Understanding and Using Place Identities - An Opportunity for Future-oriented Regions

Raumbezogene Identitäten verstehen und nutzen – Eine Chance für zukunftsorientierte Regionen

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Keywords:

Place Identity, Regional Identity, Place Attachment, Regionalization, Regional Development
Raumbezogene Identität, Regionale Identität, emotionaler Raumbezug, Regionalisierung, Regionalentwicklung

Abstract

The 'Zukunftsdiskurs' (future discourse) "Understanding and using place identities - an opportunity for future-oriented regions" (short title "Zukunftsdiskurs Place Identities") has taken up and continued the debate on the foundations, goals and characteristics of regional identities. In workshops, actors in spatial planning and development, as well as scientists, discussed the topics of regionalization, regional development, place identities and attachments to 'Heimat' (homeland). The aim was to identify innovative approaches for regional development by considering place identities and developing practical implementation guidelines. The 'Zukunftsdiskurs' thus addressed the following objectives,

- to point out identity-generating characteristics and their further development as an important prerequisite for the profiling of regions,

- to use the knowledge of these potentials for regional change processes and

- to make the debates about identity, 'Heimat' and participation more objective.

Regionalization as a process of cooperative regional formation is not a foregone conclusion. However, if regional identity is discussed and made manageable for planning practice, regional development can take targeted action to shape regions in a future-oriented manner. The identification with one's region, the willingness to participate in planning processes and the understanding of joint and progressive territorial development are essential effects that the 'Zukunftsdiskurs' supports.

Zusammenfassung

Der Zukunftsdiskurs „Raumbezogene Identitäten verstehen und nutzen – eine Chance für zukunftsorientierte Regionen" (Kurztitel „Zukunftsdiskurs Raumbezogene Identitäten") hat die Auseinandersetzung zu Grundlagen, Zielen und Ausprägungen regionaler Identitäten aufgegriffen und weitergeführt. In mehreren Foren diskutierten Akteure/-innen der räumlichen Planung und Entwicklung sowie Wissenschaftlerinnen und Wissenschaftler die Themen Regionalisierung, Regionalentwicklung, räumliche Identitäten und Heimatbezüge. Ziel war es, innovative Ansätze für die Berücksichtigung raumbezogener Identitäten bei der Entwicklung von Regionen zu erheben und praktische Umsetzungshinweise zu erarbeiten. Im Zukunftsdiskurs ging es also darum,

- *identitätsstiftende Merkmale und deren Weiterentwicklung als wichtige Voraussetzung für eine Profilierung von Regionen aufzuzeigen,*

- *das Wissen um diese Potenziale für regionale Veränderungsprozesse zu nutzen und*

- *die Debatten um Identität, Heimat und Teilhabe zu versachlichen.*

Regionalisierung als Prozess kooperativer Regionsbildung ist kein Selbstläufer. Erfasst und diskutiert man jedoch regionale Identität und macht sie für die Planungspraxis handhabbar, kann Regionalentwicklung hier gezielt ansetzen, um Regionen zukunftsorientiert zu gestalten. Die Identifikation mit der eigenen Region, die Bereitschaft, sich an Planungsprozessen zu beteiligen und das Verständnis von gemeinschaftlicher und progressiver Raumentwicklung sind wesentliche Effekte, die der Zukunftsdiskurs unterstützt.

1. Introduction

1.1 Place identity – a concept of growing significance

In the (spatial) scientific discourse, voices have grown louder in recent years, calling for more 'place sensitivity' in regional development and funding policy. The structural preconditions, potentials and restrictions on site or in a defined region should be methodically recorded and used for development processes. This applies both to urban areas and rural regions (Rodríguez-Pose 2017: 31, 34; Tomaney/Pike/Rodríguez-Pose 2010: 775; Iammarino/Rodríguez-Pose/Storper 2017). To capture and evaluate 'place sensitivity', it is important to consider people's emotional attachment to a particular place or region. This emotional bond – often discussed in terms of place identity, place attachment, sense of place or 'Heimat' – represents a great potential for regional or local development (e.g., Peng/Striker/Wu 2020: 7-10; Nelson/Ahn/Corley 2020: 10). The increase in the number of published articles on the topics of 'place identity', 'regional identity' and 'place branding'[1] in recent years underlines their rapidly growing importance. While the annual publications on place identity and regional identity between 1999 and 2011 were in the lower two-digit range (max. 40 in 2010), their number increased in the following years up to the three-digit range (118 publications on these topics appeared in 2018). The topic 'place branding' developed analogously from only 41 published articles between 1999 and 2009 to well over 500 publications between 2010 and 2019 (analysis by Scopus, 25.08.2019).

A similar picture emerges from the debate in the general German public/ society. Attention to regional processes with links to 'Heimat' has also increased considerably over the past five to ten years. Our research shows that the regional and national press is reporting more and more frequently on various aspects of 'Heimat', identity or regionality (exemplary for the national press Fig. 1 and 2).

Number of press articles on the topics of 'Heimat' and identity
published in Süddeutsche Zeitung and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung
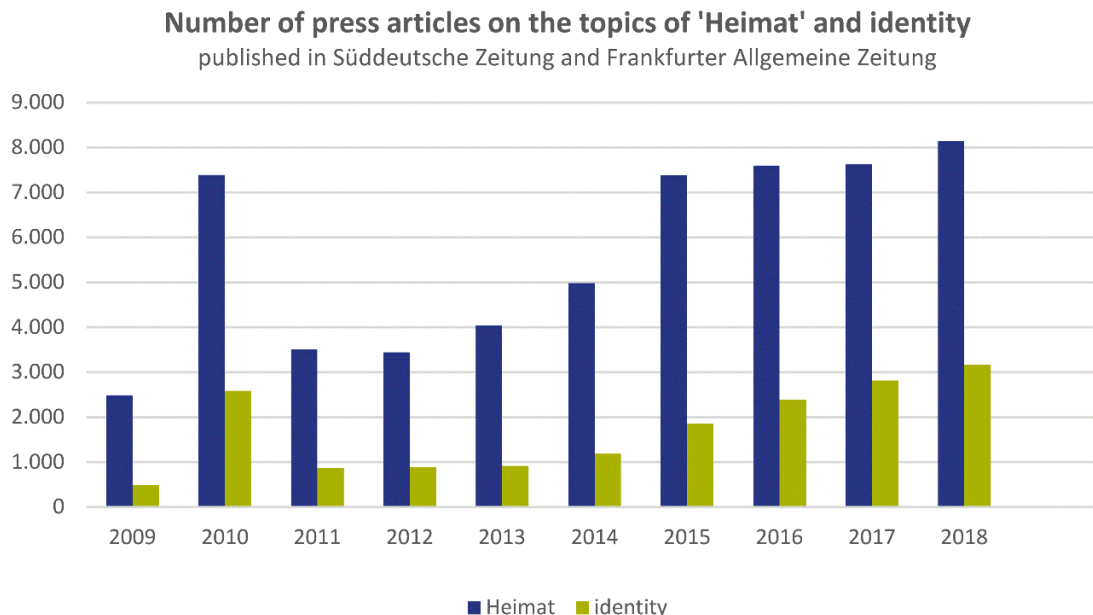
Fig. 1: **Number of press articles on the topics Heimat and identity published in Süddeutsche Zeitung and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung between 2009 and 2018**

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[1] Place branding is often seen to be interlinked with the concept of place identity. It is recommended to anchor these processes in residents' notions of place identity and attachments (e.g. Donner et al. 2017: 287) as they can contribute to unify a community, guide community action and serve as a catalyst for change (Grenni/Horlings/Soini 2020: 1369).

Number of press articles on the topics of regionality, regional development and regionalisation
published in Süddeutsche Zeitung and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung
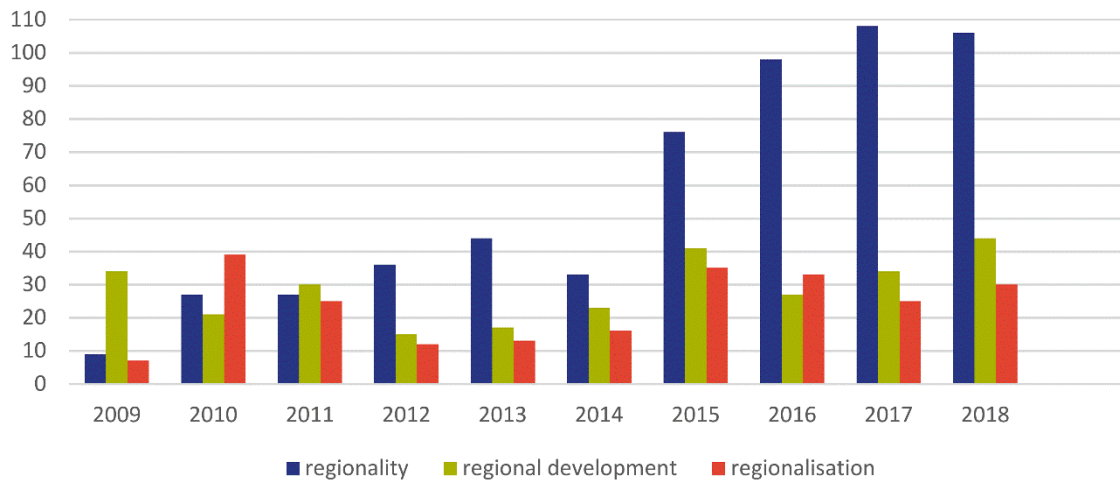
Fig. 2: Number of press articles on the topics regionality, regional development and regionalization in Süddeutsche Zeitung and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung between 2009 and 2018

German politics is also increasingly putting the issue of the population's emotional ties to place and home on its agenda. This can be read, for example, in the "Heimatstrategie" (homeland strategy) of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (BMI 2019a). A current recommendation of the Advisory Council for Territorial Development at the BMI sees "people's emotional attachment to specific places" (BMI 2019b: 5) as an integral design approach for territorial development. With participatory approaches, joint strategies should be developed and put on a broad basis (BMI 2019b: 5). This results in new tasks and opportunities for regional development, innovative participation processes, and formal territorial planning.

From the above-mentioned discourses of spatial sciences, society, politics and planning, several questions arise that were dealt with in the "Zukunftsdiskurs Place Identities".

1.2 The 'Zukunftsdiskurs' - Objectives and Procedure

In the 'Zukunftsdiskurs', Leibniz University Hannover (LUH) and the Academy for Territorial Development in the Leibniz Association (ARL) worked on the topic "Understanding and using place identities - an opportunity for future-oriented regions" (duration 05/2019-05/2020). The 'Zukunftsdiskurs' funding format is advertised annually by the Lower Saxony Ministry of Science and Culture to support the dialogue between science and society on future topics.

The aim was to work out the significance of place-related identities for regional development processes and formulate concrete approaches for regional development. In three phases, scientific findings and practioneers' perspectives were brought together, intensively discussed, and possible implementations were debated (Fig. 3). For the discourses, researchers as well as active participants and officials in planning, society and politics were addressed to deal with their own place attachment and to relate this to regional change processes.
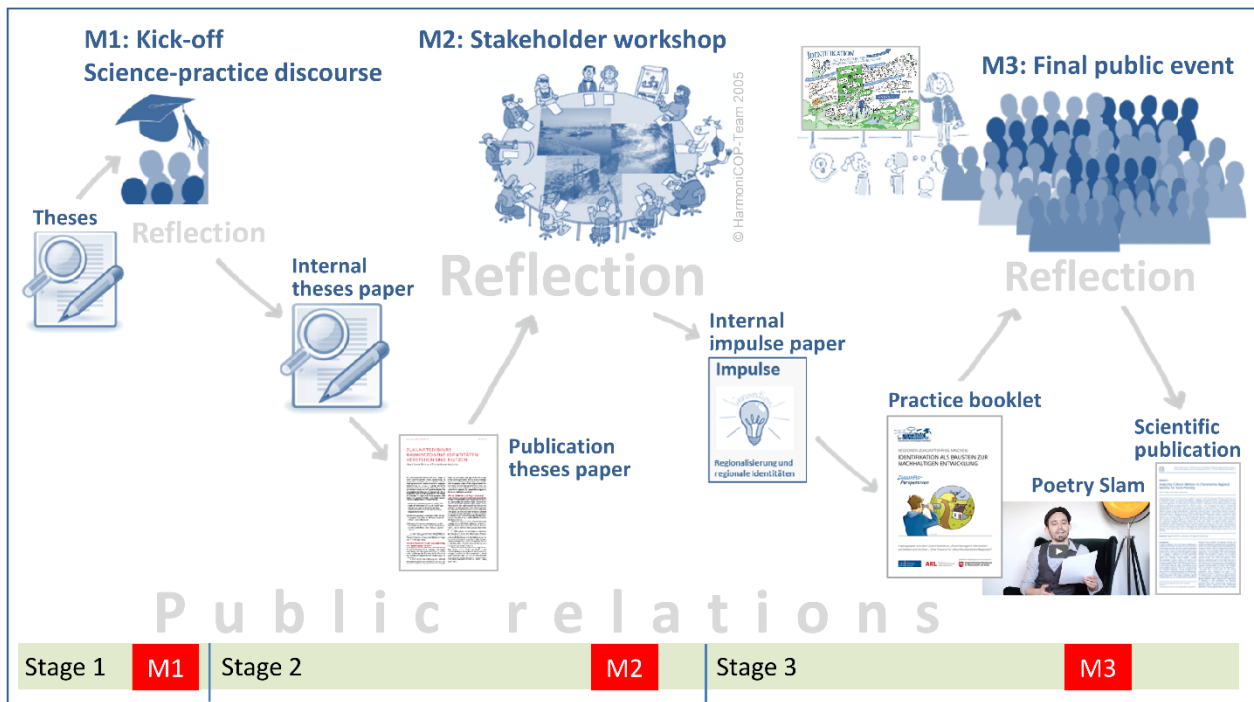
Fig. 3: Course of the 'Zukunftsdiskurs'

With the 'Zukunftsdiskurs' and this article, we want to contribute to differentiated and objective handling of place identities and show their potential for regional development processes. We devote ourselves to the questions:

- How can place identity be understood in regional development, and what spatial features does it refer to?

- What are the potentials of emotional ties to place and home for regional development processes?

- What challenges does the inclusion of emotional ties to place and home in regional development processes hold?

With conclusions for regional planning and development, we offer a reflected practical approach to the subject area, which complements other, more theoretical and empirical work (e.g., Knaps/Mölders/Herrmann 2020) with findings from the perspective of practice. In the following, we use the term 'regional development' as the addressee of the project results and understand it to mean action- and implementation-oriented development processes in regions. In this context, regional development also includes the tasks and functions of regional territorial planning, which in an inter-municipal context often assumes central tasks of moderation, coordination and communication.

Our results are based on (i) literature and press research, (ii) the documentation and preparation of discussion formats in the project events and (iii) the evaluation of a survey accompanying the discourse. Furthermore, we were able to build on extensive knowledge from previous projects such as Regiobranding (Herrmann/ Kempa 2019).

2. State of research and definition of terms

2.1 Understanding regions from different perspectives

The term 'region' describes a section of space or related subspaces that can be delimited by common or connecting features (cf. Hard/ Bartels 2003). These features or specific characteristics of regions are often politically and socially negotiated, and therefore, one can say regions are discursively (Chilla/Kühne/Neufeld 2016: 20) or socially constructed (Weichhart 1996; Blotevogel 1996; Werlen 2007; Kühne 2013). Regions are thus systems for structuring space from a human perspective, but different structuring criteria lead to different types of regions. Therefore, we can distinguish e.g., structurally similar, administrative, functional, planning or 'Heimat' regions (Fig. 4). For example, a region can be delimited based on objective functions, such as commuter networks, whereas this delimitation is based on a socially constructed logic. In this sense, some authors refer to regions as the results of "regional inventions" (Wiechmann 2000: 174), which develop as specific action areas of actors (cf. Langhagen-Rohrbach 2004). At the national level, policy and planning usually address regions as administrative units or planning areas. The EU classification of NUTS regions is a further example of an administrative demarcation and is politically central, especially with regard to structural funding.
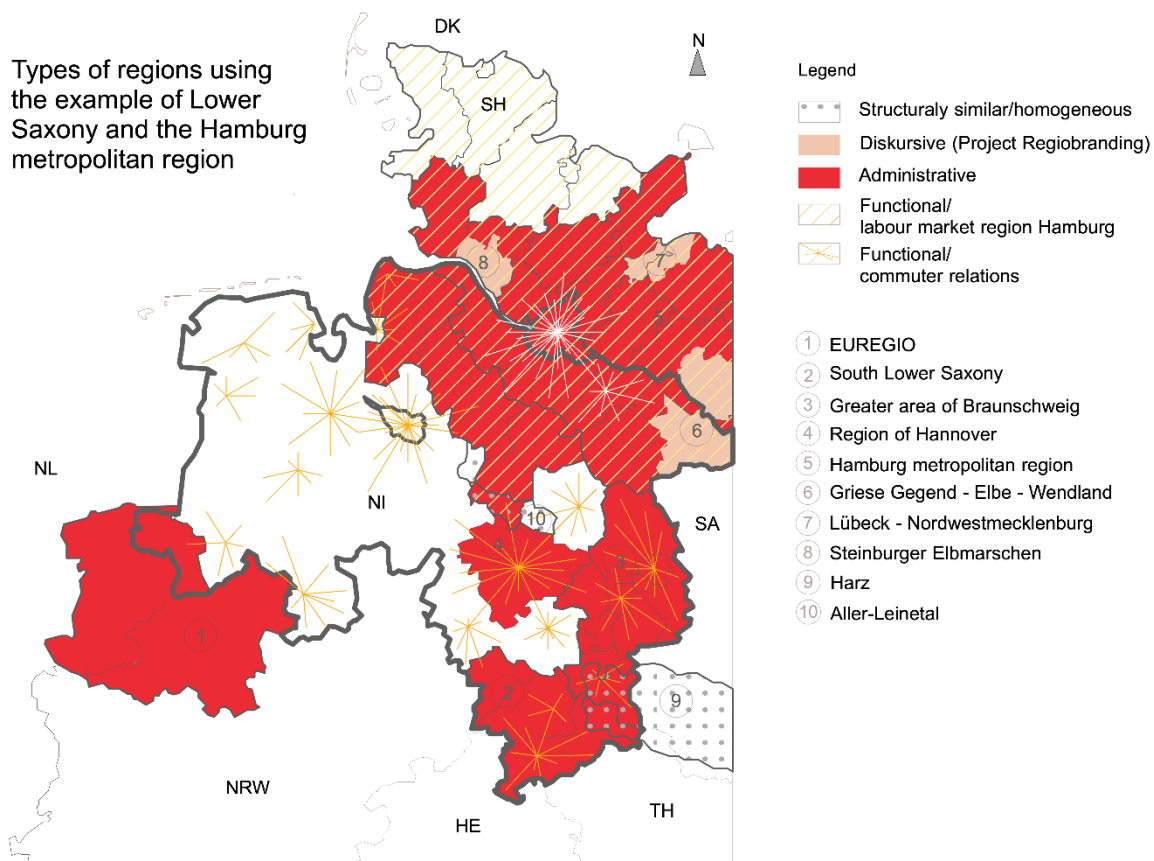
Fig. 4: Types of regions and the formation of regions using Lower Saxony and the Hamburg metropolitan region as examples (own presentation, used sources: Chilla/Kühne/Neufeld 2016; Leibniz Universität Hannover; mensch und region 2018; Adam 1998; Cassing 2016)

The 'Heimat' region can be understood as a relatively narrow space between the residential location, 'Action Space' and 'Activity Space'. While 'Action Space' describes individuals' potential spatial radius of action during the day, 'Activity Space' represents the actual everyday movement

in a concrete section of space. In this everyday space, place identity usually develops (Weichhart 2019: 57, 63). To this individual movement in space is added "the collective experience of a common space" through shared or familiar features such as institutions, infrastructure, regional ways of life etc. (Scharnowski 2018; cf. Chapter 3.3).

In summary, the term REGION will be understood as a small-scale section connected with the perception of 'Heimat' or Identity. It is the result of social construction and/ or is discursively created through a comprehensive process of participation and negotiation. Its connecting characteristics consist, for example, of landscape, natural, architectural or cultural features or combinations of elements with which the population - in different forms and intensities - identifies.

(based on Blotevogel 2005; Chilla/Kühne/Neufeld 2016; Werlen 2007)

2.2 Regionalisation as soft region-building

If one continues the train of thought on socially constructed and/ or discursively defined 'Heimat' regions, regionalization is an accompanying or connecting process.

So-called soft regionalization may emerge in the sense of "flexible spatial restructuring" as so-called "soft spaces of governance" (Balke/Reimer 2016: 294). They form horizontal, network-like spatial constructions, which may be temporary and are often not oriented toward administrative boundaries (Balke/Reimer 2016: 297; Hohn/Reimer 2010).

The processes required for forming these regions move in tension between cooperation and competition. In which direction a regionalization or sub-processes of it are going depends strongly on the idea behind it or the intended field of activity: Economic development, touristic marketing or the strengthening of a "region as living space" with its social/ cultural (social cohesion, identity) and ecological conditions (landscape etc.).[2]

Up to now, economic strength and the availability of jobs have played a significant role in raising the profile of regions. Against the background of demographic change, the competition for professionals and the labor force, especially in rural areas, is increasingly coming to the fore. At the same time, the decision about one's center of life is not only based on the place of work but also on the attractiveness of a region with its soft location factors such as education, infrastructure (e.g., cultural and social facilities) and natural resource potentials.

An emotional attachment to a particular place can be decisive, for example, in deciding not to move to an economically prosperous region (Rodríguez-Pose 2017: 24). In addition to objective location factors, there are emotional motives that are rooted in subjective spatial references or place identifications that are not always obvious. However, especially convinced returnees explain their decision with emotional place attachment, and even for bi-local forms of life, feelings of home for one of the places are often cited as a reason. Thus, either-or opposites dissolve, and hard as well as soft location factors must also be considered in context when defining regions.

In our understanding, REGIONALIZATION refers to the formation of 'soft' or 'experimental' regions in rural areas, usually located between the municipality and the district level[3]. Soft regionalization

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[2] This is only a rough systematization. Kiepe (2010: 144) names the following areas of responsibility for intermunicipal cooperation: transport, supply and disposal, settlement development and land policy, open space and climate protection, regional location marketing, cultural promotion.

[3] "The academic debate is focused on metropolitan areas. Less in focus, however, are processes of regional restructuring outside or on the periphery of the metropolitan core zones" (Balke/Reimer 2016: 294).

seeks synergy effects through cross-actor and inter-municipal cooperation, using endogenous potentials and promoting participatory governance processes.

(see Balke/Reimer 2016; Gualini 2004; Kuhlmann/Bogumil 2010)

2.3 The concept of place identity

"Identity is a concept of self-images", with whose help "answers to the question 'Who am I?' are given" (Liebsch 2002: 68). On an individual level, identity consists of the confluence of the person's self-chosen or ascribed characteristics, beliefs about herself, roles and positions in relation to significant others, membership in social groups but also her sense of where she belongs in geographical space (Vignoles/Schwartz/Luyckx 2011: 4)." Place identity thus includes those dimensions of the self which relate to feelings about specific physical settings and symbolic ties to them which are integrated into the personal self-concept (Sebastien 2020: 206; Proshansky/Fabian/Kaminoff 1983: 59-62). The common assignment to a particular space (section) and shared interpretations of it can also be part of a we-concept of groups and trigger feelings of togetherness (Christmann 2010; Weichhart 2006: 35). In this way, place identity addresses basic social needs, as it compensates feelings of loss due to decreasing relevance of traditional identity reference points such as class, religion or political parties (Sievers 2015: 16-17). Furthermore, the attachments to place can lead to loyalty to places and increase the willingness to participate in territorial planning processes (Höppner/Frick/Buchecker 2008: 616; Raagmaa 2002: 56).

The space-related characteristics with which individuals or groups identify themselves (see above) are both material/physical (buildings, settlements, land use) and immaterial goods such as traditions, crafts, visual landscape, social structures or value systems (cf. Weichhart 2006). These characteristics are regionally differently distinctive and/ or experience regionally specific assignments of meaning. For this reason, the term regional identity is often used to describe distinguishing features of regions or the identification of the inhabitants with them (Paasi 2013: 1206; Allen/Massey/Cochrane 1998: 10). Regional or place identity also explicitly includes the concept of 'Heimat' in everyday life (cf. Weichhart 2019). Just as 'Heimat' experiences different kinds of appropriation, there is usually not only one regional identity (Knaps/Herrmann 2018). Instead, it is often a matter of different individual and/ or group identities, which give an overall picture of the specificity of a region. The perception of this specific peculiarity of a place or region is thus an essential characteristic of regional identity formation processes (De Cillia/Reisigl/Wodak 1999 quoted in Paasi 2013; Knaps/Herrmann 2018).

REGIONAL IDENTITY refers to the peculiarity/ characteristic of a place as perceived by the actors in this place. This perception is connected with feelings of personal belonging and can also create a feeling of belonging together through shared interpretations of this peculiarity/ characteristic. As a place identity, regional identity also explicitly includes the concept of 'Heimat' in everyday life.

(see Weichhart/Weiske/Werlen 2006; Christmann 2010; Paasi 2013)

3. Linking regionalization and place identities - assumptions, experiences and implementation

3.1 Place identities as an opportunity and challenge for regions

During the study of scholarly sources and discussions with representatives from science and practice, it became clear that considering regional identities can positively affect regional development processes. However, the integration of place identities into regional development is also associated with a number of challenges.

Thus, regional identities are usually not permanent truths. Instead, the place-related (im-)material characteristics and the identities linked to them are subject to constant pressure to develop and change (Knaps/Mölders/Herrmann 2020). Anchors of identification can disappear, e.g., through the abandonment of no longer profitable forms of land use, the decay of historical sites, customs that are no longer lived or changes in the social structure (aging, immigration/ emigration). New spatially effective features (e.g., through the energy system's transformation) can also shape regions, provide new identification offers, or influence existing identification-forming features. This change of regional identities was addressed in the 'Zukunftsdiskurs' as both an opportunity and a challenge for regions where three effects overlap. First, if identification features (or their assignment of meaning) change, they can provide positive impulses for regions' development. Second, suppose regional identities or interpretations of identification features do not adapt to new requirements. In that case, they can inhibit the region's future orientation and even block it (e.g., Herrmann 2019). Third, nevertheless, traditions or the historical continuity of features also fulfill an important role as an anchor of regional identity by satisfying needs for stability, grounding and regional affiliation (cf. also Weichhart/Weiske/Werlen 2006: 94). The survey carried out in the 'Zukunftsdiskurs' also shows that in the personal assessments of one's own place identification, features from the categories 'tradition/culture' or 'local/regional ways of life' (which include culinary/ food cultures and mentality/ values) were most frequently mentioned (cf. Krätzig/Schneider/Kempa 2020).

To balance traditions and change, a discourse is required on whether and how traditions (possibly with a new focus) can continue to be 'usable' in the future and whether and how they can be linked to new offers (e.g., Christmann 2019). In such an 'identity discourse', newcomers and regional returnees can contribute impulses for new perspectives on the familiar (Kirsch-Stracke 2019).

Definition of 'IDENTITY DISCOURSE' in the project: In a regional development process, existing identification features are tracked down and developed in a broad discourse with the public. The 'identity discourse' aims to identify region-specific endogenous potentials linked to the population's emotional spatial references and promote cooperation across local and municipal boundaries.

Raagma describes the above-mentioned complex characteristics of regional identity formation as a "deeply social, spatial and historical (cultural) phenomenon that contains a stabilizing and changing, destructive and constructing character" (Raagmaa 2002: 56).

This distinction between constructive and destructive qualities of identities was also emphasized in the 'Zukunftsdiskurs'. While constructive or productive identities can promote cohesion and advance a region through commonalities and joint commitment, destructive identities have a negative effect on regional development through (misunderstood) local patriotism and/ or exclusion of strangers (e.g., Christmann 2019, Cassing, 2019, Allen/Massey/Cochrane 1998: 10). Above all, strongly pronounced (constructive) identities of the residents correlate closely with the

development of institutions and cooperation, increase the growth of social capital, promote immigration and integration as well as civic activities (Raagmaa 2002: 73; Wegner/Klie 2018: 564). On the other hand, there are the adverse effects of destructive characteristics of identities with 'parish pump politics', rigid structures and territorial fixation (Weichhart/Weiske/Werlen 2006: 94), which often manifests itself in exclusion and non-cooperation. A lack of or only weakly developed identities can also have a negative impact on the development of a region and can lead, for example, to less commitment and even to the out-migration of the population (Sackmann/Schubert 2018: 314; Raagma 2002: 56, 62). Participants in the 'Zukunftsdiskurs' formulated it as follows: Innovations and a profile in the competition between regions are only possible if one has productive identity-forming characteristics and cultivates them (Christmann 2019; Herrmann 2019).

The cultivation and 'maintenance' of regional features that create identity can be understood as handling these features in the event of negative external interference. There are examples in which the threatened loss of features that create regional identification is answered by their further development or new and converted use.

> *In the REGIOBRANDING project, partners identified a strong identification with the historical building culture in connection with agricultural and grazing use for the Steinburg Elbe marshes (Steinburger Elbmarschen). However, features of both aspects, namely old farmhouses and cows on pasture, are disappearing due to unprofitability and abandonment of use. Without these visual anchors of regional identity, the region would lack an important foundation of its self- and external image. Therefore, ideas were sought to make both preservation and conversion possible. One of these ideas was implemented with the project "New life on old farms". Here, old and new owners of old farm buildings that shape the cultural landscape are offered a free initial consultation with experts. In addition, the development of use or renovation concepts, including cost estimates, is being promoted to show the owner's prospects for use. The response to the offer indicates that the region has taken up an important topic (Norddeutsche Rundschau 2019).*

> *The Ruhr area (Ruhrgebiet) has undergone and continues to undergo significant economic and spatial changes closely linked to the decline of the steel and coal industry. In response to this pressure for change, the "old Ruhr Area" is being reinterpreted through an 'active identity policy' and made 'capable of identification' again. Through image campaigns directed both inwards and outwards, and the International Building Exhibition (IBA) Emscher Park, new spatial images and offers of identification were created (Blotevogel 2019).*

However, such a procedure is not always possible and sometimes even controversial. Thus, the question arises whether and how new identity offers can and should be created. In the 'Zukunftsdiskurs' this question has been answered very differently. On the one hand, offers of identity were seen as a resource for the (further) development of crisis-ridden regions in particular, where they can be the starting point for (social) innovations that are based on the region's characteristic features (Christmann 2010; Leibniz Universität Hannover & Mensch und Region 2018). On the other hand, there were also explicit rejections of the 'construction' of identities if there are no cohesive structures on the ground. Here, a cautious approach should be taken, e.g., by addressing the issue of regional identities in participation processes and making implicit knowledge visible through suitable reflection methods (Böhm/Blaumann 2019; Ibendorf 2019). Contradictory attributions of meaning to identity-forming features should be taken up in discourses to promote an awareness of different readings and perceptions but also to identify common place-related characteristics (see also Knaps/Mölders/Herrmann 2020: 13). Building on the results of such a discourse, (new) development approaches for the region can be identified and tracked. The preoccupation with regional identities unfolds not only indirect relevance for territorial development, spatial planning and politics through new development approaches with strong regional specificity. Instead, the 'identity discourses' can initiate learning processes about regional

requirements, lead to a greater willingness of the population to participate in regional planning (Raagma 2002: 55) and enable cooperation beyond age and education groups (e.g., Tuitjer 2019).

The links between regionalization and 'identity discourses' become particularly clear when comparing both processes' goals, requirements and characteristics. This comparison was elaborated in the context of the 'Zukunftsdiskurs' (Kempa/Krätzig 2020). Therefore, a detailed presentation will not be given here.

Interim conclusion: In the 'Zukunftsdiskurs', regional identities were identified as an important building block for regional development processes and possible starting points for regionalization. In this context, personal and community perspectives on the "own" region extend classical regional development approaches. Thus, it is all about a discourse that spans different local and regional actors and compares traditional regional governance mechanisms with the reality of the life of the local people. If these perspectives are made visible in an open discourse with the public, not only a broad and well-founded knowledge base will be available regarding the emotional relations of the population to the region. Interested people can also be more motivated to develop ideas for the future and to support its implementation.

3.2 Measures and experiences for integrating place identities from planning, policy and research

A systematic linking of regional 'identity discourses' and regionalisation processes is not (yet) taking place. There are, however, approaches for taking regional identities and 'Heimat' references into account in regional development and structural support programs in Germany.

In participatory planning, urban and regional development use positive identifications with places to stimulate endogenous development and creativity potentials (Blotevogel 2019). But even if 'Heimat' references have long been an implicit theme of territorial development, systematic integration of emotional spatial references into territorial planning processes is still lacking. For this reason, the Advisory Council for Territorial Development at the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) recommends spatial planning, but also in other policy areas, to "consider people's emotional ties to specific places with their social and material structures" and to "create comprehensive opportunities for participation in the shaping of their 'Heimat' for people" (BMI 2019b: 5). The regional level is considered to be of particular importance for this.

The growing attention paid to 'Heimat' references results not least from growing political uncertainty in the face of increasing mobilization and election successes of populist and extremist movements and parties in Germany. Since they are causally related to regional structural weaknesses or socio-economic distributional conflicts (cf. Giebler/Regel 2017; Manow 2018; Heitmeyer 2018), politicians and actors in territorial development (and formal spatial planning) must address the issue.

Since the 2017 - 2021 legislative period, the German Federal Government has been setting new accents and priorities on 'Heimat' references in the Federal Ministry of the Interior by assigning the tasks of 'building and community' (in German "Bau und Heimat") and developed 'Heimat strategies' for territorial development: "The overriding theme of the 'Heimat strategy' is the equal living conditions in all parts of Germany - a guiding principle of territorial development" (BMI 2019a: 6). In addition, the reference to regional identities has found its way into parts of the national urban development funding (Städtebauförderung) and the Joint Task for the Improvement of Agricultural structures and Coastal Protection (GAK). Nine of the 16 German federal states have included

regional identification or 'Heimat' references in their funding programs or their respective provisions for establishing LEADER regions (Table 1).

Tab. 1: Regional identities in national or federal state programs and strategies

National programs	▪ Heimatstrategie des BMI ▪ Städtebauförderung: Kleinere Städte und Gemeinden – überörtliche Zusammenarbeit und Netzwerke (BBSR 2019) ▪ Gemeinschaftsaufgabe „Verbesserung der Agrarstruktur und des Küstenschutzes" – Regionalbudget[a]
Federal states - programs	▪ Bayern: Regionale Identität, gleichwertige Lebens- u. Arbeitsverhältnisse[b] ▪ Mecklenburg-Vorpommern: Förderung identitätsstiftender Projekte[c] ▪ Niedersachsen: Identifikationen mit der eigenen Heimat in Demographie-Projekten[d] ▪ Nordrhein-Westfalen: Die REGIONALEN, Regionale Identität, Heimat-Akademie und Heimat-Kongress, Heimatorte und -räume im Ruhrgebiet #heimatruhr[e] ▪ Sachsen: Identifikation mit der eigenen Heimat in einzelnen Demographie-Projekten[f]
Federal states - provisions for the EU LEADER program	▪ Baden-Württemberg[g] ▪ Mecklenburg-Vorpommern[h] ▪ Saarland[i] ▪ Sachsen[j] ▪ Sachsen-Anhalt[k] ▪ Thüringen[l]

[a] https://www.bmel-statistik.de/fileadmin/daten/GAB-0002000-2019.pdf (11.05.2020)

[b] https://www.stmfh.bayern.de/heimat/regionale_identitaet/Default.asp?thema=un (08.05.2020)

[c] https://www.regierung-mv.de/static/Regierungsportal/Ministerium%20f%C3%BCr%20Inneres%20und%20Europa/Dateien/Downloads/Kommunale%20Investitionsf%C3%B6rderung/F%C3%B6rdergrunds%C3%A4tze%20identit%C3%A4tsstiftender%20Projekte%20-%20FG%20ISP.pdf (08.05.2020)

[d] https://www.stk.niedersachsen.de/download/111945 (08.05.2020)

[e] https://www.mhkbg.nrw/themen/bau/land-und-stadt-foerdern/regionale-zusammenarbeit, https://www.mhkbg.nrw/themen/heimat/heimat-foerderprogramm, https://www.mhkbg.nrw/themen/heimat/heimat-akademie, https://www.mhkbg.nrw/themen/heimat/kreativitaet-schafft-heimat-im-ruhrgebiet (08.05.2020)

[f] https://www.demografie.sachsen.de/lausitzer-sterne-als-haltefaktoren-im-landlichen-raum-8768.html (08.05.2020)

[g] https://foerderung.landwirtschaft-bw.de/pb/site/pbs-bw-new/get/documents/MLR.LEL/PB5Documents/mlr/MEPL/mepl_extern/MEPL_III_gesamt/_2020-02-19-MEPL_III_nach_4.AeA.pdf (08.05.2020)

[h] https://www.regierung-mv.de/static/Regierungsportal/Ministerium%20f%C3%BCr%20Landwirtschaft%20und%20Umwelt/Dateien/F%C3%B6rderungen/2019-05-28%20KOM%20EPLR%20genehmigte%20Fassg%207.2.pdf (11.05.2020)

[i] https://www.saarland.de/dokumente/thema_landwirtschaft/Programme_2014DE06RDRP018_6_1_de_ELER.pdf (10.05.2020)

[j] https://www.smul.sachsen.de/foerderung/download/Programme_2014DE06RDRP019_6_1_de.pdf (10.05.2020)

[k] https://europa.sachsen-anhalt.de/fileadmin/Bibliothek/Politik_und_Verwaltung/StK/Europa/ESI-Fonds-Neu_2017/Dokumente/ELER/EPLR/2018-11-15_Programme_2014DE06RDRP020_6_1_de.pdf (10.05.2020)

[l] https://infrastruktur-landwirtschaft.thueringen.de/fileadmin/Landwirtschaft/ELER/Programme_2014DE06RDRP023_5_1_consolidated_with_2014DE06RDNF001_6_1_de.pdf (10.05.2020)

The overarching strategies of planning policy and the concrete (funding) programs foster participatory approaches for reassessing traditional perspectives and experiences with a view to the present and the future. Such embedded 'identity discourses' results can be linked to concrete local and regional development approaches. Examples can be found in regional bottom-up initiatives and research and development projects.

> ***Research and development: REGIOBRANDING***
> *The research project REGIOBRANDING has already linked regionalisation and identity building, as REGIOBRANDING integrated regional place identities into a process for sustainable development. In workshops, scientists, regional actors and inhabitants learned about regional characteristics and values linked to individual or common identifications. Awareness of these emotional spatial ties also led to a deeper*

understanding of regional conflicts, which helped initiate dialogues and facilitate negotiation processes. New projects and concepts were initiated based on the developed identity characteristics. These were based on existing regional spatial patterns and generated new cross-municipal or cross-district cooperation.

Regionalization in heterogeneous areas
One of the findings of the regionalization project STADT+UM+LAND 2030 Region Braunschweig (Brunswick) is that attention must be paid to sub-spatial peculiarities in very heterogeneous regions. It was an obstacle that there was hardly any regional awareness in the "artificial" region of Braunschweig and that a regional public sphere could only be established with difficulty (Zschocke 2006: 129). In such cases, looking for small-scale compelling identity features and using them for a regional discourse may sometimes be necessary. These may relate to sub-regional priorities or development needs (e.g., traditional historical-administrative structures, natural areas, economic clusters, structural change and conversion). It is of fundamental importance for the success of such processes that the actors with their specific characteristics are reflected in the overall regional context (Hahn 2019).

Bottom-up initiatives by citizens and regional businesses
In the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia, the new region of South Westphalia has been emerging since 2007, supported by the structural development program "REGIONALE", from the historically grown regions of Sauerland, Siegerland, Wittgenstein and the Hellweg region. This is a new process initiated by the regional economy and the districts of Olpe, Hochsauerlandkreis, Siegen-Wittgenstein, Märkischer Kreis and district Soest. Regional identities are mentioned as important resources for this process and are intended to strengthen the region as a whole. Two central insights from this process are, on the one hand, to find out what people can agree on, on the other hand, to allow diversity and to inspire - not construct - identification and attachment with a place. In this sense, the local network "Wege zum Leben. In Südwestfalen" (Ways to Life in South Westphalia) tries to provide offers for the growing need of people for orientation and meaning, for spiritual search and experience outside and inside religious traditions (Falk/Kirsch-Stracke 2020).

4. Findings and recommendations for process design

The results of the 'Zukunftsdiskurs' show that

- regionalization can benefit from processes and discourses for identity building,
- regionalization and identity building are important components of regional change processes,
- regional development should deal with the further development of regional identity features and create new identification offers to meet future requirements and
- discourses on regional identities should consider, in particular, the dynamics of traditional and new identity-building characteristics as well as different attributions of meaning.

The findings are not entirely new, but in the 'Zukunftsdiskurs' they could be viewed much more strongly than before from the perspective of planners and active participants in regional development processes. The 'Zukunftsdiskurs' and previous projects (including Herrmann/Kempa 2019) have thus made it possible to answer questions about concrete implementation.

In the following, we present a 'roadmap' that gives recommendations for process design. This is a short version - a complete presentation including additional tools for participation processes can be found in our practice brochure (Kempa/Krätzig/Warner 2020).

Initiating and moderating the process, establishing structures for discourse

Setting clear objectives and communicating openly in processes involving many different actors is essential. The aim of an 'identity discourse' can be, for example, to work out a shared context of meaning for a region with a great diversity of participants to enrich and support regional developments in the future. In the beginning, it has to be clarified whether the 'identity discourse' is to be embedded in regional development processes or whether it should initially (still) be

conducted independently. A good knowledge of the structure of actors and regional problems in the region or existing development plans will help in this decision.

Experience in implementing and moderating actor/ participation processes and a basic functioning structure facilitates entry and process stabilization. As a central actor, regional planning can "hold the threads together" (e.g., Schlüter 2019) and "assume the role of organizer, motivator and moderator" (Merling 2019: 89) or delegate these tasks. A steering group with a solid core of active members is indispensable. It is broadly based on expertise and thus has an integrating effect. Responsibilities are thus distributed among these members, and multiplication effects (networks!) are achieved.

Making the topic of "identification" tangible, generating knowledge

Identification and regional identity are issues that are difficult to grasp, so the relevant contents of regional identities should be highlighted on a regular basis to foster common understandings. In suitable discourse formats, the aspects of diversity (in the sense of different references to regional characteristics) and change (in the sense of assigning meanings in the past, present and future) of identities should be taken up as important topics (Falk 2019; Engbers 2019; Huusmann 2019). For this early phase of knowledge generation about regional identities, we have compiled a list of questions in our practice brochure (cf. Kempa/Krätzig/Warner 2020: 13). It helps to draw attention to material <u>and</u> immaterial characteristics to tie in with existing identities, to uncover hitherto unconscious or underestimated characteristics, and thus to make the diverse perspectives visible.

The knowledge base gained and shared can then be used to explore the planning relevance of the findings. We have also compiled a short list of questions for this purpose (see Kempa/Krätzig/Warner 2020: 15). Questions should be asked, for example: Which developments and trends are recognizable for the region? What changes will the energy system transformation or digitalization bring? How will this influence the current identity-creating characteristics?

Figure 5 illustrates such an 'identity discourse' in regional development processes. Regional to global challenges justify the need for action to develop the region further and link it to the realities of life of the local people.

Promoting cooperation and involving key players

The figure also illustrates the importance of cooperation and key players. The latter can be decisive for the success of participation and implementation as providers of impulses and ideas as well as driving forces (e.g., Christmann 2019). Frequently, key players include returnees, newcomers (outside perspective, new perspectives), active people from district development and offices of LEADER (networking, coordination of sub-projects), entrepreneurs (action orientation, project sponsorships), artists (creative approach to 'identity') (e.g., Falk 2019; Schlüter 2019; Engbers 2019.; Koops 2019). The involvement of universities (professional support, credibility) is also often crucial for success.

In addition to the steering group and key players, local people are the most crucial resource for productive 'identity discourses. With activating and inspiring formats such as workshop discussions, storytelling salons or mapped points of happiness (in German: Glückspunktekarten) (Böhm/Blaumann 2019, Christmann/Federwisch 2019; Kempa/Krätzig/Warner 2020), they should be persuaded to plan regional development in a way that does not 'miss the citizens' point'.

However, the 'identity discourse' should not be a self-purpose in the form of a permanent discussion but should be institutionalized through cooperation and network building. Initiator(s)

and steering group can, for example, bring together participants on specific identity-creating characteristics and support them in implementing regional projects. This creates tangible results and experiences of success at an early stage, which are essential for lasting motivation and integration into the 'identity discourse' and regional development.

Fig. 5: Illustration "Identification as a building block for sustainable development" (Illustrator: Anja Weiss, Content: 'Zukunftsdiskurs')

5. Discussion

The insights gained in the 'Zukunftsdiskurs' show how 'identity discourses' can be embedded in regional development processes. The combination of regional actors' perspectives and findings from science made it possible to make recommendations for implementation. However, there remain questions and contradictions for which no concrete and generally valid indications for resolution can be given. They can only be dealt with in concrete regional cases.

For example, the question of how regional identities fit into the tension between individualization and cohesion cannot be answered conclusively. To what extent do people deal with their place of residence or direct living environment, considering their various roles, reference spaces and mobile forms of life? To what extent do "the small-scale practical conditions of belonging" (Nassehi 2019: 174) play a role?

The corona pandemic shows how dependent we are on local conditions and the social and ecologically close environment. However, it also shows how much we take flexibility and multi-optional possibilities for action for granted today. 'Identity' discourses can be an offer to address these conditions of belonging and to reveal connections between personal and communal spatial references. In regional development processes, this knowledge can contribute to establishing a

common horizon of action and design. A prerequisite for this, however, is that the discourse takes place in a progressive, cooperative and liberal understanding and not in competition or as a discourse of demarcation. A jointly negotiated sense of 'shaping a region' can work against atomization and individualization if we use new narratives about cooperation, public spirit and collaboration.

A further open question raised by regional actors is the external constraints of regional development processes and their impact on the involvement of a wide range of actors in the long term. As a rule, these processes are limited financially and in terms of time, so many requirements often cannot be fully implemented in practice. To enable public discourse with broad involvement of the regional population, openness and appreciation towards diverse social groups and interests are required. Especially if not only the 'usual suspects' are to be included. However, this requires self-reflexive processes: one must step back behind standardized routines in addressing target groups and designing events. If adolescents and young adults are to be included, different formats and communication channels are required than those used by middle-aged professionals or senior citizens. Even financially weaker people may need other ways of participation than those who earn well. Such differentiated activations require much time and financial resources. It is, therefore, very understandable that initiating actors take a pragmatic approach and organize participation through existing networks when resources are scarce.

A potential solution to this problem would be more resources or the involvement of more volunteers. Experiences in several regions (cf. LandkreisLudwigslust-Parchim/Leibniz Universität Hannover 2018; Archäologisches Landesamt Schleswig-Holstein/Kreis Steinburg 2018) show that it is important and possible to name these resources and to show, using examples, what positive effects this can have for the region. For example, a person in an interface position in the district/ regional development or LEADER offices can personally introduce the idea of a discourse on regional identification and regional development projects to the different target groups. The initiating person/ office also needs resources to establish the first participatory events and formats for encounters and networking. However, over time topics and possible projects become more concrete and participating groups with similar interests often take up responsibility for these projects. The task of the initiator changes from activator and organizer to contact person and supporter in the background. In the best case, resources and commitment are then distributed to a broader circle of participants with increased possibilities for communication and implementation in shared areas of interest and responsibility.

Much persuasion at the regional and municipal level and good examples are needed for the abovementioned processes, which show that even small projects and ideas outside the usual 'regional development routines' can achieve appreciable effects. Funding opportunities for such discourses oriented towards regional identity building have already been explicitly created in some federal states (cf. Chapter 3.2) or can be used within the LEADER framework.

6. Conclusion

Regional identity is an essential prerequisite for commitment to one's own region. The scientific and social debate on topics such as identity, 'Heimat' and local ties has gained considerable momentum in recent years, and politics has also opened up to the concept of "Heimat". Communicative and cooperative approaches to the development of regions are also discussed in (federal) spatial planning. The definition of "region" is multi-layered: It can be delimited

administratively or functionally but also discursively defined as a "place where identity is generated".

Against the background of increasing individualization, social disparities and threatened social cohesion, it is necessary to integrate the (positive) identification with 'Heimat' into regional development concepts. Missing or only weakly developed identities can negatively impact a region's development, lead to less commitment, or foster individual decisions to leave a region. Especially for structurally weak regions, we consider the integrating effect of regional discourses on place-related identity to be essential to qualify regional development (and formal planning) methodically and in terms of content.

The 'Zukunftsdiskurs' "Understanding and using spatial identities - an opportunity for future-oriented regions" also contributes to objectifying the debate on identity, 'Heimat' and participation. We asked ourselves what place identity can actually mean, what characteristics it refers to, what potentials place attachment can have for regional development processes and what challenges the inclusion of emotional ties to places brings with it. For us, regionalization as a process of active region-building is central for promoting cross-level, network-like and temporary structures, which in turn support regional identities.

In our 'Zukunftsdiskurs' we have also raised the question of whether and how new offers for identity can be created. These offers are of elementary importance for the (further) development of crisis-ridden regions in particular and can be the starting point for (social) innovations. In participation processes, the topic of regional identity must therefore be deliberately addressed, and knowledge and personal references to the region must be made visible.

Based on scientific findings on the significance of regional identities and regionalisation, this article illustrates which adjustments can make place identity manageable for regional development.

Challenges lie mainly in the high diversity of actors and the fundamental flexibility of the concept of regional identity, as well as in financial or temporal limitations. Place-related features and their associated identities are subject to constant pressure to develop and change. To keep or make them 'usable', 'identity discourses' are expedient, which work out region-specific endogenous potentials and promote the cooperation of different actors across local and municipal borders. They initiate learning processes about regional requirements and enable collaboration beyond age and education groups.

However, systematic links between regional 'identity discourses' and regionalisation processes have hardly occurred. Identity-generating characteristics must be identified and further developed in a broad public discourse to strengthen sustainable regionalization processes. Such discourses should be conducted in a progressive, cooperative and liberal understanding, not in competition or as a discourse of demarcation.

The findings of the 'Zukunftsdiskurs' are not entirely new. However, in the joint project discourse, they could be viewed much more intense than before from the perspective of planners and those active in regional development processes. It became clear that regionalisation can benefit from processes and discourses for identity building if planning routines are broken up, and regional discourses can be comprehensively included.

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