

Landscape planning towards regional identity

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Abstract

All over the world the metropolitan regions share characteristics of diffuse suburban areas with mostly non-specific character. Ecological problems and reduced functionalities for social appropriation are associated. The spatial images communicate so the attitudes and activities of society. Their diffuse character shows the low awareness of the region as a whole with the multitude of individual decisions shaping the space. As this attitude affects the future chances strongly it is a main problem. The globalization of economic and private action puts the European metropolitan regions in a strong international competition. Thus the metropolitan regions are challenged to develop as an internationally attractive location with a clear profile and to differentiate from others. Therefore it is necessary to provide the steering institutions or networks with a strategy that generates in a broad public attention to the problem, interest in the discussion about future development, desire to control the own decisions towards common values and collective action leading to a clear regional profile.

The view to develop the metropolitan region from the open space has received new importance in the discussion about the shaping of the urban sprawl. Authors such as Shannon and De Meulder (2010), Sieverts (2010), Pollak (2005) find that the landscape is a structuring element of urban development. Thus the landscape with its special qualities and potential could have the capacity to provide regional identity. Its development as a dominant structure of urban sprawl could not only be an

CITTA 4th Annual Conference on Planning Research Innovation in Governance and Decision Making in Planning Abstract Submission instrument to position regional identity but also a means to communicate it. Therefore the research project within the IST PhD program on architecture aims to investigate a strategic concept for metropolitan regions that uses the landscape to position the regions identity and develop it as a brand. A strong brand is a value for all stakeholders and thus motivation for joint action. The Metropolitan region of Lisbon (AML) has been selected as application example. The present case study focuses on an investigation of the identity concept as strategic base to assess the landscape as indicator for regional identity aiming to verify the ability of the concept to address the self-interests of the broad public. Approaches to a branding are shown in a small area. The construction of identity is a process that continues between the individual and a social group to develop both in their unique personality and their differentiated capacities. Therefore it is highly relevant for the society and the individual. The space as place for living and working is incorporated firmly in this process (Durkheim, 1912, Ipsen, 2006). The success of society depends on collective identity as control system to form the capacities of its even temporarily members and to develop of synergies a common whole.

Agreed values are the key in the identity process to control individual action. They only become effective as orientations for the individual by the attitude of the society towards them (Mead, 1934). But the motivation to choose a particular alternative course of action and to maintain is also influenced by self-interests and an imaginable objective. Therefore collective U. Sacher Landscape planning towards regional identity 4 action is necessary that the individual experiences these attitudes, identifies with them and controls his action accordingly. A common objective that responds to the needs and capacities of the actors is the motor to direct the energies. This relates to the understanding of governance as process of coordination of actors in order to attain common objectives (Le Galès, 2006). The identity process can be divided into a few criteria. Thus the transparency necessary for an assessment and a broad discussion is provided. For each criterion questions can be formulated, which are a tool to assess the spatial image as indicator of regional identity. The questions refer to the link between individual needs, the synergies in society and the spatial image as visible product of this process. Thus they provide a tool to cause awareness of the importance of the regional development as a whole and a clear common objective by responding to individual benefits. In the case study the application of the questions is tested at characteristic situations in the AML. Based on the parameter homogeneity versus differentiation transformations by uncontrolled development can be shown. On the other hand, the potential of the landscape for the recovery of identity becomes evident. By the parameters dominance and permanence main common representations of the space can be assessed.

The applicability of the questions as instrument to position identity and develop a brand will be investigated at the CITTA 4th Annual Conference on Planning Research Innovation in Governance and Decision Making in Planning Abstract Submission restricted area of a valley. As a brand differentiates from a product by unique capacities relevant for its users they have to address the special needs, capacities and desires of the stakeholders. Through the study could be verified that an identity based strategy to assess the environmental development in metropolitan regions can demonstrate the close connection of benefits between the development of the self, a collective identity and the quality of the spatial image as visible product of the societal activities. The approach thus has the ability to generate attention for the issue, interest in a qualified discourse, desire to act and finally collective action on a broad scale. The communication function of the spatial image can be used to assess and to guide regional identity by collective action. The focus on the landscape as product of regional identity offers the opportunity to use the unique capacities of the structure to create an imaginable objective as motivation for collective action and to develop a profile. The landscape receives so value as instrument to position and communicate identity. The assessment and planning of landscape towards collective identity enables the regional institutions to meet individual interest aiming to produce a common value by branding.

Keywords: identity, landscape, collective action, communication, brand