

The Turia River Park (Valencia) – part 1

Galan Vivas, Juan José

Park nad rzeką
Turia (Walencja)
– cz. 1

Fig. 1. View of the city of Valencia and the river Turia (VAN DEN WYNGAERDE, A., 1563)

Ryc. 1. Widok miasta Walencja i rzeki Turia (VAN DEN WYNGAERDE, A., 1563)



This article is the first part of the presentation. The second part will be published in the next issue of the journal.

Introduction

Wprowadzenie

since its foundation by the Romans in the 2nd C B.C., the city of Valencia established an intense and particular relationship with the unpredictable river Turia, a river embracing the town and which watered the fertile surrounding lands by means of a complex system of channels created at the Moorish time and extended in the following centuries.

During the Middle Ages and due to the frequent and damaging

floodings, the local authorities created the “Fabrica de Murs i Valls”, a municipal institution in charge of the construction and maintenance of the river embankments and bridges, all of them, elements that nowadays are part of the city heritage and that define a powerful and impressive space, framing the old town, crossing the whole city and linking some of its most outstanding buildings, gardens and public spaces.

The devastating flooding of the year 1957 marked a before and after, and following the development principles of that time, and the little knowledge of ecological issues, the river Turia was diverted with a mammoth project that completely removed the water from the old riverbed. The linear void left in the city rema-



Fig. 2. Map of the city of Valencia and the river Turia (TOSCA, T.V., 1738)

Ryc. 2. Mapa miasta Walencja i rzeki Turia (TOSCA, T.V., 1738)

ined empty and useless for decades and was object of different proposals, mainly orientated to the creation of a transport corridor within it.

In 1973 and when the plan for the creation of a highway and rail station on the former riverbed was almost approved, the social protests achieved to stop the plan and the Minister of Civil Works accepted its transformation in a public green area, starting the proceedings for its donation to the Municipality with the condition of implementing the works before a 10 years period.

A series of technical studies and global proposals for the Turia were developed then by different professionals and collectives, and, in 1976, the amendments to redefine the old river as a “park with a unitary treatment and with a natural character” were successfully included in the Local Strategic Plan.

In 1979, and following a national contest for the design of the River Turia Park, an exhibition of the 13 running bids was hold in Valencia, but, since the prize was not awarded, in 1981, Ricardo Bofill receives the commission to prepare an Integral Plan for the riverbed and, in 1982, after an intense public participation process and social debate; his masterplan was presented, receiving some critics due to its very formal character, high maintenance requirements and the lack of a continuous course of water. A first step has been given though, and in 1983 the Town Council decides to split the river park in dif-

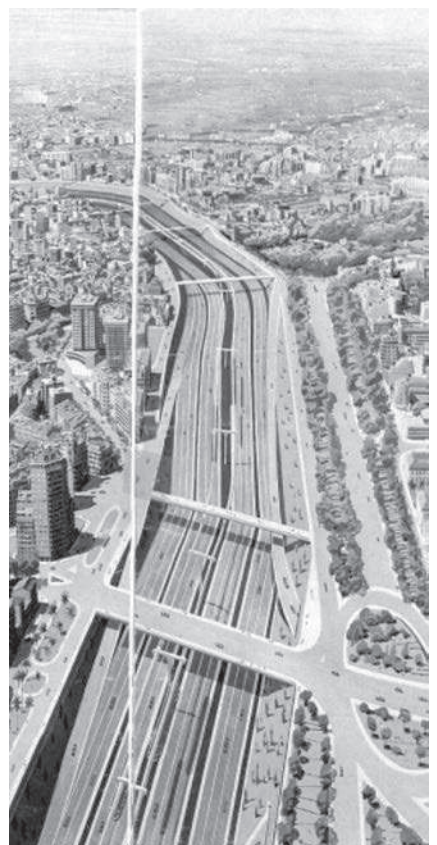
Fig. 3 and 4. Model and 3D image showing the plan to construct a highway in the old Turia riverbed, Valencia Strategic Plan, 1966

Ryc. 3 i 4. Model i obraz trójwymiarowy pokazujący plan budowy autostrady w starym korycie rzeki Turia, plan strategiczny Walencji, 1966



ferent stretches and commissions the development of each partial design to a series of local teams, with the only condition of keeping some global concepts from the Bofill’s masterplan, and letting them the freedom to change the Bofill’s neoclassical patterns.

The decision of dividing the Turia Park in a sequence of independent gardens, with their limits generally marked by the existing or new bridges, remains now as one of the most controversial aspects when the whole park is analyzed... it was at the same time the cause of the diversity and lack of unity of the park and somehow it hindered the definition of some global park systems like, the one concerning the water.



The River Turia Park

Park nad rzeką Turia

Global description

Opis ogólny

The river Turia Park has a total length of about 8,5 kilometres of uninterrupted and traffic free green space. Its section changes considerably along its course, passing

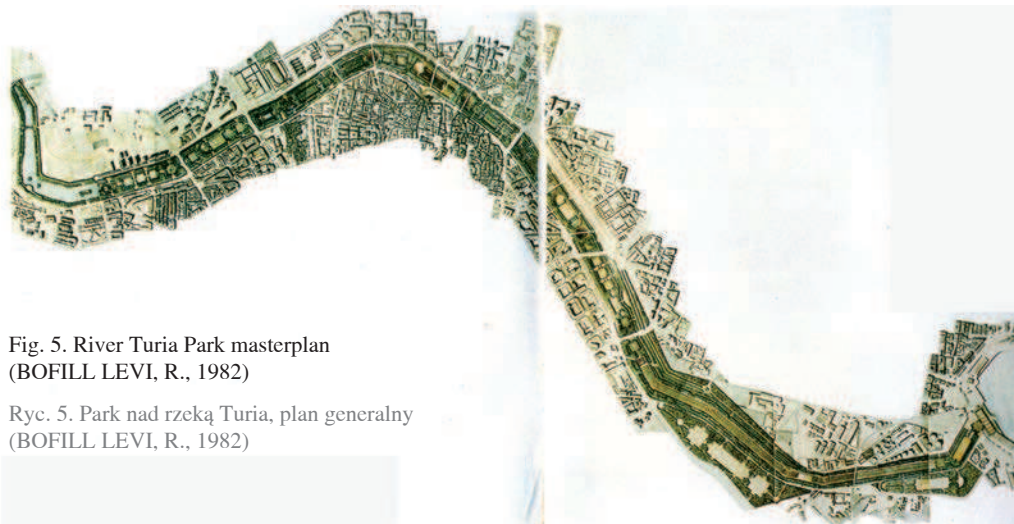


Fig. 5. River Turia Park masterplan (BOFILL LEVI, R., 1982)

Ryc. 5. Park nad rzeką Turia, plan generalny (BOFILL LEVI, R., 1982)

Fig. 6. Perspective drawings of the river Turia Park Masterplan (BOFILL LEVI, R., 1982)

Ryc. 6. Rysunki perspektywiczne parku nad rzeką Turia, plan generalny (BOFILL LEVI, R., 1982)



from a box-like profile in the first and middle parts to a more subtle topography in the final stretches. Its general position, 4 meters under the city level, creates a noise free space and, in spite of its limited average width (140 meters) and its closeness to the parallel busy avenues, the users have the feeling of being in an isolated green corridor flanked by the imposing masonry embankments and some of the most important city buildings which act as reference points.

The park has been constructed in different phases and according to a subdivision in 18 sectors, of which, the number 17 and 18, located by the old river mouth, are still pending of implementation. These sectors are basically separated by the 17 old and new bridges which cross the river and that create a sequence of clear

landmarks, showing, indirectly, the character of the districts that the park crosses.

Apart from the green matrix and the system of pathways and bicycle lane which connect the different sectors, the river Turia Park allocates a series of specific areas including

sport facilities, a lake, a series of ponds and disconnected courses of water, service areas, children playgrounds, the City of Arts & Science and some public or administrative buildings like the Music Palace, a Police Station and the Museum of the River Turia Landscapes. The location of all



Fig. 7. The river Turia Park and its different stretches (MEDINA PILES, A., 2010)

Ryc. 7. Park nad rzeką Turia i jego różne odcinki (MEDINA PILES, A., 2010)

Fig. 8. Valencia's primary transport system (LOZANO ESTEBAN, S., 2010)

Ryc. 8. Podstawowy system transportu w Walencji (LOZANO ESTEBAN, S., 2010)

these areas along the obsolete riverbed, sustains a continuous and intense activity within it, independently of the contrasting character of each stretch.

But the use of the river park cannot be understood without considering what happens on its two sides, where, two fast traffic roads create a strong physical barrier with the rest of the city, hindering the development in the adjoining buildings of services and activities complementing the ones existing in the park, that somehow, appears as an independent and isolated space, probably as a consequence of its difficult transversal connections and its location, 4 meters under the city level. This topographical condition seems to be at the same time its main virtue and weakness and is not an obstacle for its intense use during the weekends and week day evenings, when people, massively, "go down to the river" for jogging, cycling, having a stroll, resting, playing football or picnicking.

The great potential of the Turia River Park as backbone of the urban green system and as public transport corridor are two aspects that require also a further consideration and which are negatively influenced by the heavy traffic and by the absence of a specific clean transport system, promenades and bicycle lanes on its sides. Even, the pedestrians coming from some adjoining parks, like the Valencia Botanic Garden or the Viveros, find big difficulties to descend to the Turia Park or are "invited" to enter through some tunnels.

Fig. 9. Valencia's Park system (LOZANO ESTEBAN, S., 2010)

Ryc. 9. System parkowy Walencji (LOZANO ESTEBAN, S., 2010)



The river Turia Park may play also an essential role in the Regional Green Infrastructure, a system, that according with the Landscape Policy and Territorial Plan for the Valencian Region (23.000 km² and 5.110.000 inhabitants), must incorporate and

link the main natural, rural and urban open spaces of the whole region, protecting and facilitating their public use.

In order to fulfil this role and considering both the important population of the Valencian Metropoli-





Fig. 10. Green Infrastructure in the metropolitan area of Valencia (MUÑOZ CRIADO, A., 2009)

Ryc. 10. Zielona infrastruktura na wielkomijskim obszarze Walencji (MUÑOZ CRIADO, A., 2009)

tan Area (1.500.000 people) and its exceptional context, including two natural areas of international interest (Park Natural of the River Turia and Park Natural de la Albufera), and a protected cultural landscape (Huerta de Valencia), the river Turia park should articulate its connections to these spaces and channel the adequate flow of citizens to them.

The before mentioned connections affect mainly to the two ends of the river Turia Park and should be resolved in a masterplan affecting, on one hand to the coastal line and the old river mouth and, on the other, to a strong inter municipal link with the river Turia Natural Park. The complexity of these two areas, where important infrastructural corridors, the city harbour and protected agricultural or natural areas are located, require a global and transversal approach and should, necessarily, respond, both in size and character, to the importance of the pieces that they are connecting.



Fig. 11 and 12. Pending ends of the river Turia Park. Mouth of the old river (left, from the Valencia's Park's and Garden's Guide, MEDINA PILES, A., et al, 2010) and upstream connection (right, from the Strategic Plan for the Huerta of Valencia, MUÑOZ CRIADO, A., 2009)

Ryc. 11 i 12. Niezakończony odcinki krańcowe parku nad rzeką Turia. Ujście starej rzeki (widok z lewej strony, z "The Valencia's Park's and Garden's Guide", MEDINA PILES, A., i inni, 2010) i połączenie w górę rzeki (widok z prawej strony, z „Plan Strategiczny dla regionu Huerta de Valencia”, MUÑOZ CRIADO, A., 2009)

Fig. 13. Stretches of the river Turia Park (MEDINA PILES, A., et al, 2010)

Ryc. 13. Obszary parku nad rzeką Turia (MEDINA PILES, A., i inni, 2010)



Sectors description

Opis sektorów

As explained before, the river Turia Park is divided in a series of stretches designed by different teams. In the following lines it is explained in a systematic way the main characteristic of each of them:

HEAD PARK (Parque de Cabecera)

- Dimensions and location:** With a total length of 1km and an average width of 200 metres, this 15 hectares park marks the western end of the River Turia Park and is flanked by the new Valencia's zoopark. The contact with the city takes place through gentle slopes going down to the central areas.
- General description and character:** Its flowy and hydromorphic paths, central water course, landform, retaining walls and masses of trees, arranged following the typical section of a mediterranean river, evoke a riparian context and are dominated by an extense lake and by a hill with commanding views over the city.



Fig. 14. Valencia's Head Park (from the Valencia's Park's and Garden's Guide, MEDINA PILES, A., et al, 2010)

Ryc. 14. Główny Park Walencji (z "The Valencia's Park's and Garden's Guide", MEDINA PILES, A., i inni, 2010)



Fig. 15. Valencia's Head Park (source: Bingmaps, 2010)

Ryc. 15. Główny Park Walencji (źródło: Bingmaps, 2010)

Fig. 16. Stretches nr 1, 2 & 3 of the River Turia Park (from the Valencia's Park's and Garden's Guide, MEDINA PILES, A., et al, 2010)

Ryc. 16. Obszar nr 1, 2 & 3 parku nad rzeką Turia (z "The Valencia's Park's and Garden's Guide", MEDINA PILES, A., i inni, 2010)

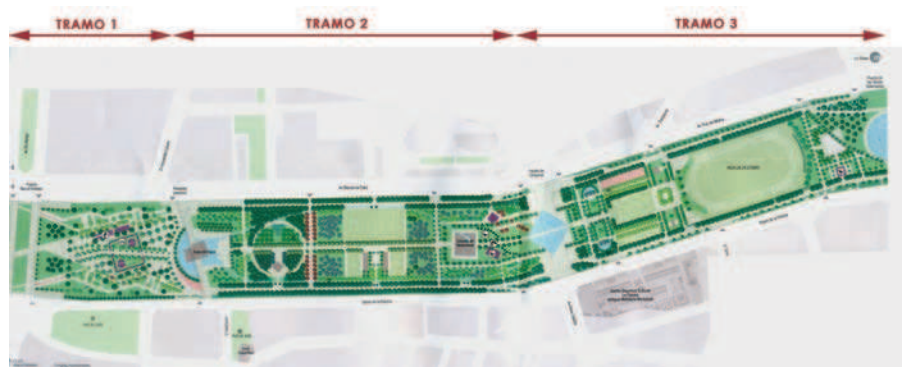


Fig. 17. River Turia Park: Stretch 1
(source: Bingmaps, 2010)

Ryc. 17. Park nad rzeką Turia: Obszar 1
(źródło: Bingmaps, 2010)



- **Uses:** The area presents extensive lawns by the lake and more intimate places amongst the embracing topography. The park is massively used by runners, cyclists and people resting, playing or enjoying the wildlife and habitats around the lake and the central watercourse
- **Connections:** The park should become the gate to the River Turia Natural Park and is adequately connected to the surrounding districts.

STRETCH 1

- **Dimensions and location:** This 225 m long and 140 metres wide stretch is laterally limited by stone embankments which define a box like section.
- **General description and character:** The stretch is defined by a rotated grid and does not present a specific character or design.
- **Uses:** Area mainly used to accommodate children's playgrounds.
- **Connections:** Stretch flanked by a small district park and by the car park of a shopping mall.

STRETCH 2

- **Dimensions and location:** This 560 m long and 140 metres wide stretch is laterally limited by stone embankments which define a box like section. Its western end is marked by a historic stone river dam (Azud de Rovella) and a new pedestrian bridge.

- **General description and character:** The water, in channels, aqueducts, pools and cascades, define the main geometry of the park and is accompanied by a hilly landform which intersects the viaducts and by a system of paths which flow parallel and perpendicular to the main axis. The planting reinforces the above mentioned geometry and includes evergreen species, mainly pines and deciduous trees in the central areas.
- **Uses:** Children playgrounds and an agora in the eastern end, sport facilities in the central area and a police station over the dam located in the western end.
- **Connections:** Stretch flanked by districts developed in the XXth century and crossed in its eastern end by the 2nd city ring, a hard and uninviting system of roads with narrow sidewalks.

STRETCH 3

- **Dimensions and location:** A 500 m long and 140 metres wide stretch that is also laterally limited by vertical stone embankments.
- **General description and character:** Geometry defined by an orthogonal grid that accommodates sport facilities and resting areas. The whole stretch is dominated by a central olympic athletics

track surrounded by stands and pergolas. Water is not present with the exception of some ponds under the bridges that, as in other stretches of the river park, provide some interest to these dark and shady areas, and avoid the presence of homeless camps.

- **Uses:** Sport, strolling, jogging, cycling and resting.
- **Connections:** The presence of two tunnels carrying most of the traffic on both sides of the park relieves considerably the pressure over the people entering the park from the surrounding districts and public facilities (sport center of La Petxina). The park is crossed in its eastern end by the 1st city ring, with its wide, tree planted and inviting central boulevards.

STRETCHES 4 & 5

- **Dimensions and location:** A 1 km long and 145 metres wide stretch laterally limited by vertical stone embankments. The area is flanked by a dense programme of cultural and commercial areas (Valencia Botanic Garden, Museum of Modern Art (IVAM) and Museum of Ethnology on the southern side and Central Bus Station and New Center shopping mall in the new districts by the northern side).



Fig. 18. River Turia Park: Stretch 2 (source: Bingmaps, 2010)

Ryc. 18. Park nad rzeką Turia: Obszar 2 (źródło: Bingmaps, 2010)

Fig. 19. River Turia Park: Stretch 3
(source: Bingmaps, 2010)

Ryc. 19. Park nad rzeką Turia: Obszar 3
(źródło: Bingmaps, 2010)



● **General description and character:** The river Turia Park incorporates in these stretches a more organic geometry with wandering paths and a hilly topography inspired in natural patterns. The planting is completely based in a combination of lawns and mediterranean forest, which is substituted by deciduous river trees along the central axis although water is not explicitly present. The street furniture and equipments attend also to a rustic, forest like style

● **Uses:** Strolling, jogging, cycling, resting and picnicking. There is a rugby pitch in the eastern end and a cafeteria in the central part.

● **Connections:** The exit of the traffic tunnel coming from the west creates a very serious barrier which blocks the connection of the river park with the Botanic Garden. Conversely, the creation of a tunnel near the Arts bridge diminish the traffic on the eastern side and improves the connection of the park with the Museum complex and with the boulevard surrounding the old town and the demolished city walls.

Galan Vivas, Juan José

Universidad Politécnica de Valencia; DE
INSAUSTI MACHINANDIARENA, Pilar;
Universidad Politécnica de Valencia, August
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Fig. 20. Stretches nº 4, 5 & 6 of the River Turia Park (from the Valencia's Park's and Garden's Guide, MEDINA PILES, A., et al, 2010)

Ryc. 20. Obszar nr 4, 5 & 6 parku nad rzeką Turia (z "The Valencia's Park's and Garden's Guide", MEDINA PILES, A., i inni 2010)

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Fig. 21. River Turia Park: Stretch 4
(source: Bingmaps, 2010)

Ryc. 21. Park nad rzeką Turia: Obszar 4
(źródło: Bingmaps, 2010)

