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A territory's hosting potential

Submitted by <u>Vincent Kaufmann</u> on Thu, 12/20/2012 - 14:52

A territory's hosting potential is made up of a whole series of factors:

- The available networks: roads, motorways, rail, airports and telecommunications, plus their respective levels of performance and conditions of access.
- The space available and its various configurations: urban development, central services, territorial institutions, etc.
- The labour market; in terms of employment and training possibilities, and the prevailing unemployment rate.
- The institutions and the laws which in one way or another influence human activities; for example, policies for families, help for home ownership and accommodation, or immigration policy.

In short, it covers the full complement of social relationships and the models for success that are expressed by a society and the challenges which are set by its various actors (Pattaroni et al. 2010).

Specific points

The dominant role played by material artifacts

If differences in the levels of hospitality offered by territories to projects is nothing new, what certainly is new is the range of resources available to an individual or a collective group that enable them to settle there – by playing with the multiple

possibilities offered by the potential speed of both communications and transport systems on the one hand, and the hospitality of the urban spaces that are accessible to various projects, on the other hand (Kaufmann, 2011).

What defines the extent and openness of a territory's potential to host a project mainly comes down to the material resources and provisions available. Every action effectively has its own context, and assumes that the environment offers opportunities for realizing that project (Gibson, 1979).

Objects (material artifacts) have an overriding importance in a territory's potential to host projects. But in a more fundamental way, these objects affect the emergence and definition of people's the projects of individuals (Hommels 2005). Clearly, that potential is defined by the diversity of urban forms, in terms of their aesthetics, their atmosphere, how people live in them, their cost, etc. In the same way, the potential for access made available by the transport systems help define the potential for accommodating plans for mobility and journeys. Cultural, sporting and economic amenities also help to define that potential for hosting projects.

The impact of all these material artifacts of which a territory is comprised has an effect on the very presence – as well as the nature – of projects (Kaufmann 2011). The presence of brownfield industrial sites in city centres or abandoned factories and workshops, is a stimulus for reappropriation. The ability to live without a car, thanks to excellent public transport, helps to make such a way of life both desirable and worth adopting. Meanwhile, the availability of theatres and public halls supports the creation of festivals and exhibitions. There are numerous examples of this.

Unequal potentialities

A consequence of this observation is that not all projects can be hosted anywhere in a territory – some areas are more able to cope with some projects, given their morphological characteristics, the laws that govern them, their accessibility etc.

The potentialities are circumscribed in terms of movement and, straight away, it becomes clear that they are unequal – according to the region and the country. It's particularly obvious when it comes to infrastructure and transport services. A central area cannot offer the same possibilities for movement as one located on the periphery, and neither can a northern country offer the same as a southern one. Above all, the contexts do not offer the same possibilities to be mobile: the

employment situation, the leisure activities available are different, according to the different spatial scales – from the local to the continental, via those at a national level. Some authors too often tend to consider that all these differences are simply dissolved by a single, triumphant, cosmopolitanism.

Living in London rather than Nairobi, as a Briton and a Kenyan respectively, is radically different in terms of earnings – for an equivalent profession – social security cover, professional career opportunities, the ability to travel the world without needing a visa, etc.

In other European countries (or in some cases, in other French towns and cities, according to the analyses carried out by Marc Wiel (1999) on the housing available), cities have developed around different types of urbanization – producing different possibilities and constraints. So, families wishing to live in a townhouse near an urban centre will have no problem finding what they need in Britain, where the housing stock is principally comprised of terraced and semi-detached houses.

By contrast, those wishing to live in their own detached house will have more difficulty in Britain – where it is also more onerous - than in France. The same reasoning also applies to the private car. In the Netherlands, where the territory is well-served by public transport networks in terms of time and space, it is easier to do without a car in daily life than it is in France.

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