment

This project is assessed highly for accessibility, apart from its visibility from a distance due to the layout and location. The design quality has no specific cultural-historical aspects, but then, none are relevant; otherwise, it performs well, apart from probably high costs of maintenance. The facilities are very good, apart from wind exposure and quality of nature – mainly due to the artificial character of the project and the open views to the ocean. Health and well-being potential is generally quite high but less so for the sense of being away and for contact with nature due to the artificial environment. Water connections are good, except for water activities and access from the water – not surprising, given it is isolated from the ocean for safety reasons. All kinds of physical activity related to the water are also possible. This is clearly an excellent project which provides a lot of enjoyment and protects people from some serious water-associated risks. Figure 12.21 analyses the project using sketches.

Paprocany Waterfront, Tychy, Poland

The town of Tychy in Poland sits directly on an extensive lake, separated from it by some forest. In this project, realised in 2014 by Robert Skitek, a promenade formed from wooden decking runs along a stretch of the shoreline, facing out to the lake, which appears to be completely natural, while the town is behind and out of sight. According to the designers, the concept is based on the wooden promenade along the lake shore, which alternately meanders out over the lake and back to the shore. This design permits different views and feelings of space to be obtained from various points along the promenade. The pedestrian/bicycle path mainly runs parallel with the shore, but where it runs over the water, the path dips to almost touch the lake. On the promenade, there are several unique elements, such as an opening in the decking with a net stretched over the water, where people recline, and specially designed benches (Figure 12.23). In addition, there is a new sandy beach and outdoor gym. The materials were selected to emphasise the natural character of the site and landscape, using mainly natural ones. Part of the site was covered with specially shaped landforms planted with grass. The promenade, benches and railings are all made of softwood. Hard surfaces such as bike parking and areas under the gym equipment were constructed from water-permeable mineral aggregates. The sections of the promenade over the lake are constructed on steel beams fixed to reinforced concrete piles driven into the lake floor. All illumination is by energy-saving LED lights.

Project quality rating assessment

This project is very accessible, although it is not visible from a distance due to the forest behind the waterfront screening views. Design quality is good for the context. As a very natural area, the absence of references to cultural heritage is to be expected; there are no landmarks, and the project is considered expensive to maintain (lots of timber). It performs well for provision of facilities, although some could be more accessible to disabled people. The health and well-being potential is excellent, mainly since the area is set within a forest with no signs of human activity. Water accessibility and connections are also excellent, although water safety equipment is not very evident. Physical activity opportunities are good; however, children's play is not obviously well provided for, nor are formal sports – although this is probably not a part of the project brief. Overall, an interesting and novel project which has some unusual features but which also requires a lot of maintenance. Figure 12.22 shows the analysis of the project using sketches.

Figure 12.22

Part of the Paprocany Waterfront showing the wooden structures and canvas shading umbrellas

(Source: courtesy of Tomasz Zakrzewski/archifolio.pl)

Figure 12.23a-f

a) Overview of the Paprocany project concentrating on the wooden deck and the path between the forest and the lake. Note how each wave in the path divides the site into separate functional zones; b) detail showing the outdoor cafeteria with a view to the lake and the way the wooden structure blends into the landscape; c) the blue hammock net set into the deck, which also provides open views across the lake – one of the elements which gives the project its identity and introduces playfulness into the design; d) the outdoor gym, terrace and steps, where all the design language of the structures creates unity; e) a cross-section through the deck with the net hammock; f) a section through the outdoor gym to the deck and steps leading to the water

Figure 12.23a–f (continued)

Sjövikstorget, Stockholm, Sweden

This project, located in central Stockholm, was completed in 2010 from the designs of Thorbjörn Andersson and Sweco Architects. Stockholm is a city on the water within an archipelago of hilly islands, and the designers of Sjövikstorget wanted to express this quality on the water body where it is sited. This is achieved by using the fact that the rhomboidal space among the buildings opens up towards the water and “borrows” the wider landscape. To emphasise this, the square is formed of a wedge-shaped flat plane which has then been tilted towards the view at an angle of 3° from the horizontal. The design comprises three segments. The upper terrace consists of two horizontal lawns set within an open tilted and paved surface for walking supplied with benches formed from the granite edges which become higher as the plane descends relative to the lawns (Figure 12.24). This defines the space as a square and frames the views to the lake. The middle space along one of the sides extending out along the water forms a sunken platform, with benches facing towards the water. The lower section consists of a promenade and a pier parallel to the bottom of the sloping square. A grove of trees fills part of the void between the wedge and the space formed by the buildings, mirrored by a line of trees down the opposite side. Finally, there is a pier and deck continuing the line of the edge of the square and the line of trees, letting the form extend out over the water as if the space becomes submerged. The square allows for contact with the water and is well used in summer for sunbathing, though not for direct access into the water. The gentle slope allows for very easy accessibility to the water edge.

Project quality rating assessment

This project has good accessibility, apart from the views of it from a distance. The design quality is excellent, although it lacks reference to cultural heritage – not surprising given the context. It is expensive to maintain – all the wooden decking needs a lot of upkeep. The extent of facilities is limited – it is exposed to wind and sun and has no contact with nature – again, features of its urban character. Health and well-being potential varies a lot – sense of being away and contact with nature are not possible in such a setting. Water connections are generally good, apart from direct access into the water or water activities. It is not a place where there is much scope for physical activity. A good project making great use of limited space in a very urban context. Figure 12.25 shows sketches analysing the project.

Figure 12.24

A view of the Sjövikstorget showing the stepped and tilted paving and the enclosed nature of the space with the views out beyond

(Source: Courtesy of Thorbjörn Andersson/SWECO)

Figure 12.25a–d

a) Overview of the Sjövikstorget project emphasising the layout – the narrow tree belt, the sloping plaza with water feature and the wooden seating along or projecting into the water; b) the seating along the tree line overlooking the open plaza; c) the wooden stepped seating along the water's edge; d) a section over the whole area showing the descent from the urban edge through the plaza to the water

Sea Organ, Zadar, Croatia

This project, designed by Nikola Bašić, was constructed in 2005 and is a unique feature set on the shores of the Adriatic Sea at Zadar, a resort in Croatia. The Sea Organ (*morske orgulje*) is a form of natural musical instrument modelled on the ancient Greek *hydraulis*. The new stepped embankment constructed by master stonemasons is 70 m long, and the instrument consists of 35 organ pipes linked to a resonating chamber laid under the concrete substructure of the new sea wall, itself constructed to restore poor post-war reconstruction (Figure 12.26). The musical pipes are located so that the sea water pushes in with the movement of the waves, and then the air so displaced resonates to produce sounds of different pitch. The designer claims that it achieves a communication with nature and promotes a unity of architecture and environment. As wave movements are unpredictable, the range of sounds produced is infinitely variable. Besides the sea organ, the embankment with its steps and ramps provides places to sit, to sunbathe and to access the warm seawater, all the while hearing the sounds continually produced. It is a very evocative way of experiencing blue space through different senses.

Project quality rating assessment

The project has good access, apart from public transport, and the design quality is high, although such a complex feature is expected to be expensive and complex to maintain. It is limited in terms of facilities – it is a small and specialised element, so this is understandable – but it is very exposed to sun and wind and, due to its character, has little in the way of nature associated with it. Its unique quality gives potential for health and well-being, although not a sense of being away or contact with nature, due to its location (although the sounds from the organ also convey a special form of contact with nature). Water connections are very good, although it does not feature many water activities – not part of the design brief – and likewise, it is not designed for promoting or offering physical activities. Figure 12.27 shows how it has been analysed by sketching.

Figure 12.26

A view of the Sea Organ showing the steps and the holes along the top step where the sound emerges

(Source: Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic Licence)

Figure 12.27a–c

a) Overview of the Sea Organ project showing how the steps extend along the shore, which contain the sea organ components, with the broader plaza behind featuring lighting which is interactive with the wave movement, connecting light and sound; b) the steps containing the sound-generating pipes; c) a section through the steps down into the water

Visual and physical access to the water landscape: Bondi-Bronte coastal walk, Sydney Australia

This project was completed in 2009 from designs by Aspect Studios of Sydney. It is a 515-m extension of the 9-km-long coastal walk stretching from South Head to Marouba. This section, the Bondi-Bronte walk, is located in eastern Sydney. From here it is possible to obtain amazing panoramic vistas, and it is a heavily visited location. The site is a series of sandstone escarpments and cliffs, which posed severe challenges for engineering and construction. It is also very sensitive, and so the project needed to take this into account. It is an example of a constructed facility which enables access while protecting the landscape, although due to the terrain and constructional challenges, universal access could not be achieved. The elevated boardwalk is constructed from stainless steel with wooden decking, steel grill or mesh steps surfaces, wooden seating and handrails. It resolves complex geotechnical, structural and historical conditions (Figure 12.28). The walk highlights the sublime qualities of the land and sea interface. As well as the walkway, there are a number of observation points, each focusing on a different aspect of the geology and landscape. The structure appears quite delicate and minimal and sits lightly on the fragile cliffs. The route also presents different vistas, as one is hidden and another one revealed as the walker proceeds along it.

Project quality rating assessment

This project, due to its location and the terrain, was always going to show some limitations against different aspects. In terms of accessibility, it suffers in several aspects, especially universal access, as well as its visibility from a distance. The design does well for some but not all aspects – cultural heritage is weaker given its location – but the quality of materials suggests it should be low maintenance. The number of facilities is necessarily limited, and the whole site is very exposed to the elements. The health and well-being potential is very good, apart from direct contact with nature over most of its length. Water access – apart from visual access – is impossible given the terrain, so naturally it is rated low. Physical activity is clearly limited to walking. The project is excellent at maximising potential given the location and terrain limitations. It makes the most of the challenging design environment and engineering requirements and manages to remain modest, allowing the spectacular scenery and ocean views to dominate, which is as it should be. Figure 12.29 expresses the character of the site using sketches.

Figure 12.28

A view of the walkway and steps on the Bondi-Bronte coastal walk, showing how it perches above the cliffs and ocean
(Source: jipe7 via Flickr)

Figure 12.29a–e

a) The Bondi-Bronte pathway clings to the shore and winds across the rocks, emphasising how it provides access to a challenging stretch of coastline; b) detail of wooden decking connecting to a path with steps leading down a terraced section and ending close to the sea; c) one of the seating pockets which provide a great place for resting and admiring the view; d) cross-section of the terraced, grassed spaces in the central portion; e) a section through the elevated deck, stairs and seating pocket with bench

Figure 12.29a–e (continued)

Concordia University lakeshore, Concordia University, Wisconsin, United States

This project, completed in 2010, was designed by Smith Group for Concordia University. The site comprises the top, slopes and bottom of a high, steep bluff lying above Lake Michigan. The height of the bluff is 40 m, which made accessibility down to the lakeshore from the university campus a major challenge. In fact, the project started for the purpose of slope stabilisation but became a more complex design project with inclusive access, landscape restoration, wetland and coastal area designs, storm water management and use of slope-stabilising native plants. The project connects the university with its main natural asset, the lakefront, for the university staff and students as well as the general public. The project provides beaches, hiking, fishing, swimming, wildlife observation, landscape viewing and educational resources. The open-air theatre built into the design is used as an outdoor classroom. The design features a series of zig-zag ramps traversed with a more direct access via steps (Figure 12.30). The theatre overlooks the lake and is located at the top. The paths incorporate drainage channels to collect the runoff and are lit at night. The beach at the bottom is flanked by stone riprap stabilisation structures.

Project quality rating assessment

This project provides excellent accessibility, except for its visibility from a distance (given the large lake). It is also an excellent design, apart from the lack of reference to cultural historical aspects – which, given its location, is no surprise. The facilities are somewhat limited by the terrain and gradients, and it lacks seating on the climb (despite seating at the top as part of the open-air theatre). It is also exposed and lacks any shade or shelter. It has excellent

Figure 12.30

A view of the Concordia University Lakeshore slope with the paths and steps leading down to the lakeshore

(Source: Smith Group)

Figure 12.31a–c

a) Overview of the Concordia University Lakeshore project showing the three main sections – the platform and theatre at the top of the slope, the zig-zag ramp and step sequence leading down to the lake and finally the lake-shore and lake access; b) a section highlighting the bottom of the slope showing how the ramps are incorporated into it and how they finish at the beach and retained shoreline; c) section focusing on the upper part with the theatre and steps leading downwards

potential for health and well-being. Water accessibility is also very good, apart from accessibility from the water – no jetties – and the range of possible activities in or on the water – due to the poor accessibility, it is assumed. The range of possible physical activities is also necessarily limited by the terrain and nature of the design. This is a really good example of a project which overcomes huge challenges and results in a unique and sensitive solution that provides something special in an otherwise rather bland landscape. Figure 12.31 presents the sketched analysis of the project.

Comparison of projects in terms of different aspects

General design aspects

The projects presented in this chapter were chosen for their diversity and originality, and they each display many interesting and exceptional qualities in this regard. They each combine a sensitivity to sense of place and place creation with a high degree of creative solutions to the specific contexts and project briefs. That many were competition winners also demonstrates that new and innovative solutions are possible even in traditional or familiar places such as at the seaside or on the beach. One aspect which has only been a feature of the designs in a few cases is the reference to cultural history – many are in places with little of this present, or else the designers did not find much to which to make reference. Even the regenerated promenades such as at Dover or Benidorm tend to refer to inspiration such as the movement of waves rather than historical elements.

Potential for enhancing health and well-being

Almost all the projects display many opportunities to improve health and well-being. Onshore and in-water physical activities are possible, and the projects generally aim to attract and facilitate more of this as an integral part of the design. De-stressing, getting closer to nature and contemplation may have more potential in some places, but busy tourist beaches can be noisy and full of stimulation, which limit this. All beaches tend to be very exposed to the sun and wind, and the presence of shade provided by the projects varied, many having none at all, which could pose risks for skin cancer, sunburn and so on.

Accessibility

All the sites except for one (Bondi-Bronte walkway) are very accessible – even the Concordia lake shore. Some sites have local issues with steps, such as Zadar, and it seems that public transport is not always ideal. Some sites are isolated, others well connected outside the boundaries.

Interaction with water

Beaches, promenades and sea/lake fronts are in general all constructed with water access in mind – as a result of the history of sea-bathing summarised in the introduction to this chapter. With some exceptions, such as Sugar Beach or Sjövikstorget, all the beaches and promenades featured here promote direct access to the water. It is the Bondi-Bronte walkway, which provides a promenade but no direct access, that is the only one not directly connected with the water.

Seating and opportunities for socialising

Most of the projects make plenty of provision for seating, often in conjunction with viewpoints, as at Bondi-Bronte and Myrtle Edwards Park; sheltered nooks along promenades, as at Dover; or beneath umbrellas, as at Sugar Beach. However, some do not provide much or any formal seating, and so steps and other structures take the role, for example, at Zadar or Sjövikstorget. Some projects lack sufficient seating, such as the Concordia University Lakeshore, where the long ramps look daunting. Of course, at many beaches, seating is optional, and it is possible for users to bring their own or to rent it, so it is unnecessary to provide it as part of the design.

Microclimate amelioration

Almost all the beaches and promenades presented here, for obvious reasons of their location and purpose, are very exposed to the sun and wind – usually both. This can present a risk to health, especially in locations where the sun is strong, such as the Mediterranean Sea resorts of Benidorm or Vinaros or in Australia – especially at tropical Cairns. It is a factor which designers could consider more when working on such projects (see final recommendations in the following). The shading structures at Benidorm, cast in concrete as part of the promenade, help to some degree, but there are other potential solutions available, such as stretched fabric, which could be used more, as could vegetation.

Use of materials

There is a relatively narrow range of materials used in the construction of the projects reviewed here. Concrete is popular – it is more resistant to waves and storms – as in Dover, Benidorm and Veules-les-Roses, but timber is also extensively employed in decking, boardwalks, buildings and other structures, such as at Saulkrasti, as well as at Paprocany. Stone is also used to some extent, often for high-quality specialist paving or for walls and seating as at Zadar or Sjövikstorget. In coastal climates with salt in the air, steel is less sustainable unless stainless or galvanised and is not used so much (except at Bondi-Bronte). The use of certain materials, such as concrete, is clearly with the aim of reducing maintenance costs (see the following). Artificial beaches, such as Amager, also require a lot of sand, which, in the conditions of natural water movement, may be washed away and need to be replaced.

Use of vegetation and ecological aspects

In many projects, planting plays only a small role – some rows of trees (sometimes palms which do not provide shade or shelter), grassed areas (where wear and tear may be less of an issue) and occasional ornamental flowers. This seems to be a missed opportunity, especially when there is a need for shade and shelter in many locations and there are plenty of suitable trees available. Some sites clearly have ecological values and sensitivities – such as Saulkrasti in Latvia or the cliffs at Bondi-Bronte and the bluff at Concordia University – where the boardwalks protect the ground surface and encourage people to stay on the paths.

Site management and maintenance

All the projects are well maintained – and many have been in use for over 10 years so that repair and maintenance would be expected to be necessary by now. If the construction has been to a high standard and good-quality materials have been used, then this should lead to a reduced need for extensive maintenance. However, the widespread use of timber for decking leads to a need for constant checking and repair, since it can react to different weather conditions even if it does not rot. The sites also appear to be free from vandalism and are kept very clean, which helps to maintain them as welcoming places.

Conclusions and implications for practice

This chapter has reviewed the history and importance of the seaside, lakesides, beaches and promenades as places to visit with enduring attraction for local residents and tourists alike. The heydays of promenading along specially constructed “proms” and esplanades in the 19th and 20th centuries continues, but new and reconstructed projects range from references back to the classical models of yesteryear to innovative and highly creative responses following national or international design competitions. The selection presented here all have their strengths and weaknesses according to a number of factors such as the setting, terrain, history or climate. Each designer has attempted to maximise the opportunities and minimise the constraints while also producing solutions which provide better

opportunities to interact with water and to imbue a new or reimagined sense of place. These projects have often also had significant impacts on the local economies and on the image and brand of the places where they are located.

There are a few specific aspects we wish to draw attention to:

- Increasing the availability of shade and shelter as we move into times of more extreme weather events, heat-waves, storms and so on and in order to reduce the risks of skin cancer.
- Making more use of sustainable materials which balance longevity and low maintenance with local origin and flexibility of application for different functions.
- Including more vegetation in projects which offer the potential for it – both ornamental, functional (shade or shelter) and ecological (to reduce the need for hard materials and to restore damaged habitats).
- To celebrate and maintain continuity with the long traditions of being at the seaside – sun, sea and sand; strolling along the prom; and keeping cars away from families relaxing and enjoying themselves.

Finally, in this chapter, we have highlighted the enduring value and importance of beaches and promenades, seeing how they have been re-invented in recent years to provide facilities which satisfy current social requirements. From their origins over 200 years ago and through the highs and lows of popularity as holiday destinations, together within the current contexts of environmental and social change, it is gratifying to see creative approaches taking account of these challenges. It shows how adaptability is at the heart of successful design in these conditions.

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