

**First SAUL- Symposium  
A Sense of Places**

**The new identity challenge for metropolitan regions in North West Europe  
1<sup>st</sup> October 2003 in Dortmund**

**Questionnaire for participants**

**Dear participant of the SAUL-Symposium,**

this event is the first of a series of Symposia of the SAUL-project. The first Symposium will focus on the issue **regional identity**. Each Symposium will take place in another partner's region, thus this first Symposium also have a regional focus, which is on the Ruhr Region. Participants of the Symposium are not only be members of the SAUL project partners. A crucial intention of the SAUL is to involve experts and practitioners from the wider network of contacts and co-operators from the practical demonstration projects of every SAUL region. Mayor parts of this transnational learning and exchange are the "Joint Planning Groups", built up to accompany each of the regional projects, whose members are therefore also invited to the Symposium.

To make the best mutual use of the expertise gathered in this Symposium, we offer a questionnaire to all participants, and kindly ask you to fill it in. The aim of this questionnaire is to allow all of us, participants, as well as organisers, speakers and facilitators, to do a short preparation for the Symposium. Moreover, your answers, specially those regarding your own region, will allow for a comparing analysis of the regional identities in the SAUL regions. Though some first insights from analysis of the questionnaire will be made available for the Symposium itself, a final analysis will be prepared later; of course you will receive a copy of this paper. Finally, the questionnaire will be used, together with the proceedings and findings of the Symposium itself, for preparing a common "SAUL-policy" on regional identity. This hopefully will be a useful basis for our further work in the SAUL project, and probably even beyond.

Please send the filled-in questionnaire (preferably by e-mail) to: Rainer Kestermann, ILS NRW, Postbox/Postfach 101764, D-44017 Dortmund, Fax: +49 (0) 231 - 90 51 - 155, e-mail: [rainer.kestermann@ils.nrw.de](mailto:rainer.kestermann@ils.nrw.de). If you have any questions, please feel free to address to the same contact. To give us the chance for doing first analyses and interpretations, and making use of them in the Symposium, please **return the questionnaire until 19<sup>th</sup> September 2003!**

Take it playfully, and have fun! Many thanks for your assistance!

Rainer Kestermann      Wolfgang Knapp      Philipp Schwede

# 1. Introduction

## **This questionnaire has three parts:**

- The first part addresses **your region**, we want to know, what are your notions of regional identity in your own region; so you are asked as an inhabitant and expert for your region.
- The second part turns to the host region of the Symposium, which is the **Ruhr Region**, used as an example and case study during the Symposium. Here we ask: What is your outsider's view of the regional identity of the Ruhr Region? Of course, if you are living in this region, this second part is not relevant for you.
- In the third part we want to know, what is **your experience** in working with the regional identity concept.

## **How to use the questionnaire?**

First of all, this is by no means a test of your professional knowledge on the issue of regional identity! We all have some notion about this; ideas, views, and some even have experience in actively working on regional identity; this previous knowledge is all we want to know about. So, no special expertise, no studies are needed, and we don't expect you to do any special reading of literature, documents etc. Don't study long before giving your answers! Simply tick-off answers you agree with and **fill in** other questions **quite spontaneously**, giving your immediate impressions, feelings, views in some catchwords, only; no completeness is required! Where you cannot decide, or feel to have no notion about an answer, let out the question. The fields for giving your answers are flexible in size, allowing for any length of answers you want to give.

We hope working on this questionnaire will not take too much of your time, but it will show to be profitable for all of us. Though it does seem to be quite lengthy, you will notice, that answering the questions mostly only affords a tick-off and/or some catchwords.

We are grateful for any **further commentaries**, explanations and insights, you can and may give. Experience of you who have already actively worked with a regional identity would be of special importance. Please use another blank sheet, and mark the number of the question, to which you want to give additional information.

## **Anonymity**

Though we ask you to give us your name and phone/fax/e-mail at the end of the questionnaire, this is only to allowing for contacting you to make clear your information or to get additional information. The questionnaire will be filled in by several people of each region, and we assure that all analysis will be done in an **anonymous way** and no names, or information allowing for identification of participants will be given to outside the Symposium members, specially not in the resulting papers and /or published documents.

## I. Regional identity of your own region

### 1. What is name and what are borders of your personal region?

One necessary dimension of any identity, thus also for the regional identity, is a demarcation of a contour, of borders, dividing people, things, places being “inside” or “outside”; moreover the - given or chosen - name of what allows a feeling of identification tells a lot about the common aspects, producing cohesion, and the contour of the identity.

#### 1a) What is the name of what you feel, is your region?

London

#### 1b) Please describe the range of your region and its boundaries (by using towns/cities, geographical elements or units, historical areas, borderlines etc). The range of my region is given by:

My personal view of the boundaries of the region is that it is everything within the M25 circular motorway

If helpful, give explanation, what is clearly outside your region:

#### 1c) Is there a discourse on “what is the region”?

Maybe, your subjective regional consciousness refers to another range, or level of “region” than other social groups have, and there may be a discourse on what is the region, or what should become (the institutions of) the region.

No, in my region, there is a clear, common understanding about the name and range of the region

Although exact boundaries may still be queried (what is ‘inner’ or ‘outer’ London)

Yes, in my region, there is a unfinished discourse about name and range of the region. Please give catchwords for identifying the relevant names and ranges, and add, which social groups are promoting the proposals (e.g. politicians, government and administration, scientists, media, economic players, others):

### 2. Your subjective regional image

Besides the necessity of shaping a contour, a precondition of any spatial identity is the existence of “special” characteristics, namely of “special places”, which are essential for the feeling of identifying. The more such “special places” there are, and the higher their qualities are in the eyes of the users (making them their “own places”), the more “complexity” of the regional image is constructed, and the stronger will be the feeling of regional identity.

#### 2a) Please describe one “picture” of your region that spontaneously appears before your eyes: places inhabited by wide range of cultures and social groups – busy shopping streets

#### 2b) What do you see as characteristic “hard” factors (meaning material or visible dimensions), contributing to your identity feeling in your region? Many of them could be “own places” of your special interest and actively used.

Tick-off points you agree to play an important role for you and, if you wish, add some additional catchwords. Again, it could be useful, possibly easier for you, to give your notion, of what does clearly not belong to your regional image:

- Landscape and elements of nature, landmarks  
NOT
- single cities/towns, built-up areas of the region  
YES
- town/city-quarters, places, a set of buildings or special architectural sites, including heritage  
YES
- special institutions, whether political, social, educational, cultural, economical (actually existing or historical ones)  
YES
- visible elements of economic structures, “highlights” of industries or other economic sectors, etc.
  
- visible effects of social structures, lifestyle groups etc.  
YES
- others:

**2c) What are characteristic “soft” factors (meaning immaterial, invisible factors, cultural and symbolic dimensions) describing your region?**

These factors are relevant for a third dimension of regional images, besides “contour” and “complexity”, which is “coherence”. This means, a social identity feeling (= regional consciousness) is not possible without a certain amount of common shared attitudes, values, practices etc.

Again, it might be useful, and easier for you to describe in catchwords, what does not belong to your region, demarcating what is outside:

- Cultural heritage, traditions, symbols etc.  
YES
  
- Typical attitudes, values, cultures, behaviour, language etc.
  
- Styles of living, common practices and activities, making up for the singularity of your region (e.g. special food and beverage, sports, etc.)  
NO
- other special attributes, characteristics...  
Wide variety of cultures, attitudes, etc.

**3. What do you think, is the internal regional image of your region?**

**3a) Do you think, there is a generally accepted regional image of your region?**

Maybe, this image is differing from your own subjective regional image, described in your answers to question 2 (regarding “contour”, “complexity” and “cohesion”). Perhaps you even feel, that there is no common regional image among the residents of your region, but a plurality of different regional identities, following basic differentiation processes in local, social, and lifestyle dimensions, prohibiting one single accepted identity to evolve.

- Yes, I feel that in my region, there is a consistent image of what are characteristics

of the region, which is shared by the inhabitants. I feel, my personal regional image (as described above) also describes the generally accepted regional image.

- No, I feel there are important differences between my own, subjective regional image and a general regional identity of the inhabitants. Main differences, regarding the dimensions of question 2 above, are:
- I feel, there is no single set of characteristics, forming a common regional image in my region. I rather see a plurality of differing, distinct regional images. If so, please give some catchwords to give an idea, what are the local, or social groups having special images of their own:  
I feel the region identifies with the global/multicultural position and dynamic living pace it has today but additionally various social and ethnic groups (often geographically distributed) have an extra local identity within the wider regional context. This 'local' identity (whether specific ethnic groups or class divisions) often can be stronger than the wider identity.

**3b) Regional consciousness?**

Only built on a shared regional image, a regional feeling of identifying with this region (regional consciousness) may evolve. This would be revealed by common attitudes, practices representing the insiders' image of the region: using regional places and facilities, sharing the meaning of regional signs and symbols, and by real, observable actions like relationships between individuals, participating in regional associations, engaging in development and planning processes etc.

- Based on a common general regional image, in our region, there is a common feeling of "togetherness", people identify with their region, and feel to be part of a regional community
- Though diverse social and local groups have differing regional images, people all together have a feeling of identification with this region
- I feel, there is a "multi-layered" identity of people in my region; they partly identify with several, and different areas that might be seen as sub-regions
- I feel, my region is a region in a functional sense, and a regional image from outside can be described, still the inner image does not or not already allow for a regional consciousness.
- other statements

**4. Outside image - objective regional identity**

Besides the subjective regional identity of the inhabitants of the region themselves, showing their regional consciousness as a process of self-description, there is another notion of regional identity, which is a description or ascription of outsiders. Inhabitants of other regions have their own - again subjective - regional image of a certain region. And finally, there is a somewhat "objective" regional image that can be described by using classification methods of more neutral scientific analyses, surveys, inquiries etc. Between these two, you find images produced from outside by the media (TV and radio services, the press media, and feature films).

**4a) What do you think, are main elements of the ascribed regional image of outsiders regarding your region?**

Taking the dimensions of question 2 again, please highlight some in your eyes important elements, specially those, which you think, are differing from the insiders' identity:

**Fast paced life – high wages, young people.**

**4b) What do you think are pictures often used by the media and in feature films to describe your region?**

**3 main pictures are used: traditional historic/touristic landmarks; busy, wealthy financial districts; or estates with social problems**

**Do you feel these are used as a cliché?**

generally yes     sometimes     no

**5. Changing regional identity? What is your impression of actual changes in your regional identity?**

Regional identity is not a constant phenomenon; though elements of insiders' as well as outsiders' regional image may show to be quite sustainable over time, in principle regional identity as a social construction is constantly under change. With actual heavy changes in social, economic and political circumstances, it is widely thought, regional identities were under change, basically and rapidly, in our days. Which of the following statements would you accept?

More or less, regional identity in my region shows unchanged, disregarding the turbulence of (post)modern world.

Post-industrialisation, ongoing social differentiation, effects of globalisation, economic restructuring, and political reforms etc. have heavy influences on regional identity.

The spatial features of my region are changing rapidly; what might be the region is changing, getting more complex, boundaries of the region are becoming unclear. All these effects make a regional identity vanish, fade, or becoming pluralistic.

There is a change towards the regional level gaining importance in spatial planning and spatial policy, thus I feel regional identity to have a chance for gaining meaning and substance.

Taking together these effects, I feel regional identity of my region is changing significantly (Please give some catchwords to explain the direction of changes),

other statements

How do you feel about these changes (e.g. winning profile, a chance, threatening, loss of identity etc):

a chance to encourage a new identity that all residents can feel represents them more closely.

## II. Regional identity of the Ruhr Region

Now we change our view, turning to the Ruhr Region. This region is where the Symposium will take place and therefore will serve as an example or test case for our work with the concept of regional identity.

Note: Of course, participants of the Symposium, living and working in the Ruhr Region, already gave their notions of regional identity of this region in the above chapter. They may immediately turn to part III!

Thus, we now want to know, what is your (subjective) outsider's image of the region, or your notion of an objective image of it. It doesn't matter how well you know this area, you should do no extra studies to fill in the questions well. It is most important for us to know your previous knowledge, and prejudices, and prevalent thinking.

There is much the case to be careful about what is this region is. Therefore here we use the "neutral" word Ruhr Region. Let's say with much caution, we describe the spatial area that is the relevant region in your eyes for planning and realising the project of the restructuring of the Emscher, and the "Emscher Landscape Park"; it certainly is larger than a single town/city or a county, and certainly is something smaller than the federal state ("Land") Northrhine-Westphalia, NRW .

### 6. What is in your eyes the Ruhr Region?

Give a **name and explain the demarcation of the region** (by using towns/cities, other geographical elements or units, historical areas, borderlines etc). The range of the Ruhr Region is given by:

I think of the region as being around the cities of Dusseldorf, Essen and Dortmund and surrounding towns

If helpful, give explanation, what is clearly outside the region:

### 7. Describe your regional image of the Ruhr Region

In your following answers, you should always refer to your answer of question 6, above!

Again, very alike to part I, of course, we have to ask for your notion of regional identity. But now, we ask for your outsider's image, or your feeling of what could be called a more objective regional image, as constructed by scientists. Since an outside image usually will be not as detailed as an insider's image, we can shorten the list of questions a bit, compared with part I, above.

#### 7a) What are "special places" of the Ruhr Region in your eyes, making up for its singularity?

They could be elements of nature, of the environment, landscapes, historical centres, special sites, spectacular architecture etc.

Nature elements – forest and rivers

Architecture – attractive towns

Industrial past

**7b) What do you feel are characteristic immaterial, cultural and symbolic factors with importance for your outsider's image of the Ruhr Region, responsible for the cohesion of the region?**

I'm not sure

**7c) Thinking about the image of the Ruhr Region in the media or in films, what do you think are characteristic elements of it:**

Forests and rivers

### III. Your experience in working with the regional identity concept

Finally, we want to ask you about your experience in working on and with regional identity in a spatial planning context. This might be in an analyzing, understanding way, or it might be in a strategic way, aiming at an actively induced change of regional identity for special reasons and aims.

**8a) In your region, has regional identity (regional consciousness, and regional image) been explicitly been a relevant issue for regional planning, regional development and special actions/projects? Please give catchwords for name of plan/project and what is its aim:**

**8b) What kind of use is/was made of the regional identity concept?**

- used as analytic knowledge of the regional identity for better understanding and meeting the needs of the regional inhabitants
- used to create, enhance or change regional image in a strategic way (“image production”)
  - aiming at insiders’ image
  - aiming at regional consciousness of the residents
  - aiming at influencing the outsiders’ image
- used to foster regional co-operation, governance structures, special projects...
- other use

**8c) What methods were used for finding regional identity?**

- Work of experts, or working with experts (politicians, professionals and organized interests) (e.g. studies, workshops, discussions, consulting, design-competitions...);  
please give catchwords for explanation:
- Working with inhabitants, users, the communities;  
please give catchwords for explanation:

**8d) If a strategy of “image production” is/was/will be used: What instruments are implemented (e.g. creating of new facilities, new landscape, improving public space, image campaign, advertising, investment in design, arts, landmarks; creation of events, assistance for creating new institutions etc.)? Please explain shortly**

- 8e) What is the idea of the effects, working on regional identity should show? Can you give examples of wished outputs, outcomes and their wanted - positive - effects on conditions of life in the region?**
- 8f) If a project working with a strategy of “identity production” has already been finished, how would you evaluate the process, and the results?**

To allow for additional information, please give your name and phone/fax/e-mail (all analysis of the questionnaire and publications based on this information will happen fully anonymously):

**Thank you very much for taking the time for filling in this questionnaire!**