

Sensory Landscapes of Creativity: Towards a New Form of Identity Branding

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Abstract — Creativity is strongly linked with the social and cultural dimensions of place defining new forms of landscapes, mainly transformed and articulated through culture. The role of senses is also considered significant in the way the generated landscape is shaped and perceived. Hence, creativity and senses play a crucial role in shaping landscapes. In addition, place marketing and place branding aim at the generation of a strong place identity that stem from its landscape, referring not only to the physical characteristics of the place, but also to the meaning and the relations between places and people. In this paper, the notions of creativity, sensory landscape/sensoryscape and place marketing are discussed and combined, through a literature review. The purpose of the paper is to include both sensory and creative dimensions as part of the research into place marketing and place branding procedures. The paper states that creativity is a central organizing principle of landscape that provides distinctiveness to the place and along with the stimulation of senses can lead to a creative sensory landscape emerging from the interaction between creativity displayed in the landscape and its sensoryscape. The authors conclude that these landscapes could lead to the discovery of a new place identity through the process of place marketing and place branding and hence, a new a form of identity branding.

Keywords — *Creativity; landscape; senses; place identity; place marketing; place branding; creative sensory branding.*

I. INTRODUCTION

During the past decades, creativity has been a crucial factor in the discussion of places' development ([1], [2], [3], [4], [5], [6], [7]). Creativity in terms of cultural production had a major impact on landscape ([8], [9], [10]) transforming it in various ways. The role of senses is also considered significant in the way the generated landscape is shaped and perceived ([11], [12], [13], [14], [15], [16], [17], [18]). Furthermore, the identity of a place which stems from its landscape is managed and articulated through place marketing and place branding procedures ([19], [20], [21]). In this paper, creativity, sensory landscapes/sensoryscapes and place marketing are discussed and combined, through a

literature review. The aim of the paper is to include both sensory and creative dimensions as part of the research into place marketing and place branding procedures. The originality of this paper lies in the fact that it is the first time the concepts of creativity and landscape have been related and approached through the perspective of senses in order to investigate if these two concepts combined could establish a unique place identity.

The paper attempts to answer two main questions: a) if creativity can contribute to the sensory perception of landscape, and b) whether creative sensoryscapes that emerge from the interaction between sensory landscape and the creative characteristics or activities that exist or occur in

the place may contribute to place marketing and place branding procedures leading to a new form of identity branding.

Currently, places compete with each other promoting their distinctive characteristics and their comparative advantages in order to increase their attractiveness in the external environment ([19], [20]). Cultural production and specifically creativity which is an important factor in place's economy and promotion ([4], [5], [7], [22]), is part of the place's distinctiveness which is related to landscape, determining place's identity and development. Place marketing and branding as significant tools that promote place's identity have been only recently associated with all senses [23]. This research gap in the literature combined with the gap in the relation between creativity and senses and the latest increased interest in the sensory perception and shaping of landscape [24] were the motivations for this review. The attempt to propose a new form of identity branding inspired by the creative elements and their relation with the sensory landscape should be essential to the academic community as it could provide the real sense of place and hence its most authentic identity.

The paper is divided into five sections. After the introduction, the second section examines the notion of creativity and its spatial footprint. The third section discusses the concept of landscape and investigates the importance of human perception and sensory effect in the formulation of the sense of a place. The fourth section aims to link the elements of creativity, landscape and place marketing in the light of senses and place identity. The final section pulls together the conclusions that arise from the preceding review.

II. CREATIVITY AND PLACE

Creativity has long been discussed within various disciplines, such as psychology, philosophy, sociology, education, economics, anthropology and cognitive sciences. It is considered as a prevalent sociocultural paradox that derives from, and affects, all aspects of, society and cultural evidence [25] given that it could lead to the production of novel results that contribute to economic development. However, creativity can have various meanings, depending on the scope of the study, and as mentioned in [26], there are few confluence approaches that examine creativity not from a strict point of view. Particularly, the 'investment theory' that [26] presents, highlights the importance of the environment, amongst others (intellectual ability,

knowledge, styles of thinking, personality, motivation), as a crucial factor that fosters creativity.

During the past decades, creativity has spread as a 'friendly virus' in urban studies as well, with 'culture as a backpack' [27]. There has been a rising tendency towards embodying creativity in the study of urban economics and urban geography, incorporating relevant parameters in the making of urban space, all expressed mostly through the seminal works of [1] and [2]. These theories had a major impact on the research agenda of urban studies, as well as on the urban policy agendas. Nevertheless, creativity has not yet been properly incorporated into urban policies, since negative judgments that come from the academic literature review have persistently been overlooked ([28], [29]).

Criticism refers largely to Florida's theory of the creative class, accusing it of being elitist, serving neo-liberal interests and politics, and contributing to gentrification and social eclecticism ([30], [31], [32], [33], [34], [35], [36]) as well as the creative class's factors for spatial mobility and residence ([37], [38]). Even Florida in his last book [39] acknowledged severe issues, such as gentrification, unaffordability, segregation and inequality that arose in urban centers. However, creativity is considered as a concept that concerns the whole of the society, and not a particular class, from the citizen to the leading actors of a place and refers to human synergies in governance and planning. As in [40] argued, the inhabitants are not only the observant but also the creative activators of the urban space. Thus, a 'creative milieu' is being formed, an environment that can act as a magnet in order to promote human interaction [41].

The complexity that is expressed through the notions of creativity, creative milieu, etc. is apparent in terms of the vague definitions of the concepts ([42], [43], [44]). Another element also demonstrates this ambiguity: the multitude of indexes used and suggested by several organizations, public bodies, academics and practitioners. Reference [45] demonstrates that a way to 'catch a city' is to measure it, so creativity has been a prosperous field for further study. Reference [46] displays and categorizes lists of the most prominent indexes whose basic differentiations are the place images and the scale of their impact, as well as the directional meaning of creativity. Most of them refer to elements such as the cultural production, creative and cultural industries funding, diversity, participation and technology, leading to the conclusion that they are largely referring to the measurement of the size and impact of the creative markets. Nonetheless, there are indexes much more

holistic, covering domains that constitute the urban realm, flirting with the quality of urban life and enhancing the roles and the relations amongst the people involved, more suitable for potential 'creative milieus' [47].

Although creativity was mostly integrated for the past decades in urban theories and urban policy agendas, it has been long associated with the notion of place and landscape, breeding the symbolic/cognitive landscape and the landscape of the new cultural economy, mainly transformed and articulated through culture [8]. The physical and symbolic landscape is constantly changing due to creativity derived from the actors of a place (residents, producers and visitors) and the cultural economy that is developed. The expressed creativity in the landscape is considered important as it can apply not only in urban areas but in rural ones as well. As such, creativity is not strictly associated with technology industries or innovation but it can also be linked with the sense of place arising from the landscape [10].

III. LANDSCAPE THROUGH SENSES

Over the years, the notion of landscape has been associated with a wide range of disciplines (e.g. geography, anthropology, ecology, planning, etc.), which gave its term a variety of meanings. According to the European Landscape Convention [48], the most formal definition of landscape is the 'area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors'. According to this definition, landscape is a specific geographical area in which people act (physical landscape), the image of this area, and its elaboration through the eyes and mind of its observer (symbolic landscape). In other words, landscape is a construct of spirit and culture which reflects natural procedures and cultural changes and evolves through space and time [49].

Thus, the concept of landscape is arrived at through the interaction of the concepts of place and people. Landscape is a place where both the actual/objective data (which exist regardless of whether or how they are perceived by people) as well as the subjective data (the meanings and perceptions that are created after the reconstruction of intake data from people) coexist. The objective and subjective elements are completely interdependent, as the landscape is subject to continuous shaping by humans ([49], [50], [51], [52], [53], [54], [55]).

A review of a place always starts with the aesthetic judgment of its observer ([51], [53]). People perceive a place through their ideology, experience, beliefs, aesthetics, intentions and objectives. The mental and psychological

state of the observer, the conceptual and philosophical considerations of the time, the fashion and the external conditions of place (e.g. light, motion, distance, season and time) also play an important role in the perception of landscape ([56], [57], [58]). However, above all, people experience landscape in a multi-sensory way, using their sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch, deriving, organizing and interpreting information received from the environment, as an inherently natural instinct ([14], [15], [16], [17], [18], [59]). Landscape is the observer's imagination exercised over sense data; the embodied practice/experience in a place, constructed through the use of all senses and developed through time ([11], [60], [61]).

The 'formative experience' of the landscape, the way that people perceive its image, comes mainly from the landscape representations that emerge in everyday life and not by the 'stay experience' in it [62]. It is not enough to observe a static image of a place in order to perceive a landscape as a whole. The observer has to walk in situ, using all of his/her senses, connecting the elements of the place in order to create its internal image, the idea of its spirit ([63], [64], [65], [66]). The elements of the place act as 'signs', disturbing the unity of the experience of its observer and activating his/her memory ([67], [68]). The process of perception contains the natural and cultural dimensions of the place, which are filtered by narrative and collective memories [69].

The most important element of a landscape is the 'stimmung' [68] / 'genius loci' [70] or sense of place [71] which is the atmosphere created in a place as the unique element that can be synthesized from all of its contents [16]. The atmosphere is not a fact that exists from the start, but something that is created from human actions, spontaneous or otherwise. Thus, the term 'atmosphere' embraces all the sensory experiences that people can have in a place [12], [13]. This phenomenological approach between people and place reveals 'how senses of self and landscape are together made and communicated, in and through lived experience' ([72], [73]). Without this active process that takes place between the observer and the place, there is no landscape.

Concluding, all senses are engaged in the perception and comprehension of a place, providing equally important information about it and therefore about its landscape. Thus, every landscape has visual, sound, smell, taste and touch feature, and hence is a sensory landscape [74] or sensoryscape which exists only through human perception of the general environment of a place. Although most researchers mainly investigate landscape as a visual

phenomenon and with emphasis on the visual/material qualities of the place [23], new cultural geographers have focused on nonmaterial landscapes and their representations ([75], [76], [77], [78], [79], [80]). In the literature, a range of different terms have been used, such as soundscape (first developed by [81]) and smellscape (first developed by [82]), which are place related and give a different dimension to landscape research. In the most recent bibliography, phenomenological approaches have reinforced the sensory elements in shaping landscape [24].

IV. PLACE MARKETING, CREATIVITY, LANDSCAPE AND IDENTITY

In the globalized world of the 21st century, and after the emergence of the new knowledge surrounding urban economies, the need for places to have their own distinctiveness in order to be competitive led to new forms of strategic planning. Place marketing is considered as the appropriate process through which to achieve urban development using various tools ([19], [20], [21], [83], [84]). Place marketing is defined as a long-term process or strategy of interrelated actions and measures in order to maintain or increase the attractiveness of a place for specific population groups ([85], [86], [87]), and as in [88] mentioned, the application of place marketing has been associated with local economic development and the promotion of investment activities of a place in order to identify and support its image in the external environment.

As Reference [89] notes, place marketing passed through many phases, from promotional advertisements to the recent stage of place branding procedure. During the evolution of place marketing strategy, all these phases aimed at the generation of a strong place brand identity ([90], [91], [92], [93]). The concept of identity entails the notions of uniqueness and continuity, so place identity refers to those characteristics that guarantee a place's distinctiveness and its continuity in time [94]. Reference [91] refers to the identity of a place as its character, which is based on history and is constantly changing according to the circumstances. Thus, place identity not only refers to the physical characteristics of the place, but also to the meaning and the relations between places and people. As Reference [95] mentions, the identity of a place is created 'through a complex system of interactions between the individual and the collective, between the physical and the non-physical, between the functional and the emotional, between the internal and the external, and between the organized and the random'.

The above definition of the creation of a place's identity seems to correspond to the concept of landscape which, as mentioned earlier, is not only a natural but also a social and cultural construction formed through everyday human actions ([78], [96], [97], [98], [99], [100]) composing of time-culture layers with different characteristics influenced by the 'human perceptions and undertakings that come and go as the cultural evolves through time' [10]. In other words, landscape is not only a selective observation of a specified geographical area according to the individual style of each observer, but also an attempt to approach the internal identity of a place which is multiply charged, both by the emotional background of the observer and the historical context of the place ([54], [69], [71], [80], [101], [102], [103]). Thus, landscape functions as a sign of place, representing its identity, and plays a leading role in the projection of a place's meanings and symbolization ([104], [105]).

Although there is a close relation between landscape and place identity, there is no such relation between landscape and place marketing/branding. Reference [106] supports that 'few studies have developed a theory to address the possibilities of the competitive representation of geographical space through landscape, especially in the ... context of place branding'. However, landscape can give a positive meaning to a place, and hence a competitive advantage that can be used as a tool in place marketing and place branding procedures.

In addition, the visual emphasis in place marketing and place branding is a reality, as in landscape research. Although the dominance of the visual is not surprising but indicative of how people 'primarily navigate and consume space and place' [23], other (non-visual) senses have been largely ignored. Medway [23] was the first who generally examined the role of smell, taste and touch in place marketing, proving that the analysis of all senses could deliver a more holistic experience of place and offer 'different but equally important information and stimuli ..., which could provide a real point of difference in related place marketing effort' [107].

Concerning the concept of creativity and its relation to place marketing and place branding procedures, in previous decade, place marketing and place branding had a strong relationship with the creative city discourse that stemmed from the evolution of cultural place branding, and the connection that creativity displayed in places had with cultural industries and institutions, cultural expression and consumption ([30], [89], [108]). This resulted in the struggle

for and adoption of the 'creative city' label, which entailed the attraction of creative and cultural industries, creative class, festivals, tourism, etc. into cities. The overall aim of the places was to construct a creative environment in order to attract people and businesses which could lead eventually to urban development. In this process, not only 'hard' and 'soft' factors define the creative workforce's attraction but also personal networks, i.e. local social connections related to people's life courses ([21], [37], [38]).

In reality, all public and human activities are the resources of a creative identity generated in a place. All these activities are also part of the relationship between the people and the place, which form the landscape of the region. 'The landscape is the basis on which culture is created, but also part of the already formed cultural background of a region' [109]. Consequently, if the landscape is perceived as a living organism that evolves constantly through culture and time, creativity is strongly linked to this evolution, stemming from the human capital, and engaging with both social and cultural contexts. Furthermore, as stated above, people create relationships with places and therefore landscapes, using sensory aspects ([110], [111]). Thus, a place's creative identity can be defined as the sensory expressions of cultural and creative activities that its inhabitants produce, and the place supports, along with the culture, tradition and collective memory of the place [112] i.e. its creative landscape. This is reflected clearly through cultural expressions, social synergies and the citizens' participation.

Concluding, the expression of culture and creativity in human-space interactions defines landscapes ([8], [71], [113], [114]). Thus, creativity could become the central organizing principle of landscape, providing value, character, distinctiveness and authenticity to the place. The creative sensoryscape could define the sense of place and lead to the discovery of a new place identity through the process of place marketing and place branding and hence, a new form of identity branding; the creative sensory branding.

V. CONCLUSION

In this paper, the basic notions of creative place, landscape and their sensory implications were examined and synthesized through a literature review, in an attempt to study approaches that stem from, and conclude in, the basic distinctive characteristics of a place that constitute its identity.

Creativity plays a major role in urban development in the contemporary world ([1], [5], [9], [27], [32], [115]). It is connected with culture, but more recently creativity is linked to the participation of citizens and the process of inclusive place making. Conversely to the 'creative city' label that large urban centers have pursued, based mostly on the development of the creative industries and the attraction of the creative class, more holistic strategies have been suggested that combine approaches promoting place identity. However, smaller areas can also be a part of this creativity flow, since the most important component i.e. the human capital, induces place's creativity.

The creative identity of a place is generated by its public and human activities, which are also part of its sensory landscape. Thus, creativity is strongly connected with the sensory qualities of a place. Therefore, coming back to the questions presented in the introduction, the answer to the first question is that creative activities can undoubtedly influence the sensory perception of landscape as a place's creative identity is related to culture, an evident aspect in the formation and perception of landscape. In other words, creativity can contribute to the creation of a sensoryscape, providing a newly-emerged, unique and authentic creative sensory identity for the place. Further field research could clarify if there is a difference in the degree of the presence of creativity in urban and rural landscapes affecting senses and therefore the perception of landscape, how creative identity applies in different landscapes contributing to its sensory transformation, and whether a more specific connection exists between certain senses and creativity criteria that emerge in a landscape, based on the opinion that human activities and place interventions change the sensory qualities of a place.

Concerning the second question, the answer is that the most appropriate means to give prominence to the creative sensory identity in a landscape are place marketing and place branding. Lately they have been engaged in a more inclusive way of planning, with a social and cultural approach. While place marketing has been significantly concerned with creativity in places, the sensory approach has not been adequately integrated, neither in theory nor in practice. Due to the direct association between creativity and the sensory perception of a place, it is considered that the development of a creative sensory identity through place marketing and place branding constitutes a field with strong potential.

Concluding, 'creative sensory milieus' could emerge from the interaction between creativity displayed in places

and sensoryscapes. Hence, a new form of place branding could be proposed including the formation and promotion of the so-called creative sensory identity of a place, attracting specific target groups and featuring its most authentic identity.

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