Summary

A connecting past: heritage, leisure and regional identity

Cultural tourism is a growing sector. The World Tourism Organization stated that 37 percent of all travel concerns a visit to a heritage attraction and that cultural tourism is one of the main and most growing segments in tourism. Within cultural tourism, heritage tourism is beginning to play a more prominent role because of its rapid growth (ETC, 2005; CBS, 2011). The popularity of heritage as a form of leisure in the Netherlands, can be illustrated by the increasing number of museum visitors and the great interest in the annual ‘Open Monumentendag’. Many of the regions that present themselves as leisure destinations, compete with each other by making use of heritage in their marketing campaigns. In many parts of Europe, processes of regionalization are increasingly being shaped by the history and experience of places, cities and landscapes (Kolen, 2005). To a variety of those competing regions, their identity is strongly derived from these references from the past. Since the beginning of the nineties of the 20th century, the academic research on cultural tourism has increased with studies concerning regional development, localization and identity. Until now, however, the meaning of heritage in leisure and its influence on the construction of regional identity has not yet been researched. In this study, we want to connect heritage and regional identity with leisure activities, concerning both the visitors of heritage and the producers of the heritage-related leisure supply. This led us to the following research question:

What is the meaning of heritage for visitors and interested heritage producers and what are the consequences for regional identity.

When it comes down to identifying the ‘consumers’ of heritage, three groups of visitors can be distinguished: recreationists, tourists and residents. From the perspective of heritage ‘producers’, both heritage oriented leisure activities and the development of leisure related heritage products are of great importance. Especially since governmental policy concerning leisure has shifted from a supply-driven to a demand-driven model (VROM-raad, 2006). This latter development requires an understanding of the meanings assigned to heritage and the appreciation given to regional environments.

The central question is therefore divided into these four sub-questions:
1. What is the meaning of regional heritage to residents, recreationists and tourists during their leisure activities?
2. Which relationship exists between the meaning of heritage to regional heritage producers and their involvement in the development of leisure products?
3. To what extent is the construction of regional identity influenced by the meaning that visitors and heritage producers ascribe to its heritage?
4. What is the influence of the experienced identity of regions on the development of leisure products by interested entrepreneurs?
The first two sub–questions are about the meaning of heritage for the two distinct groups, namely visitors and the stakeholding heritage producers who are involved in the leisure supply. The third sub–question is derived from the first two sub–questions, and focuses on the relationship between the meanings of heritage and its influence on regional identity. The fourth sub–question connects the resulting insights to entrepreneurial policy and functions as a policy reflection on the first three sub–questions.

The first sub–question is researched by using a questionnaire among visitors to heritage attractions. The second sub–question is answered by conducting in–depth interviews with the producers of the heritage related leisure supply. By comparing the results from these two sub–questions, the third sub–question is answered in which the influence of the meaning of heritage on the regional identity is researched. Finally, integrating the analysis of the answers given to the first three sub–questions, insight can be given in the policy related fourth sub–question.

To create a clear analysis of the results, first attention must be given to the leading definitions in this dissertation. Heritage can be defined as the contemporary use of the past (see for example Ashworth, Tunbridge & Graham, 2007). Visitors to these ‘pasts’ become more and more active participant in cultural worlds, rather than merely passive recipients. Through this practice we appropriate the past, add unique meanings and values and thereby construct our heritage.

With heritage attractions we refer to all the (in)angible heritage that is being visited during leisure activities. This may involve cultural landscapes and ensembles of places, buildings and objects, but also places with customs and traditions. Despite the centuries–long fascination of men with heritage, there is little understanding in its valuation. Research into the experience of heritage by cultural tourists has, until now, been mainly focused on the development of typologies based on visitor interests, sought experiences, the importance of culture in visitor motivation and the role of education, age and income. Only limited research has been carried out to show differences between residents, recreationists and tourists in terms of meanings, preferences and evaluations of cultural landscapes. In addition, there appears to be insufficient understanding in the way that cultural visitors influence each other, such as the influence of the traveling party on the individual preference and appreciation of heritage attractions during the visit. Tourists can be distinguished from recreationists because the first combines at least one overnight with their leisure activities. It can be concluded that whether or not a person resides in a regional leisure destination influences their place–attachment and is expected to be important in the process of regional identification with a heritage attraction (Ryan & Aitcken, 2010). In this study, residents and recreationists will therefore be distinguished.

Producers also play an important part in this research, by which we refer to the organizations providing the development, marketing and sales of leisure products. With their leisure supply the heritage producers influence the interpretation, appreciation and development of heritage. By making use of regional identity, public and private organisations such as tourist information centers, regional tourist offices, governments, provincial authorities, heritage organizations and entrepreneurs can develop an attractive environment
in favor of relaxation and entertainment. Naturally, the development of such an environment demands attention to naming the most characteristic and attractive elements in a destination: the offer must meet the expectations and motivations of the guest.

In this study, we define the **meaning of heritage** in regions as: the totality of observations, feelings, ideas, beliefs, memories and attitudes with respect to objects, places (including historical cultural landscapes), customs and traditions as well as the degree of connection with heritage. This meaning takes shape in an active process of meaning making. Wherever the term ‘meaning’ is discussed in this study, it refers to the process-related meaning making that successively consists of: adding meaning, interpretation and appreciation. There is hardly any research among residents about their appreciation of heritage. The residents are an increasingly important stakeholder in the landscape policy (European Landscape Convention, 2000) and the heritage policy (UNESCO, 2003).

In the discussions about heritage we take, as explained in Chapter 2, a critical constructivist position. On the one hand, we assume that heritage, especially for visitors, consists of concrete (in)tangible objects that have their roots in the past. At the same time heritage is a cultural construction in the present. The process of giving meaning to entities from the past, which are inherited and constructed by contemporary use and ascribe character to a region, requires an understanding of the valuation process of the environment and the development of spatial quality awareness.

For understanding **regional identity**, we stick to the description given by Paasi (1986, 2002) who described this as **regional consciousness**. With this he refers to the degree in which people identify themselves with the region as a whole of institutionalized practices, discourses and symbols. Regional consciousness is formed in a continuous process of institutionalization and transformation. This thesis focuses on the importance of heritage for the leisure activities of residents, recreationists and tourists in regions. With **leisure time** we mean the non-compulsory use of time available for relaxation or entertainment and personal development. In leisure activities, heritage and regional identity has in common that the past in an attractive local destination at individual and group level gives meaning to the present. The study object of this research can be described in short as the interplay between the knowledge domains of heritage, regional identity and leisure for both consumers and producers.

The tourist and recreational regions IJsseldelta and Twente in the province of Overijssel have been chosen as case studies for this research. Both regions differ in spatial characteristics and heritage and therefore as tourist and recreational destination.

The theoretical framework is developed based on existing theories about heritage, leisure and regional identity, as well as the interrelationships in-between. In the use of heritage as a ‘resource’ for leisure activities, it is about experience and assigning meaning. Meaning and appreciation are placed in perspective as determinants of experience. The values that are related to heritage are not easy to express in market prices. That is because it concerns public goods. According to Urry in his ‘tourist gaze’ (1990), heritage that determines the
identity of regional destinations, attract a larger share of recreationists and tourists from outside the region than the remaining heritage. From this geographical thought the travel cost method has been developed. That method (Rietveld, 2010; Rouwendal, 2013) can provide insight into the relative value of specific landscapes and heritage. It is apparent that the attraction value for high appreciated landscape- and heritage types result in a relative great number of kilometers that visitors are willing to travel, because of its provided leisure opportunities.

The meanings attributed to heritage in the context of leisure activities touch the well-being of visitors. It connects the senses, feelings, thoughts, values and attitudes with objects, places, landscapes and regions. This wellbeing obviously varies depending on personal preferences. On the basis of the environmental values (Van Marwijk, 2009) the valuation of a heritage visit can be determined. In their preference people assess their environment with at least four properties, called environmental values: the use value, the experience value, the narrative value and the appropriation value. The use value of an environment is the value assigned to all the amenities that unlock the landscape and facilitate leisure activities. The experience value is the value granted to the attractiveness of an area where the concept of experience points to the subjective process of perception through recognition to meaning making and valuation, which can result into action. The narrative value consists of stories about the meanings of heritage. It concerns specific information or stories about cultural history, biodiversity, regional identity or certain traditions and symbols. The power of the personal attachment to a place determines the appropriation value. People can appropriate environments not only physically, but also symbolically. The attachment to a place or region has a positive effect on the leisure experiences, it contributes to a sense of security, individual and collective identity and often leads to greater involvement in what is happening in the public space. It concerns specific information or stories about cultural history, biodiversity, regional identity, certain traditions or symbols. The heritage producers in a region can use these four environmental values to create favorable conditions for leisure activities.

The growth in uniformity of the environment through globalization leads to a growing sense of detachment and stimulates a desire for new forms of identity and authenticity. This desire can be satisfied at the regional level. Consequently a greater awareness and interest in regional characteristics and identities may be the result. Ascribing identities to regions is a dynamic process. Meanings as a driving force in shaping the involvement of stakeholders in the construction of region-specific identities appear to be related to: the pursuit of continuity, self-esteem and self-development and positive identification with place attachment. In theories about regional identity and awareness of this identity the concepts of 'thin ' and 'thick' regions (Terlouw, 2011) are important. These concepts serve as a metaphor to describe the characteristics of social relations. Thick regions are traditional regions with regional identities strongly influenced by history, while thin regions are more focused on transition to anticipate quickly to changes with a focus on economic functions. Terlouw (2011) concludes that hybrid regional identities, as a mix of both types, are most effective for regional policy development. This fact can be anticipated on both the regional consciousness as the challenges of globalization.
Regions compete for the visitor's favor and therefore it is interesting to examine the quality of leisure destinations at this scale. Heritage is increasingly exploited as a regional quality to profile the regional identity. This is illustrated by the frequent occurrence of the historically formed ‘couleur locale’ in regional promotion and city marketing (Lombarts, 2008; Hospers, 2003). The awareness of regional identity is elaborated in terms of identification and place attachment. The development of regional identity and the influence of heritage on this are placed in the relevant geographic and sociological theories. Building blocks of identity, and more specifically the cultural representations of regional identity, are associated with this. Subsequently it is examined to what extent the identity of regional destinations is influenced by heritage and the way in which heritage contributes to the recognition as a location for leisure activities and its impact on the so-called attraction system (Leiper, 1990). The motivation led push factors and area related pull factors in this attraction system influence the expectations that underlie a leisure visit.

The ‘journey’ of the heritage visitor and the appreciation of this meaningful experience is made clear in the research model of the ‘visitors’ journey’. The meaning of a heritage attraction and its valuation as a leisure activity thereof, can be seen as the physical journey of the visitor, which is gradually made up of a before, during and after stage in his or her visit. However, it is also a mental journey. What makes this unique is that the expectations and experience may lead to an evaluation of the visit, which on itself can be a premise to a new journey. This also applies to the physical travel. This cyclical process is of importance for a memorable experience (Snel, 2011), in which the herinnering can lead to loyalty. The degree of satisfaction affects the loyalty of the visitor. The evaluation phase of the mental journey is determined more by the visitor if and to what extent he will be loyal to the visited attraction. Loyalty is partly reflected in a repeat visit and/or to recommend the destination or attraction(s) to others. In addition to the push and pull factors, the influence of place attachment and experienced environmental values on the ‘visitors’ journey’ is researched. Relationships are then examined between heritage visit and demographic characteristics of the heritage visitor as well as the composition of the travel party.

The meaning of heritage to visitors during their leisure activities is described first. It may be noted that women make slightly more heritage visits to both regions than men do. In addition the largest group of visitors is elderly. The higher income groups are most strongly represented in Twente. For both regions the effect of the meaning of heritage on the valuation of heritage by its visitors is determined using economic and environmental values. With the travel costs method the extent to which the traveled distance reflects the economic value is researched. Visitors of heritage destinations in Twente travel greater distances (average of 58.23 kilometer) than heritage visitors in the IJsseldelta (an average of 41.25 kilometer) do. Since the leisure behavior of heritage visitors strongly varies, the number of leisure activities plays a role in the willingness to travel a certain distance. The assumption that the composition of the traveling party can determine the meaning of the heritage visit is correct. Heritage visits to Twente and IJsseldelta, with percentages of 56% and 38 % respectively, are primarily consisting of traveling parties, mostly visitors with their partners. It also appears that the type of traveling party influences which particular type of heritage
attraction is preferred. In addition there are significant differences between the types of travel parties and the importance that they attach to push factors in both regions.

Storylines related to cultural history, regional identity, traditions and symbols form the narrative value. Apart from the narrative value, the appropriation value is a component of the environmental value. By analyzing the place-attachment that respondents have with heritage attractions, insight can be obtained in this appropriation value. The IJsseldelta shows a stronger relationship between place attachment and visited heritage attractions than Twente. The experience value and use value of heritage for heritage visitors is researched using the 'visitors' journey'. Recreationists, tourists and residents tend to have different preferences regarding the frequency of visits and the number and diversity of visited heritage attractions. The 'visitors' journey' is also different across the various heritage attractions. As shown by the analysis results, the three types of heritage visitors have, in their leisure activities, a different relation and experience that manifests itself in the degree of correlation between satisfaction with a specific heritage visit and the extent to which one is willing to recommend the visited heritage and/or to make a repeat visit themselves. Recommending a heritage visit as an expression of loyalty affects more heritage attractions and generally exhibits a higher relation of satisfaction with the heritage visit than visitors' willingness for a repeat visit.

Residents and recreationists appear in Twente and in the IJsseldelta to be the strongest ambassadors for recommending heritage attractions. Both studied regions have distinctive heritage attractions that lead to impressive experiences, the meaning of which is heritage related and mainly determined by respectively 'learning and self-development', 'continuity through time', 'emotions and well-being', as well as 'realization of leisure motives' and 'aesthetics'.

The relationship between the meaning of heritage to the heritage producers and their involvement in the development of the leisure supply is also examined. The research on heritage producers showed that, contrary to generally accepted views (Ashworth, Graham & Tunbridge, 2007) on opposing interests in the heritage arena, there is hardly any friction in the development of the heritage product supply in both regions. Adopting the motto 'collective enjoyment', on continuity focused regional authorities, such as owners of estates, farms and industrial heritage, facilitate many public activities and practice initiatives, aiming to conserve through development. They seek dialogue with their guests and offer the possibility of co-creating the leisure experience: from collection to connection. This cooperation and connection between heritage conservation care and heritage products to offer has strengthened regional consciousness. For both regions, heritage shows to be an important and successful 'identity marker' (Stone, 2002; Hajer & Uitermark, 2008), which is deliberately and collectively used to emphasize the distinctive character of regional identity and the attractiveness of the area as leisure destination.

Heritage producers characterize Twente as a clear and recognizable region. With respect to this, the relationship between regional identity and heritage is emphasized. The landscape of Twente, filled with heritage constructions and narratives, is seen as a source of inspiration for desired developments in the future (Renes, 2011–A), in which one wishes two speeds: one for a preservation through development-oriented 'slow' strategy in the rural– and a
more dynamic strategy in the urban environment. Twente is a region in transition and developing, according to the terminology of Terlouw (2011), from a clear ‘thick’ region where cultural heritage is used as a catalyst to realize greater autonomy and independence, towards a ‘hybrid’ form, combining the characteristics of both ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ regions. From the interviews, it can be concluded that what is regarded as valuable heritage for the identification of Twente, and how this is being handled by different groups, is plural. The personal colored, time- and region-specific interpretations of heritage show a relation with a mix of material elements. This mix consists of reused industrial heritage (referring to the large-scale textile and metal industry) with new economic drivers, attractive estates with collective leisure enjoyment, contemporary interpretations of heritage in museum ‘Twentse Welle’ located in the redesigned Roombeek district, the small-scale agricultural landscape and symbols in which the typical horse of Twente dominates. They are combined with a selection of intangible manifestations, such as ‘naoberschap’, Easter customs and dialect. The cultural representations experienced as characteristic, provide Twente with the identity of a ‘thick’ symbolic region. In addition, they give a contemporary interpretation to the region as a focal point of (technological) innovation, sporting aspirations (the positive associations with FC Twente), knowledge and education, and as a node in an extended network of (inter)national relations. The dynamics in the multiple constructions of heritage, through technological innovations, a wide range of associations and (inter)national and regional networks, give Twente a hybrid status.

The many regional associations, participation in various networks and the short existence of the region, make the Ijssel delta a ‘thin’ region. Functional relations on economic and spatial planning problems seem to be dominant. Several heritage producers indicate that various companies owe their existence to the historical relation with the maritime history and heritage thus serves as a source of inspiration for business and the attachment to places. Besides shared landscape characteristics, economic principles, and especially the principle of the so-called Hanseatic League, the favorable economic climate and the vital entrepreneurship in the region are also being stated. The historical continuity connects the old with the new contemporary Hanseatic League, in a form of cooperation in which entrepreneurship is focused on trade and on creating a network society (Castells, 1996), where contacts with other regions are essential. The National Landscape Ijssel delta made it possible for the region Ijsseldelta to enable inter-municipal projects in which restoration, preservation and use of heritage have the support of several local interest groups. The heritage producers are aware of the identity of this region, which is, in some cases, connected with their roots. The producers are not clear in the selection of leading heritage in identity construction and there are various heritage practices in relation to the leisure supply that are meaningful to them. These include the Hanseatic League, the various events, the importance of boating, the historic city centers as well as the characteristics of the agricultural landscape and the many cultural representations. The Hanse is a binding symbol of regional identity as well as the typical dikes, pumping stations and waterways that are reminiscent of the battle against the water. The Ijssel is both physically and mentally a carrier of regional identity and, as such, an eponymous brand with strong storylines.
Subsequently we investigated the influence of the meaning of heritage on the construction of regional identity. The heritage visitors prove themselves to feel closely connected with the heritage and identity of Twente which is expressed, among other things, through loyalty by sharing information with others and willingness to recommend a visit. Estates, agricultural heritage and built monuments score highest in this regard. In the IJsseldelta this connection is not so strong and is mainly determined by museums and estates. The willingness to repeat a visit is another expression of loyalty and for many heritage visitors in both regions this is the case. The most important pull-factors for repeated leisure activities in both Twente and the IJsseldelta are the natural environment, monuments and historic buildings. In this regard Twente is specifically mentioned in respect with its cultural landscape, for the IJsseldelta the traditional events are mentioned. Identification with the region during the 'visitors' journey' will also contribute to the construction of regional identity. This identification is strong for the IJsseldelta and even very strong for Twente. The relationship between cultural representations and regional identity are analyzed in relation with demographic personal characteristics. Furthermore, this analysis is repeated for the various types of heritage visitors and the place attachment. Typical symbols, rituals, heroes and values that are considered characteristic of Twente or IJsseldelta are found. Cultural representations play an important role in the common identification and imaging of regions. They are actively and consciously used for marketing. Unlike the IJsseldelta, 'otherness' (Reverda, 2004) is a driver for the regional awareness among stakeholders in Twente. It refers to its location as a border region with Germany, distinctive (in) tangible elements and the long-term more or less independent existence of Twente in the Province of Overijssel. The marketing campaign by the Twente Tourism Bureau, using the slogan 'Twente, estate of the Netherlands', refers to the regional identity. All the heritage producers which were interviewed consider Twente's estates to be characteristic and play a determinative role in its identity construction. The heritage producers are keen on preserving the authenticity of the Twente landscape, as they are convinced that its attractiveness functions as leisure attraction. Most of the interviewees recognize that the value of the cultural landscape is partly derived from continuous changes in space and time. Important is the speed of the changes. For the treatment of the cultural landscape in Twente as a museum there are few advocates, but there is support for a certain slowness of spatial development in rural areas (Luiten, 2003). In addition, they express the need of a more dynamic development of space in the urban environment.

In Twente and IJsseldelta typical storylines contribute to identification opportunities for individuals and groups with the region. This function is also performed by locations where material objects such as religious and industrial heritage are 'loaded' and passed on through stories. Among other things this occurs by inheritance of property within families of estates and farms, or through organizations that manage and unlock heritage such as museums, provincial landscapes or water boards. Family histories and personal activities contribute to a lasting bond that arises with such objects. These storylines strengthen understanding and the readability of the cultural landscape and help the appropriation of and identification with the local and regional history.
Finally, the foregoing research insights are linked to the policy of entrepreneurs and covers the impact of the experienced identity of the regions on the development of leisure products. The presence of attractive landscapes with a varied leisure supply appears to be essential for heritage visitors. The different types of heritage attractions enhance the quality of regional destinations for heritage visitors, which can be seen from the satisfaction with the visit and the resulting loyalty. Residents, tourists and recreationists have different preferences to visit specific heritage attractions. Understanding these differences provides the opportunity to better align the heritage product supply to the needs of different visitors. This also increases the experience value; use value; narrative value and appropriation value of the regional destination. Research devoted to the 'visitors' journey' of these three groups and the sharing of research results with heritage producers can make a substantial contribution. By understanding the 'visitors' journey', the desire to pay more attention to the way in which user groups experience regional identity and the role of heritage thereby, can be answered. Cooperation with knowledge and educational institutions in both regions offers these opportunities. In the end, opportunities are then created to provide current and relevant education to the heritage producers of tomorrow. Coordination in the development of heritage products and regional marketing campaigns, contributes to appreciated heritage visits. For this it is necessary to develop crossovers between the suppliers of heritage products in the cultural sector and entrepreneurs in the leisure sector. An adequate leisure supply brings consumers and producers together in the experience of a connected past.