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AN ANALYSIS OF 'INTERCONNECTED PARK SYSTEM' AS AN INTEGRATED STRUCTURAL APPROACH FOR THE REGENERATION OF POST-INDUSTRIAL REGION AS IN THE CASE OF EMSCHER PARK

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the integrated structural approach of the International Building Exhibition Emscher Park with a closer inspection on the concept of "interconnected park system" in the regeneration process of the polycentric region Ruhr in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. This case is very unique in its attempts to focus on a "structural change" for a whole region in its goals of urban development, ecological renewal, new infrastructure, and the use of international building exhibition as a cultural catalyst. From the point of typology and goals, it definitely aims economical, social and cultural development in regional scale.

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INTRODUCTION

New studies and efforts on creating parks under the main goal of urban development, ecological renewal and cultural catalyst signify how parks can turn into effective tools in creating better living environments and regeneration of post-industrial cities and regions. Parks as open spaces in which people make social and cultural exchanges may be very effective in the integration of the parts of a neighborhood, a city, or in a bigger scale, a region. Besides making people come together, they can function as joints in more complex systems in and between cities. Due to new social and economical conditions, physical connections may not be enough to create new social and economical bonds. Especially when it is a matter of forming social and economical networks, it is possible that the old boundaries between parts urge for a new reading and evaluation of the old connections sometimes restoring an old usage and sometimes by putting up totally new connections. From many points of view, the approach of *International Building Exhibition Emscher Park* in formulating an 'interconnected park system' in the northern part of the Ruhr region, also known as *Emscher zone* in Germany differs from

the general definition of the parks in literature. The idea of park in the Emscher Park did go very further than it is all known about parks. First of all, it turns out into an 'interconnected park system', of which boundaries are defined with a whole Ruhr Region so that *Emscher Regional Park* is aimed. Secondly the landscape over written in this park was deteriorated and abandoned industrial land and architecture. Thirdly it is not merely a well-defined recreational spot in the urban environment since it has a capacity to maintain "working and living environment" for the habitants. And lastly this case is very unique in its attempts to focus on a "structural change" for a whole region in its goals of urban development, ecological renewal and cultural catalyst. From the point of typology and goals, it definitely aims economical, social and cultural development in regional scale.

The Concept of Interconnected Park System

The first ideas of the interconnected park system flourished around the urban park model developed in the industrialized city. The urban park model was in fact originally borrowed from the English landscape garden. In 1844 Joseph Paxton (1803-65) who was known as the builder of Crystal Palace

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(1851) for the Great Exhibition in London designed Birkenhead Park as an integral component of a working class of Liverpool. It is thought by many scholars that Birkenhead Park became a guide for future people's park designs especially for the part that it was the first publicly funded urban park in the world. The term 'interconnected park system' derived from Olmsted's vision of creating an integrated park and parkway system. In 1868, Frederick Law Olmsted and his partner, Calvert Vaux were invited to Buffalo, NY to design the first system of parks and inter-connecting parkways. The two were previously known for the design of New York's Central Park with their submission of Greensward plan in 1858. Instead of designing a single recreational area as in the case of New York Central Park, Olmsted proposed a series of separate green-spaces. He proposed three parks in the northern part of the city, which were called The Park (the present Delaware Park), The Front (the present Front Park), and The Parade (after the 1896 Humboldt Park, the present Martin Luther King, Jr., Park as in Figure 1.

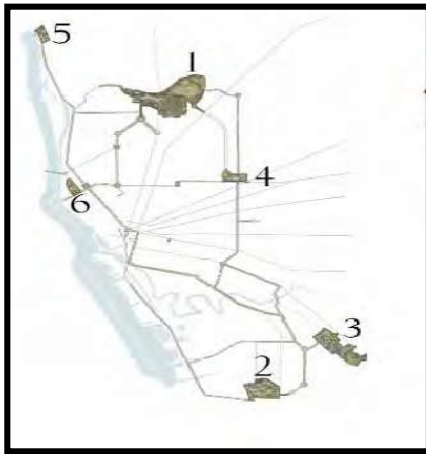


Figure 1 Six restored urban parks: 1. Delaware Park, 2. South Park, 3. Cazenovia Park, 4. Martin Luther King Jr. Park, 5. Riverside Park, 6. Front Park

Source: http://www.buffaloolmstedparks.org/Tools/Portfolio/Upload/Project73/Docs/Olmsted_20Park_20book5__2008.pdf [Accessed 9 November 2010]

These sites, with different names had different qualities and purposes within what Olmsted considered a citywide park system. In addition to the new public grounds, Olmsted and Vaux planned to connect the parkways and avenues to one another (Kowsky, 1987, p. 52). So the initial ideas on interconnected park systems included the connectivity of the separate parks with parkways and avenues, which implied an overall development of green spaces and recreational areas, which is nearly 60 percent of the parks and open space system of Buffalo (Shibley and Schneekloth, 2008).

The need for a structural program for the regeneration of the polycentric region Ruhr

A polycentric urban region is much recently defined as "morphologically and functionally urbanized areas that are spread over a few large cities, some more medium-sized cities and a vast number of smaller towns and villages" (Romein, 2004). And as from the terminology of pioneers of urban geography and economy it can be understood as "spatially closely connected and strategically planned region with historically and politically distinct cities, no hierarchy and

separated with open spaces". The argument of increased competitiveness between cities implies that there should be functional interdependence between formerly separated cities in order to compete with large metropolitan areas (Van Houtum and Lagendijk, 2001, p.747-767).

It is clear that the Ruhr region always had to retain its market position, after the First World War for the mining sector. Again, after the Second World War the whole region worked for getting its place back in the heavy industry. But simultaneously, throughout these time periods there was a shift in the dominant economy. The region always had to cope with the changes in the socio-economical structure of the world, changing it socially and physically due to the urban transformation accompanying the new movement of industrialization. As would many scholars agree, it was a very rapid urbanization due to the "industry-driven growth" (Le Galés, 2002, p.55). In another opening, "the post-industrial and information revolutions challenged traditional conceptions of the *city and culture*, which relied on geographic boundaries, political-economical circumscriptions, population densities and numbers and a social consensus" (Ellin, 1999, p. 267-297). On world base, there existed a transition to a post-industrial economy. Conclusively, the number of manufacturing people declined in the Ruhr. The unemployment was inevitable. This gave way to the burgeoning of new sectors, such as service and informational industries. It meant for the need of a totally different environment with a new infrastructure and look. The past-industrial image of the Ruhr was not suitable to a new picture that new service and informational industries would like to fit in. However, as it is also stated that, today it has nothing to do with "growth" and "expansion" but with "reduction" (Christ, 2003). According to forecasts, the predicted population is 4.5 million in 2015. Controversially the Ruhr has too much of everything, such as "industrial wastelands, derelict buildings, industrial infrastructure, residential housing, children's nurseries, schools, hospitals, and streets" (Christ, 2003). In that respect "regeneration" for this specific case means "transformation of an urban landscape whose form shaped by industrial needs over 100 years ago" (Christ, 2003). The regeneration process had to do more than to deal with the abandoned buildings and the demolished landscape; it needed to restore the collective mind of the region whose only culture coal and steel, and its decline at the end of the 20th century, had stamped itself into the memories of the people. So the choice is not erasing their memories but elaborating those memories and inserting them into their future. This togetherness implies a peaceful collaboration rather than an unhealthy collage. The ongoing process of regeneration has always been a concern of catching up with the industry's needs and forces for state policies. Similarly, Christ (2003) uses the word, "updates" for the regular experiences the Ruhr faced. However, it was also clear for him that in the eighties the social welfare systems could not afford the effects of the industrial decline. The abandoned picture of the post-industrial Ruhr was already a magnet for the "low-capital low expertise workplaces within the milieu of industrial tradition." (Christ, 2003). So in this last "update" the utmost focus was to prepare the new image for being a magnet for the service, information and culture industries.

The task was very hard in this economically weakened post-industrial site which had once the biggest capacity of coal mining in Europe and managed the so called *economic miracle* between 1950s and 1960s. In the Ruhr case the change was a very structural one and there was a need for a structural program. The need for a guiding corporation was inevitable. The Ruhr is continuously developed by the collaboration of numerous institutions, federal state, municipalities and persons in order to keep up with the developments. The argument of co-actors is found very vital for Ruhr's specific place in today's industrial arena. And in order to be alive in the competition of cities and regions, Ruhr needed to provide the region the necessary infrastructure for the present industry and new perspectives and future possibilities for the inhabitants. Although the question, "how is this post-industrial economy introduced in the Ruhr?" is very broad, and has urged many solutions, in the following section it will be discussed from the efforts of *International Building Exhibition Emscher Park*, as the moderator of the structural program, whose focus was to bring innovation to the region.

International Building Exhibition (IBA) Emscher Park

The presentation of latest product and thinking of nations in the international competition is a tradition going back to the international Great Exhibition in London in 1851, which presented the Glass Palace of Joseph Paxton. *Raison d'être* of "application of the most simple and rational system of manufacturing" was simply the will to expose the highly developed industry of England. Simultaneously there had been exhibitions in the countries, which saw themselves eligible in this competition of nations as would International Exhibitions in Paris (1855, 1867, 1878) would exemplify. The building exhibition tradition starts with single buildings and spreads to a group of buildings and, as Giedion (1967, p.264) indicates, the Philadelphia exhibition of 1876 is the first example of the use of pavilion system, which will be repeated at Chicago in 1893 and Paris in 1900 and that would be a method for organizing exhibitions at the end of the century. In Germany one of the first separate building exhibitions was held in *Darmstadt-Mathildenhöhe* in 1901 where by the first International Building

Exhibition (IBA) was inaugurated with the title *Ein Dokument Deutscher Kunst*- a Document of German Art. Actually the exhibited was the individual houses, the atelier and various temporary constructions of a group of artists, called themselves as followers of art nouveau, invited by Ernest Ludwig, Grand Duke of Hesse. (Figure 2) As would many scholars agree, the Darmstadt Artist's colony designed by Joseph Maria Olbrich was "the mecca of modern architecture and decoration" at its time (Etlin, 1989, p. 94-99). The following exhibition was held in Stuttgart (1927)-organized by *Deutscher Werkbund* for the construction of *Weissenhof Siedlung* or settlement- and proposed a model for housing settlement with humane conditions as a result of an architectural and town planning strategy. Mies van der Rohe, the vice president of *Deutscher Werkbund*, was brought in charge of the enterprise. Mies developed the master plan and invited sixteen honorable architects including Walter Gropius, Peter Behrens, Oud and Le Corbusier for the assignment of sites for detached houses, duplexes and row houses. (Figure 3) Land and money for the realization of thirty two permanent buildings were obtained from the city of Stuttgart and various material suppliers (Moffett and Lawrence, 2003, p. 518-519). According to Kaufman (1989), zenith of exhibits of workers' housing dates to the *Weissenhof Siedlung* in Stuttgart. In addition to the "increasing texture of popular life in the past" in world fairs starting from 1867, it was also observed that social life was taken into consideration as a result of the popularity of social welfare, as Burton Benedict points out and Kaufman refers to (Kaufman, 1989, p.23). This reference point to social life, exposed with fully furnished houses for workers presented to a large public audience (nearly half a million visitors) was a turning point in the history of exhibitions, which gave way to an international reputation for modern architecture though not welcomed at all by the whole nation, which was ignored by the organizers at the time of exhibition but the effects of the protests would be observed when the Nazi regime exiled the architects from the country. *Bund für Heimatschutz*, "which developed into a more inflexible group of architects after the First World War by discriminating themselves as advocates of



Figure 2 Darmstadt Artist's Colony Opening Ceremony, 15 May 1901, Ernst Ludwig House in the background, *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, 8 (1901)

Source: Maciuika, John V. (2007). "The Production and Display of Domestic Interiors in Wilhelmine Germany, 1900–1914" in *German History Advance Access* published on October 1, 2007, DOI 10.1177/0266355407082761.

tradition versus *Deutscher Werkbund*” as quoted from Otto (1983) criticized the *Deutscher Werkbund* for a number of reasons. These could be summarized as their understanding of rationalization, introduction of new architectural style, the damage on the landscape because of the site construction and a number of economical issues, so on. Last but not least, the new architecture with its new scenario was contradicting with the national ideology, legitimizing itself with the *klein stadt* and *heimat*. (Otto, 1983, p.148-157)



Figure 3 House by Le Corbusier in Stuttgart Exhibition, 1927

Source: Donald Corner and Jenny Young. Slide from photographer's collection. PCD.2260.1012.1841.006 as published in www.greatbuildings.com

The first international building exhibition after the Second World War, *Interbau* Berlin 1957 presented the Hansa Quarter in Berlin, whereby under the patronage of Berlin Senate 53 internationally well-known architects were hired to erect single buildings in a “park-like landscape”. As many scholars would agree Hansa Quarter, idealized with new models of international modernism, was interpreted as a reaction of the West to the East Germany which produced *Stalinallee* as the “first socialist street” in Germany. Again for many authors the quarter is labeled as the product of Cold War. Actually in this park-like landscape neglecting the city lines, architects (Le Corbusier, Gropius, Niemeyer, Scharoun, Aalto, and etc) emphasized open spaces, connections with greenery and separation from the traffic and shopping areas. Actually the Hansa Quarter meant “an experimental development and a showcase of West Berlin’s new architectural internationalism” (Daum, 2008, p.128). This new internationalism called for “a deliberate renunciation of axial orientation, centralized order and anything smacked of regimentation or totalitarianism” (Ladd, 1998, p.188).

International Building Exhibition Berlin 1987 was developed on two objectives, to renovate the old buildings and to produce new buildings, with the ideal of rediscovery of the historic center of Berlin. The unique point of the Berlin 1987 exhibition was in its efforts to re-use the building stock and restore the damaged built environment in the city center, which can be accepted as a new tendency contrary to the previous studies concentrating on “post-war urban planning”. The internationalism showed up again with national and international architects such as Rob Krier, James Sterling, Rem Koolhaas, Charles Moore, Aldo Rossi and Arato Isozaki as well as Om Ungers, Gottfried Böhm, Axel Schultes and Hans Kollhoff.

Later on, most probably inspired from Berlin 1987 exhibition, the International Building Exhibition targeted more than living and the city, and gave start to studies on a structural plan for urban development and ecological renewal. With the aim of ecological and urban renewal of the northern Ruhr District, the *Internationale Bauausstellung Emscher Park* (IBA) or International Building Exhibition Emscher Park was established in 1989. In the Emscher Park, the polluted land is converted into a man-made second nature. For the first time in the history of above mentioned international building exhibitions, ecological regeneration of the Emscher river system, working in the park, housing construction and integrated urban district development, and new uses for industrial buildings were handled together by IBA Emscher Park. Moreover it was the first time that IBA exposed “landscape architecture and landscape planning”.

IBA functioned under the structural program of the state of *North-Rhine/Westphalia* in a scheduled time of ten years between 1989 and 1999. The most important thing about the program was “the aim of initiating and maintaining an ecological assault as the basis for further development” (IBA Emscher, 1996). The IBA had various projects in the whole region. New perspectives for a widespread economical renewal were searched where “the IBA GmbH acted as a coordinator and the responsibility for the projects remains with the developers, mostly local authorities and in some cases private companies or pressure groups” (IBA Emscher, 1996). This planning structure worked for translation of good ideas into practicable and feasible plans. Also it organized architectural and urban planning contests enabling exchange of experience on a national and international scale.

Emscher Park was named after the Emscher River rising in the eastern part of the Ruhr area, crossing the region in western direction before connecting with the Rhine River. Actually the rapid urbanization due to industrial growth had effects on and around the sides of this river. The land and the river were polluted to a very high degree. Along with the aims of ecological renewal, IBA Emscher Park had many phases and consisted of small projects which could bring economic vitality to the region. Between the parts or the centers of activities, which are defined as *model projects*, an increased accessibility by means of transportation and walking paths is formulated. However, one big idea of *Emscher Landscape Park* shapes and surrounds these separate parts with the creation of new paths combining 17 cities including Duisburg, Oberhausen, Mülheim an der Ruhr, Bottrop, Essen, Gladbeck, Bochum, Gelsenkirchen, Recklinghausen, Herne, Herten, Castrop-Rauxel, Waltrop, Lünen, Dortmund, Kamen and Bergkamen. But how is this scheme created? According to IBA report, it is achieved by “connecting isolated, open spaces, restoring the landscape, and upgrading the ecological and aesthetic quality of the countryside, the idea is to achieve a lasting improvement of the living and working environment for the more than 2 million inhabitants” (IBA Emscher, 1996). The vitality of the region depended on the quality of the built environment but more to the improvements in the ecological quality of the site.

The revitalization process of the Ruhr district is a long term process of nearly 80 years starting from 1920s. According to IBA report, Emscher Landscape Park is in fact the further

development of the plan of seven regional greenways numbered A to G which was first elaborated by the SVR, *Siedlungsverband Ruhrkohlenbezirk* (Ruhr Planning Association) in 1920s. (Figure 4) This association helped municipalities to prepare their own expansion schemes including introduction of a regional road system for further expansions, preserving woodlands and open countryside to improve region's recreational potential. The aim was to achieve "a large strip of countryside". This corporation is known as the first legally supported regional planning organization in Europe. Its mandate covered an area of 3,840 square kilometers, containing 346 municipalities and a population of 3,572,500. As a continuation of SVR, *Kommunalverband Ruhrgebiet* (KVR), the municipal association of Ruhr Valley defines itself as a publicly-legal corporation, with the right of the autonomy through its selected agencies and with manifold regional tasks and services. Shortly it is an organization for municipal self-government. In the report it is stated that:

settlements, serve as recreational areas and improve air quality" (Von Haaren and Reich, p.7-22). In parallel with today's official use of greenways (or *Grünzüge*) as a category for spatial planning at the regional level, the structure of the Emscher Landscape Park develops on the recreational potential which is foreseen in 1920's and implemented as the greenways. Again these corridors are operational in the renewal of the ecological system and the binding elements of the parts of a region.

The living and working environment is thought for defining new relationships among home, work, and leisure, and between industry and nature, production and waste. (IBA, 1996) By this means, a well balanced heterogeneous environment is achieved with the increase in usable land in-between the post-industrial landscapes of the region. While doing so they were not starting from tabula-rasa. The abandoned post-industrial areas are once more brought to life.

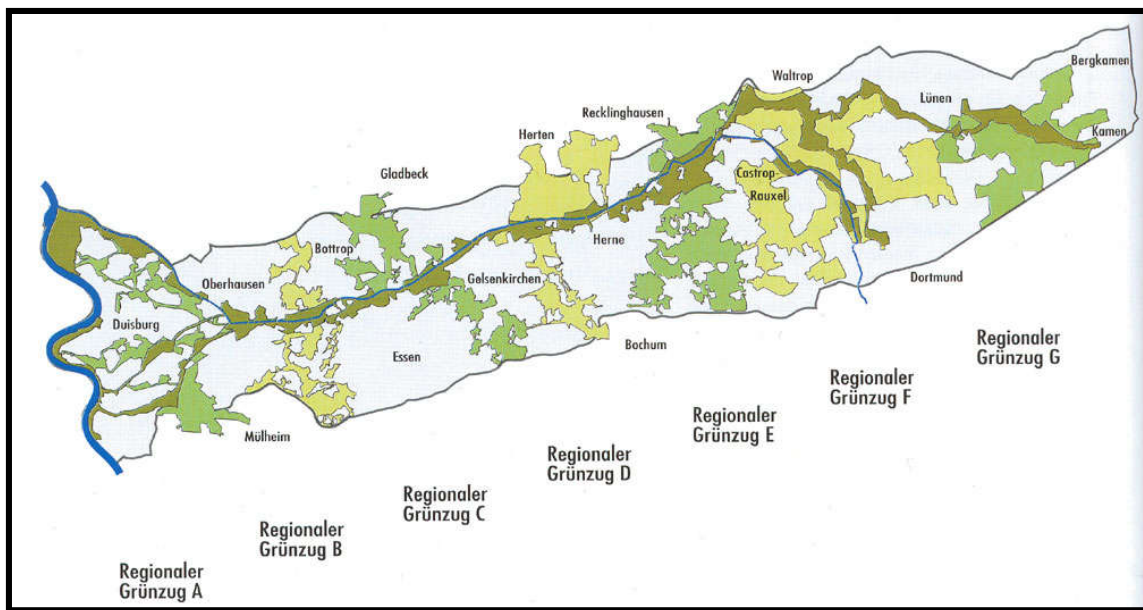


Figure 4 "The structure of the Emscher Landscape Park with its greenways",

Source: *Industrie Natur, Ökologie und Gartenkunst im Emscher Park*, IBA Emscher Park (1999), p.40

Kommunalverband Ruhrgebiet has assumed the responsibility for the master planning of the entire project. Since 1990, the cities and urban districts involved have formed inter-municipal project groups to undertake the planning on the green corridors running along a north-south axis and crossing the borders of the various local authorities. Together with a new east-west corridor, this will constitute the basic framework of the future Emscher Landscape Park. There are a total of seven working parties for the regional corridors A to G, from Duisburg to Bergkamen, each with its own character and assignments. In each of these corridors the *Kommunalverband Ruhrgebiet* has an anchored model exemplifying the various themes and approaches adopted in the Emscher Landscape Park. (IBA Emscher, 1996)

The idea of preserving woodlands and open countryside to improve region's recreational potential is again coming from 1920s comprehensive regional planning. Actually Schmidt, who published his dissertation in 1912, the pioneer of organized spatial planning in Germany was the first to see a "need for network of green spaces that would separate the

Nearly 17 sites are developed for new use, around 11 technological centers are started and a number of science parks are implemented. And the old housing schemes are evaluated, and in return a big amount of the houses are renovated. That is why, "Living and working in the park" is the motto of Emscher Park.

Industrial heritage and or culture as an appropriate urban integrative structure

In the competition of cities and regions, as it is written by some scholars, the argument of culture in new more economically ways is very much spelled. Culture is already a driving force in urban reinvention and renewal as in creating or rebuilding iconic cultural institutions. As from the examples of the previous international building exhibitions in Germany, the basic goal was to create a new art, architecture and a new life style. Sometimes these ideals of creating the latest product also were inclined with the political ideology. That also coincides with the fact that international building exhibitions were understood as a part of national representation and eligibility for international competition. However after 1980, the efforts

of the IBA turned into a new agenda, fighting with urban decline and regeneration other than creation. In *Emscher Park*, the post-industrial life of the area, as well as of the workers is told and taught and also open to public visits. *The Industrial Heritage route*, which officially opened in 1999, has already attracted some three million visitors to the Ruhr Valley in 2001, with the numbers on the rise, according to tourism authorities (Deutsche Welle, 2004). This route is formed in a map of activities or special buildings or parks taking place in the Emscher Park. (Figure 5) If the route is followed, it gives all the information about the history, and special geography, and culture of the region.

at Duisburg into a 500-acre public park with hiking trails, promenades, climbing walls, gardens and a water park based on the ecological generation of the old Emscher Canal System” (Lowry, 2001). Latz defines the park as a key project of the IBA that reflects new ideas about landscape and nature where old industrial substance is the basis of the park and the existing blast furnaces are symbol (Latz, 2004, p.149). Duisburg-Nord Landscape Park not only gives room for plants and ecology but also it is a room for people to come together. The old atmosphere of the site is the scene of many activities and the machine halls are the new exhibition halls.

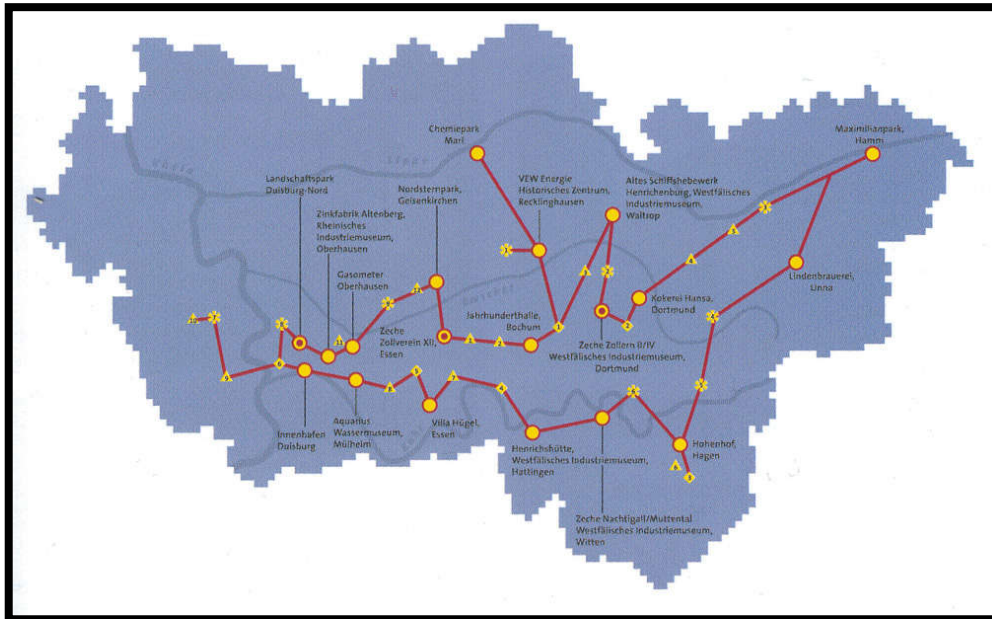


Figure 5 “Industry Culture Route”.

Source: *IndustrieKultur Mythos und Moderne im Ruhrgebiet; im Rahmen der IBA Emscher Park*. (1999), p.61

On the *Industrial Heritage route*, there are open air museums and public parks such as Duisburg-Nord Landscape Park in *Nordrhein-Westfalen*. The park is designed by *Latz+Partners* in the green corridor A. (Figure 6) In a way, the industrial culture route starts where the park is situated.

Duisburg-Nord Landscape Park offers its visitors a bunch of cultural and leisure activities. The sustainability of the park relies on its different and mutant nature, its open spaces, places of industrial heritage and social attractions- it is already a meeting place for mountain climbing and diving associations. Duisburg-Nord Landscape Park gets very much attention and thus the site welcome a lot of tourists. The project is promising for the inhabitants as well as for other parts of the world which have similar kind of post-industrial sites waiting for a good solution to return to life once again. The park has already made a good reputation in Europe and USA. According to some researchers it is a new marker for the Ruhr district, which started with the IBA Emscher Park to use the resources of landscape architecture to control a fluent transition from past to future.



Figure 6 “Duisburg-Nord Landscape Park”

Source: *Industrie Natur, Ökologie und Gartenkunst im Emscher Park*, (1999), p.60

It is a project decided by competition, and around 100 other competitions were held for architects and planners for the numerous projects in the Emscher Park. What Latz did in the Landscape Park is “transforming a former iron and steel works

The IBA was responsible from the image-making by introducing very important terms as “industrial culture” and “industrial natural landscape” and turning the post-industrial landscape into landscapes of “industrial heritage”. Similarly, it is open to new steps of development through a number of “appropriate urban integrative structures” and “symbols” in the competitive market of new *metropolises*. The capacity of cities to change and adapt themselves to developments is the criteria for preserving their place in this reckless game.

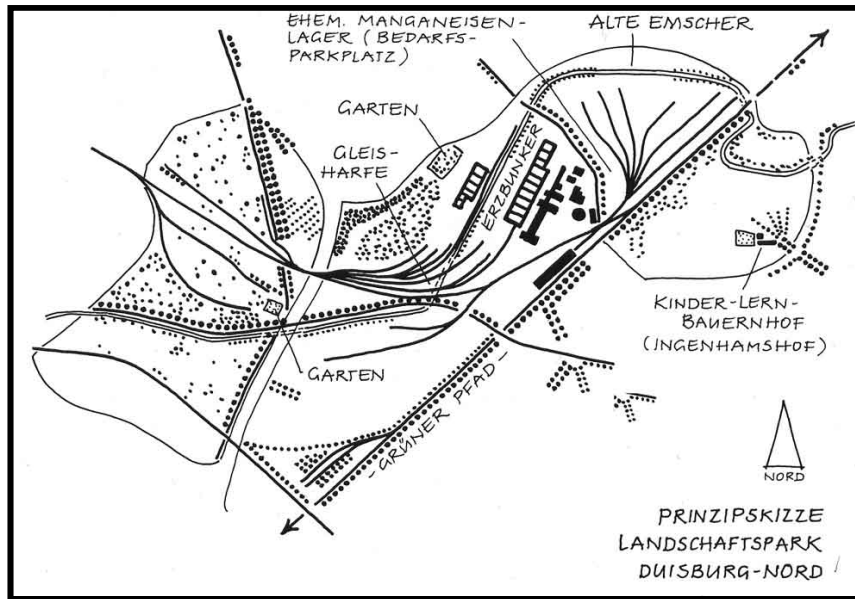


Figure 7 “Duisburg-Nord Landscape Park Sketch”

Source: *Industrie Natur, Ökologie und Gartenkunst im Emscher Park*, (1999), p.58

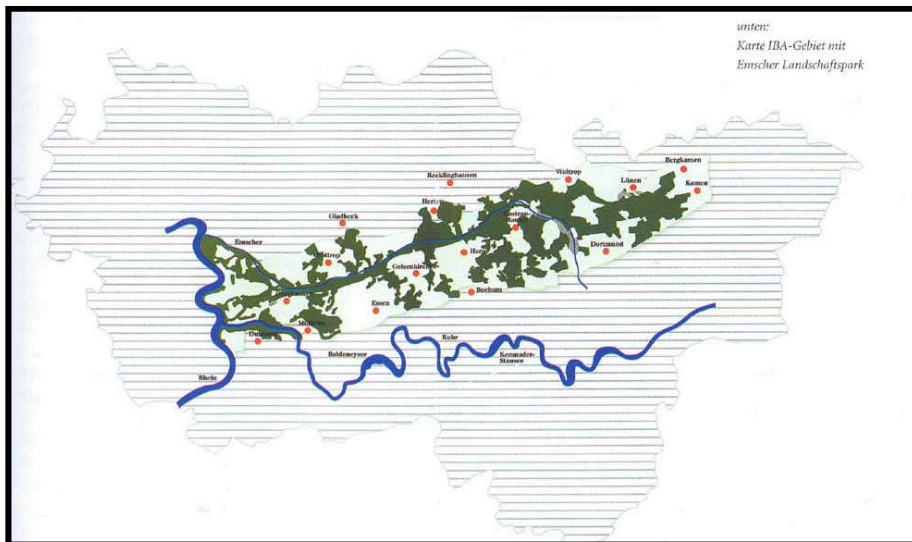


Figure 8 “Emscher Landscape Park”

Source: *IndustrieKultur Mythos und Moderne im Ruhrgebiet; im Rahmen der IBA Emscher Park*. (1999) Essen: Klartext, p.13

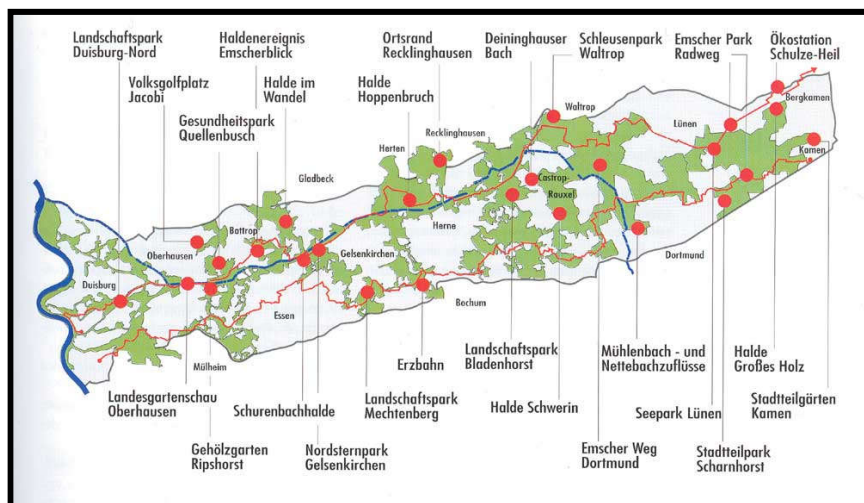


Figure 9 “Landscape Parks in Emscher Landscape Park”

Source: *Industrie Natur, Ökologie und Gartenkunst im Emscher Park*, (1999), p.41

Eventually, to be involved in the competition of new service and information age is the aim. Economically speaking, “the technological potential of countries and regions is directly related to their ability to produce, indeed manufacture, the most advanced technological products, which constitute technological inputs that condition the improvement of products and processes in downstream industries” (Castells and Hall, 2003, p.5). They assume that Ruhr in another 10 or 15 years will attract people as a research center if the image problem is solved.

Nature and but most specifically, culture, become very powerful instruments in recasting the local economies with their increasing appeal. This brings new arguments of culture in more economical ways. The culture as an input brings to the region or the site of renewal, its sub-industries which would be called by some people as *creative industries*. Although service and information industries seem to be dominant, nobody would deny the presence of such new industries of the new economy. And these new industries also feed the Emscher zone and the economical vitality brings hope to its inhabitants. *International Building Exhibition Emscher Park* is successful in its idea of a park system: “a new infrastructure to the region” because the cities rely on the regions for many aspects, one of which is the, “space for major economic and infrastructure projects” as stated in the second report of Cities, Regions and Competitiveness (2003).

The success of the project is introduced after it is completed with several exhibitions and it is still celebrated by many ways. And in 2004, *Staatspreis NRW*, the country price of *Northrhine-Westphalia* went to Karl Ganser, who was the director of the *International Building Exhibition Emscher Park* between 1989 and 2000. In this time period, 120 projects in 17 cities with a building volume of five billion marks emerged (Garten Landschaft Magazine, 2004). Besides these economical treatments through the projects, it is very important that the restoration of the built environment affected the quality of the region. The renovated buildings then become the guarantee of urban development helping to increase property values that make progress possible.

CONCLUSION

In physical planning of the Ruhr Region a series of greenways introduced in 1920's planning is connected with a new perpendicular corridor at the end of 1980's with the idea of developing an interconnected park system. This interconnected park system developed into a well balanced heterogeneous environment achieved with the increase in usable land in-between the post-industrial landscapes of the region with the initiatives of the IBA Emscher Park starting from 1989. The integrity and the variety of activities ranging from working, living and leisure promise new openings for the post-industrial landscapes in the rest of the world. However the success not only lies in the physical connectivity but also the connectivity between the actors of the process. The efforts of IBA starting from 1900's till today prove that there is a change in the understanding of international building exhibition, an emphasize on “re-use” rather than “creation” in architectural production and a call for the integrated structural approach in planning.

The use of culture as a catalyst for economical vitality is already accepted as a method in and for regeneration processes of cities and regions. However, there is still the risk of falling into inefficiency for a future development. Can we accept the culture as a catalyst in the search for a number of developments and good living for the habitants? The social and economical responsibility of the IBA Emscher Park continues with another future program after its completion in 2000. One of the late developments in the region is the acceleration of Area Based Initiative projects. The IBA report takes them as “the initiators for structural change” containing “improvement of infrastructure possibilities, construction investment, and programs with training and re-employment schemes.” And they are financially supported by the *Land North Rhine-Westphalia*. Though the continuation is relied on the support of the projects, it is worth mentioning. The cities, in the competition has to provide the economical vitality and its vehicles, however the region has to support this competition by providing the ground for these activities.

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