The Coast – “Heimat” & Region in Transition

Daniela Siedschlag and Kira Gee, Institute for Coastal Research, Department Human Dimensions of Coastal Areas

Concept of “Heimat”

The Concept of “Heimat” is closely related to ideas of place, place attachment and sense of place. Despite its difficult history, it is currently experiencing a renaissance in public interest and also in geographical, ethnological and psychological research [1].

“Heimat” is constructed individually and influenced by social norms and values. It refers to a place or a feeling of a person and relates to:

- Social components (family, friends, …)
- Emotional components (feelings, cultural background, language, …)
- Spatial components (landscape, special places, natural phenomena, …)

Research area & empirical method

Several case studies on the European North Sea coast.

- Germany (Schleswig-Holstein, Lower Saxony)
- The Netherlands
- Denmark

Quantitative household based questionnaires.


What does “Heimat” mean to you?

The European North Sea coast is much more than an abstract space or a planning place. Transition processes like sea level rise, wind farming, demographic change, … take place in a region that people call “Heimat”

Therefore regional planning processes in context of transition processes should include the view of coastal residents.

The concept of “Heimat” is an useful instrument for exploring peoples attachment to a region. It shows how coastal residents view the sea and shows the connections between people and their life worlds.

The concept of “Heimat” creates the basis for a suitable management strategy on the European North Sea coast.

References


Concept of “Heimat”

Space becomes place

“Heimat”

Social components

Emotional components

Spatial components

Land

Coast

Sea

Figure: Daniela Siedschlag, Kira Gee

References
