PERCEPTION OF LAND AMONG SLOVENIANS IN THE CONTEXT OF LANDSCAPE CHANGES IN SLOVENIAN ISTRIA [ISTRA]

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Zusammenfassung

Die Wahrnehmung von Land bei den Slowenen im Kontext der landschaftlichen Veränderungen im slowenischen Teil Istriens


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Summary

This paper deals with the perception of land (in particular, agricultural land) among the Slovenian population in Istria [Istra]. It studies the mechanisms of understanding, comprehending, and evaluating the notion of land and changes connected with it in the context of landscape changes in the 20th century. The empirical section, which traces the processes of grounded theory, was carried out using ATLAS.ti software. The result of an analysis of 147 specialized and general texts yielded several mutually coordinated and connected aspects of the land that reveal a diverse social conception of the land and land dynamics, and that express the close interconnectedness of material and intangible elements, as well as their underlying processes.

1 Introduction

The link between man and land is one of the oldest in human history, because it is directly involved in human development and its relationship towards the living environment. This complex relationship – and landscape as one of the results – has been studied by a variety of disciplines (Swanwick 2009, p. S62). Lately, as perception has gained universal interest in studies by various disciplines, the comprehension and understanding of land have enabled deep insight into this complex and complicated relationship.

The understanding of land, landscape, and the processes connected with both is a key element of understanding this relationship. It enables more thoughtful planning and measures to suit the local population. Future development should go beyond the long-established comprehension of land and glorification of traditional cultural landscapes, and should consider the living and functional relationship between an individual, society, and physical space (Penko Seidl 2008, p. 35). This would lead to a higher quality of the living environment, which is also the goal of the European Landscape Convention (Internet 1).

The key questions of this paper are the meaning of land to people, the connection between land and landscape, and how the comprehension of both notions has been influenced by societal factors triggered by political, economic, and social changes.

The study on which this paper is based on was carried out in Slovenian Istria [Istra]. This region has experienced a turbulent past, with many changes that also influenced people’s attitude towards the land and how they understand it. Rapid changes of governments and the economic measures connected with this played a significant role. Istria is well in line with distinctive landscape changes that occurred in Central and Eastern Europe on extensive scale as stated by many papers (Scharr & Geitner 2008, Palang et al. 2006, Urbanc et al. 2004).