

Synergetic Effects of Planning and Self-Organization in City Identity Creation

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1. Introduction

Regional images play an important role in attracting visitors for sightseeing and for selling regional special products. That is, positive images enable the regions to derive capital from other regions. It is very difficult to vitalize a region only by independent efforts of individuals and private enterprises. Therefore, coherent efforts of constituent human societies are needed to vitalize the region effectively. Therefore, city identity is expected to serve as a force creating coherency in efforts. Most local governments in Japan pay attention to the significance of planning for the creation of city identity based on regional images¹⁾.

Generally, the development of a system is thought to be composed of two processes: supervised and unsupervised learnings. The former is involved in a learning process based on some explicit instruction; the latter is the so-called self-organization process according to implicit instruction which underlies the mutual interaction between the system and its environment²⁾. In the light of city identity creation, the supervised learning corresponds

to a political process by planners toward the formation of ideal regional images, while the unsupervised learning corresponds to a process in which an identity is crystallized out of a mixture of regional images through the communication of people between the inside and outside of the city. So far, the aspect of supervised learning in city planning has been paid attention to. However, the region's potential for self-organization seems to have been underestimated. In the present paper, taking a successful example of Iida City in the creation of the identity as a puppet drama town, we investigate the importance of the synergy of supervised and unsupervised learnings for city identity creation. From this typical example, we derive four stages for the planning of city identity creation, by utilizing regional images and resources effectively. Finally, we suggest the usefulness of multimedia to promote the worldwide spread of better regional images and the city identity creation.

2. General Comments on Regional Image and City Identity

Boulding pointed out an important role

of images in human behavior, in which "behavior depends on the image"³⁾. It is almost impossible to recognize things and events, because we do not necessarily have perfect knowledge and information about them. All we have in our minds are corresponding mental and subjective representations, that is, images. Therefore, images are found to be key factors for recognition.

1) Definition of Regional Image

In the present research, we adopted the definition of regional image as a set of pictures of a region that we have in individual minds. Any regional image lives in our minds as a mixture of partial images of the region which is acquired through mental transactions of one's regional images with other individuals. Regional images, whether they might be positive or negative, change with the accumulation of knowledge about the region. Such a change in regional image is regarded as a kind of learning. In this sense, regional image is modifiable. The development of regions is greatly influenced by regional images. Therefore we may say that the improvement of regional images is critical for the prosperity of the region.

2) Causes of Image Gap

Although regional images are generated from the region, they do not necessarily represent exactly the region. In other words, it is likely that images of a region often deviate from its true entity. What are causes of the deviation?

One of the cause is the relationship between real- and pseudo-environments which correspond to the true entity and image in our terms, respectively. It is believed that people define their situations before they behave. The definition of the situation gives rise to a "pseudo-environment" which is constructed in people's minds⁴⁾. In recent highly informatized society, mass media tend to enhance the devi-

ation between real- and pseudo-environments. Therefore, we cannot exactly perceive the true entity (real environment). This is one of the causes for the image-entity deviation. The development of mass communication has increased the gap between the two. Mass media have created a variety of pseudo-environments. That is, mass media not only produce environments in terms of image-making, but also present remarkably effective measures.

The second cause is attributed to time delay. Even if conditions in the region become better, images of the region held by people living outside are not necessarily improved. It takes a long time to change or improve images which are already firm in people's mind.

The third cause is the substitution of images. If people do not have sufficient knowledge to recognize the region, images of the region are compensated by images which are held for other regions. In some cases, an image of a region covers its unfamiliar sub-areas. In other cases, an image of a sub-area covers the region to which the sub-area belongs.

The fourth cause is the absence of adequate images. In the case where people have no knowledge of a region, suitable images cannot be produced. In fact, most cases of a large deviation between image and true entity are due to the absence of images. If a region sends no message, people living outside may not know even basic facts about the region, such as its location, population, and industries.

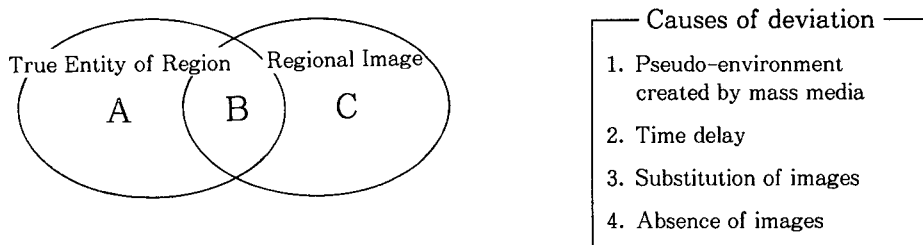


Figure 1. Deviation of Regional Image from True Entity

3) Categorization of Image Strategies

Action programs for image strategy differ according to the relationship between true entity of the region and regional image. In Figure 1, domain A represents a set of true entities of a region, not associated with any image; domain B stands for regional images covering true entities; and domain C indicates regional images not involved in the true entity.

In planning action programs for image strategy, it is important for local governments to recognize which domain explains the present situations of their regions. In domain A, the presence of unfamiliar internal resources should be widely publicized through proper media, or new resources should be explored or created if no resources are found. In domain B, negative images of a region should be suppressed, and/or positive images promoted. For these purposes it is necessary for the local government to improve the true entity as well as the image and to publicize the improvement inside and outside the region. In domain C, there are two possible approaches to city vitalization. One approach is to introduce a new and intense regional image which is not necessarily associated with the true entity. Another approach in domain C is to emulate a positive image of other regions.

4) Definition of City Identity

In this paper, "city identity" is defined as the dominant image of the region,

which is commonly possessed by people inside the city and which can be crystallized gradually. The people can clearly recognize the individuality of the region with the city identity, and distinguish the inside of the region from the outside. Typical examples of city identities are a "city of art" for Paris and a "city of musicals" for New York. People throughout the world admire the individuality of these cities, and the residents are proud of being citizens of these cities. It is believed that such city identity can be served as a centrifugal force producing coherency in efforts of individuals, social communities, enterprises, and local governments to vitalize the region.

3. Case Study : Iida City as a Puppet Drama Town

Now let us focus on Iida City, famous as a puppet drama town, and analyze self-organization phenomena regarding its identity creation process through Iida's Puppetry Carnival and of the planning by the municipal government. Iida's case is that the domain in Figure 1 corresponding to a certain region changes according to whether the image in the figure is interpreted as the external image or internal image. In this case, its situation corresponds to domain A, in that the succession of Japanese traditional puppet dramas in Iida City was not well known outside of the city: that is, there were no external images of a traditional puppet drama

town. On the other hand, the situation of Iida City can also be assigned to domain B, in that Iida's residents recognize the presence of puppeteers in succession to the traditional puppet dramas.

The executive committee of the carnival is composed of citizens, puppeteers, and the staff of the municipal government. The secretariat of the working groups is settled at the Culture Hall which is subject to oversight by the municipal government, which supports the executive committee.

1) Characteristic Features of Iida's Puppetry Carnival

(1) Geographic Features of Iida City

Iida City is a city of Nagano Prefecture, located in the middle of Japan. The population of the city is 92 thousand people, and its leading industries are computer production, the mechanic industry, and cultivation of fruits, especially apples. It takes 4 hours to get to the city via the Chuo Expressway by car both either Tokyo or Osaka, and 2 hours from Nagoya.

(2) Background of Iida's Puppetry Carnival

It was the trigger that, in the process of discussions between a major group of puppeteers in Japan and the Iida municipal government, a puppetry festival was planned. The festival was aimed to promote the communication between domestic puppeteers and the citizens through puppet dramas as programs for the International Children's Year. The first carnival was held in the same year, 1979.

Generally, availability of highway networks is a necessary condition for the success of big events. In this sense, the Chuo Expressway passing through Iida City from Tokyo to Nagoya is convenient because puppeteers need to convey heavy tools and puppets. Although the location of Iida city is very suitable for holding a puppetry festival, conditions are not sufficient to successfully gather a lot of visi-

tions. In Iida city, traditional Japanese puppet dramas such as JORURI and BUNRAKU have been succeeded since the end of the 16th century. With this historical background, the theater appreciation of the citizens has also been highly cultivated, and their degree of involvement in lifelong learning activities is known to be high. In addition, they exhibit warm hospitality toward domestic and international puppeteers.

(3) Development and Public Relations of the Carnival

In the first carnival, 381 puppeteers were staged at 17 theaters. Since 1979, the carnival has developed, and the number of puppeteers and theaters staged increased to 1963 and 88, respectively in 1994. More than 500 thousand people have watched puppet dramas in Iida City over 16 years. Figure 2 shows the size of audience and the number of puppeteers participating in the carnival by year. In 1979, Iida's municipal government supplied 500 thousand yen to meet carnival expenses, but in 1994 the budget for the carnival steadily increased and has amounted to a cumulative total of 10 million yen over 16 years. The cost of the 16th carnival was about 30 million yen, over 1/3 of which was covered by the proceeds from *wappen*.

As for public relations for the citizens, two local papers played an important role in circulating information about the carnival every day and stimulating the interest of the citizens. These media are credible means by which the citizens can obtain regional news correctly and quickly. On the other hand, Shinano-Mainichi Shinbun-Mainichi Shinbun-sha reports the carnival's situation to other areas. Furthermore, mass media such as TV and radio are used for propaganda. The working groups of the carnival post registration materials to puppeteers all over the world in order to gather puppeteers and also

send out programs of the carnival. These media encourage the establishment of city's

identity as "puppet drama town".

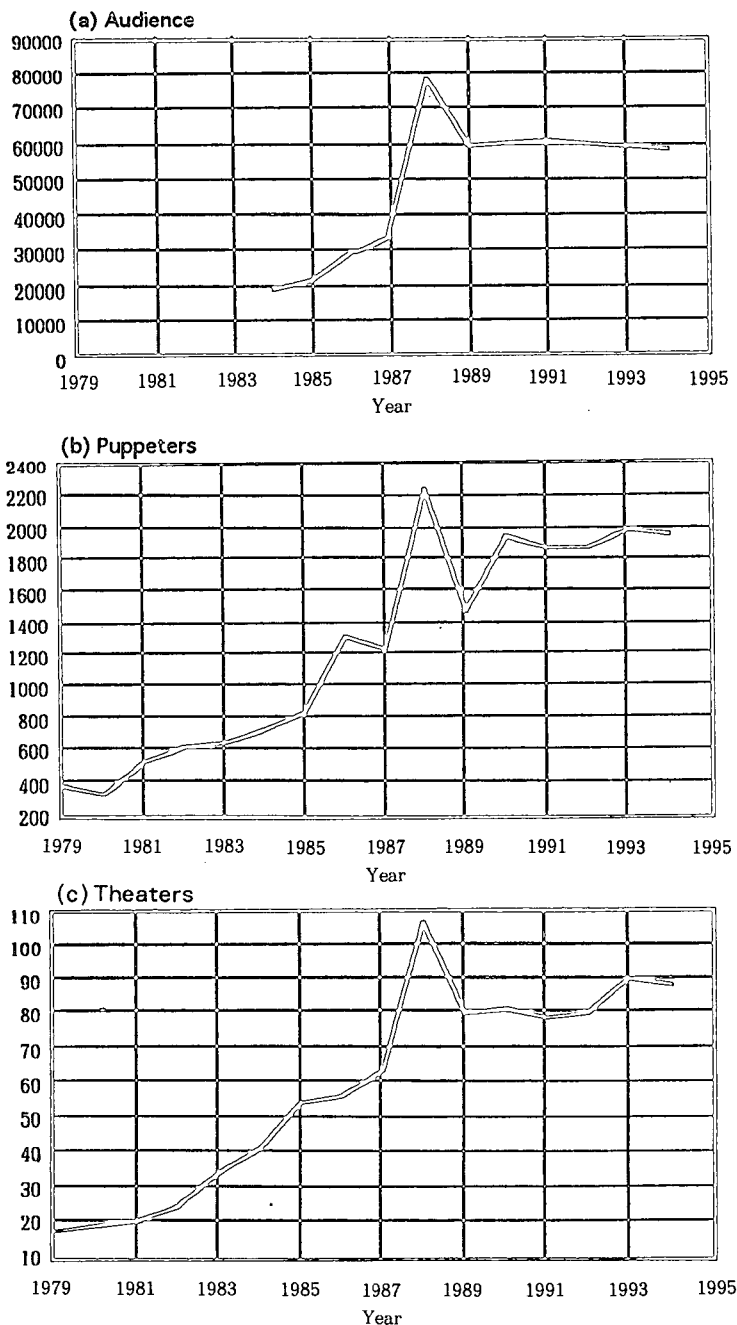


Figure 2. Development of Iida's Puppetry Carnival

Note : There are no statistical data about the size of audience from 1979 to 1983. In 1988, World Puppetry Festival was held together with Iida's Puppetry Carnival, for celebrating its 10th anniversary.

2) Processes of Identity Creation

We can observe the phenomena of city image self-organization in the development of Iida's Puppetry Carnival. The Carnival involves a change in that the functions of the city's facilities to those of theaters for puppet dramas during a period. Puppet dramas planned by the executive committee of the Carnival are staged everywhere in the city, in parallel sessions during 4 days of August. The Culture Hall, school gymnasiums, temple courtyards, and main streets become places where the puppet dramas are staged. Such an arrangement of widely distributed theaters enables as many citizens, puppeteers and administrative staff as possible to participate in the carnival. Anyone who buys and puts on a *wappen* (700 yen) can take in any drama during the Carnival. The *wappen* serves not only as a passport for admission but also as a token of cooperative participation. This system symbolically indicates that the puppeteers and citizens are not merely players and audience. In this sense, the puppeteers also pay all costs for traveling and registration, and obtain no guarantee except for invited puppeteers. This is also the reason why the Carnival can be held at the low cost of 20 million yen. Citizens of Iida, puppeteers, and the municipal government of the city cooperate to promote this cultural activity.

Owing to high evaluation of the carnival not only by people in the city, but also by people outside and abroad, the World Puppetry Festival was induced and held together with the city's own carnival, to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Iida's Puppetry Carnival. It was the first memorial festival of its kind held in Asia. During the festival, there was also the signing of a sister-cities pledge between Iida and Charleville-Mezieres in France, where UNIMA's⁵⁾ secretariat is located. These evaluations from the outside, in par-

ticular, appreciation on a global level, promote Iida's identity creation as a puppet drama town inside the city.

As the symbol of the Puppet Drama Town, a city puppet theater was constructed and its inaugural ceremony was held during the 10th carnival. The fact that the theater was built for the first time at the 10th proved that identity creation was not promoted in a hardware-oriented manner, but in a self-organizing manner.

Phenomena of self-organization can be found not only in cultural aspects but also in political aspects. In Iida's municipal government, the Office for the Puppet Drama Town was established in 1994, in response to the expansion of these activities. Thus, Iida City is found to have been successful in establishing its identity, making the best use of puppetry traditions as the true entity.

These findings indicate that the city identity has been self-organized as the development of Iida's Puppetry Carnival. The signing of a sister-cities pledge with Charleville-Mezieres and the success of introducing the World Puppetry Festival in Iida show that Iida's Puppetry Carnival is highly evaluated from the outside. As another line of evidence that Iida's Puppetry Carnival is highly evaluated, a number of major organizations in Japan presented Iida City with many awards, such as the Mobile Children's Culture Award and Suntory Regional Culture Award. We wish to emphasize that the high evaluation by the outside world encourages community spirit among the citizens and promotes self-organization of images. Iida's Puppetry Carnival has the purpose of bringing about interaction between puppeteers and the citizens of Iida. Therefore, the citizens can learn about puppet dramas through the Carnival, and the hospitality extended by Iida City attracts the puppeteers from all over the world. Consequently, the number of participants, including visitors, has

increased. Thus, positive feedback of images led to maturation of the city identity as a puppet drama town.

Through the spread of the image of an active puppet drama town, the residents have come to be proud of being Iida City citizens, which leads to being aware of we-feeling. In addition, it can be pointed out that the citizen's warm hospitality and eye for the beautiful are important regional resources.

4. Self-Organization of Regional Images and City Identity Creation

It is hard for a region to be vitalized only by individuals or private enterprises inside a region. Therefore, coherent efforts of constituent communities are needed to vitalize the city effectively. Organic systems are characterized by their potential for self-organization. A city comprised of human societies, which is thought to be a kind of organic system, changes plastically, and develops in the manner of self-organization. By this analogy to organic systems, we propose a hypothesis of the self-organization of city images under interaction between the region and its environment.

Positive evaluation of actions tends to encourage the city to take the actions more frequently. On the other hand, negative evaluation may depress or inhibit the taking of actions. When the environment attempts to evaluate the city's actions, a standard of evaluation and a direction leading toward an ideal city are required. If the evaluation is consistent with the internal image of an ideal city, it is accepted as a positive evaluation; otherwise, it is accepted as a negative evaluation. That is, the direction of an ideal city determines whether the estimation is positive or negative. Note that this ideal direction may also be determined in a self-organization manner based on possible resources of the

city.

The evaluation of the city's actions by the environment is expected to promote the city to be self-organized toward a more functional and vitalized state. Based on this idea, it is concluded that the "driving force" of the self-organization of a city is determined by the synergy of actions of the city toward the ideal direction and the evaluation of the actions by the environment. In considering that the city image is formed through propagation, public relations, and recognition of city's actions, it turns out that the local government should attempt to employ appropriate communication media for propaganda of the city's actions.

The effect of a city identity is to provide residents of the city with a motivation to live there with pride; they have a positive image of the city. Moreover, the positive image or appraisal of the city by people outside influences the residents of the city, who are proud of their city, to make more efforts towards the city identity. Positive feedback mechanisms of this kind are significant in the promotion of the self-organization of city image. Such a positive feedback effect can commonly be seen in image maturation processes, as observed in the process of identity creation of Iida City. In order that positive feedback in the self-organization operates effectively, it is important for planners to periodically reconsider their plans by taking the gauge of their effects during execution. This plan-do-see process is also a sort of feedback in identity creation.

5. Planning for City Identity Creation

One of the roles of local governments is to support the activity of the residents or local groups so as to improve regional images and to establish the city identity. Based on the case study mentioned above,

four stages in regional planning for city identity creation, illustrated in Figure 3, are detailed in the succeeding subsections.

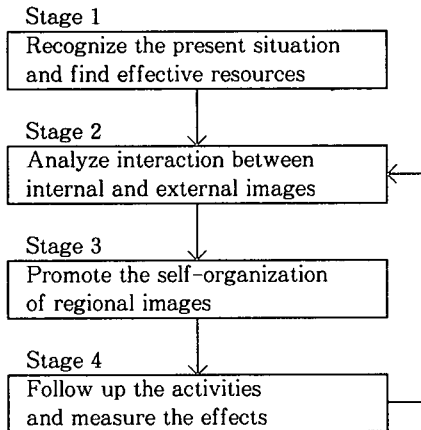


Figure 3. Planning for City Identity Creation

1) Recognition of the Present Situation and Finding of Effective Resources

The first stage is to analyze the phenomena around the region, confirm the motivation and necessity of regional vitalization, and then find effective resources. Regional resources should be clearly identified, for instance, as natural resources, historical resources, and human resources. In Iida's case, the beginning of the puppetry carnival was based on the city's traditional puppet dramas. The attention of residents to the current regional situation is very important for success in regional planning. At this stage, it is necessary to fully discuss and analyze problems which the region is suffering from⁶⁾. If necessary, a field survey into the problems should be carried out. Then, there is a need to identify persons who can strongly influence the region, and organize a project team composed of those persons. The project team will play a significant role in finding proper resources to improve the regional image, and in considering how to make the best use of them to resolve the region's problems. (1) The first task is to *discover* something with which to appeal

to the outside world. (2) If there are irrelevant elements inside the region, which may produce a negative image, it is better to *change* them without hesitation. (3) If there are no promising resources, something which would produce a positive image must be *created*.

Iida's Puppetry Carnival has succeeded owing to valuable regional resources such as the traditional puppet dramas, citizens' ability to appreciate puppet dramas, and their hospitality to visitors. The proper resources to improve the regional image should then be selected based on original criteria. In other words, the region must strive to pursue originality, that is, the concept of the ideal direction.

2) Analysis of Interaction between Internal and External Images

The ideal direction has been firmed to a considerable extent at this stage. The local governments coordinate project teams, local groups, and residents, and undertake planning to improve the regional image from the perspective viewpoint. Taking into account the analyses of the problems, planners need to reconfirm why the planning is necessary, what message should be sent, which media should be chosen, how promising and hopeful the region is, and so on. Then they should attempt to formulate the image strategy by publicizing the ideal direction to the residents as well as to people outside. Also, it is necessary that each member of the local government clearly recognize his role in planning. In Iida's case, planners selected a strategy aiming toward the identity of a puppet drama town. The executive committee of Iida's Puppetry Carnival was comprised of citizens, puppeteers and the municipal government staff, who worked together to make a plan for the success of the carnival every year.

3) Promotion of the Self-Organization of Regional Images

The overall plan to improve the regional image is finally put into effect at the third stage. In the image strategy, all the people in the region are participants in the activities. Throughout these processes, the we-feeling emerges among the people in the region. In this sense, the *Free Wappen* Method adopted by Iida's Puppetry Carnival must be regarded as highly effective. In the Carnival, anyone who purchases and wears the wappen can appreciate all puppet dramas. That is, the *wappen* marks the wearer as a participant who actively contributes to the event rather than just a passive member of an audience for which puppet dramas are staged.

It is effective to use reliable media to publicize positive images inside and outside the region. In Iida's case, credible newspapers play an important role in spreading information. At the second stage, only some groups sensitive to the environment of the region tend to be active as innovators. Most of the residents comprehend the ideal direction of the region and the plan, owing to the efforts of these opinion leaders. As Katz and Lazarsfeld pointed out⁷⁾, opinion leaders are active and tend to keep in contact with the mass media. The opinion leaders take a significant part in communication, especially in the propagation of action programs. As an effect of the communication plan, not only the residents but also people outside the region or visitors are subject to selective exposure or predisposition. In this way, the positive image of the region is created. The key point in planning of communication media is to utilize opinion leaders.

4) Pursuit of the Activities and Measurement of the Effects

The activities are followed up and the

effect of the execution of the plan is measured at the last stage. It is significant to reconsider the original criteria, that is, the ideal direction of the region. This stage is for feedback control of this kind. It is an important role of the local government to provide information on the achievements or effects of the execution of the plan for identity creation to all members such as the residents, the local groups, and the working staff of the local government. In this way, the city image self-organization is promoted.

In Iida's case, the extension of self-organization is limited in the field of culture. However, as self-organization in city identity creation is promoted, multimedia may become effective measures to stimulate self-organization in other fields such as the economy or politics.

6. Application of Multimedia for City Identity Creation

The human capacity for communication has been developing drastically with the growth of networking technology. In particular, recent multimedia technology, which enables us to transfer individual images between one another reciprocally and interactively, is expected to bring about a great revolution in communication.

The important point in planning of identity creation is how to make the best use of positive feedback control in the following respects: what message and to whom should be sent from the city, and which medium should be selected? In this context, the role of multimedia will become significant for city identity creation.

Multimedia are characterized by bi-directional communication among active members of the media, whereas conventional mass media can present only unidirectional communication from information providers to the passive mass without direct feedback. Using the reciprocal communication of the multimedia, we can

promptly revise an image if we find that the receivers possess an irrelevant image of a thing or event. When we define the self-organization of a system as a process of its change in function and structure under interaction or communication with its environment, it can be promoted by strengthening the transmission efficacy in communication between the inside and outside. Therefore, we may say that multimedia are effective infrastructures for the promotion of the self-organization of city images since they can immediately diminish the deviation between image and entity. We can expect that an identity of a city, which is a dominant image shared by internal social actors, is gradually crystallized in a self-organizing manner. Thus, it is emphasized that the evaluation of the region's action by the external world promotes the city identity creation and propels the potential for self-organization by means of multimedia technology.

7. Conclusion

In this research, the situations of regions were categorized into three domains according to the relationship between image and true entity of the regions. In particular, a case study of Iida City, known as a puppet drama town, was carried out. Although traditional puppet had been passed down through generations in Iida city, there was previously no external image of the regional resources. Iida City was found to be successful in establishing its identity, making the best use of the puppetry traditions as the true entity. It was also found out that high evaluation from the outside promoted the creation of Iida City's identity as a puppet drama town. Based on the case study, four stages geared toward city identity creation using regional images and resources were derived. It is emphasized that the improvement of regional images is a promising policy for city vitalization. The self-organ-

nization of a system is a process of its change in structure and function under interaction with its environment. In this case, the extension of self-organization is limited in the field of culture. As self-organization in city identity creation advances, multimedia will become effective measures for stimulating self-organization in other fields such as the economy or politics in the near future. Since multimedia can provide us with reciprocal communication, regional images which people have in their own mind are reciprocated promptly and changed so as to become relevant to city vitalization. Finally, it is suggested that multimedia will serve as effective infrastructures to promote the self-organization of regional images toward a city identity.

Endnotes

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- 4) W. Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, 1922.
- 5) UNIMA is the abbreviation of Union Internationale de la Marionnette
- 6) P. Kotler, D. H. Haider and I. Rein, *Marketing Places*, Free Press, 1993.
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ABSTRACT

This paper first introduces the concept of image as a key factor in recognition, and city identity as the dominant image of a region which is commonly possessed by individuals living and working in the region. Then, the new approach toward planning, the notion of self-organization associated with images and positive feed-

back mechanisms in terms of city vitalization, is discussed. Thirdly, carrying out the case study of a process in which Iida City in Japan has acquired a city identity as a puppet drama town, we present four stages in planning for city identity creation and discuss the phenomena of city image self-organization. Finally, it is pointed out that multimedia are effective measures for the promotion of self-organization of city images, and that the role of local governments is very important in city planning to support the self-organization of cities.