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CORPORATE IDENTITY OF TERRITORIAL SUBJECTS

My thesis topic is dedicated to the field of Corporate Identity (CI) of territorial subjects. There are a lot of similar characteristics between commercial business organisations and territorial subjects (town, region, district) in their management. Regional marketing/management is one of the principal tools how to develop region or city and the concept of its Corporate Identity plays the key role in this process¹. Each region, city or other territorial subject has to find its own personality and unique shape. It helps to distinguish the subject from other subjects, and support the process of inhabitants' identification with the place, and it also brings many other benefits for the selected area. The process of developing CI of region is an intersection of marketing/management theory, urban planning, social sciences and graphic design.

Let me closer introduce the term of Corporate Identity.

The term of Corporate Identity has become more widely used than ever before not only by experts, but is still more expanding in broader public. The block letters CI are no longer associated with British secret service – they are more and more appearing in dictionaries of firm and organisation representatives. What does this abbreviation CI stand for?

Most relevant objects of performing Corporate Identity are commercial business companies and organisations. In our opinion, a town, state, region or any other territorial subject should also have own CI². CI reveals an existential fundament of each subject – its past and history, its „personality“, its values, principles and visions. The visual style is the most transparent channel to show this identity. In short, CI is a spirit, for subjects as business companies, organisations or territorial subjects. Losing identity means losing oneself.

Opinions differ in delimiting CI-concept. CI is often perceived as the only visual sign and characteristic of company, region or other subject. It is necessary to set a broader framework. CI is then an integration base, an expression of Corporate Personality or maybe a significant unity of all material

and immaterial parts of the subject's identity. The term Corporate identity might be considered as an analogical construction to human being – the identity of territorial or other subject has many similar traits to that of human identity.

Developing an identity is always a process. This process is permanent and can be implemented only within successive phases.

Corporate Identity is an accumulation of a subject's history and creates its main strategy. Although CI is changeable, an important event could dramatically reform the whole identity. The history is important especially for territorial subjects – their identity grows up from fixed historical contexts.

It is not easy to respond to a question: what is the essential base for an identity of a subject, organisation or region. In my opinion, it should be a key message, values and principles. An existence of a subject without these issues seems to be impossible and they should be visible and transparent in each behavioural expression of the subject or its representatives. To focus these priorities it is appropriate to use an independent external help.

The core of an identity can be a product (IBM), the performance of employees (airlines) or environmental attitude (many Scandinavian companies). Corporate identity may be arranged and established in different ways. We know a so called monolithic model of identity, where the whole organisation represents a total unit (most sporting equipment producers)³. Another model is a Brand Identity – the brands of producers are single carriers of their own identity. There are many examples in food-processing industry. Delegation identity is synonym for situation when the identity of daughter companies is connected to identity of a parental company (GM – Opel)

In addition, CI is not reserved for commercial subjects only. The term Corporate Identity does not mean identity of commercial business company only, but in broader framework it means identity of any human community regulated by social and

cultural norms. The fundamentals of CI lie in people, more exactly, they lie in symbols and values created by them. That is the reason to stop reserving CI for only the commercial business companies and to start considering CI of non-profit organisations, sporting, regional or cultural subjects. CI can exist in all the communities where common goals, values and visions are present.

A region, town or other territorial subject appears as a unit carrying its own identity. Each territorial subject has its own past and cultural background, its norms and rites and its visual style. The CI is one of the most relevant factors decisive for attractiveness for visitors and for its own „spirit“. There are a lot of regions similar to each other in many aspects. Some of them do have a strong profiled identity, some of them have only some signs of identity. Identity of some of them is split in many directions. Finally we come to term *genius loci* – it is closely connected to CI as well.

Corporate Identity of an urban complex, region, land or any other territorial subject is determined by its past, history and culture. It is also represented by its architecture and visual style and shared by people – the inhabitants and the external perceivers.

It is necessary to focus the backgrounds and sources, which are determining and influencing CI of regions and try to find ways of application. That is the reason, why the social-economic variables entering and influencing the whole process must be taken into consideration. An important part of this process is the support from public auditorium, regional and government institutions and commercial partners – this is strengthened by external communication (mainly public and media relations). Process of design and application of CI is an multidisciplinary event, which demands the mutual effort of historians, architects, psychologists, regional representatives and other experts.

A) Aims and goals

My ambition is to test my own methodological approach how to proceed a Corporate Identity project in the reality of Slovak regions. There are some Slovak regions plausible for such project, it seems probable that the region of Zlate Moravce will be selected for the project. My main goals are the following:

- to find the essential analogies between CI of commercial business subjects and CI of territorial subjects. I would like to use some

similar approaches and steps from my previous work in commercial field, but I would also like to find the most important distinctions and special items of the CI of a region.

- to prove and test my own methodological approach of CI projects. I have been participating in several CI projects, so I have created my own approach. I would like to test it in particular project.

- to design a CI project for particular Slovak region. As far as I know, none of them has been working on a systematic project in this field yet. So I am planning to help the region of Zlate Moravce to find its unique identity and strengthen its marketing, environmental and communication potential.

- to implement the CI of the selected region in the applied field – it means to prepare and develop its visual style, communication strategy, marketing behaviour etc.

I am continuously working on CI-projects of diverse commercial subjects, therefore I am confident to use the experience also in CI for territorial subjects.

I am planning to finish the project design by 2001. Then I will test the described approach in practice. After that, I will try to outline the new CI of the analysed territorial subject and collaborate at its visual style, public relations campaign, www presentation, image-campaign etc. The work is planned to be finished by 2003.

This project might be one of the contributions to the regional development strategy of the region of Zlate Moravce and its main benefits should be the following:

a) non-commercial effects:

- developing an original and memorable identity of the region of Zlate Moravce which will become a base for identification of inhabitants with this subject. This identification could help people to support the existential identification in their lives.

- CI project is an important platform for positive discrimination of the region. It will enable to emphasise the most important traits and characteristics distinguishing the subject from the others.

- one of the parts of the project will be dedicated to support the quality of life and ecology in the region.

- CI project of the region of Zlate Moravce will bring new development impulses into the field of architecture, urban-planning and visual communication
 - the cultural background of the region will become more visible and will enable the transfer of its cultural benefits to other regions
 - a smaller region or city may become a communication carrier for a higher level unit's identity (district Nitra, Western Slovakia etc.)

b) commercial effects

- support of marketing communication of region (it may attract the foreign capital and investments)
 - support of tourism
 - increase of employment opportunities
 - increased opportunity to find financial sources for other events connected to CI of the region (exhibitions, sport events, conferences)

It is very complicated to enumerate all the benefits, as well as it is difficult to estimate the overall financial profit of a CI-project. The entire project is an intersection of factors fixed in time and space (position of region, its history, culture etc.) and factors which need to be outlined and implemented into reality (visual style, communication forms). The result is a compatibility of both groups of factors. Only in this case the synergy effect can be achieved.

B) Relevant methods

This section is dedicated to obvious methods and proceeding of CI. In my opinion, CI is such an interdisciplinary field, that it is necessary to coordinate the approaches and methods of different expert areas. It is difficult to introduce all the professions and branches included in a CI project. The basic ones are:

- the representatives of territorial subject – municipality or local authority representatives, town mayor, etc. These people should be the initiators and co-ordinators of the project.
 - the specialists from specific branches and fields – psychologists, sociologists, economists, architects, designers, ecologists, media communication experts etc.

An independent approach of external experts is highly important for success of CI project as well.

The first phase of CI project is dedicated to basic aims and goals:

- What is the purpose of the CI project?
- What are the estimated costs?
- Which areas and fields are supposed to be involved?
 - Is the actual identity of the territorial subject highly profiled?
 - What are the goals and aims of the CI project?
 - What sources are available?
 - What are the commercial effects of the project?
 - What are the non-commercial effects of the project?
 - What are the general threats for the project?
 - etc.

Definition of sources and methods

CI is an area concerning many fields and branches. The borders between these branches are very unclear and diffuse. It is difficult to set a clear and visible framework for the methodology and theory of the CI of a territorial subject. Despite of these problems I have tried to outline the basic methodological principles. First of all, we should remember the principle of *the project continuity*. All the activities have to follow certain rules and rankings. The next principle is *the value and idea consistency* – each step must not be in opposition and contradiction to the mission of the project.

The following tools are available:

1) Analysing process

- historical and cultural desk research (analysis of documents, chronicles, books, mass-media)
 - analysis of cultural artefacts and works of art
 - analysis of architecture and material artefacts
 - analysis of economic and financial indicators
 - analysis of demographical issues
 - interview with famous and leading personalities related to region
 - regional population research
 - workshop with participation of regional institutions representatives, municipality representatives, local government representatives etc.

There are 4 basic aspects of the analysis:

- *the history and origin of the region*
- *the internal life*
- *the environment*
- *the future of the region*

2) Implementation process

- codification of CI (profile of region)
- visual style
- architecture of region
- verbalisation – slogans, words
- CI-manual (book of main values, principles and guidelines for new CI)

3) Communication process

- press conference
- PR and media relations
- www – presentation
- CI Events – conferences, congress, exhibitions
 - cooperation with tourism subjects and travel agencies
 - cooperation with governmental institutes in field of culture, social programs and economics, environmental issues
 - cooperation with regional commercial organisations

Codification of Corporate Personality

Codification of Corporate personality means the valid recording of the core values, principles, mission and character traits of CI⁴. This material (CI Manual) should be consulted with experts from different branches or fields and accepted by major representatives of region.

Layout of CI project

Layout of a CI project depends on the following questions:

- What is the actual identity?
- What is the wished identity?
- What are the sources (financial, natural, human, information etc.)?
- What are the goals?
- What is the subsequence of steps?
- How much time is needed?
- What is the profit of the CI project?

The layout of the CI project will be specified within all details after negotiating with the repre-

sentatives of the region of Zlate Moravce and after establishing the project team.

C) Implementation of CI

Corporate Design

Corporate Design or visual style is the most explicit expression of CI⁵. The advantage of this communication channel lies in transparency, intelligibility, short exposition time and large emotional impact. Visual style of the region or other territorial subject has to reflect its *genius loci*. The basic elements of visual style of territorial subject are:

- logotype
- colours
- other signs and symbols

Visual communication, graphic symbols

The following tools are available as carriers for visual style:

- orientation system
- billboards
- building signs and marks
- architectural forms
- advertising and publicity issues
- exhibitions
- visual style of events related to the region (exhibitions, conferences, cultural and sports events)

These basic elements of visual style are obviously codified in Design Manual.

Verbatim, CI slogan, Corporate Wording

Beside the visual style also the verbal communication is an important communication channel. Verbal communication is based on the strength of words, metaphors and the emotional effect of some word combinations. It is an important communication channel in communication to all the target groups.

CI slogan should be the shortcut of mission

Verbatim is the verbal construction supporting the advertising campaign. Its function is to initiate emotional attitudes of a target group.

Corporate Wording means a selection of frequented words with positive relation to CI. The

selection of those words should be based on the psychological analysis of target group needs.

External communication

External communication includes the message that subject is able to satisfy a need of target public. Although there are many differences in external communication of territorial subject and the commercial business organisations, there are several common forms, types and channels of external communication for both cases.

Principles of external communication

Principles of external communication should be an explicit form of value profile of communicator. The congruence between the CI and the external communication is highly important because the external communication is exposed to public attention. The basic forms of external communication are public relations, advertising, promotion, Corporate Events and sponsoring.

There are many other activities included in the process of implementation of CI (environmental policy, ethic code, local authority communication, image making and image keeping etc.). I have tried to describe only the fundamental outputs.

D) Conclusion

I have analysed several books and articles dedicated to the field of CI and regional management/marketing. It is difficult to select the only or the main source of information. Some of them are manuals and guide-lines, so I gained a lot of background information on issues like regional development, visual communication, public relations, architectural and urban development and planning. The others were reports of implemented CI-projects. Especially in German-speaking countries, the field of Corporate Identity of territorial subjects is intensively developed and supported. There are many examples and case studies regarding this field – from the huge well-known international projects (Airport Duesseldorf) to the regional, low-cost attempts of local authorities to create and design an identity of small urban unit (village Weiz / Austria). An Advanced CI-project has been externalised in town Luzern / Switzerland. Unfortunately, there is a lack of such projects in the Slovak milieu.

One of the most impressive books is a guide-book from prof. Dieter Herbst⁶, a famous German CI

expert. It is a comprehensible tool to design a CI project, and it is completed with many practical examples (BMW, Sony, Lufthansa). I have learnt how to select all the miscellaneous factors influencing the final CI project. The usually accepted approaches and steps in process of building an identity are systematic and clearly described and explained in the book. The most helpful part of the book is the case study describing the process of internal and external analysis of the subject. It enables to follow the process from the beginning to the end: analysing of image, culture, history, visual style, market position, human resource, communication potential, target groups etc. Then the summary and the suggestion of the new identity appears, integrating the positive traits from the current identity and providing new impulses. New identity is codified in basic document – so called CI-manual. The final phase is oriented to communication and implementation of new CI, it means new Corporate Design (visual style), new Public Relations strategy, new Corporate Culture, www-communication etc.

Some methodological and language difficulties have appeared. The word "Corporate" is difficult to translate into other languages, including the Slovak language. There is another problem: there are only few examples of case studies of CI development by territorial subjects in Slovakia. In addition, most of them (projects) are not publicly available. So it is difficult to match these real projects with my approach.

Sources:

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4. *Temporal, P., Alder, H. : Corporate Charisma. London 1999.*
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6. *Herbst, D.: Corporate Identity, Berlin 1998.*