Resurrected Canals
Urban water transport system, Bangkok, Thailand

Background

Place: Over a hundred years ago, these canals were being used as trade and transit routes, and a lifestyle connected to the waterways was a Thai characteristic. Palaces, ancient temples and communities are also located on the waterfront.

Context: The development of water transport system and the transfer stations would enable interaction along the canals. The secondary canals will interconnect retail precincts of the city. The transfer stations could act as catalysts for regenerating much-needed economic activities and jobs, especially, for informal settlements along the canals.

Prosperity: The water transport system will provide routes to many places. The main canals will connect to important business districts. The secondary canals will interconnect retail precincts of the city. The transfer stations could act as catalysts for regenerating much-needed economic activities and jobs, especially, for informal settlements along the canals. Place: Over a hundred years ago, these canals were being used as trade and transit routes, and a lifestyle connected to the waterways was a Thai characteristic. Palaces, ancient temples and communities are also located on the waterfront. Resurrected Canals will enhance tourism promotion as well as contemporary development.

Main author

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Project data

Context: Landscape, urban design and infrastructure
Client: Bangkok Metropolitan Administration
Background: Research project
Planned start: March 2015

Summary and appraisal by the jury

The Resurrected Canals concept offers an answer to the notoriously congested traffic conditions in Bangkok. The project proposes to revive the ancient canals of the city to create a modern network of waterways and supplement existing Metropolitan Rapid Transit (MRT) systems. A train-to-boat transfer station and pier will be built as a prototype to be positioned along various intersections of canal lines and rail stations. The development of water transport will not only reduce commuting time for residents, but also provide social services at key locations. This major infrastructure project will also introduce flood control and pollution reduction measures.

Sustainability concept

Progress: The development of water transport system would be a lower-cost alternative (around 1/20 to 1/10 of the construction costs for the heavy railway underground project). The service route can also be multi-purpose by allocating a schedule that accommodates both public transportation and (off-peak) shipping. The prototype of transfer station or pier will be created by the concept of an ‘Architecture Manual’ that can be applied elsewhere in the future.

People: Resurrected Canals is an opportunity to achieve an efficient transport system for all people from all areas, thus it promotes equal rights of access to public services. It also allows each person to choose a particular path in order to reach their destination and allows passengers or visitors to experience the diverse waterfront lifestyles of the city as well. The transfer stations would enable informal residents to gain faster access to healthcare facilities and services along rail lines that were previously out of their reach.

Planet: The main goal of the project is the development of efficient and affordable transport network to reduce private car use. Furthermore, solving the flood, waste and water pollution is another intention of the project. Resurrected Canals also integrates various systems both active and passive within the water transport network. The main canals will be comprised of flood drainage channels that will connect to retention ponds. The secondary canals that connect to the side-channel community are comprised of a buffer zone for passive waste water treatment. The port area will include systems to observe and control the waste discharging into the water as well.

Prosperity: The water transport system will provide routes to many places. The main canals will connect to important business districts. The secondary canals will interconnect retail precincts of the city. The transfer stations could act as catalysts for regenerating much-needed economic activities and jobs, especially, for informal settlements along the canals.

The jury applauds the bold vision of the project, particularly its aim to rehabilitate a historic city network, which — though crucial for the definition of the urban fabric — was unfortunately compromised due to both formal and informal growth over time. Furthermore, the idea to combine technical exigencies with social needs is an excellent feature of the planning proposal, one that reclaims infrastructure as residing in the public domain and being truly important matter of concern for society at large.

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