



Stations for People – Important Factors in Station Design

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Summary

Travel by railways is now more popular than it was several years ago. Along with the “station renaissance”, many new stations have been built and many historical stations have been refurbished and developed. Stations have become more user-friendly, satisfying many needs and various additional functions. This paper examines factors, which have an influence that railway stations in Europe and Japan have become more designated for people than, like before, for trains. The conclusion is that both in Europe and Japan many factors of station design are essential for people and make travel by rail more convenient.

Keywords: Station renaissance, railway station; station design; aesthetics.

1. Introduction

In Europe since 1980s, there was the most notable development concerning railways, since their beginning in 19 century. After the introduction of high-speed trains (HST), a travel by rail has been again gaining popularity and railway stations have experienced “station renaissance” [1]. In Japan railways have always had a strong popularity, although the motorization of the country and urban migrations had also unfavourably influenced the travel by train. Currently, both in Europe and in Japan, stations are important urban infrastructure and their design has a big influence on the transportation, on the urban landscape, and on the people. Station design is closely related to the way people can feel about stations. It has been investigated that stations designed for their users have become important urban junctions shaping urban centers and neighborhoods [2].

This paper analyses the current role of railway stations on the examples of railway stations in Europe and Japan. It describes various aspects of station function and form that play part in the evaluation of the stations, as “stations for people”. The function includes transportation function, commercial, and cultural. In regard to form, the paper discusses various aesthetic criteria. Aesthetics is important not only from the visual aspect of perception, but also in terms of function, and in relation with urban environment.

2. What is a railway station today?

A railway station can be defined as a place where trains load or unload passengers and recently very rarely – goods. It usually consists of the combination of a platform and a station building or shelter, or only one of either. A platform is a basic station component that allows the passengers to get on and off the train. In the past, large railway halls for the train terminals built in all major European cities were top achievements among engineering structures that flourished in the 19th century. Today, along with the “station renaissance”, some of these splendid stations have been modernized and adapted for the HST. Also, the last two decades saw a development of impressive large-size