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Engaging with the edge

LWK+Partners' Kerem Cengiz and Jason Ho address minimising the impact of waterfront developments while maximising the user experience

"It is a planning adage that cities with water tend to be more interesting," said Jason Ho, director of planning and urban design at Hong Kong-based practice LWK+Partners. "Waterfronts are natural assets that should belong to everyone. They are public realm and should be accessible for the enjoyment of all, except when they are used for very specific and strategic uses that require direct waterfront access, like ports and naval installations."

Ho's comments were part of a larger conversation that addressed waterfront developments and the challenges they present to architects. According to Ho and Kerem Cengiz, LWK+Partners' MENA managing director, such projects require a well-informed approach that considers a multitude of factors. Chief among them are the impact of waterfront developments on the natural surroundings, as well as enhancing integration and creating harmonious and activated environments for better interface and end-user experience.

"As rapid urbanisation and population increase in and around coastal and riverside cities, the environmental impact on the river, coast and the ocean ecosystems will increase as well," said Ho.

"As planners, we need to be aware that natural environments have their own carrying capacities," he added. "If this is left unchecked and over-population occurs, then the harm done to the natural ecosystems could be difficult to reverse.

At the same time, we have the opportunity to transform these waterfront environments into places that are interesting, unique, engaging and special not only for tourists, but also for the people who live, work and play there."

IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

According to Ho, the most common challenge presented by waterfront projects to architects and planners is the impact of development on the natural environment. In facing this dilemma, technical assessments are required to determine the existing conditions and provide recommended solutions to mitigate potentially negative effects of riverbank or coastline adjustments on land and water.

Planners and architects, said Ho, need to integrate these recommendations into their overall concept to ensure that a balanced approach to development is applied.

"The consequences of global warming and rising sea levels are becoming more apparent," he said. "We are witnessing a higher occurrence of tsunamis and hurricanes that have devastated large coastal areas, towns and cities. Governments are starting to realise the mega problems caused by not preparing for such natural disasters, as most people, assets and wealth are concentrated around waterfront cities."

Ho then noted that further research and engineering solutions need to be considered to protect waterfront



Danzishi Old Street



Jason Ho

communities against such disastrous environmental risks.

"With the advanced technology that we have today, we should be able to address and tackle these risks on lives and property," he said.

One opportunity to alleviate the impact of waterfront construction on the natural environment is reclaiming coastal land that no longer serves its original purpose. The sustainable reuse of existing buildings, while still bearing impact on surrounding land, reduces the negative effects of construction.

One example is a regeneration project in China by LWK+Partners. While originally a manufacturing zone where coal and steel would be imported, the waterfront area had opened up to potential redevelopment as manufacturing and business zones started relocating outside of the city.

"As time passed, we engaged with local authorities and proposed this huge opportunity to repopulate or reactivate this amazing artery," said Cengiz. "Rather than demolishing these mid-20th century industrial buildings, we proposed reusing them, which allowed for adaptive reuse, permeability, new communities to thrive and an activated, vibrant waterfront connected to the rest of the city."

INTEGRATION

Across the GCC, waterfront developments are largely manufactured rather than organically developed over time. This can provide a number of advantages, such as creating solu-

tion-based designs that pre-emptively tackle planning and urban development issues, including isolated building and not making the most of the waterfront in terms of connectivity, mobility, amenity and views.

While waterfront developments come in different types and sizes, from sea fronts to riversides, integrating such projects into the surrounding urban realm is part and parcel to delivering successful projects that not only meet commercial demands, but also those of the relevant community.

According to Cengiz, one of LWK+Partners' projects in Chongqing, China successfully balanced this seeming dichotomy. Called Danzishi Old Street, the multi-award winning project is a residential community underpinned by large retail components, community-based street retail and food and beverage offerings, which integrated an existing part of the community.

"We believe that one of the biggest challenges in the GCC is that our developments tend to be very community centric," Cengiz said. "And so, the response of the developer or the client is to meet the needs of that specific development, rather than make it a more permeable offer that integrates all the various amenities, including the water."

"One of the ways we dealt with it in Danzishi Old Street is that in front of the residential towers, which were obviously private, was a broader retail and community context that then fed out into a more organic, mixed-use environment. We worked with a professor from Beijing University who is an ex-



↑
Kerem Cengiz



↑
Waterside Lantau

pert in the history and development of old hill-side villages, and how that works with contemporary urban culture, orientation and building. So, while we had that strong backbone of commerciality, there was also a deeply ingrained cultural approach that gave an interesting duality between modern and historic.”

Cengiz added that the incorporation of such complementing factors attract visitors because it creates a cultural quarter through the arrangement of buildings, spaces and uses.

In contexts when a surrounding environment does not yet exist, Cengiz noted that the challenge for waterfronts then becomes ensuring they don't become independent and isolated islands.

“In these scenarios it is important to respond to the needs of that development while also planning it in such a way that the engagement with the waterfront gives you different offers,” he said. “That edge between urban developments and the natural environment is an opportunity to create a nuanced setting. It is essential to create varied environments through different types of plazas, pocket parks, play areas for children, public and more private spaces. Create other amenities and offers around it, too, so people can come and enjoy that development for the day as a visitor, not only as a resident. And in that, you allow that permeability, which mitigates, in time, what might happen adjacent to it.”

While it's difficult to predict how the surrounding urban environment will develop in time, Cengiz insists that you can still address those edges in a way so as not to “turn your back”.

“Through sensitive predictive planning and integration,”

he said, “you can offer an edge that would add value to not only the development, but also the adjoining properties and broader community.”

CREATING HARMONIOUS ENVIRONMENTS

LWK+Partners is working on a number of waterfront developments across the Middle East and North Africa. While one in the GCC is a hospitality initiative that has special cultural criteria, such as separated areas for men and women, another in Egypt requires the resolution of existing issues. According to Cengiz, LWK+Partners' role on the project in Egypt was very much peer review – the firm was brought in to address issues of inconsistency as well as to establish a “coastal look and feel appropriate to the location and adjacencies”.

“The question was how to work with an existing set of criteria and commerciality, which in some cases have already been sold and in construction, to create an environment that feels harmonious,” Cengiz said. “And that largely comes down to materiality, looking at the masses and voids, hierarchies and use of colour.

“Sometimes, being by the coast can be very playful, light-hearted and enjoyable. So how do we enhance that? Through integrating softer edges and touches, creating a lived-in feel. There's no hard or fast rule – it's about finding the sense of being by the sea and communicating it.”

Written by Rima Alsammarae

Images courtesy of LWK+Partners

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沿岸区的互动发展

LWK + PARTNERS 的 Kerem Cengiz 及何永平认为在发展沿岸项目时，应以提高用户体验及减少开发带来的环境影响为目标。

LWK + PARTNERS 规划及城市设计董事何永平说：“从城市规划的角度来看，有水的城市往往更有趣。沿岸区是屬於所有人的自然资产，除了特殊和战略用途，例如港口和海军设施外，它们应该是所有人都能享用的公共区域。”

何永平的看法引伸出关于沿岸区发展的讨论及建筑师所面对的挑战。根据何永平及董事总经理 – 中东及北非 Kerem Cengiz 的说法，这类项目需要考虑多种因素。最主要的考虑因素是水岸开发对自然环境的影响，以及如何创造和谐、连通的环境，以获得更好的空间界面和最终用户体验。

何永平认为：“随着急速的城市发展以及海岸和沿河城市的人口增长，河流、海岸及海洋的生态环境影响必定会大大增加。”

他补充：“作为规划师，我们需要注意环境的承载能力。如果发展时忽略这点，再加上过多的人口，必定会对自然生态系统造成难以逆转的损害。同时，我们有机会改造原有的沿岸环境，为游客、在当地工作和生活的人提供有趣、独特和引人入胜的地方。”

为环境带来的影响

何永平认为，对建筑师和规划师来说，沿岸项目最常带来的挑战是要避免开发对自然环境造成影响。面对这一难题，建筑师和规划师需要进行技术评估以确定现有条件并提供解决方案，减轻河岸或海岸线调整对土地、海水或河水的潜在负面影响。

何永平提到规划者和建筑师需要将这些考量整合到他们的整体概念中，以确保采用平衡的发展方法。

他认为：“全球暖化和海平面上升带来的后果越来越明显，海啸和飓风的出现更频繁，摧毁了多个沿海地区、城镇和城市。由于大多数的人口、资产和财富都集中在沿海城市，各国政府开始意识到没有为自然灾害作充足的准备会造成巨大的损失。”

他指出我们应考虑作进一步研究及寻找工程解决方案，以减低沿岸区受环境灾害冲击的风险。

他说：“既然现今拥有先进的技术，我们应更灵活应对灾害对生命和财产的威胁。”

复用一些已失去原有作用的沿海土地是其中一个能够减轻沿岸发展对自然环境影响的方法。尽管可持续利用现有建筑物依然会对周边土地产生影响，但至少能够减少兴建建筑物时产生的负面影响。

以一个 LWK + PARTNERS 在中国的更新项目为例，虽然最初是一个进口煤炭和钢铁的工业区，但随着制造业和商业区开始迁往城外，沿岸区已经成为潜在的再开发地区。

Kerem 认为：“我们与地方当局接触，并提出了这个机会来重新规划或重新激活这条神奇的水岸线。我们建议当局重新利用当地，而不是拆除这些 20 世纪中期的工业建筑，从而活化再利用，推动新社区的通达蓬勃发展，以及加强水岸与城市其他部分的连通度。”

融为一体

在海湾阿拉伯国家合作委员会地区（GCC）中，大部分沿岸开发项目都是人工制造的，而不是随着时间推移自然开发的。这个方法提供许多优势，例如它们往往是解决方案为本的设计，能预先解决未来规划和城市发展可能出现的问题，包括孤立的建筑及水岸未能充分发挥连通、流动、便利和景观效果等问题。

从海岸到河岸的开发项目有不同的类型和规模，将这些项目融入周围的城市区域不仅能满足商业需求，也能满足社区需求。

LWK + PARTNERS 的中国重庆项目 – 长嘉汇弹子石老街成功平衡了这种需求。这个屡获殊荣的项目是结合大型零售组合、街区餐饮和社区零售的住宅区，能有效与现有社区相融合。

Kerem 表示：“以社区为中心的发展趋向是 GCC 最大的挑战之一。因此，开发商或客户以回应特定开发项目的需求为目标，而不是以融合所有便利设施，包括水资源，为目标。”

“我们在打造长嘉汇弹子石老街项目的时候，特意把私人住宅塔楼前的零售和社区融入综合体的环境中。我们与一位北京大学的教授合作，他是研究旧山区村落的历史和发展，以及如何与当代城市文化、定位和建筑相结合的专家。因此，我们拥有强大的商业骨干之余，仍然可以采取尊重文化内涵的策略，在现代与历史之间作出平衡。”

Kerem 认为，这些相辅相成的元素通过建筑、空间和用途的安排得以体现，创造出能够吸引访客的文化街区。

他亦指出在没有周围环境的情况下，确保沿岸区不会成为孤岛是一个挑战。

他说：“在这些情况下，回应开发沿岸需求是非常重要的，规划时更要确保能发挥水岸多元化的特质。城市发展与自然环境之间的边缘，往往能创造出微妙的环境。必须通过不同类型的广场、小型公园、儿童游乐区、公共和私人空间来创造不同的环境。在附近兴建其他便利设施，让游客及居民都能享用。这样的流动空间更能适应周边未来的新发展。”

虽然很难预测周围的城市环境将如何发展，但 Kerem 认为，这些问题仍然可以在一定程度上解决。

他表示：“透过具前瞻性的规划和融合，沿岸开发项目、邻近的物业和社区都能增值。”

创造和谐环境

LWK + PARTNERS 正在中东及北非地区展开一系列沿岸开发项目。其中一项是 GCC 的酒店项目，该项目的特定文化准则包括男女分开的区域，而另一个埃及项目是需要解决现有的问题。据 Kerem 说，LWK + PARTNERS 在埃及项目中担任类似顾问角色，负责解决方案中不一致的地方，并建立“切合地理位置和周边环境的水岸风格”。

Kerem 表示：“问题是在于某些已经售出并在建设情况下，如何利用现有的一套标准和商业准则来创造和谐的环境。”这通常关乎到实体，着眼于实体和空间，层次结构和颜色的使用。

他认为：“海边带来有趣、轻松和愉快的感觉。那么我们该如何增强这一点呢？我们可以通过融合柔和的边缘和触感，营造出生活的感觉。这没有硬性规定或方程式，而是要找到那种待在海边的感觉，并将它重塑出来。”