Visual Identity of Seaside City’s Cultural Landscape

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Abstract. The unification of modern cities is becoming a consequence of globalization. There is a leveling of their unique features: cultural, social and visual identity. A city without a bright expressed "face" - a recognizable visual image and stable semantic associations - inevitably loses its position in today's highly competitive market. Urban identity is becoming one of the city's competitive advantages in the context of globalization. The potential of urban identity lies in the possibility of forming a recognizable city, maintaining the true (authentic) urban meanings, the “spirit” of the city. In this regard, it is important to actualize the visual potential of the city, as well as the process of introducing unique visual components of the city's cultural landscape into the concept of urban identity. The article examines the specifics of a maritime city's urban identity, revealing the uniqueness of the city at the level of visual perception, which must be taken into account when elaborating a city development strategy.

Keywords: cultural landscape, urban identity, visual projection of urban structure, seaside city’s image, space-forming role of water area, architectural panorama.

1. Introduction

The concept of the “city cultural landscape” is important for understanding urban identity, in which it is fixed that urban identity can be transmitted in visual ways. The conducted research [1-10] gives a fairly broad picture of modern ideas about the specifics of the cultural landscape, its components and, thus, can serve as a theoretical basis for analyzing the formation of a city's identity, taking into account the visual component. The main goal of this work is to identify the specifics of the formation of the identity of a seaside city at the level of visual perception, depending on the cultural landscape’s special structure. The features of stable spatial impressions based on such quality of a seaside city environment’s perception as panorama are considered. An architectural panorama is a specific form of a city’s image demonstration, the fundamental basis of which is the visual-spatial integrity of the city’s elements with a simultaneous perception of large urban formations. Being as the main form of the urban structure’s visual projection for a certain type of cities, the architectural panorama is for them the most important condition for the formation of a visually integral image of the cultural landscape.

Many concepts of the city’s spatial organization took into account the panoramic aspect of perception [11-17]. The panorama, as the main visual component of the maritime city’s identity formation, did not become the subject of special and purposeful research in most of these works. However, exactly this approach is becoming especially actual today, since it is necessary to understand...
and comprehend the nature and mechanisms of the coastal cities’ originality and, in particular, the city of Vladivostok, to ensure sustainable development.

2. Methods

The research of the city’s cultural landscape must begin with an analysis of its formation’s specific conditions in order to show in the future how these conditions lead to certain features of the spatial structure and qualitative characteristics of the cultural landscape. The city located on the seashore is a specific architectural phenomenon. The most important natural factor - the sea - influences the city image’s formation in two ways: directly - through its visual and spatial inclusion in the urban cultural landscape, and indirectly - through specific compositional decisions of the urban structure. These two aspects of the sea influence are most clearly expressed in the peculiarities of such city’s external spatial appearance as a panorama. Precisely the water area’s presence is one of the objective conditions for the panoramic perception of the city.

The methodology of research and renovation of the seaside city’s cultural landscape has been considered in a number of works [18-24]. The methodology is based on a system of formal and substantive characteristics of the city’s spatial structure and architectural image, which together reveals the structural-morphological, architectural-compositional and artistic-figurative qualities of the urban environment and represent them at the level of panoramic perception (Fig. 1).

| REGARDING THE WATER AREA | THE VIEWER IS OUTSIDE CONCERNING THE BUILDINGS | THE VIEWER RECEIVES A PANORAMA FROM THE INSIDE WHILE IN THE BUILDINGS ITSELF (FOR EXAMPLE, FROM THE TOPS OF THE HILLS) |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| EXTERNAL (marine)        |                                              |                                                                                                 |
| INTERNAL (urban)         |                                              |                                                                                                 |
| BY LENGTH                | CHARACTERIZED BY A LARGE ANGLE OF VISION (up to a circular view) WITH A SHORT-TERM PERCEPTION FROM ONE POINT, OR FORMED AS A SERIES OF FRAMES IN THE PROCESS OF MOTION | CHARACTERIZED BY A SMALL ANGLE OF VIEW, FIXED VIEW, REMOTE OF THE VIEWER FROM THE BUILDINGS |
| EXTENDED                 |                                              |                                                                                                 |
| COMPACT                  |                                              |                                                                                                 |
| BY GEOMETRIC FORM        | ARE PROJECTED ON THE FRONTAL SURFACE, THE VIEWER RECEIVES THEM FROM ONE POINT OR WHEN MOVING ALONG THE FRONT | ARE PROJECTED ON A CYLINDRICAL SURFACE OR PART OF IT, PERCEPTED EITHER IN THE PROCESS OF ROTATION, OR WHEN MOVING ON A CURVE |
| LINEAR                   |                                              |                                                                                                 |
| CIRCULAR                 |                                              |                                                                                                 |
| BY DEPTH (LEVELNESS)     | ARISE ON LEVEL TERRITORIES, DO NOT HAVE DEVELOPMENT INTO THE DEPTH, THE PROJECTION OF THE URBAN STRUCTURE REFLECTS PREVENTLY THE FIRST PLAN | ARISE IN CONDITIONS OF A COMPLEX RELIEF, THE PROJECTION OF THE URBAN STRUCTURE SYNTHESIZES DIFFERENT BUILDINGS LAYERS AT A SIGNIFICANT DISTANCE FROM EACH OTHER |
| ONE LEVEL                |                                              |                                                                                                 |
| MULTIPLE                 |                                              |                                                                                                 |
These characteristics arise as a result of a seaside city’s main components interaction: terrain, water area, architecture and ship-port facilities. A comprehensive spatial analysis of the urban environment can be implemented, revealing a unified natural and cultural framework of the urbanized environment on the basis of the above characteristics. An analysis of the surrounding visual space through a panorama is the basis for understanding urban identity.

Comprehensive analysis assumes as the first step structural and morphological analysis of panoramic projections. In the course of it, such visually perceived characteristics of the environment as geometric shape, length, tiering, layering, density, light and shade, and color structure are revealed. Further, a compositional analysis is implemented according to such parameters as: characteristic points and directions of panoramic perception from outside and from inside the city, the location of the most important silhouette lines, accents and dominants, scale-proportional relations, etc. In the course of semantic analysis, the artistic-figurative and semantic content of the environment is revealed; its components: associative-metaphorical series, key semantic signs, basic senses and meanings.

Comparing the data of complex analysis, we get an objective basis for a comprehensive and integrated study of seaside cities’ structure and image. This technique allows, firstly, to study, compare, identify the specifics of different cities’ urban identity. Secondly, on its basis, the shortcomings and contradictions of the cultural landscape’s urbanized component can be revealed, and proposals for its improvement can be formulated.

3. Results
The space of the city is too complex to become the object of simultaneous direct perception. In a complex system of the environment, the ordering of perception by large-scale levels makes it easier to understand the city as a whole, its character and appearance, but requires certain "costs" for organizing the vision. Therefore, if the environment is visually organized and has a vivid recognizability, it allows a person to link these properties of the environment into a generalized ideal model - the image of the city, the "appropriation" and use of which is an element of the urban identity’s effective formation.

The sea and the city are visually a single spatial unit that develops according to specific laws, and therefore the environment of the city acquires a certain semantic richness, which has no place in other (non-seaside) cities. Visual accessibility, i.e. the ability to view the water area from within the city space is one aspect of the sea’s compositional influence on the city’s structure. A well-defined city boundary formed by the coastline significantly affects the spatial and compositional parameters of the urban environment [17; 20].

The space-forming role of the water area is manifested in the peculiar orientation of the urban environment towards the sea, which is expressed both in the solution of the planning structure and in the concentration of the main architectural expression means in the coastal strip. The morphological structure of the seaside city is formed as a result of such directed “gravitation” of the city space towards the sea, which is fixed by the urban planning composition. The material and structural qualities of the composition oriented towards the water area find their visual expression in the panorama from the sea side, with a holistic perception of the city’s “sea facade”.

![Figure 1. Structural and morphological characteristics of the seaside city panorama.](image-url)
The image of the city is formed under the influence of multidirectional compositional "efforts": on the one hand, compositional solutions that provide a visual orientation of the city inner space to the sea, on the other, the compositional organization of the panorama perceived from the sea. The architectural and artistic unity of the city's image can be achieved under the condition of the interconnected organization of compositional forces, both “internal” and “external” (Fig. 2).

The system of the seaside panorama’s visual characteristics, contributing to the formation of the seaside city’s cultural landscape unique qualities, is associated with the visual inclusion of the water area in the panorama structure (Fig. 3).

Figure 2. The water area’s influence on the formation of the city’ cultural landscape.

4. Discussion
City’s spatial and visual connections with the sea are of great importance in the formation of its artistic image. In the case when the city is located on flat terrain, these visual connections are provided by the specific orientation of streets and urban spaces in such a way that peculiar visual “corridors” are formed. As a rule, the planning structure here consists of streets repeating the coastline and streets perpendicular to the coastline (or going to it at an angle). As you move away from the sea, this regularity weakens, as the visual relationship with the sea weakens.
If the city is located on a relief that has a weakly expressed slope towards the sea, then the value of the streets providing visual “corridors” continues to remain significant even at a sufficient distance from the coastal strip. In other words, the area of the sea’s compositional and artistic-figurative impact on the city is increasing.

As the slope increases further, the moment comes when the importance of streets - “corridors” in providing a visual connection with the sea drops sharply. Indeed, with large slopes, it becomes possible to perceive the sea in the intervals between the houses, and with their sufficient indentation also over the roofs. In addition, with steep slopes, “streets-corridors” across the relief become impossible. As for the streets running parallel to the coastline and along the relief, special measures are needed to ensure their visual interconnection with the sea - gaps in buildings, raising buildings to supports and other methods. All this applies to the side of the street, which is located closer to the sea.

![Figure 3. Water area is key component of coastal city’s urban landscape: a - Genoa, b - Vancouver, c - Sydney, d - Hong Kong.](image)

The examples considered above characterize the simplest forms of the relationship between the natural landscape of the seaside city’s coastal zone and planning structure. In reality, there may be more complex situations, as is the case, for example, in the Far Eastern coastal cities, in particular, in Vladivostok. Firstly, the natural landscape here is an intricate, hilly area. Different parts of this territory have different slopes, different orientations in the cardinal directions and are differently related to the sea. Consequently, the spatial and visual connections between the city and the sea are more complex here. In addition, we get not a two-member visual series “city-sea”, but a three-member visual series “city-sea-city” in the presence of deeply flowing bays, on the banks of which the city is located (as, for example, in Vladivostok). In this case, the image of the city appears simultaneously in two visual-spatial qualities: “exterior” and “interior”.

Of course, the formation of the city's planning structure occurs under the influence of a number factors, and in reality situations arise when the possibility and necessity of visual interconnection with the sea is "canceled out" by other circumstances (for example, the orientation of the slope in the cardinal directions, the unfavorable effect of the prevailing winds, etc.). However, practice shows that the visual relationship with the sea is one of the most important conditions for the formation of a seaside city’s cultural landscape. Therefore, even in the presence of unfavorable factors, there are means, methods and forms of resolving this contradiction in the direction of maintaining such a relationship.
5. Conclusions
The most important means of forming the symbolic capital of a city (its positive image, fame, uniqueness, recognition, etc.) in the age of competition is urban identity. From the study, we can conclude that the sea city has a unique specificity of the cultural landscape, due to the spatial and visual connections between the city and the sea. Panorama as the main visual component of projecting the structure and image of a sea city allows us to understand and comprehend the nature and mechanisms of the coastal cities’ identity formation. The architectural panorama is an important way of the urban environment’s artistic and compositional regulation and, therefore, must be consciously and purposefully formed at all stages of the design process. The organic nature of the city's cultural landscape natural and urbanized components fusion, the degree of their unity are the basis for the preservation of urban identity in the following development of the city.

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