

Architectural Governance and Regional Development: A Comprehensive Analysis of the Coordination of Architectural Development and the Regional Building Culture in five Alpine Regions

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Abstract (preconference version)

The research project addresses two thematic areas, which remained disconnected in the scientific literature so far: “governance and development theories” and “the role of architecture and regional building culture in tourism”. Especially the latter topic only recently gained growing scientific attention. The present study is the first one bridging the two fields “governance and regional development” and “architecture and regional building culture in tourism”.

In form of a comparative analysis, the study compares the Architectural Governance in five Alpine regions (South Tyrol, Tyrol, Trentino, Vorarlberg, Grisons). The aim of the project is to elaborate the different coordination possibilities and their implications on the regional architecture, the architectural planning process and the regional building culture. The expression of architecture and regional building culture is brought in conjunction to the regional regulatory systems and the competence character of the architecture in the context of location and destination management. The central research question asks “what determines forms/elements of Architectural Governance, how do they influence the development of the regional building culture and what are their implications for regional development”. The study explores commonalities as well as differences in answering this question among the five investigated Alpine regions.

Methodologically the study uses qualitative and quantitative research methods. Secondary literature and quantitative data were collected, analyzed and mapped. Furthermore, it included a number of qualitative interviews among local stakeholders in the five regions, which were analyzed with the GABEK qualitative analysis technique (Pechlaner & Volgger, 2012). In collaboration with an architect, for every investigated region best practice examples were selected, visits to the sites conducted and the selected buildings recorded photographically. Finally, several images were analyzed to examine the role of architecture and regional building culture in communication materials and in the construction of the regional identity. In doing this an image analysis method referring to Bohnsack (2009), Geise & Rössler (2012) and Pilarczyk & Mietzner (2005) was used.

Study findings indicate that soft governance instruments, such as education, awareness building and networking, have at least as much as influence as hard governance instruments (laws and regulatory systems) have on the development of architecture and the building culture in a region. A regional building culture is strongly influenced by regional stakeholders and their relationship to each other. Understanding governance, its mechanisms and developments often means to be familiar with the regional, tricky relationships between architects, craftsmen, hoteliers, entrepreneurs as well as public managers and the networks through which they are cooperating.

Organizational structures to coordinate stakeholders are often not intended by law, but happen on a voluntary basis. Furthermore, findings show that an analysis of the regional building culture requires an understanding of local particularities, traditions and cultural aspects. That’s why several differences among the five Alpine regions appear. So, it is argued that understanding regional building culture and its impact on regional and in particular tourism development requires an improved understanding of local habits and cultural issues.

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