

## **Place branding and industrial heritage: Spatial Strategies and Interventions in the Ruhr area<sup>1</sup>.**

**Evangelos Asprogerakas,**  
Department of Planning & Regional Development, University of Thessaly

**Kiki Mountanea,**  
School of Architecture, National Technical University of Athens

### **Abstract**

The shaping of a strong, recognizable and thus attractive identity of a place is closely linked to the process of effective planning, both in strategic and in physical level. Heritage is a common marketing tool that relied on the exploitation and presentation of, among others, urban forms related to the past. The re-packaging and re-use of historical structures and brownfields, remains of previous urban development models often provide the field for a landscape renewal underscored a link with the past.

The Ruhr Valley has long been linked to the industrial history of Europe due to the concentration of mining and steel industry. Since the 1970s, these activities have been declining causing severe social and economic problems. Today the region is undergoing a restructuring process. This work will focus on: (a) some of the strategies and actions implemented to identify a new identity of the area with an emphasis on the development of the Emscher Landschaftspark; and (b) the way in which the old abandoned industrial facilities were used in the context of configuring this new identity.

The Emscher Landscape Park, developed in the 90s, offers an exceptional landscape of industrial culture and leisure activities. The related projects have improved the quality of life in the area while providing a network of attractions linked to the industrial heritage of the region. The revitalization or repurposing of the former industrial brownfields, is a major tool in this process for enhancement of the cities' but also the whole region's image. Following the presentation of the planning goals and principles for shaping the park, a series of examples of brownfields interventions will be presented (eg Zollverein Coal Mine Industrial Complex, Gasometer, Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord etc) in order to identify a typology. The conclusions will include a summary and assessment of the goals and choices made and, finally, the characteristics of the new identity that is being sought to promote the area.

**Key words:** *Spatial planning, regional branding, industrial heritage, brownfields, remediation strategy*

### **1. Aim**

This work examines the case of the Ruhr Valley's transformation through the shaping of a place brand, by focusing on the development of Emscher Landscape Park, a network of remediated post-industrial sites. The area has experienced big spatial and structural changes through its history and is en route to one more. The de-industrialization of the late 1980s follows an attempt to house new activities in the region according to the creation of a strong identity of cultural and recreational usages that feed back into the deprived employment and housing sectors. Thirty years after the birth of the initiative redevelopment projects proliferate and more post-industrial fields are adding to the network of the regenerated brownfields. The aim of this paper is to examine the gradual creation of this identity through the sites' transformations by identifying typological characteristics between the network's flagship projects.

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<sup>1</sup>The field research and the visits to the sites, were carried out in the framework of the joint Greek-German scientific-research programme HeKriS 2017-19: "Herausforderung Krisenfestigkeit europäischer Städte. Entwicklung planerischer Strategien und kreativer Maßnahmen durch die ochschulkooperation von NTUA und LUH" funded by DAAD: <http://resilient-cities.eu/>

## 2. Main approach

As the competition among cities and regions intensifies place branding is becoming increasingly important (Serraos and Asprogerakas, 2012) as it is recognized as a critical attraction factor for visitors, residents and investors (literature review in Hankinson, 2010 and examples in Dinnie, 2011) to develop activities such as tourism (Asprogerakas 2007). The shaping of a strong, recognizable and thus attractive identity of a place is closely linked to the process of effective planning, both in strategic and in physical level. This connection can be interactive. Place branding is an important source of urban planning strategy goals, which in turn can become an operational tool for shaping the city's image in order to serve and accompany that identity. This role of planning concerns both the spatial organization and development of urban centres as well as specific actions focused on urban interventions (Serraos & Asprogerakas, 2012).

A comprehensive theoretical framework for the investigation of place branding concept is provided by Kavaratzis (2008) with a decisive role attributed to "Primary Communication" related to the communicative effects of a city's actions, and divided into four broad areas of intervention:

- Landscape Strategies refer to fields of actions and decisions that are relevant to urban design, architecture, public spaces and the use of heritage planning.
- Infrastructure Projects that are needed in a city in order for example to improve accessibility to various audiences, such as an airport or cultural centres and conference facilities.
- Organizational and Administrative Structure refer to the effectiveness and improvement of the city's governing structure with key elements the involvement of citizens in decisions and the existence of public-private partnerships.
- City's Behavior referring to issues as the city leaders' vision for the city, the strategy adopted or the financial incentives provided by the city to various stakeholders.

In the same context, "secondary communication" refers to promotional actions such as advertising, public relations, logo use, etc. The model is complemented by "tertiary communication" which is not controlled by professionals and it is related to the "reputation" of the city as it is shaped by residents and visitors and spreading "mouth by mouth" through informal networks (Kavaratzis 2008: ch 3).

Some key trends in a spatial-type typology of strategies for obtaining a distinct and strong urban identity may be identified without this categorization being exhaustive:

- Attract or maintain top-level, high-income operations (headquarters of multinational companies, financial institutions, infrastructure and transnational services etc). Examples include the redevelopment of "Docklands" in London, "La Defence" in Paris, "Donau City" in Vienna, and even more recent attempts such as "Moscow City".
- "Catalyst actions", and major events, ranging from local festivals up to large commercial and technological exhibitions such as EXPO and major sporting events such as the Olympic Games. These are used mainly as a reason for mobilizing institutional and economic tools to revitalise areas or entire cities. One of the best-known examples is the successful rebirth of Barcelona for the 1992 Olympic Games, which has redeemed the city on the world map.
- "Flagship interventions", important works by famous architects and planners, or large-scale interventions. A typical example is the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, the work of the Canadian architect Frank Gehry. It operated in 1997 in a former industrial area of the city and was the trigger for the revival of its declining economy.
- Selection and development of a specific sector, such as tourism or culture, as a "vehicle" to exploit unique features or comparative advantages as well as the revitalization of inactive or degraded resources or areas.

"Employment through Culture" has been subject to intensive debate over the last decades and post-industrial cities usually show large investments in their cultural capital (Ward, 1998: 229-253). Heritage is a common marketing tool that relied on the exploitation and presentation of, among others,

urban forms related to the past. The re-packaging and re-use of historical structures and brownfields, remains of previous urban development models often provide the field for a landscape renewal underscored a link with the past. The formation of a cultural policy connected to Urban Regeneration projects especially to formerly decayed areas like docks, derelict industrial and warehouse zones dates back to the end of the previous century (see examples from Europe in Bianchini & Parkin, 1993) as an expression of a new mode of urban management (Griffiths, 1995).

The culture industries are especially dependent on the synergies associated with metropolitan regions such as the Rhine-Ruhr area in Germany (Freund, 2002). In situations such as the polycentric urban region of the Rhine-Ruhr area, cities share ambiguous relations: on the one hand they are potential partners in strengthen the external profile of their region and on the other, they are potential competitors in attract investment. According to Goess, Jong & Meijers (2016) the Rhine-Ruhr regional identity formation occurs at the sub region level, coinciding more with historical economic profiles when at the same time cities in the Ruhr area struggle to rebuff their unfavorable image associated with industrial decline and shrinking population.

The importance of the "Organizational and Administrative Structure", which is a basic pillar of "primary communication" (Kavaratzis, 2008, Chapter 3.3) has already been mentioned. Public-private partnerships and corporate city marketing have emerged as important trends in urban marketing organizations for tourism in old industrial cities (Bramwell & Rawding, 1994). The private sector can contribute effectively through funding schemes or providing know-how, in cooperation with the public or even individually (Deffner & Liouris, 2005: 16). Strategic and urban planning governance processes may provide the framework for the emergence of participatory tools in the process of developing an effective urban marketing strategy and also for the civil society to acquire possession of the strategy (Serraos, Asrogerakas & Voulelis, 2017).

### **3. Key arguments**

The area where Ruhr, Emscher, Lippe and Rhein flow was an agrarian and underpopulated field until the early 1900s, when the first transformation took place. The valley turned rapidly to a polycentric, industrial agglomeration for coal mining and steel production, which exploited the natural resources. The few pre-existing cities, such as Duisburg, Mülheim, Essen, Bochum and Dortmund, experienced the expansion of their medieval cores to big and compact urban fields. In 1951 North Rhein-Westphalia (NRW) held 40% of the total industrial production in West Germany, by producing 80% of steel and 90% of carbon (Goch, 2002). After World War II, the international shift to new energy sources (natural gas and oil) changed again the functional structure of the area. Traditional stakeholders like shipping, railways, steelworks and chemical industries needed fewer amounts of coal, while Germany also imported cheap carbon from the United States. During the 1960s the crisis deepened and affected the human capital of the agglomeration. From 1961 to 2011 Essen lost 23% of its population and Oberhausen an equally considerable 19% (Cox, 2013).

The de-industrialization of the region forced unfavorable economic, social and environmental impacts, such as unemployment, population decline and pollution. De-industrialization is visible all over the area through the vacant and degraded buildings and sites. The spreading of the industrial installations and the housing development trod on the natural landscape, while the remaining nature was sniped by highways, railways, water canals and sewers. The shrinkage of the industrial cities led to various initiatives focusing on the economic reconstruction of the Ruhr Area during the 1970s. Structural changes demanded a series of actions and programmes. The funds came from the European Union, the federal state and the state of North Rhein-Westphalia.

The related policies vary over time, adapting to the general trends and covering (Schwarze-Rodrian, 2018; Kunzmann, 2013; Keil & Wetterau, 2012):

- Production restructuring focusing / Introduction of new technologies
- Establishment of universities / education - training
- Rehabilitation of the environment / improvement of the quality of life

The effort to implement re-industrialization actions was limited, as the tertiary sector's jobs, the development of competitive activities and the regeneration of urban centers were soon emphasized.

The Ruhr area is nowadays a polycentric agglomeration of 53 municipalities. Eleven of them are major cities like Essen, Dortmund and Duisburg. Due to the transformational route of the past, the functional and administrative borders between the cities do not always coincide, while the settlements have highly sprawled outside the urban city cores. The valley is considered by the German state as a functional unit and one of the state's metropolitan conurbations (Knapp, W., Kunzmann, K. R. and Schmitt, P. 2004), although spatial characteristics of the traditional metropolis such as a significant center and ring roads are absent. The institutionalization of the Ruhr region is being implemented through the Regional Association Ruhr (Regionanverbund Ruhr - RVR). The attempts for regionalization of Ruhrgebiet go back to 1920, when RVR was firstly established. In 1975 the association was disempowered, but during the 2000s it took over again governance and planning competencies for the area.

The brownfields existing all over the region constitute intervention fields in the post-industrial urban environment and cultural development is a feasible strategy for their reuse (Andres & Grésillon, 2013). The creation of Emscher Landscape Park (Emscher Landschaftspark), a regional park along the Emscher River, stretching 85km long from Duisburg to Bönen and covering the central part of the Ruhr Region, deployed the cultural place-branding strategy. The landscape park was an initiative of the International Architecture Exhibition (Internationale Bauausstellung - IBA) that took place there between the years 1989 and 1999. Aiming at the urban and the natural renovation of the area along the river Emscher and guided by the IBA, the project involved numerous stakeholders and funds both from the public and the private sector. The purpose of IBA was to provide the guidelines for an incremental reconstruction of the post-industrialized region. The impact is still visible through the continuity of the area's transformation.



Figure 1: The Ruhr Industrial Heritage Trail. Source: <http://www.route-industriekultur.ruhr/>

The spatial outcomes of IBA are significant and they are overall considered as an efficient approach (Kunzmann, 2013; Shaw, 2002). The evolution of co-operative values and the mobilization of local

communities are distinguishing effects of the initiative. The project of IBA is regarded to be a forward momentum for the establishment of a regional administration character in an area where no clear signs of structural change, from the passive land-use planning policy to more strategic ones, has been noticed (Knapp, W., Kunzmann, K. R. and Schmitt, P. 2004). The policy gave prominence to many brownfields in the area which featured as the industrial heritage of the region. The sites were in various ways incorporated in the cultural and creative industry of the area or accommodated new economic activities (Goch, 2002). Moreover IBA projects that were more coordinated to the North Rhine-Westphalia's programs were prioritized in regards to state funding (Knapp, Kunzmann and Schmitt, 2004).

In fact the endeavor was project-oriented and not plan-based. Some of the censures it received relate to the limited number of new jobs contrary to the primary goals. It is also considered that an emphasis was given to more elitist and symbolic projects than to the crucial social problems. It is described as a chance for new activities in regional scale, without thus constituting a holistic regional approach (Kunzmann, 2013; Kunzmann, 2004; Shaw, 2002).

The main strategy of IBA was the economic and social regeneration of the region through environmental and cultural interventions that can build an identity. Numerous and various projects were implemented under six guidelines: employment, housing, ecological renewal, urban development, social stimuli and the regionalization of the park. By the end of IBA in 1999 the Regional Association Ruhr planned the Industrial Heritage Trail (Route Industriekultur), a network between 25 points of interest, 17 industrial viewpoints and 13 settlements (fig.1). The network points out the industrial history of the Ruhr area and it is a part of the European Route of Industrial Heritage. A bike path 1200km long was also implemented in the landscape park. One of the region's main activities is thus tourism, which presents a growth rate starkly bigger than the state's equivalent (Schwarze-Rodrian, 2018). This work focuses on the flagship projects of recycled brownfields and the way they structured a new identity for the region. The Gasometer in Oberhausen, the Jahrhunderthalle in Bochum, the Zeche Zollverein, the Duisburg-Nord Landscape Park, the Duisburg Innenhafen and Phoenixsee at Dortmund are being examined in order to identify typological characteristics among them.



Figure 2: The "Gasometer", outside view (left). The coking plant artificial channel, Zollverein Coal Mine Industrial Complex (right). Source: E. Asprogerakas

#### Gasometer, Oberhausen

In Oberhausen, a small city in the north of Emscher and between Duisburg and Essen, there is the cultural and exhibition space of Gasometer. It is about a former gas repository that served the local steelwork from 1929 to 1988 (fig.2). In 1992 the local council of Oberhausen decided to reuse the empty circular construction as an exhibition area, rejecting the thoughts for its dismantling.

Remarkable art exhibitions have taken place in the former gas storage which is a principal hub of the European Route of Industrial Heritage. The Gasometer is functionally separated from the nearby commercial centre, also shaped in a former industrial field, since the development of synergies between them was hitherto not feasible (Schwarze-Rodrian, 2018; Keil & Wetterau, 2012).

#### Jahrhunderthalle, Bochum

Jahrhunderthalle is a festival hall in Stahhausen, Bochum. It lies in the centre of Westpark, one of the pre-industrial fields that turned to cultural landscapes in Ruhrgebiet, after 1985, when the industries accommodated there collapsed. It was built in 1902 as a pavilion for the Bochum Association in the Düsseldorf Industrial and Trade Exhibition. The initial snap-together steel construction was later integrated in the Bochum steelwork as a gas-fired power plant and lately as a repository. In 1991 a first concert performed inside the hall as part of planning initiatives and in 2003 the building was converted into a festival theater that hosts the Ruhrtriennale cultural fest and various other music concerts, as well as theatrical productions, exhibitions and reward ceremonies. A company directed by the municipality has undertaken the theater's management.

#### Zollverein Coal Mine Industrial Complex, Essen

Zeche Zollverein and Kokerei is a cultural park formed in the former coal mining areas near Essen, where the largest coal mine in the world operated during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1986 it was the last coal mine in Essen that stopped operations. The state of North Rhine-Westphalia purchased the area and declared one of the shafts as a heritage site. The site is not only important for its industrial history, but also due to the original Bauhaus architectural forms of the buildings. UNESCO has thus included the Zollverein in the list of World Heritage Sites since 2001 and it is also a hub in the European Route of Industrial Heritage. One of the restored buildings houses the regional museum for the Ruhr area, designed by Rem Koolhaas. The park accommodates recreation and dining usages too. Many of the industrial remnants act as exhibits themselves (fig.2). A foundation under the same name, established and funded by the NRW State, manages the operation and protection of the site since 1998.



Figure 3: Duisburg-Nord Landscape Park. Source: E. Asprogerakas

#### Duisburg-Nord Landscape Park

The landscape park in the north part of Duisburg is a cultural, environmental and recreation area and an industrial monument on its own. It was integrated to the planning targets of IBA in 1991 after its purchase by the city of Duisburg. Duisburg-Nord Landscape Park belonged to the Thyssen steel industry and operated until 1985. The strategic goal of the restoration was the remediation of the landscape and the water canals so that the natural environment clusters around the industrial landscape. Most of the infrastructures are kept to their first industrial state as self-evident monuments, while some have been reused for recreation and leisure activities (fig.3). A lighting installation is one of the most popular acts in the park. The masterplan was a subject of architectural competition won by Peter Latz landscape-architect.

#### Duisburg Innenhafen

The inner port of Duisburg is also a hub of the European Route of Industrial Heritage and one of the first phase's IBA projects in the Ruhr area. The masterplan of the port, a subject of architectural competition, was designed by Norman Foster's architectural firm. It is about a residential, business and administrative, cultural and recreation hub. Küppersmühle, the former flour mills, was converted to contemporary arts museum by Herzog and de Meuron architects. During the intense industrialization of the region and until the mid-1960s the inner port was a significant junction for the grain commerce. The principal goal of the port's revitalization was the shaping of a flexible framework able to develop individual interventions in different timeframes. Between Innenfahen and the city center of Duisburg a modern residential area developed along the canals that flow to the Rhine River.

*Phoenix, Dortmund*

The Phoenix brownfield consists of the east and the west part of the former steelwork in Hörde region of Dortmund. It is an emblematic area for the Ruhr Region since Phoenix AG was the fourth greater industry in Germany in 1906. The blast furnaces in Phoenix-West produced cast iron that was transferred on a railroad (Eliasbahn) to Phoenix-Ost (east part) for further processing (fig.4). In 2001 ThyssenKrupp AG, the last owner of the industry, closed it down and the city of Dortmund took on the utilization of the site by forming the "Dortmund Project". The restoration of Phoenix-Ost completed in 2011. It is a 96ha housing development surrounding an artificial lake, the Phoenix See (fig 4). Dining, recreation and sport usages are adding to the whole, along with the luxurious residences. The lake superseded the former industrial facilities, which were totally removed from the area and the land was reclaimed. Phoenix See was designed by the municipal planning authorities. On the west side of Hörde most of the industrial remnants have been kept as self-referential monuments. The area, which is under reconstruction, hosts a technological and recreation campus and a public park. A private corporation in consultation with the city has taken over the shaping of Phoenix-West, which is already a tourist attraction.



Figure 4: Phoenix, Dortmund: Viaduct Hympendahlbrücke (Eliasbahn) (left). Phoenix See urban development, partial view (right). Source: E. Asprogerakas.

The above projects are being examined into the following table in regards to main characteristics of the place branding transformation. The intervention timescale affiliates with the incremental character of the momentum. The actors refer to the examination of co-operative management as a cornerstone of the initiative. The planners have to do with the creation of the place brand by the designing point of view, while the ways of intervention add to the discussion around heritage management. Finally the new usages are examined as the way these sites were feasibly revitalized under a new coherent identity.

**Table 1: Main characteristics of the interventions**

Project / Planners	Place/ Former usage/ Closing down	Intervention timescale	Actors	Ways of intervention	New usages

<b>Duisburg Nord</b> / Latz + Partner landscape architects	Duisburg, north region Steelwork 1985	1990-2002	IBA, City of Duisburg, Emschergenossenschaft Essen (public), Kommunalverband Ruhrgebiet (Ruhr Regional association – public), Landesentwicklungsges ellschaft Nordrhein- Westfalen (housing company – private ltd)	restoration, conversion, land reclaim	recreation, leisure and sports activities
<b>Duisburg Innenhafen</b> / Norman Foster (master-plan), Herzog and de Meuron (Küppersmühle Museum)	Duisburg, Inland (trade) port mid-1960s	1990-1994 (first master-plan) 1995 (Kontor- haus opening) 2007 (second master-plan) ongoing	IBA, City of Duisburg	conversion and new constructions	cultural, dining, recreational - leisure, services, administrative, residential
<b>Jahrhunderthalle</b> / Petzinka-Pink architects	Bochum, Westpark Gas fired power plant	1991 (heritage site) 2003 (implementatio n)	IBA, City of Bochum, North Rhein- Westphalia State, Landesentwicklungsges ellschaft Nordrhein- Westfalen GmbH (housing company – private ltd)	conversion	cultural, recreational
<b>Gasometer Oberhausen</b>	Oberhausen Neue Mitte Gas repository 1988	1993-1994 (implementatio n)	IBA, City of Oberhausen, Babcock AG (public ltd)	conversion	cultural
<b>Zeche Zollverein and Kokerei</b> / OMA - Rem Koolhaas	Essen (outskirts) Coal mine 1986 Zollverein 1993 Kokerei	1990 (reclaim) 2001 (UNESCO heritage site and master-plan) 2010 (Ruhr Museum opening) ongoing	Zollverein Foundation (in concentration with regional and local historic monument conservation authorities)	restoration, conversion, land reclaim	cultural, recreational, creative industries
<b>PhonixSee (east)</b> / municipal planning authorities	Dortmund, Hörde Steelwork (plant) 2001	2001 (reclaim) 2011 (lake fill) 2018	City of Dortmund, Stadtwerke AG (municipal/public ltd)	Dismantling, land reclaim, artificial landscape	residential, dining, recreational- leisure and sports
<b>Phoenix-West</b> / World of Walas (urban development company)	Dortmund, Hörde Steelwork (blast furnaces) 1998	2018 - ongoing	City of Dortmund, Landesentwicklungsges ellschaft Nordrhein- Westfalen (housing company – private ltd), NRW.URBAN GmbH & Co.Kg (land development company)	Dismantling, restoration and new constructions	services, knowledge, technologies, logistics, residential, recreational- leisure

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#### 4. Conclusions

What can be derived from the analysis is that IBA gave a boost to the region, and almost 20 years later post-industrial sites like Phoenix-West are still being remediated and redeveloped. The process of place branding formation is based on physical planning interventions, emphasizing on highlighting the industrial heritage of the area with the involvement of well-known architects and planners. The synergies between public and private actors are basic and consistent assets of the endeavor confirming the importance of the organizational and administrative structure.

The character of the changes seems to shift from the cultural and touristic reuse after public impulse to business redevelopment projects in terms of real-estate management. At the same time new ways of intervention come forward. During the first phase of the projects restoration and conversion of the buildings were the main approaches for their reuse and that was a successful policy in order to create a strong cultural character based on heritage esteem, judging by the promising global publicity of the sites. As A. Freundt (2002) pointed out, the Emscher Park International Building Exhibition, offered not only a major contribution to preserving the region's industrial heritage, but also created the infrastructure for cultural tourism and for culture industries. The complete dismantling of Phoenix-Ost, the partial restoration in Phoenix-West and the real estate oriented further development of Duisburg Innenhafen could be signs of a new attitude against industrial heritage, while simultaneously the new technologic-business usages add different characteristics to the previously clearly cultural and touristic landscape park. The industrial history of the place as the spine of the network is strong and still active as a place brand. The expansion of the regeneration attempt is in fact being adapted to the contemporary circumstances and developing synergies in the area.

The approach was based on a landscape oriented strategy and the use of heritage planning and proved to be able to meet the common need of the various cities to strengthen their external profile although they were potential competitors in attract investment. The public sector has been the leader regarding the implementation initiatives and funding. Projects can be classified as "Flagship" at regional level and in aggregate they constitute a "large-scale" intervention. However, what could be kept as a remark is the project-based orientation of the place-branding strategy instead of a holistic regional approach of interventions that could be incorporated into mainstream planning processes providing an enduring policy model. The culture industries can only be one part of a whole regional development strategy (Freundt, 2002) based on a holistic approach and supported by spatial planning initiatives.

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