



KONINKLIJKE VLAAMSE ACADEMIE VAN BELGIE
VOOR WETENSCHAPPEN EN KUNSTEN

MULTIFUNCTIONALITY AND LOCAL IDENTITY AS PARADIGMS FOR A SUSTAINABLE AND COMPETITIVE AGRICULTURE

22 maart 2011

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Handelingen van het contactforum " Multifunctionality and local identity as paradigms for a sustainable and competitive agriculture " (22 maart 2011, hoofdaanvrager: Prof. dr. ir. Guido Van Huylenbroeck, Universiteit Gent) gesteund door de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van België voor Wetenschappen en Kunsten.

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ISSN XXXXXXXXXXXX

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**Multifunctionality and local identity as paradigms for a
sustainable and competitive agriculture**

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Agriculture has always been multifunctional in the sense that it has always provided yellow (social care and cohesion), green (environmental and landscape services) and blue services (water management and flood control). The modernization of agriculture, however, has put pressure on this which endangers the ecological sustainability of farming. Moreover, as rural areas are changing from 'productive' to 'consumptive' areas, people living in rural areas increasingly expect agriculture to deliver these extra goods and services (Potter and Tilzey, 2005). Next to this, the modernization process of agriculture is also confronted with other limits. First of all there are market limits: resistance is building up from countries outside Europe, who consider the production incentives that caused the European Union (EU) to become a net exporter of food, as unfair competition. There are also social limits: farmers become victims of isolation and income decreases, there are increased financial risks and more recently agriculture has suffered a lot from food and animal health crises. All these conflicts show that the modern agricultural model is in crisis and needs to be changed. A basic assumption in this research project is that multifunctionality can be a new unifying paradigm that can bring post-modern agriculture in accordance with new societal demands and as such increases its economic, ecological and social sustainability (Van Huylenbroeck, et al., 2007a).

The most popular definition of multifunctional agriculture is the one of the OECD (2001) in which multifunctionality is described as 'the production of non-commodities which are a joint output of commodity production or in other words the delivery of non-tradable outputs when producing food and fibre' (OECD, 2001). According to Moyer and Josling (2002) however, the production of non-commodities is threatened to disappear when the market does not remunerate farmers for this. One possible option to stimulate multifunctionality are government payments. However, a better solution would be that the government stimulates the creation of new markets and networks in which the delivery of non-commodity products is valued (Van Huylenbroeck, et al., 2007a). Nowadays the remuneration of non-commodities is currently still inefficiently organized and multifunctionality is mostly associated with non-competitive forms of agriculture and more alternative farmers, while ways should be found to stimulate forms of agriculture which are efficient in the provision of local public goods. Therefore most farmers are reluctant to leave the modernization paradigm for this new way of farming.

There is already a lot of evidence that multifunctional agriculture contributes to economically beneficial functions in a region, such as an increase in the value of residential property in an area (see e.g. Cheshire and Sheppard, 1995; Garrod and Willis, 1992b; Irwin, 2002) and the prices of rural accommodation (see e.g. Fleischer and Tchetchik, 2005a; Vanslebrouck, et al., 2005). Evidence also exists that when agriculture disappears, there will be a negative impact on landscapes and agri-ecological systems (MacDonald, et al., 2000) and that the willingness-to-pay for agriculture increases when farming systems are more multifunctional (Bennett, et al., 2004; Poe, 1999). Because of their appeal to tourists, agricultural elements are often used in regional branding attempts which are emerging as a new theme in rural development approaches (Hegger, 2007). These examples from literature suggest that agriculture unintentionally contributes to the identity of a region and that this can have

economic effects, as such increasing rural competitiveness. In the MUSICAL¹ project, we hypothesize that multifunctional agriculture can also profit from regional identity and the economic effects it creates in a region. This is for instance the case in the Italian regions where the Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese is produced, and where farmers are the owners of a very successful cheese supply chain (de Roest and Menghi, 2000). This reasoning is schematically depicted in Figure 1.

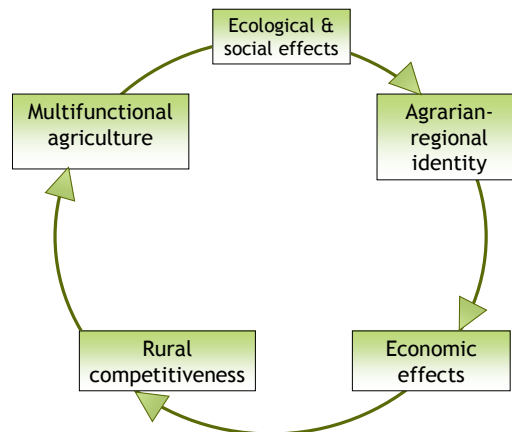


Figure 1. Main hypothesis of the MUSICAL project

Using an agricultural regional identity to stimulate rural competitiveness seems promising in the light of an increasing importance of identity. Castells (1997) identified a growing need of individuals, daily operating in a globally organised network society, for local and regional places with an identity they feel a bond with. Also in their consumption patterns, people show an increased preference for authentic (local) products and places (Sims, 2009). This increasing importance of identity is reflected in the spectrum of political place branding attempts, in the ways in which regional actors try to integrate identity in the marketing of their products, but also in research (see e.g. Kruit, et al., 2004; Simon, 2005).

Finally, the concept of multifunctional agriculture could be strengthened through its contribution to regional identity. According to Renting et al. (2009), nowadays the concept of multifunctionality is still rather weak, since it is often used to legitimize existing subsidies by linking them to the supply of positive externalities. Strong multifunctionality, however, requires that agriculture is incorporated into an integrated and territorial rural development approach. Imbedding agriculture in regional development processes based on regional identity could therefore strengthen the concept of multifunctional agriculture and make it more attractive. However, the appropriate governance structures should be in place for multifunctional agriculture to optimally contribute to and profit from identity-based regional development. According to Shucksmith (2010), the outcomes of rural development can be optimized with an integrated approach, moving from government to governance. This means that governments are not just sponsoring local projects, but delivering them through partnerships of governmental and non-governmental partners.

¹ Multifunctionality and local identity as paradigms for a competitive and sustainable agriculture, financed by the Belgian Federal Science Policy in the programme ‘Science for a Sustainable Development’, start: January 2007, end: March 2011

1.2. Objectives

The main objective of this project is to gain insight in the contribution of multifunctional agriculture to the development of a regional identity and its consequences on rural competitiveness and sustainability. The hypothesis of the project is that multifunctional agriculture is not opposite to competitive, mainstream agriculture. Through its contribution to regional identity and the production of other non-commodities, multifunctional agriculture can increase the competitiveness of (rural) regions. Figure 2 shows the different steps in the research process to reach this main objective.

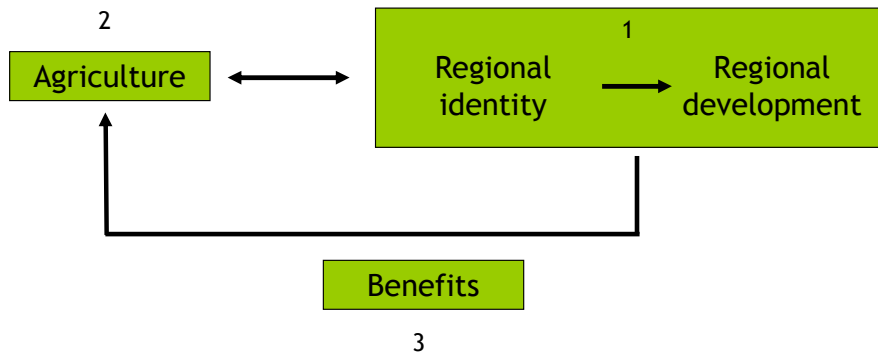


Figure 2. Structure of the research

The first part of the research describes the relationship between regional identity and regional development as such. The first subsection gives a short theoretical introduction on the concepts of regional identity, regional development and regional branding, placing them in the context of glocalisation and the shift from government to governance. The second subsection focuses on how to achieve regional development based on regional identity. Based on the field work in the case study areas, success factors, linked to the natural, cultural and agricultural characteristics of the region, the geographical situation and regional identity are identified. Next to that, attention is paid to cooperation and coordination among regional actors, the economic sustainability of the regional development projects, and the involvement of residents.

The second part of the research will shed light on the role of agriculture in regional development on the basis of a regional identity. It investigates the role of the farmer in these processes, and how this role is evaluated, both by farmers and organizations or governments involved in identity-based regional development. Finally, it looks at ways to stimulate the involvement of farmers in identity-based regional development.

The third and final part of the research starts from the observation that regional development, as a result of a regional identity, yields benefits for certain users in the region. When this regional identity is strongly influenced by the presence of agriculture, the question can be posed whether agriculture could (better) benefit from the profits of regional development. The first subsection in this part investigates how a regional identity which is highly influenced by agriculture affects the economy of a region, with a focus on the real estate sector and the tourism sector. The second subsection deals with the question how this private sector can compensate farmers for these public goods and services they deliver through alternative financing mechanisms. The third subsection finally looks at alternative ways for farmers to

benefit from (their contribution to) regional identity, through diversification activities such as farm tourism, home sales and processing of products, etc.

1.3. Valorisation of the project results

It is expected that the dissemination of the results of this project will raise awareness on the importance of agriculture in the production of non-commodities and specifically its contribution to the identity and related economic effects in a region. Secondly, the aim is to provide farmers and other stakeholders involved in regional branding in a rural context with practical recommendations on how to increase the benefits from these processes. Finally, the results of the MUSICAL project will give inspiration on how to achieve more direct funding for multifunctional agriculture, as such easing the pressure on the limited funds for rural development.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Methodologies used in the project

In order to achieve the objectives defined in the introduction, the project applies several methodologies. An important aspect of this project consists of getting a profound understanding of several societal processes around the notions of identity and multifunctional agriculture. Since current theoretical frameworks about these concepts are inadequate for the objectives of our study, an important objective of this project is to contribute to building new theoretical frameworks in order to capture and understand the dimensions and the properties of these - up till now - obscure developments in society. Therefore, the study is largely based on a grounded theory and case study approach. Table I shows all methodologies used in the different parts of the project, which will now be discussed further in detail.

Table I. Methodologies used in the project (the numbers refer to the number of interviewees, respondents, participants)

	Part 1: Relationship local identity and regional development	Part 2: Role of agriculture in regional development based on identity	Part 3: Economic benefits as a result of regional identity development		
			3.1	3.2	3.3
	Literature study	Literature study	Literature study		
Haspengouw	Interviews stakeholders involved in regional development: 10	Interviews stakeholders involved in regional development: 10 + farmers: 6			Questionnaires inhabitants: 289 + farmers: 174
	Questionnaires inhabitants: 289	Questionnaires farmers: 174			Interviews farmers: 6
Meetjesland	Interviews stakeholders involved in regional development: 9	Interviews stakeholders involved in regional development: 9 + farmers: 6		Focus groups: 15 + 25	Questionnaires inhabitants: 370 + farmers: 218
	Questionnaires inhabitants: 370	Questionnaires farmers: 218			Interviews farmers: 6
Pays des Deux Ourthes	Interviews stakeholders involved in regional development: 11	Interviews stakeholders involved in regional development: 11 + farmers: 6			Questionnaires inhabitants: 42 + farmers: 35
	Questionnaires inhabitants: 42	Questionnaires farmers: 35			Interviews farmers: 6
Gaume	Interviews stakeholders involved in regional development: 14	Interviews stakeholders involved in regional development: 14 + farmers: 6			Questionnaires inhabitants: 167 + farmers: 23
	Questionnaires inhabitants: 167	Questionnaires farmers: 23			Interviews farmers: 6
Leievallei (Menen-Kortrijk)				Focus groups: 25	
Westhoek	Interviews stakeholders/individuals involved in regional development: 20				
	Questionnaires inhabitants: 504				
	Focus groups: 41				
Pajottenland	Interviews stakeholders/individuals involved in regional development: 19				
Belgium			Hedonic pricing: 589		
Best-practice cases outside Belgium (West Cork - Ireland, Groene Woud - the Netherlands)	Interviews stakeholders/individuals involved in regional development: 6 (West Cork) + 9 (Groene Woud)				

2.2. Case Studies

In order to answer the research questions, the MUSICAL project has chosen for an extended case study approach.

Building theory from case studies is a research strategy that involves using one or more cases to create theoretical constructs, propositions and/or midrange theory from case-based, empirical evidence (Eisenhardt & Greibner, 2007). A case study is a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon with its real life context using multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2003). The central notion in case study research is to use cases as the basis from which to develop theory inductively. The theory is emergent in the sense that it is situated in and developed by recognizing patterns of relationships among constructs within and across cases and their underlying logical arguments (Eisenhardt & Greibner, 2007). While single-case studies can richly describe the existence of a phenomenon (Darke, et al., 1998), multiple-case studies provide a stronger base for theory building and enable a broader exploration of the research topic (Zartman, 2005). Multiple cases enable comparisons that clarify whether an emergent finding is simply idiosyncratic to a single case or consistently replicated by several cases (Eisenhardt & Greibner, 2007). Both qualitative data collection and analysis methods and quantitative methods can be used in case study research (Yin, 1994).

To be able to assure scientific validity and transferability of the results, seven Belgian regions were chosen as study areas. These are regions bringing forth information-rich data, and in which a major part of the research was executed. Next to the Belgian cases, best-practice cases abroad were also studied, in a first, exploratory phase. The findings in these areas were used to develop the research questions and methodologies in the Belgian cases.

The seven case studies in Belgium, Meetjesland, Haspengouw, Leievallei, Westhoek en Pajottenland in Flanders, and Parc Naturel des Deux Ourthes (PN2O) and the Gaume in the Walloon region, have been consciously selected based on the following criteria:

- Degree of rurality: the regions are all rural, but the degree of rurality differs;
- Geographical characteristics: location (distance to larger cities, the accessibility through roads or public transport, regions neighbouring the region in question, ...), landscape related to soil type, etc.;
- Economic characteristics of the region: income and employment levels, importance and type of agriculture, touristic development, etc;
- Characteristics related to the identity of the region: whether the region has unique selling points, the historical background of the region, whether the region has typical agricultural products and whether there is a unity in characteristics in the region;
- Characteristics related to how this identity is perceived: whether the residents are aware of their region, the image the region has to outsiders;
- Characteristics related to regional development: the presence of regional development organizations in the region, vital coalitions between actors in the regions, how the regional development process is organized, the goal of the regional development

process and possible problems encountered in reaching this goal, experience with European projects, etc.

Figure 3 shows the location of the selected cases on a map.

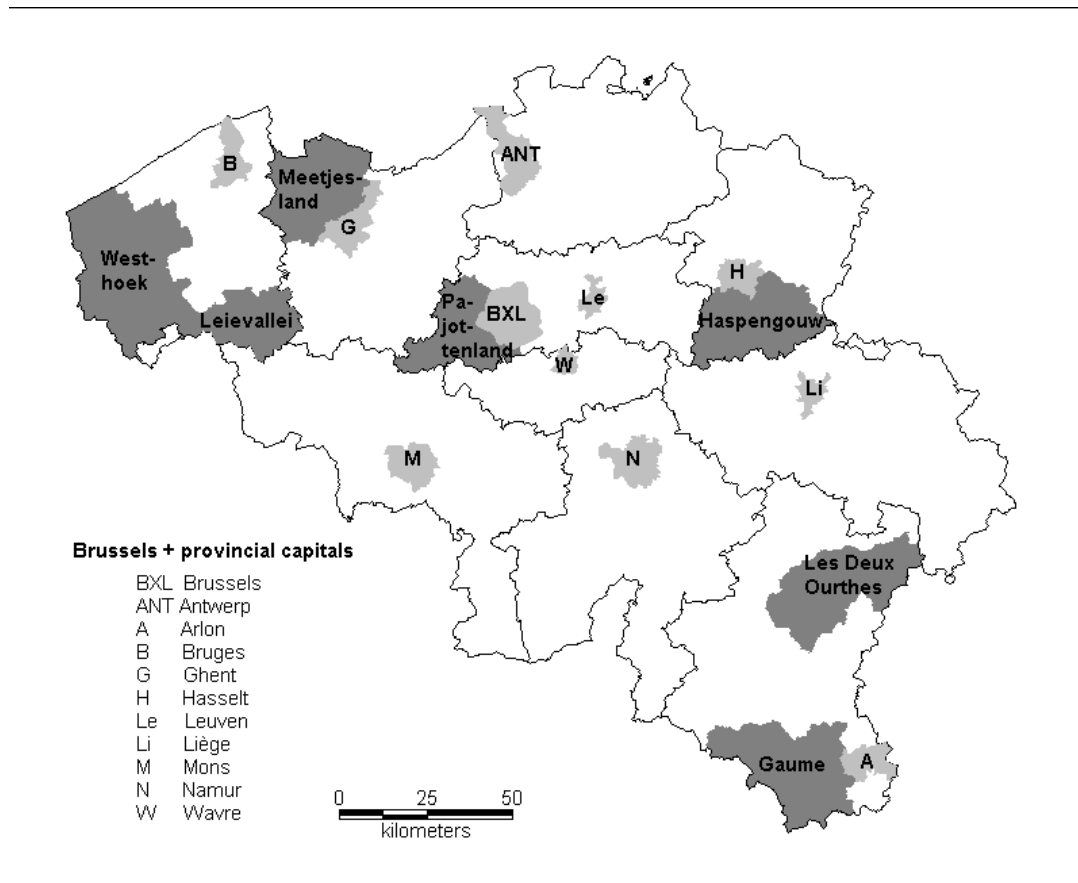


Figure 3. Location of case studies within Belgium

In order to clearly understand the results of the research it is necessary to have some understanding of what typifies the case studies. Table II gives an overview of some general characteristics of the seven Belgian study areas, regarding size, population and the agricultural sector in the region. For all these characteristics, the seven regions are very different.

Table II. General characteristics of the Belgian case studies

	Meetjes-land	Haspen- gouw	Les Deux Ourthes (PN2O)	Gaume	Leiestreek	Pajotten- land	Westhoek	Belgium
municipalities	Maldegem Sint-Laureins Kaprijke Eeklo Assenede Knesselare Aalter Lovendegem Waarschoot Zomergem Evergem Nevele	Nieuwer- kerken Sint-Truiden Gingelom Alken Wellen Borgloon Heers Diepen-beek Kortessem Hoeselt Tongeren Herstappe Bilzen Riemst	Bertogne Gouvy Houffalize La Roche-en- Ardenne Sainte Ode Tenneville	Florenville Chiny Meix-devant- Virton Virton Rouvroy Saint-Léger Habay Musson Tintigny Etalle	Anzegem Avelgem Deerlijk Harelbeke Kortrijk Kuurne Lendelede Menen Waregem Wevelgem Zwevegem Spiere- Helkijn Wervik	Affligem Bever Dilbeek Galmaarden Gooik Halle Herne Lennik Liedekerke Pepingen Roosdaal Sint-Pieters- Leeuw Ternat	Alveringem De Panne Diksmuide Heuvelland Houthulst Ieper Koekelare Koksijde Kortemark Langemark- Poel-kappelle Lo-Reninge Mesen Nieuwpoort Poperinge Veurne Vleteren Wervik Zonnebeke	
area (in km ²)	646.42	672.70	760.56	771.19	446.48	405.78	1187.25	30,528
agricultural area according to cadastre (in km ²) (2009)	494.20	507.91	333.64	300.29	281.85	281.34	997.20	17269.07
% agricultural area	76.45	75.50	43.87	38.94	63.13	69.33	83.99	56.57
population (2008)	164,852	201,029	21,999	51,361	296,447	197,820	215,802	10,666,866
population density (inhab/km ²) (2008)	255.02	298.84	28.92	66.60	663.97	487.51	181.77	349.41
# farms (2008)	2,177	1,870	530	415	1,222	901	3,571	46,187
# farms per km ²	3.37	2.78	0.70	0.54	2.74	2.22	3.01	1.51
ha agricultural land per farm	22.70	27.16	62.95	72.36	23.06	31.23	27.92	37.39

However, not all characteristics of a region can be expressed in numbers. Therefore, in the following, all cases will be described in detail regarding their geographical status, history, agriculture and the processes of regional development and branding going on in the region. This information is important for a good interpretation of the results of the research.

Meetjesland

Meetjesland is a predominantly rural region with an agricultural character in the north-west of the province of East-Flanders. In the north, the region is adjacent to the Netherlands and in the West it borders West-Flanders. The southern and eastern borders are formed by two important motorways: the E40 and the R4 respectively. The position of the four main big roads in Meetjesland (E40, R4, N49 & N44) induced the creation of an alternative name for the region: the diamond with the hat. Meetjesland is situated between the two important cultural centres of Bruges and Ghent. However, it also has some cultural attractions of its own, such as the fortified farms, the castle belt in the south and 13 museums. Counting about 130 000 inhabitants, it is a sparsely populated region (251 inhabitants/km², which is half of the Flemish average) with several small villages spread over the landscape. Concerning the landscape, the region can be split up into two main parts. The northern creek area is an open polder landscape with typical creeks and banks, while the southern Woodland is characterized by remainders of large forests (Streekplatform+ Meetjesland, 2011a).

Meetjesland is a pronounced agricultural and food region. There are about 2300 farmers in Meetjesland and 80% of the surface of the region is cultivated by farmers. The primary sector corresponds to about 9% of total employment, which is 3 times the Flemish average (Streekplatform+ Meetjesland, 2006). In the northern part of Meetjesland, the clay soil is ideal to grow crops such as potatoes, sugar beets, wheat and flax. In the southern part of Meetjesland, mixed farms with dairy and pigs are widespread. Grassland and maize are the most cultivated crops. Concerning the food industry, internationally oriented companies such as Vandemoortele and Lotus Bakeries are present in the region (Streekplatform+ Meetjesland, 2011a).

There are a lot of regional organizations in Meetjesland, which resulted in the formation of numerous consultative structures related to economy, tourism, landscape, culture, etc. In Flanders, Meetjesland was a trendsetter in the development of these regional consultative structures. The non-profit organization Streekplatform+ Meetjesland is the central player in the regional dynamic. All sectors and municipalities within the region have a representative in this organization. It was since the establishment of this regional platform in 1995, that a lot of regional arrangements with regard to diverse policy domains (culture, tourism, social work, etc.) were established. With the Streekplatform+ as a driving force, the most important organizations in the region developed a regional vision called 'Meetjesland 2020'. Together with the regional vision, a regional brand was introduced which is used by almost all local authorities and regional organizations. Together with neighbouring regions, Meetjesland is part of the LEADER area Meetjesland, Leie & Schelde. The Streekplatform+ is also involved in the project Vital Rural Area, in the framework of the Interreg IVB North Sea Programme. The objective of this project is to strengthen rural areas by increasing the competitiveness of its companies, optimizing public services and improving the image of these regions. The

Streekplatform+ is taking the lead in this last objective: to strengthen the image of a region through regional branding (Streekplatform+ Meetjesland, 2011b).

Haspengouw

Haspengouw is a region in the south of the province of Limburg. As in many regions, there is a lot of debate about its exact borders. In fact, the landscape and culture of the region exceed the province borders to parts of Flemish- and Walloon-Brabant, Liège and Namur. Because of its highly productive agriculture, the Romans came to settle in the region around Tongeren. Along the roman routes passing through the city, castles, villas and grave mounds were built. From the 10th century, the hilly landscape of Haspengouw proved to be ideal for protecting the county against neighbouring rival counties, which again gave rise to the construction of fortresses. In the time of the crusades, the Teutonic Knights ruled a share of the territory from their headquarters at the landcommandery of Alden Biesen, which is now an important tourist attraction. Typical for the region are its quadratic farmsteads, built in the 15th till 18th century by the prosperous nobility in the region. Till the second half of the 19th century, these large landowners grew fruit for own consumption and as a means of passing the time. Soon, however, these fruits were exported, production rose and the high standard fruit trees were replaced by half-standard fruit trees (Toerisme Vlaanderen, 2011). Fruit production is one of the key elements of the identity of the region. Today, the region is still taking measures to prevent the standard fruit trees from disappearing from the landscape.

From an agricultural perspective, Haspengouw can be divided into two parts: dry Haspengouw in the south and humid Haspengouw in the north. The loamy soil makes dry Haspengouw fit for arable farming, with sugar beets and wheat as important crops. In humid Haspengouw, the soil is more sandy and the most common farming types are dairy and fruit farms. In April, the blossoming fruit trees attract many tourists.

The promotion of Haspengouw as a fruit region was accelerated by the television series Katarakt, which was shown on Belgian national television at the end of 2007, beginning of 2008. Per episode, more than 1.5 million people in Flanders watched the series, so it can be considered as very popular. The series was co-financed by the province of Limburg and formed part of a promotion campaign for Limburg as a tourist destination. In 2009, the tourism office of the province of Limburg calculated that Katarakt resulted in at least 11,000 extra tourists staying overnight and at least 110,000 extra day trippers. All together, these tourists spent an extra 3.2 million Euros in the region (Toerisme Limburg, 2009).

In 2003 the province of Limburg commissioned a consultancy agency to create a Masterplan for Haspengouw. The objective of this plan is to promote the rich cultural heritage in the region, through research, educating and sensitizing the locals, and economically revitalize the region through heritage tourism. The coordination of actions within the Masterplan is done by a coordination platform, formed by the Regional Landscape Haspengouw and Voeren, Tourism Limburg and the Provincial Centre for Cultural Heritage. Besides this Masterplan, there is not a lot of cooperation for the development of Haspengouw at the regional level. The Province of Limburg, and its Tourism Office are largely responsible for the development of the region, and some cities in the region also do a lot of efforts for touristic development, e.g. Sint-Truiden and Tongeren.

Parc Naturel des Deux Ourthes

In 2001, the municipalities of Bertogne, Gouvy, Houffalize, La Roche, Sainte-Ode and Tenneville decided to establish the Parc Naturel des Deux Ourthes. The Parc is situated in the south east of Belgium and is well connected by motorway with Liège and Luxembourg and by railway with Brussels and Luxembourg. With a total area of 76 000 hectares, the territory of the Parc covers the six municipalities completely. The altitude ranges from 200 meters in the Ourthe valley to 650 meters on the plateau of the Ardennes. Unlike most other case study regions, les Deux Ourthes was not considered to be a region until very recently. The different municipalities did not start to work together because they had always been considered to be a historical or an administrative entity. When the Parc was set up, the Ourthe River was the most important element that connected them.

The main aims of the Parc revolve around nature conservation, environmental protection and environmental planning. This should not come as a surprise since the territory of the Parc is marked by an abundance of scenic landscapes, beautiful valleys and wildlife. With a population density of less than 30 inhabitants per square kilometer, there is much more room for nature in the Parc Naturel des Deux Ourthes than in other Belgian regions. The Parc hosts six protected sites and more than twenty nature reserves. As much as 15 per cent of the total territory of the Parc has been classified as a Natura 2000 habitat. On top of this natural richness, there is also a cultural wealth. In terms of gastronomy, it is difficult to overlook the local ham, for example. In terms of patrimony, it is hard to forget about the typical buildings in natural stone. The crucial point is, however, that both the nature and the culture of the region also prevail in the surrounding regions. Even though it cannot be denied that beautiful valleys and houses in natural stone are plentiful in the region, it has to be recognized that both are characteristic for the surrounding Ardennes regions too. Because of the relative recent establishment of the Parc and because of the similarities with the neighbouring regions, both the stakeholders and the residents of the Parc admit that the region of les Deux Ourthes lacks a strong regional identity.

At this moment, tourism and agriculture take up an important role in the local economy. With concentrations in La Roche and Houffalize, the tourism sector is even one of the biggest employers. In terms of agriculture, the region is mainly known for its cattle farms. As in other regions, the absolute number of farmers is going down, while the average size of each farm is going up. While some farmers are trying to diversify their activities by offering farm products or farm stays, others have chosen for intensive pork breeding.

While the Parc Naturel des Deux Ourthes could function as a regional development agency that would overlook all aspects of the economic development of the region, it has to be admitted that there is a lot of overlap with other institutions. From a thematic point of view, it has to be acknowledged, for example, that there are quite some organizations working on more or less the same aspects in more or less the same area. In 2000, the tourist information offices have been regrouped into a couple of Maisons du Tourisme, for instance. From 2001, the Contrat de Rivière Ourthe is gathering all the municipalities that have anything to do with the surface water in the whole Ourthe Basin. To make this fragmentation even worse, each cooperative assembles another set of municipalities. The six municipalities of the Parc are divided over four different Maisons du Tourisme, for example. The Contrat de Rivière Ourthe, on the other hand, covers much more than the Parc Naturel des Deux Ourthes alone. The result is that efforts of the Parc Naturel always run the risk that they are being counteracted by projects of other intercommunal institutions. Simultaneously, there is also a danger that

danger that different institutions working within the borders of the Parc cannot come to an agreement.

Gaume

The ten municipalities of the Gaume take up most of the southern tip of Belgium. These municipalities are Forenville, Chiny, Meix-devant-Virton, Virton, Rouvroy, Saint-Léger, Habay, Musson, Tintigny and Etalle. To the north, the region is bounded by a geological boundary between the Mesozoic sediments of the Lorraine and the Paleozoic sediments of the Ardennes. In the east, there is a linguistic boundary between the Roman patois spoken in the Gaume and the Alemmanic patois spoken in the Pays d'Arlon. In the south, there is a political boundary between the kingdom of Belgium and the French republic.

All in all, the Gaume is still a predominantly rural region with a landscape that is characterized by an alternation of forests, fields and small villages. With less than 70 inhabitants per square kilometer, the region is one of the least densely populated in the whole of Belgium. The Gaume is rather well known among tourists. The residents feel very much connected with it as well. The region hosts a wide range of natural and cultural assets. With regard to the nature, one can refer to the rivers, the valleys, the pastures and the forests, for example. Concerning the culture, it is hard to forget about the regional dialect, the gastronomy (Orval, wine from Torgny, pâté gaumais, zigomar, etc) and the local architecture (typical stones, typical houses, etc.). In comparison with the Ardennes, the Gaume is said to have a different soil, climate, architecture, mentality, dialect and culture. In tourist leaflets, the inhabitants of the Gaume are also said to be more welcoming, hospitable and friendly.

In the economy of the Gaume, agriculture has become less important than it used to be. In a lot of small villages, there is often only one active farmer left. In comparison with the Belgian average, the percentage of cultivated land is also smaller in the Gaume than elsewhere. Most of the farmers breed cattle for the milk or the meat. Apart from agriculture, there is some forestry, industry and tourism. Within Belgium, the region takes up a very peripheral position. It is situated far from any major towns or cities. Yet, because of the proximity to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, more and more people commute between the Gaume and its rich neighbour. In fact, a lot of new residents consider the region to be the banlieue of Luxembourg.

At this moment, there are a lot of organizations working on the natural environment, the landscape, the culture, the tourism and the agriculture of the Gaume. Few of them represent all ten municipalities, however. The problem is that the region is not considered to be an administrative entity. Even though there is one tourism office for seven municipalities, the three other municipalities are promoted by two other tourism offices, for example. In order to initiate and facilitate a more coherent regional development process, a number of stakeholders have urged to set up a natural park that brings together stakeholders from all municipalities and from different sectors. As long as this natural park has not been realized, there is no agency that overlooks the regional development of the Gaume as a whole.

Leievallei

The region around the Leie river in the South of the province of West-Flanders used to be famous for its flax production, which was exported to all continents. The water in the Leie, which the English used to call the 'Golden River', was ideal for flax production because of its low level of calcium and iron (Toerisme Leiestreek, 2011). However, the flax- and textile industry only was a part of the rich industrial sector in the region, where also the brick, tile, tobacco and other industries were well developed. The choice of the name 'Leievallei' region is somewhat arbitrary, since the name is neither internally (within the region) nor externally recognized. As a consequence the name cannot be associated with a well-defined territory and covers no symbolic value. Besides, the region seems to have no pronounced identity. On the other hand, the institutionalization of the region, which is mainly steered and catalyzed by the Intermunicipal Development Agency 'Leiedal' and the Province of West-Flanders, is already going on for decades and has reached a stage where a lot of policy domains (landscape, spatial planning) have gone beyond the municipal/local level and are now being centralized within the intermunicipal arrangement. In contrast with the Meetjesland, the social network structure is more hierarchical.

The Intermunicipal Development Agency Leiedal groups thirteen municipalities and cities in the region of Kortrijk, who cooperate in the following domains: economy, e-government, town planning, housing, environment and mobility. Leiedal stimulates the cooperation between the municipalities and tries to develop the region as a whole (Intercommunale Leiedal, 2011).

From 2002, Leiedal started to focus on developing the landscape and open space in the region. The objective was to create a framework for the spatial planning of green structures, which not only strengthens the landscape, but also agriculture, nature and recreation possibilities in the region of Kortrijk. In 2006, the Regional Green Structure was developed, which created a vision on the open space and the landscape. The objective of this plan is to connect large green areas in the region and to support projects that fit in these green areas, in order to try to create a spatial, ecological or recreational surplus value. To develop the Regional Green Structure, Leiedal cooperates with organisations in the region and other governments, also beyond the country's borders. For instance, for the recreational development of the waterways and bicycle routes, there is cooperation with the north of France. The bicycle route network links the cultural, industrial and natural heritage in the region (Intercommunale Leiedal, 2008).

The agricultural sector in the region is known for its vegetable production: Brussels sprouts, cabbages, scorzonera, chicory and mushrooms. Farm products from the region are promoted through the label of 'Leiestreek Hoeveproducten'. Leiestreek is a larger touristic-recreational region which comprises 28 municipalities spread over East- and West-Flanders (Toerisme Leiestreek, 2011).

Westhoek

As the name indicates, the region Westhoek is a region in the most Western part of Flanders. The northern boundary is the North sea, while in the south, the region is adjacent to France. The region has a peripheral position within the country, not only related to the distance to the

capital Brussels, but also in terms of social, institutional, political and economic dimensions. The Westhoek is a well-known region in Flanders; its diversity of open landscapes and several heritage sites related to its First World War history are the main attractions. Among the residents of the region there is a strong attachment to the region, with the regional dialect and the open space as most important identity markers.

Westhoek is one of the most rural regions of Flanders and is traditionally an agricultural region with agriculture-related industries. The farms in the polders focus predominantly on field cropping (feed crops, potatoes, sugar) and cattle, while on the sandy loam soils the farms are typically mixed with a combination of field cropping, vegetable cultivation and stock breeding (cattle, pigs and poultry). The southern part is known for the production of hoppe, with a specific mode of cultivation that is strongly visible in the landscape. However, because the economic importance of hoppe has decreased, the cultivated area of hoppe has become very limited. A significant percentage of the farmers adapted to the increased importance of tourism and started farm tourism or recreation activities on their farm.

The combination of the heritage of the First World War, the coast, the diverse landscapes and open space attracts many tourists to the region. Westtoer, the provincial tourism office, is responsible for the communication and promotion of the Westhoek as a tourist region. The efforts of Westtoer to promote the region to the rest of Flanders and Belgium have increased the economic importance and revenues of the tourism sector, with many direct and indirect regional employment opportunities.

Since 1994, the region disposes of a regional network organization, Streekwerking Westhoek, which is the intermediate level that links the municipalities and the province. Streekwerking Westhoek is responsible for i) designing and implementing the region-specific policy for agricultural, tourism, environmental, economic, cultural and social domains; ii) facilitating the inter-sectoral dialogue and iii) coordinating several integrated regional development projects. Streekwerking Westhoek implements these tasks in cooperation with the province, the municipalities and regional civic associations. Since 1998, the region (without the coastal municipalities) is acknowledged as a LEADER area and receives European support for rural development. The LEADER strategy mainly focuses on i) reinforcing the local and regional governance capabilities, ii) strengthening the region's recreational and facilities' capacities, iii) enhancing the livability in rural villages, iv) preserving and developing the local heritage and v) promoting local entrepreneurship. Streekwerking Westhoek has chosen to integrate Leader Westhoek into their daily functioning and the local development strategy of Leader Westhoek fits the long-term regional vision, as put forward by the regional network organization and its' policy and civic partners.

Streekwerking Westhoek recently chose regional identity as an overarching theme in the different regional development programs and tries to use the region-specific characteristics and assets in every policy domain. Next to that, they started in September 2009 a regional branding project, funded by EFRD. Partners in the project are the province West-Flanders, Westtoer, the provincial tourism office, and RESOC Westhoek, a socio-economic association.

Pajottenland

Pajottenland is a region situated southwest of Brussels, in the western part of the province Flemish Brabant, along the border between Flanders and Wallonia. Pajottenland is characterized by a small scale landscape with the alternation of hills and river valleys. The northern municipalities, closest to Brussels, are more urbanized and industrialized, while the southern municipalities, at only 20 km from the Belgian and European capital, are still rural. The name Pajottenland dates from the middle of the 19th century and doesn't refer to a fixed geographic or administrative region. It has no link with historical regions or the physical character of the area. It was introduced by a local writer and had a folklore meaning, referring to "the rurality close to Brussels". Although the name Pajottenland is well known, both inside and outside the region, not so many people feel really attached to the region.

Agriculture and agriculture-related industries and services are well-represented in the southern, rural municipalities of Pajottenland. Besides agriculture and agriculture-related industries and services, there are little employment opportunities in the region and the majority of the residents works in Brussels. The typical farm of the region is combining the production of cereals and feed crops with cattle breeding. There is only a small number of farmers that have started farm tourism or farm products initiatives. Since the 1980s, several farmers' markets have been initiated in the region, and the last 10 years these farmers' markets have grown in popularity and attract many people from the region and from Brussels as well. Typical regional products are strawberries, a traditionally important crop that is regaining importance, and the typical regional beers Geuze and Kriek.

The proximity of this rural area with recreational possibilities to Brussels offers plenty opportunities for tourism development, which until now is rather low developed. There are only a few possibilities for overnight stay in the region and the offer of recreational walking and biking trails is limited.

Since 2002, the region Pajottenland is acknowledged as a Leader-area and receives European support for rural development. However, the region of Pajottenland+ is smaller than the region defined above: only the southern, rural municipalities are eligible and meet the requirements of Leader. The Local Action Group of Leader, Pajottenland+, is the only institution that is working on integrated regional development, in collaboration with about 20 different regional economic, ecological and socio-cultural associations and the municipalities. The development strategy aims at three tracks: i) promoting the rural economy, ii) strengthening the rural residential accommodation and the provision of services and iii) preserving the rural character of the region. Since 2007, Haviland, the inter-communal organisation responsible for a.o. spatial planning, has set up a small regional development department, that is supporting Pajottenland+ in implementing and managing the local development strategy.

Pajottenland started a regional branding project in November 2008, funded by EFRD, under coordination of the local action group of Pajottenland+. Other regional partners in the project are the provincial tourism department, and the provincial regional products association. For the regional branding project, Pajottenland has to cooperate with Zennevallei, an adjacent region, that is much more urbanized. Both Pajottenland and Zennevallei were recently merged by the province into one region for tourist promotion reasons.

Groene Woud (the Netherlands)

Groene Woud is a rural area in between the Dutch cities 's Hertogenbosch, Tilburg and Eindhoven. The very flat landscape is characterized by small agricultural parcels, surrounded by lines of poplars, and a few nature reserves. Different picturesque, small villages are situated in a nodal pattern, on short mutual distances. The name Groene Woud only exists since 2005, when the area has been recognized by the Dutch government as a 'national landscape'. Before the proclamation as national landscape, the region was called Meierij and this region was smaller than what is now Groene Woud. A national landscape is an area with a unique combination of cultural-historical and natural elements, telling the story of the landscape. In all national landscapes there is a specific and typical combination of different landscape aspects, like nature, relief, land use and infrastructure. The proclamation of a national landscape entails that the Dutch government pays extra attention to the area and that extra financial means are reserved for it. These financial means are used to preserve and strengthen the core qualities of the area, essentially the landscape qualities of the area. Because of the creation of this new area, the attachment that people feel to their region is low and not many respondents attributed specific meanings to the characteristics of the region.

Agriculture and its related industries and services are the most important economic base for the region. The small agricultural parcels don't facilitate the production of crops, so the majority of the farms focus on dairy production. Because competition on the world market becomes more and more difficult, a substantial part of the regional farmers has shifted focus towards niche markets like organic farming or diversification strategies. Diversification through farm tourism, the processing of products on farms, on farm education and the production of regional products has found wide acceptance in the region.

The tourism potential of the region has increased during the last years, with a main focus on rural tourism. The number of (rural) accommodation for overnight stay and walking and biking trails has risen. The tourism facilities are mainly aimed at attracting the residents of the surrounding cities.

Since 1998, there was a Local Action Group of Leader active in the area, called Innovation Platform Sustainable Meierij. The LAG implemented several rural development projects and supported the introduction of the regional branding project. The regional branding project has its origins in the organisation of an annual Region Festival by farmers. The entrepreneurs that initiated the regional festival used available Leader funds to hire a project agency that drew up and implemented a business plan for their projects and the integration of all discrete projects into one regional plan for the branding of the region. This resulted in the development of a cooperative association that is responsible for the implementation and management of the regional branding project. With the proclamation as national landscape, two extra regional development agencies were set up to facilitate the development processes related to the national landscape regulations. In 2008 both these regional development agencies and Innovation Platform Sustainable Meierij were merged into one regional development agency: Regional Counsel Groene Woud and Meierij. The Regional Counsel has formulated a regional development plan, with as main priorities i) preserving and maintaining the landscape, ii) developing the regional brand with a focus on economic sustainability, iii) promoting urban-rural relations and iv) optimizing water management in the region.

West Cork (Ireland)

West Cork is the southern coastal region of Ireland with Cork as its capital. It is a rural area in a mountainous scenery, surrounded by the sea. Other visible characteristics are the small villages with coloured houses and the fuchsia hedges along small meandering roads. The residents of the region have a strong passion and pride for the region and its food products. The peripheral position of West Cork impedes the access to external markets, but on the other hand it allows for a more pronounced regional identity and collaboration amongst people.

The percentage of area under agricultural cultivation in West Cork is twice as big as the national average. The industrialisation processes that have changed and intensified European agriculture, has had less influence in West Cork, where most farms are small-scale farms, which are very often fragmented. Dairying is the most important sector with 42% of farms involved, there are also significant numbers of beef, sheep and pig farmers in the region. The southeastern part of the area has quite a number of tillage farms, while inland in the eastern half of the area mixed tillage and dairy farming is common. Organic farming in West Cork has grown to a stronger position than in any other part of Ireland, with approximately 10% of all registered producers.

The area is situated within one of the country's prime tourism destinations and attracts a huge amount of both foreign and Irish visitors. In recent years the region has seen a considerable investment in new tourist accommodation, and to a lesser degree in amenities and facilities. Whilst the direct employment in tourism is comparatively modest, its significant regional distributive effect has led to the creation of employment and the maintenance of rural populations where few alternative opportunities have existed. Economically, socially and environmentally tourism represents a good strategic fit for the expansion of economic activity in the region.

Like the rest of Ireland, West Cork has been receiving European support for rural development since 1992. Nowadays the West Cork Leader Co-operative Society, a project agency that also takes up the function of Local Action Group, paid by European and national funds, co-ordinates the rural development process. The LAG focuses on i) developing and marketing the regional brand West Cork, ii) strengthening the natural, cultural and built environment and iii) developing and implementing new technologies. The main duties of the Leader Co-op. are (i) the integration of the individual projects of entrepreneurs – who can apply for a grant – into a well-thought strategy for the region, (ii) encouraging social cohesion and networking and (iii) offering training facilities. The West Cork Leader Co-operative Society started in 1995 to use the unique image and identity of the West Cork region as the key driver of the rural development strategy of the region. They see the branding initiative through a broader development lens rather than a mere marketing one.

2.3. Data collection by in-depth interviews

In-depth semi-structured interviews were done with stakeholders involved in regional development (local organizations, local governments, individuals, etc.) and with farmers in the regions of Haspengouw, Meetjesland, Les Deux Ourthes, Gaume, Westhoek, Pajottenland and the best practice cases abroad of Groene Woud and West Cork. The interviews were done

in the period of January till April 2008, with extra interviews carried out in the first half of 2010.

Stakeholders involved in regional development were found by desktop research and snowball sampling. Interviewees were mostly key persons from organizations involved in regional development, but could also be chairmen of local societies, politicians, entrepreneurs, local guides, teachers, etc. An important selection criterion for the interviewees was diversity in perspectives. Interviews were mostly held in the working office of the interviewee and lasted about 1 to 3 hours. The topics brought up with the stakeholders were the identity of the region and how this evolved, the organizations occupied with regional development and branding in the region, the links between these organizations and the link with citizens, strategies for regional development now and in the future, the role of farmers in regional development, their contacts with farmers, and their opinion on the role of multifunctional agriculture in regional identity and branding.

Next to the stakeholders, farmers with multifunctional strategies (also called diversification) were interviewed. The selection of the farmers was done through snowball sampling, paying attention to a sufficient amount of independent starting points, spatial diversity in place of residence and diversity in multifunctional strategies. Extra farmers were found through desktop research and promotional documents. These interviews were all held in the residence of the interviewee and lasted about 1 to 1.30 hour. The topics of the interviews with farmers were the motivation for being involved in multifunctional practices, the problems they encounter, their link with the region, whether there are advantages or disadvantages of regional development for farmers and their link with government bodies or organizations involved in regional development.

The interviews were analyzed by means of the software NVIVO, by coding the text paragraphs of the interviews' verbatim transcripts. The credibility of the results was strengthened by researcher triangulation (cfr. Baxter & Eyles, 1998)

2.4. Data Collection by Surveys

For part 1, 2 and 3.3 of the research, data were collected through a survey with inhabitants and a survey with farmers of the regions Haspengouw, Meetjesland, Les Deux Ourthes, Gaume and Westhoek. Questionnaires were collected in Haspengouw, Meetjesland, Les Deux Ourthes and Gaume from April until November 2009. In Westhoek the survey was only done for inhabitants and data collection took place from February until May 2010.

The inhabitants' questionnaire was completely collected through an online application. It consisted of six parts, and was a combination of open and closed questions. Part 1 of the questionnaire dealt with the inhabitants' perception of the character of the region: i) the elements that characterize the region, ii) whether the respondents feel they belong to the region and iii) the region's main strengths and weaknesses. Part 2 contained questions related to tourism: i) whether tourism should be promoted in the region, ii) how should this be done and iii) the main touristic attractions. Part 3 was about the role of the farmer in the region: i) which role does and should the farmer play in the region, ii) whether the respondents buy products directly at the farm, and iii) why, or why not. Part 4 contained questions related to what could be done to improve regional development: i) evaluation of the work of regional

organizations , ii) involvement of the respondent in regional development, iii) expectations of the regional development process. Part 5 contained one specific question on how regional identity affects the value of the inhabitant's real estate. Part 6, finally, was a socio-demographic part, containing also specific questions on how long the inhabitant lived in the region and the motivation to live there.

The farmers' questionnaire contained mainly closed questions and consisted of five parts. Part 1 was about regional development and asked which elements influence regional identity, how the farmers are involved in the development of regional identity, how regional development affects agriculture and the region as a whole. Part 2 of the questionnaire dealt with how several sustainability parameters on the farm changed in comparison to the situation five years ago. Part 3 was only aimed at farmers who diversified their activities and contained questions on the type of diversification, cooperation regarding diversification, advice the farmers received and specific training. Part 4 asked all the farmers, with and without diversification, which elements could be an obstacle in developing diversification on the farm and how several elements influence cooperation with other farmers in diversification. Part 5, finally, contained general socio-demographic questions, questions related to the farm and farm management.

To understand the representativeness of the survey results, it is important to know that all inhabitants' and 33 per cent of the farmers' surveys were collected online. Out of a total of 485 farmers' questionnaires, 67 per cent was gathered through a postal survey with a response rate of 19 per cent. Promotion for both online surveys was done through articles in the local press and mailing lists of local organizations. The questionnaires were also distributed through local organizations, institutions and municipalities willing to cooperate. Even though we did our best to increase the response rate by inviting respondents to participate in a draw where they could win an iPhone and other nice prizes, it has to be admitted that the survey results are not representative for all the inhabitants of the region. First of all, it has to be acknowledged that there is a bias in the results because not everyone has equal access to internet connections. In general, men with a higher-than-average socio-economic status and education are relatively more present on the web than women and men with a lower-than-average socio-economic status or education (Hewson, et al., 2003). Secondly, it has to be recognized that the contact lists we got from the regional organizations were largely made up of people who are interested in their working. For this reason, it has to be presumed that supporters and advocates of these institutions are relatively better represented than opponents and adversaries. While this makes it impossible to draw general statements about the inhabitants of the regions, it does not discredit the use of the surveys. In order to deal with the limits of the questionnaire, we focused, for example, on the open questions of the inhabitants' survey and analyzed them in a qualitative manner. Quantitative analysis was done with the software SPSS.

2.5. Hedonic pricing

Part 3.1 of the project focuses on the economic impact of multifunctional agriculture in a region, specifically on tourism, real estate and land prices. For real estate and land prices, this impact is assessed by using a hedonic pricing method. Within hedonic pricing, the assumption is made that people value the characteristics of a good, rather than the good itself. Thus, prices reflect the value of a set of characteristics or attributes that people consider important when purchasing the good. Therefore a function can be built in which price is explained by

attributes of the good or service. The marginal implicit price of any of the good's attributes can then be found by differentiating the hedonic price function with respect to the attribute.

In a first step, the average selling price of a private house in the municipality and the average selling price of building land at municipal level are analyzed. Data are collected for each municipality in Belgium and for four different years (1990, 1995, 2000 and 2005) leading to a larger dataset and more possibilities for research (panel data). To find the best function for real estate or land price as many relevant attributes of houses or land as possible have to be defined. Sometimes this is limited because of the lack of data. One such problem was encountered on multifunctional agriculture attributes, because no data series exists for the whole of Belgium. Therefore a variable for multifunctional agriculture was built, using information gathered within two projects (Calus, et al., 2005; Van Huylenbroeck, et al., 2005). Within these projects, the number of multifunctional farmers in West-Flanders and the fringe of Brussels was registered. Furthermore, it was researched which characteristics of farmers can explain the uptake of different types of diversification. Data on some of these characteristics are available for all municipalities in Belgium. This makes it possible to extrapolate the percentage of multifunctional farmers per municipality to all municipalities in Belgium.

2.6. Focus groups

Focus groups are group interviews (Morgan, 1998). A moderator guides the interviewer while a small group discusses the topics that the interviewer raises. When doing focus groups, the interviewer uses group discussions to generate data on specific topics. The researcher selects a purposive sample of participants and typically, the participants come from similar backgrounds. The moderator works from a predetermined set of discussion topics and uses different participative methods to keep the discussion animated (VIWTA, 2006).

In the project, focus groups were conducted in three regions and for two parts of the research: in the region Westhoek for the first part on the relationships between local identity and regional development and in the regions Meetjesland and Leievallei for the third part on economic benefits as a result of regional identity development.

In the region Westhoek, five focus groups were done, with participation of in total 41 stakeholders and individuals involved in regional development. The themes of the focus groups were selected on the basis of the interviews. All themes were challenges for the future regional development of Westhoek: i) development and preservation of open space, ii) brain drain, iii) identity versus image, iv) development and preservation of local heritage and v) development of a social Westhoek with sufficient provision of services. The aim of the focus groups was to gain a broad insight into the regional development dynamics and to suggest new development paths for the region.

In order to assess the public, economic and governmental basis for alternative financing, different workshops have been organized in well-selected regions. A financing construction - containing alternative financing mechanisms - has been proposed to a broad field of actors during two workshops in the Meetjesland region (29/4/2008 and 19/6/2009) and one in the Leievallei (23/4/2009). The aim of the workshops was to verify whether or not there is public support for different alternative financing mechanisms. Leievallei has been chosen next to

Meetjesland, because it was assumed that the public character of and the responsibility for the open (rural) space would be more explicit in this urbanized context.

2.7. Grounded theory/ Qualitative analysis through coding

Because of the explorative character of this study, we opted to adopt a moderate version of the grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Grounded theory implies systematic research that “remains open to unexpected paths of questioning and discovery” (Bailey, et al., 1999a, p. 173). In this line of thought, non-chaotic theories are built rather than tested through a largely inductive process of repeatedly coding and recoding (Glaser, 1965; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Starting from an integration of fieldwork and well-defined theoretical constructs, codes are grouped into categories, which are finally brought together in hypotheses or ‘propositions’ (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). These propositions eventually provoke revised rounds of data collection until the researcher can come up with a new set of empirically grounded theories. The underlying idea is that a trustworthy theory can only be developed if “it accounts for all known cases without exception” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 309). In principle this means that the provisional analytical scheme has to be constantly revised until it accounts for every single data fragment (Silverman, 2000, p. 180-181). The objective is to allow the theory to emerge from the data and to understand the research situation, rather than to test an a priori outlined hypothesis.

3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REGIONAL IDENTITY AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

3.1. Theoretical introduction to regional identity and regional development

3.1.1. Regional identity

Over the last two decades, regional identity, regional development and regional branding have become popular themes among academics and policy makers (Pike, et al., 2006; Wiskerke, 2007). Behind this popularity lies a renewed interest in the geographical scale of the region. This interest follows from the rescaling of politics, economics and culture. The important point here is that globalisation and localisation do not necessarily have to be each others' opposites (Swyngedouw, 2004; Simon, 2005). Internationalisation and globalisation have reordered political, economical and cultural relationships into global patterns (Dicken, 1992; Featherstone, et al., 1995). It is clear, however, that this reordering is as much local as it is global (Swyngedouw, 2004). In economic terms, Silicon Valley, has demonstrated, for example, that economic competitiveness is based on local clusters of companies within global networks (Rosenfeld, 1997; Porter, 2000). In political terms, the emerging globalisation has led to a loss of power of nation-state in favour of supra-national bodies such as the European Union and at the same time, seemingly paradoxically, a decentralisation to the local scale (Jeffery, 1996; Jones & Keating, 1995; Pike, et al., 2006). Anssi Paasi (2002b, p. 137) concluded, therefore, that "international markets and the emerging continental regime of Europe have now given rise to a new wave of regionalism that stresses the importance of regions and regional identities".

Even though regional identity has become a key concept among academics and policy makers, its precise meaning remains vague and unclear. Jan Kolen (2006, p. 2) remarked, for example, "that identity may well be the most used concept in the debate on the cultural meaning of our environment, but that it is also the least defined". Together with a lot of other scholars, he considers regional identity to be a container concept (Paasi, 2002a; Kruit, et al., 2004). Because different ideas have been lumped together under the same umbrella, regional identity means different things to different people. This conceptual chaos broadly reflects two opposing points of view. The major fault line lies between the essentialist approach of the 'old' cultural geographers and the constructivist approach of the 'new' cultural geographers (Natter & Jones, 1997; Agnew, 1999; Simon, 2005).

In the eyes of the former, it is possible to speak of a singular, homogeneous and natural identity of a region. In France, the followers of Vidal de la Blache concentrated, for example, on the harmonious relationship between the physical, cultural and social aspects of a regional entity. By investigating the interconnections between cultural features such as the regional economy and the regional mentality, on the one hand, and natural qualities such as the soil, the climate and the geomorphology, on the other, they demarcated regions with a particular *personnalité géographique* (Vidal de la Blache, 1903; De Pater & Van der Wusten, 1996, p. 111-114). In their essentialist view, this was a rather stable object whose true meaning could be found in the age-old dialogue between culture and nature.

Over the last decades, such an essentialist view has been criticized, however. According to the proponents of the 'new' cultural geography, the demarcation and the personality of a region

cannot be taken for granted as pre-given facts. In-stead, they have to be seen as the result of social struggles, power relations and identity politics (e.g. Jackson & Penrose, 1993; Keith & Pile, 1993). In the words of John Allen, Doreen Massey and Allen Cochrane regions “are not ‘out there’ waiting to be discovered; they are our (and others’) constructions” (1998, p. 2). In what follows, we will elaborate on this. To do so, we will come up with four interrelated binaries between essentialist and constructivist conceptualizations of regional identities. Even though the real distinction between essentialist and constructivist theories may be less caricatural and less pronounced than these four binaries suggest, we are convinced that they provide an analytical means to reveal the meaning of regional identity as it is understood by constructivists (cf. Simon, 2005, p. 21).

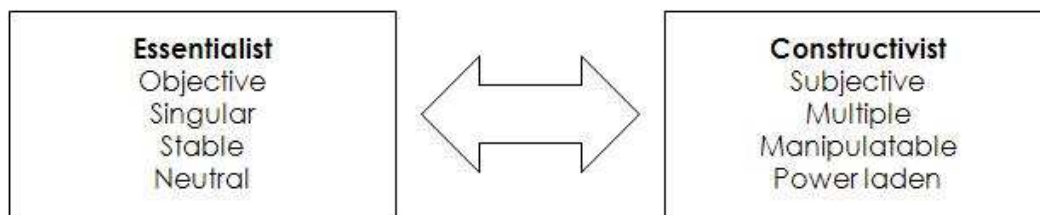


Figure 4: Binaries between essentialist and constructivist ideas of regional identity

1.) The binary between the objective and the subjective: Both in essentialist and in constructivist approaches, regional identities lean on characteristics of the region such as the landscape, the vegetation, the soil composition, the climate, the land use, the economic situation, the history, the culture and the dialect (Paasi, 2003, p. 477; Stedman, 2003). Essentialists consider these characteristics to be objective markers of identity, however, while constructivists assume that they are, by definition, subjective. In the constructivist framework, the characteristics and the boundaries of a region do not have a direct influence on the regional identity. Instead, they are assumed to be coloured by personal perceptions (Cuba & Hummon, 1993). For constructivists, regional identities and regional boundaries are the product of interaction between the physical and the social space of a region and the mental reflection of this space in someone’s mind and memory (cf. Raagmaa, 2001, p. 11).

2.) The binary between the singular and the multiple: If we assume that regional identities and regional boundaries reflect the characteristics of a region in a neutral and objective way, as essentialists do, then every region has only one identity which reflects the regional features univocally. If we assume, however, that the identity and the boundary of a region are the result of individual perceptions, as constructivists do, then regions can have several identities and multiple boundaries. After all, it is virtually impossible that two people will experience, interpret and represent a spatial entity in exactly the same way (Paasi, 2003).

3.) The apparent binary between the personal and the social: At first sight, the binary between the singular and the multiple corresponds with a binary between the social and the personal. While essentialists expect that every region has a single identity, constructivists assume that everyone has a different idea about the identity of a region. The crucial point here is that such a personal relation does not necessarily hold back an inter-subjective consensus (cf. Paasi, 2002b, p. 804). In real life, the construction of regional identities will always be influenced by television broadcasts, newspaper articles and everyday conversations (Paasi, 2002a; Kruit, et al., 2004; Curré, 2007). Because different social groups are socialized in a

different way, the identity and the boundary of a region vary according to a person's social identity (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001, p. 112 in Simon, 2005, p. 22). Therefore, constructivists do not rely on a purely personal conceptualization of regional identity, but on the social construction of regional identities by different social groups.

4.) The binary between the stable and the manipulatable: For essentialists, regional identities reflect the typical features of a region in a straightforward way. This means that the identity of a region can only be modified if the regional characteristics undergo a change. From the viewpoint of constructivists, this is not necessarily the case (Simon, 2005, p. 23-24; Kolen, 2006). Because they consider regional identities as the result of an interpretation of the typical features of a region, such identities can also change with the creation of a new perspective on the region. This also implies that regional identities can be resisted, challenged and reworked continuously (Pratt, 1999; Paasi, 2002b, p. 807).

5.) The binary between the neutral and the power laden: For essentialists, the identity of a region is something stable and objective that is intrinsically neutral and powerless. For constructivists, the establishment of a regional identity is not the result of an autonomous and self-evident process, however, but an expression of the perpetual struggle over meanings, interpretations and discourses (Paasi, 2002a, p. 805). For this reason, constructivists cannot consider regional identities as self-evident, positive and innocent forces (Paasi, 2002b, p. 137). In their view, the creation of regional identities has to be seen as acts of power that are oriented towards the production and the reproduction of structures of exclusion and domination (Paasi, 2002a, p. 805; Paasi, 2002b, p. 139). Unlike essentialist scholars, constructivist researchers have to ask who has created the dominant identity of a region and whose views were included and excluded in that process (Paasi, 2002b, p. 146; Simon, 2005, p. 22).

3.1.2. Regional development

The changing conceptualization of regional identity creates new possibilities in the field of regional development. Different people and/or institutions, who have different interests in the development of the region, may proclaim different regional identities (Groote, et al., 2000). Nowadays one or more of the identities are used by different institutions as a catalyst for regional development. In policy documents, regional development has been defined as “a general effort to reduce regional disparities by supporting economic activities in regions” (OECD, 2010). In the old paradigm, such development used to be largely a matter of getting the right combination of factors of production to achieve efficiency. At that time, thinking focused mostly on “hard” factors, such as location, resources and transport infrastructure. Since the 1980s, thinking has started to focus, however, on “softer” factors such as networks of actors and public-private interactions. Regional development now incorporates sustainability and holistic or integrated approaches to economic, social and environmental concerns (Pike, et al., 2006). Regions are not necessarily condemned by geography to backwardness or progress, nor is there a magic formula allowing regions to innovate and grow (Keating, 1999). Rather, there are objective economic strengths and weaknesses, but also context-specific social, cultural and political factors that shape how the region responds to development processes. Regional identity is one of these socio-cultural factors that is taking a more central role in discussions about endogenous development.

Apart from this shift to softer location factors, there is also a shift to involve different kinds of actors in regional development processes. Figure 5 illustrates that these can range from public institutions and regional development agencies to civil society partners and private companies. In this context, Jessop (1997) and Pike et al. (2006) talk about the shift from government to governance. Governance refers to the development of governing styles in which boundaries between and within public and private sectors have become blurred. It is generally understood to imply a shift from state sponsorship of economic and social programmes and projects towards the delivery of these through partnerships involving both governmental and non-governmental organisations and perhaps other actors (Shortall & Shucksmith, 1998). Regional governance refers to a set of new and different modes of governance, which together constitute new ways of doing regional policy and which are able to support regional development more effectively (Benz, et al., 2000).

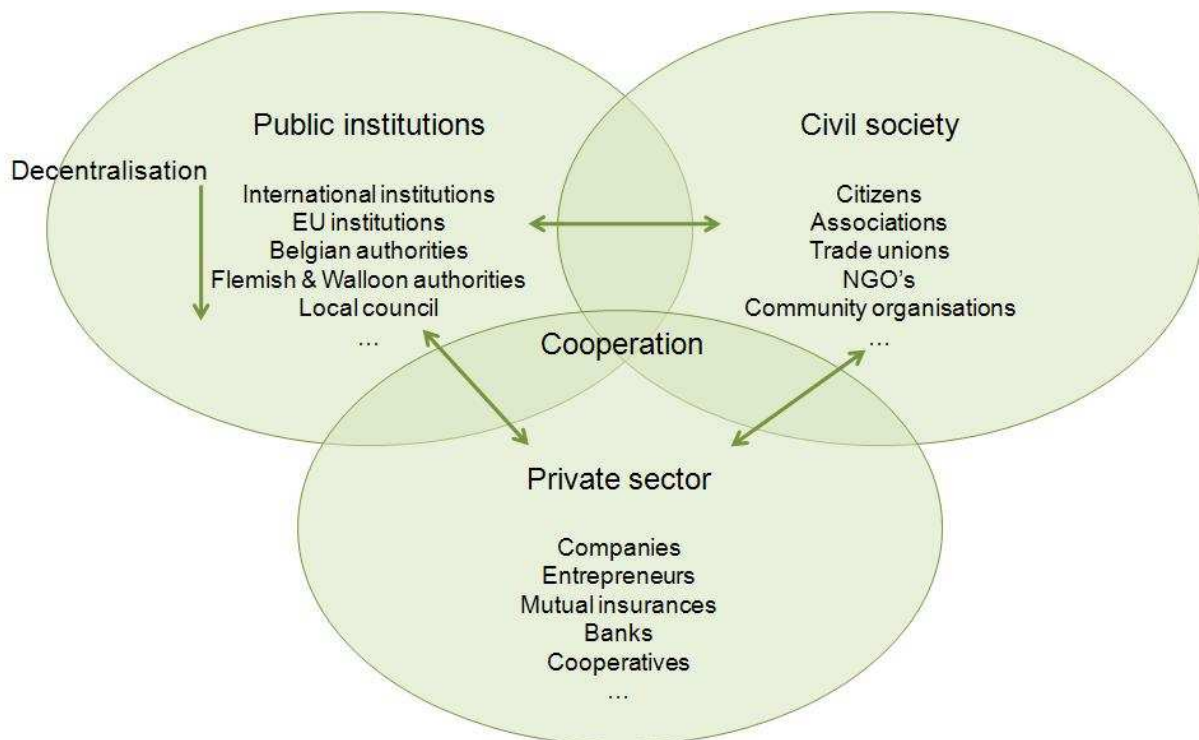


Figure 5: Regional development as multi-actor processes

The concepts of decentralisation and governance also apply to rural development policy. At present, approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of the European policy for rural development is implemented at decentralized levels (Wiskerke, 2007). The OECD (2006) distinguishes a new rural paradigm, which includes attempts to integrate various sectoral policies at regional and local levels and often requires efforts to improve coordination of sectoral policies within central governments (Ward & Brown, 2009). Rural areas are facing major changes, new functions are competing for the scarce rural space and new actors are entering the rural area (Horlings, 2010). The key actors are no longer limited to the farmers and national governments, all levels of government and various stakeholders are involved. More attention is being paid to endogenous development and partnerships and networks among the actors.

The European rural development policy 2007-2013 is focused on three axes (EU, 2010): i) improving the competitiveness of the agriculture and forestry sector; ii) improving the environment and the countryside and iii) improving the quality of life in rural areas and

encouraging diversification of the rural economy. Each member state has to divide its development funding between these three axes and sets out a national strategy plan based on European guidelines. In addition to these three axes, a fourth axe is based on the LEADER initiative, helping rural actors to fully develop their regional potential. The LEADER program encourages the implementation of integrated, high-quality and original strategies for sustainable development, with a strong focus on partnerships and networks of exchange and experience. The setting up of a local partnership, known as a “local action group” (LAG), is an important feature of the LEADER approach. Members of the LAG are rural actors from several public institutions, civil society and private sector. The LAG identifies and implements a local development strategy, makes decisions about the allocation of the financial resources and manages the projects.

3.1.3. Regional development based on regional identity: regional branding

In the context of globalisation and a world economy that is becoming more and more integrated, places are currently in “territorial competition” (Hospers, 2004). Although many places offer the same “product” – territory, infrastructure, educated people, and an almost identical system of governance – they must compete with each other for investment, tourism, residents and political power, often on a global scale. To stand out from the crowd and capture significant mind- and market share, place branding has become essential (van Ham, 2008). Place branding or place marketing is a promotional strategy that includes all activities that increase the attractiveness of an area as a place for working, living and spending free time (van Ham, 2001). Regional branding is aimed at creating a more distinctive image or reputation for a region, which helps to increase regional competitiveness (Maessen, et al., 2008). In regional branding initiatives, the regional identity serves as a basis for the regional brand or mark, that is used to promote the region (Sonneveld, 2007). Branding can be seen in the wider context of the dependence of regions on their “cultural load”, and of the sense of belonging they are able to create, not only among visitors, but also entrepreneurs, investors and inhabitants (Horlings, 2010). Regional branding stimulates the regional economy, creates added value for the regional products and services, and can break through existing restrictions of sector-oriented approaches to rural development (Hegger, 2007).

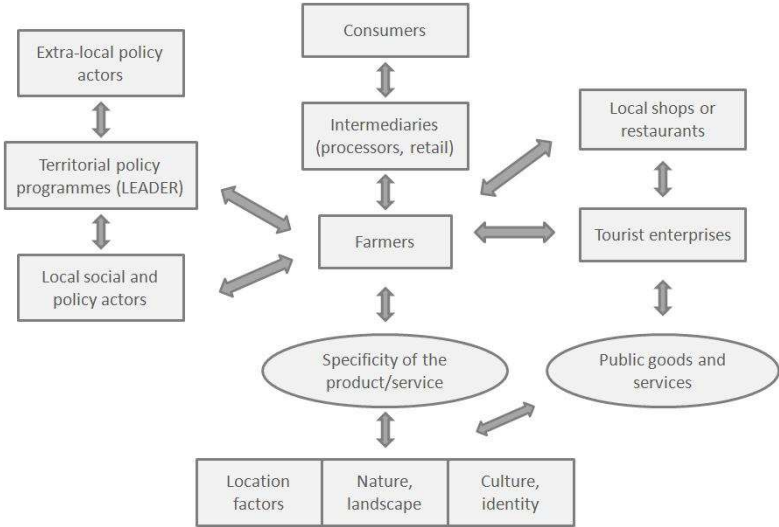


Figure 6: Actors in rural regional branding processes (adapted from Renting, 2008)

Figure 6 gives an overview of the different actors and their interrelations in rural regional branding processes. The figure illustrates that region-specific characteristics like nature, landscape, culture and identity determine the specificity of the regional products and services. The regional brand is based on these region-specific characteristics and is used to promote the varied offer of regional products and services. In a way, the region as a whole becomes a brand (Renting, 2008). The regional products and services are produced by farmers in cooperation with processors and retail, tourist enterprises, local restaurants, etc. These opportunities for cooperation create new synergies among the rural entrepreneurs. Several local, regional and national social and policy actors influence the regional branding process, through consumption, cooperation and regulation. Farmers play an important role in rural regional branding processes, their role is discussed in part 2 of the report.

3.1.4. Conclusion

Figure 7 recapitulates the relations between regional characteristics, regional identities and regional development processes from a constructivist point of view. The upper part of the figure shows, first of all, that regional identities are based on typical characteristics of a region such as the landscape, the vegetation, the climate, the economy, the history and the culture. The arrows pointing downwards indicate that these characteristics are coloured by personal experiences and individual interpretations as well as by social discourses and stereotypes. As a consequence, there are always several regional identities that can be in conflict or in accord with each other. Every organisation, institution or actor may have a different strategy regarding the meaning of the region and its resultant identity. Which identity becomes dominant depends on the power relations between the stakeholders. Powerful stakeholders are able to steer the stereotypes and the interpretations of the general public in such a way that their view on the identity of the region is reproduced. Less powerful stakeholders can still write and talk about a region, but this will only result in an additional and alternative representation of the region (Paasi, 2002a, p. 807; Raagmaa, 2001).

In the lower half of the figure, it is visualised that the establishment of a regional identity is not only important as a mental creation, but also as an instigator of practices. Regional branding, for example, is a strategy to create regional development by promoting a particular regional identity. The arrows pointing downwards show that regional identities can be used in different ways by different actors to stimulate different regional development trajectories. Public institutions, civil society actors and private companies may all have a different interest in the development of the region. As such, they may also proclaim different regional identities to legitimise different practices. Because a regional identity determines what is good and bad for a region, the perpetual struggle over regional identities is oriented towards the production and the reproduction of power relations (Paasi, 2002a, p. 805; Paasi, 2002b, p. 139). Less powerful stakeholders have two options. Either they try to frame their practices in the dominant regional identity. Either they suggest alternative practices that resist the dominant practices and the regional identity that goes with. In both cases, these practices may have an impact upon the typical characteristics of the region - as is shown by the arrows going up.

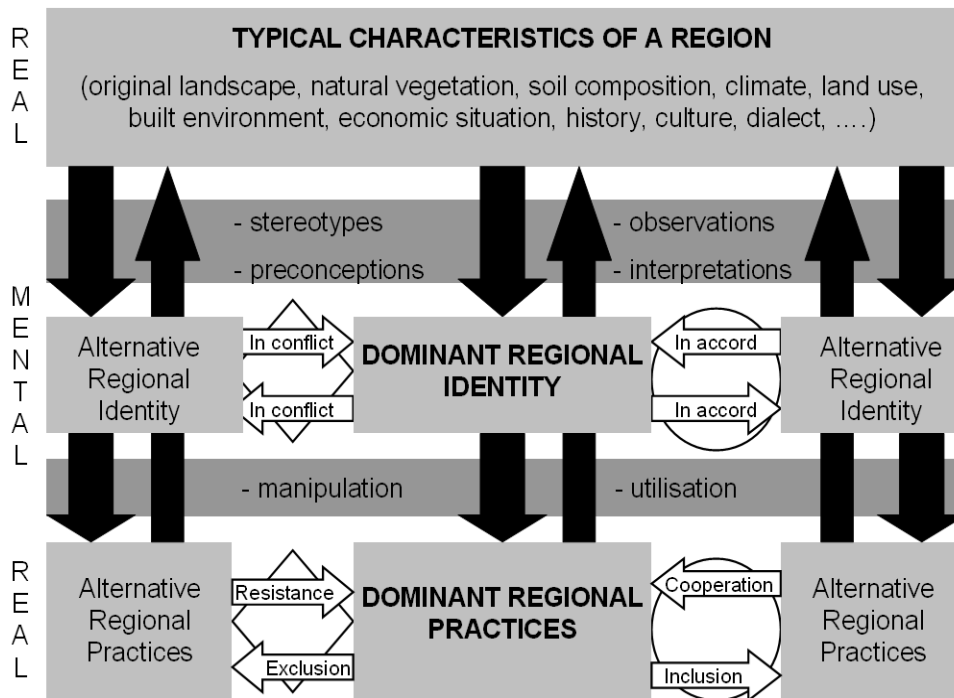


Figure 7: A constructivist view on regional identities and regional development

Before going to the findings of our case studies, it is important to note that the theories outlined above demarcate a number of important fields that guide the regional development process. In what follows, we will elaborate on seven of such fields. The first three fields look at the characteristics of the region and its regional identities. The first field, for example, is made up by the natural, the cultural and the agricultural characteristics of a region. Because regional identities are still rooted in these characteristics, it is important to differentiate between regions which have a rich source material and regions that don't. The second field revolves around the geographical situation of a region. In fact, it will be argued that similar regions can set up different regional identities and different regional development trajectories dependent upon their location vis-à-vis other regions, towns and cities. A third field that we will look at is regional identity. In this field, we will focus, more particularly, on the geographical and the historical factors that explain why regions with the same source material still have built up different regional identities.

The other four fields deal with the governance of the regional characteristics, the regional identities, the regional branding processes and the regional development trajectories. In the fourth field, we will focus on the role of regional institutions, for example. In this field, we will question, more specifically, whether regions with a single regional development agency are more likely to be successful in terms of regional development than regions which are institutionally very fragmented. We will also answer the question whether regional development should be a top-down or a bottom-up process. The fifth field deals, then, with the importance of cooperation and coordination between different actors. In this field, we will look, more particularly, at the collaboration between actors from the same sector, between actors from different sectors and between actors from different regions. While the sixth field will point at the importance of financial means, the seventh field revolves around the involvement of local residents.

3.2. Results

3.2.1. Natural, cultural and agricultural characteristics

Looking at the natural, the cultural and the agricultural characteristics of the different case study regions, it has to be recognized that every region has a different potential to initiate a regional development trajectory rooted in regional identities. In fact, it has to be acknowledged that the characteristics of regions such as Haspengouw, Westhoek and Les Deux Ourthes are easier to use in regional branding exercises than those of the Meetjesland region. In **Haspengouw**, the stakeholders argued, for example, that the trumps of the region could be positioned on the corners of a triangle. For them, the first corner is taken up by the cultural heritage (Roman roads, Roman tumuli, medieval castles, old farmsteads, gastronomy, etc.), the second by the natural and the agricultural landscape (open fields, fruit trees, blossoms, hedges, etc.) and the third by the well-developed tourist infrastructure (cycling network, walking trails, farm stays, regional products, etc.). Even though the open landscape of the **Meetjesland** is definitely a strength of the region, it has to be accepted that it cannot compete with the valleys and the forests of Les Deux Ourthes or the fruit blossoms of Haspengouw. In comparison with other regions, the Meetjesland does not have any crowd-drawing historical attractions that can match the war heritage in the Westhoek or the Roman heritage and the medieval castles in Haspengouw either. On top of that, the region does not boast about any regional products that are as easily commodified as the fruit of Haspengouw or the ham of the Ardennes. If Haspengouw has more success in the particular field that we are looking at than Meetjesland, it is, thus, not only because of the amounts of money that have been invested in the improvement of the regional characteristics, but also because of the higher potential that was present before the initiation of the regional development process.

- Because the natural, the cultural and the agricultural characteristics of a region are the starting point for the processes of regional identity creation and regional branding, the success of these processes is partly dependent upon the quality of these characteristics. This also implies that some regions have more chances than others to initiate an identity-based regional development trajectory.

3.2.2. Geographical situation of the region

Based on the geographical situation of the different regions in Belgium and its neighbouring countries, it can be inferred that their development potential is not only influenced by their natural, cultural and agricultural characteristics, however, but also by their location vis-à-vis other regions, towns and cities. Taking the **Meetjesland** region as an example, it has to be recognized that its setting between Ghent and Bruges could be an enormous advantage for the development of the region. In contrast to the Westhoek and Les Deux Ourthes, which are both situated far away from towns and cities, the Meetjesland can easily benefit from this nearness of people and jobs. A lot of stakeholders working on the regional development of the Meetjesland seemed to struggle with this nearness, however. On the one hand, they acknowledged that the proximity of Ghent and Bruges opened up development trajectories that would be closed if these towns would be situated further away (see quote below). They realized, for example, that the region could be marketed as an interesting stop-over or overnight stay for the hordes of tourists visiting Bruges and Ghent. On the other hand, a lot of residents and stakeholders also seemed to be afraid of the expansion of these towns. In fact,

they feared that the rurality of the Meetjesland would be challenged if villages like Nevele, Aalter and Lovendegem would become dormitory suburbs of Ghent.

“The Westhoek is rural - so that is a strength in terms of calmness and environmental quality - but there is no interaction with a town and that’s why they envy us. (...) You have to take advantage of that. But that is only possible because of this geographical proximity. (...) At the moment, we are also setting up a project on knowledge economies, a centre for ICT companies. In the Meetjesland, it is possible to talk about that. On the one hand, we have a green environment that can attract knowledge workers. On the other hand, we’re not that far away from the city centre. Lovendegem, for example, is just a stone’s throw away from Ghent. So we have the advantage of a green region together with the advantage of being situated close to Ghent”

This quote demonstrates that a lot of Meetjeslanders are defending the rural identity of their region against something that they could also use to their advantage. The proximity of a town or a moderate suburbanization should not necessarily jeopardize regional development processes. By acknowledging that the people in Ghent and the newcomers in Lovendegem, Nevele and Aalter are not just a threat to the rural qualities of the region, but also an interesting pool of potential day trippers and prospective buyers of regional products, the geographical situation of the Meetjesland could be exploited more to the full. The same can be said about other regions. While the Dutch region of the **Groene Woud** is very much aware of its position in between the towns of Tilburg, Eindhoven and ‘s-Hertogenbosch, the Belgian **Gaume** and **Pajottenland** regions consider the urbanization and the suburbanization of Luxembourg and Brussels mainly as a menace. When this proximity would be seen as an opportunity, it could become an important strength of the region, however.

- Apart from the natural, the cultural and the agricultural characteristics of a region, its location vis-à-vis towns and cities can also influence the process of regional branding. At this moment, inhabitants of towns and suburbs are regarded much more as a threat to the rural character of the region than as a potential market of agricultural and touristic products, however.

3.2.3. Regional identity

In the previous section, it has been argued already that regional identities are the result of a clash between personal experiences and interpretations of regional characteristics and social discourses and stereotypes about them. Even though the constructivist paradigm does not lay a direct connection between the characteristics and the resulting identity, regional identities are, thus, still rooted in the characteristics of a particular region (nature, culture, agriculture, ...). Based on the discussion in section 2.1, it can, therefore, be understood why the image of the **Meetjesland** is generally considered to be weaker than that of **Haspengouw** and why people living outside of the Meetjesland generally find it difficult to give examples of emblematic products or typical characteristics, while this is much less of a problem in Haspengouw.

Looking at the example of **Les Deux Ourthes**, it becomes clear, however, that regions with strong natural, cultural and agricultural qualities do not necessarily manage to build up a strong regional identity. In terms of nature, the region of Les Deux Ourthes is celebrated for its scenic landscapes and beautiful valleys. In terms of gastronomy and patrimony, it is also difficult to overlook the local ham and the typical buildings in natural stone. The problem is,

however, that all these qualities also prevail in the neighbouring regions. The ham that we speak of is the “jambon d’Ardenne”. The houses in natural stone are better known as “maisons ardennaises”. Forests, valleys and beautiful landscapes are generally also considered to be characteristics of the Ardennes as a whole. Because the image of the region of Les Deux Ourthes overlaps so strongly with the stereotypes about the Ardennes, tourists, visitors and residents do not really identify themselves with the region. The explanation is that the identity of the region is undermined both from above (through the strong image of the Ardennes) and from below (through the good reputation of places like La Roche and Houffalize). For this reason, it has to be questioned whether the region of Les Deux Ourthes can be branded as a separate subregion of the Ardennes or whether it would make more sense to underline the way in which the image of the region of les Deux Ourthes is consistent with the general image of the Ardennes. In any case, it must be concluded that the scale at which the region comes to be defined strongly impacts upon the uniqueness of the regional characteristics. In this way, the scale also influences the regional identities and the potential development trajectories.

“The best card to play (...) is the Ardennes. That is an appreciated and respected and known appellation. The Deux Ourthes Region, nothing! (...) The region of les Deux Ourthes will need twenty years to get in the people’s minds, while the Ardennes is there already.”

The examples of the Meetjesland, the Westhoek and Haspengouw regions demonstrate another effect of scale. In all three regions, there is, namely, a strong tendency to consider the northern part of the region to be a better/worse representative of the regional identity than its southern counterpart. In **Haspengouw**, the more rural villages in the ‘dry’ south are said to epitomize the region much more than the more suburbanized villages in the ‘wet’ north. In the **Westhoek**, there is a similar dichotomy between the municipalities in the south (more World War I heritage, less influence of the coast) and those in the north (less World War I heritage, more influence of the coast). In the **Meetjesland**, there is also a binary between municipalities such as Sint-Laureins (open, landscape with creeks, still very rural) and Lovendegem (more closed landscape with ‘kouters’ and ‘bulken’, much more suburbanized). Regional development projects often discriminate between municipalities that adhere to the stereotypical images of the region and those that do not. Because the former are generally able to take more advantage of the financial means available for regional development, there is a danger that regional branding processes lead to intra-regional competition and intra-regional inequalities.

“I do not see what connects the Meetjesland. Aalter and Sint-Laureins seem two separate regions to me. In other words: the polders in the north and the woodland in the south seem to me two regions.”

Competition does not only occur between different municipalities within the same region, however, but also between different visions on the identity of a particular region. In the **Westhoek**, for example, it is clear that some residents do not want the peace and quietness of their region to be disturbed by tourists. They are reluctant to accept new development projects that would change the typical characteristics of the region, such as the quietness, the calmness and the open space. Other residents of the same region struggle, however, with the fact that the preservation of the current characteristics will make the Westhoek a nature reserve or a second Bokrijk. They also fear that the conservation of the open spaces will threaten the economic development of the region. By looking at these competing visions of the regional

identity, it becomes clear that the imposition of a certain development trajectory based on a regional identity always entails power relations.

“I think that the inhabitants of the Gaume identify themselves very strongly with the Gaume, sometimes as reaction that “I am not Ardennais”. We want to separate ourselves from an image that is given from the outside, from the Ardennes. (...) When I was a child I was living in the Ardennes. Then, the Gaume was another country with different habits, a different language and different houses.”

Competition does not only take place inside regions, but also in between regions. Because regional identities are often understood in binary oppositions, regional development processes based on regional identities often result in inter-regional competition. Looking at the **Gaume** region in the south of Belgium, some stakeholders argued, for example, that the geological boundary between the Mesozoic sediments of the Lorraine and the Paleozoic sediments of the Ardennes corresponded with a linguistic boundary between the Walloon dialect spoken in the Ardennes and the Lorraine dialect spoken in the Gaume. Other stakeholders stressed that the climate of the Ardennes is much colder than that of the Gaume and that the average ardennais is also much colder than the typical gaumais. Because the identity of the Gaume is strongly dependent upon the negation of everything that is ardennais, it is difficult to establish strong ties between institutions in both regions. Because a lot of tourists confuse the regional identities, the natural qualities and the cultural specialities of the Gaume and the Ardennes, and because even the tourism board of Wallonia promotes the former as an integral part of the latter, the relation between both regions cannot be based on competition, however. If the regional development of the Gaume is to be successful, then cooperation with the Ardennes is a crucial factor. By stressing that the Gaume is completely different from the Ardennes, there is a danger that people interested in the nature and the food of the Ardennes will overlook the Gaume. As the Gaume has more or less the same qualities as the Ardennes - especially if you compare both regions with the average region of Flanders - it is necessary to establish strong ties between the tourism boards, the nature organisations and the agricultural associations in both regions.

- Nowadays, regional identities are vital aspects in processes of regional branding. As such, it is important to realise that regions with strong natural, cultural and agricultural characteristics do not necessarily build up strong regional identities. Together with these characteristics, the scale at which the region comes to be defined is crucial as well.
- Every regional development trajectory that is rooted in the identity of a region competes with another regional development trajectory that is rooted in another identity of the same region or another one. For this reason, any regional branding process entails competition between different municipalities of the same region, between different visions within the same region and between different regions.

3.2.4. Regional actors

Throughout the case studies, we noticed a great variety in the actors and institutions involved in regional development as well as in their organisation. The analysis of the relevant regional actors resulted in the development of two dichotomies, which will be elaborated in this part.

Top down versus bottom-up

A first dichotomy can be found in the initiation of regional development projects. In some Belgian cases like Pajottenland, Les Deux Ourthes and the Dutch case Groene Woud, the process was mostly the consequence of a top-down decision, taken by province or national government. In Westhoek and West Cork (Ireland) we see the contrary; there the initiative is started bottom-up by local associations or local action groups.

The Dutch region **Groene Woud** is an example of a bottom-up regional development project that was triggered by a top-down decision by the Dutch government. In 2005 the Dutch government has delimited 20 national landscapes all over the country. A national landscape is an area with a unique combination of cultural-historical and natural elements, telling the story of the landscape. In all national landscapes there is a specific and typical combination of different landscape aspects, like nature, relief, land use and infrastructure. The proclamation of a national landscape entails that the Dutch government pays extra attention to the area and that extra financial means are reserved for it. These financial means are used to preserve and strengthen the core qualities of the area, essentially the landscape qualities of the area. Groene Woud is one of those national landscapes and comprises the rural area in between the three cities 's Hertogenbosch, Tilburg and Eindhoven. Neither the name Groene Woud, nor the demarcation of the area was used before 2005. Local farmers felt threatened by this demarcation of national landscape and feared that the emphasis on ecological sustainability would hamper the economic development. As a reaction, they started a regional branding initiative in order to show both residents and outsiders the extended offer of regional agricultural products and services and to convince them of the importance of agriculture for the region.

In **Pajottenland** we see that there are tensions between the Province Flemish-Brabant and the local action group of LEADER. Members of the local action group criticize the province for working too much top-down and implementing projects without consideration of bottom-up actions in the region. One of the stakeholders of a regional development organisation talked about the discussion with the province on the lack of region-oriented policy:

“In my opinion – this is a regular point of discussion with the province – the province needs to better develop its region-oriented policy. I think that it would be better if they integrate the region-oriented aspect in their functioning instead of the top-down implementation of a common procedure. I wouldn't do that, the province should allow more bottom-up initiatives.”

A clear example of the problematic results of this top-down approach, is the forced cooperation between Pajottenland and the adjacent region Zennevallei for the regional branding project. Zennevallei is an adjacent region that is much more urbanized. Pajottenland and Zennevallei were recently merged by the province into one region for tourist promotion reasons. Both regions point out that they are completely different and are reluctant to cooperate. As a consequence, their cooperation in the regional branding project is rather difficult and the fact that the local action group of Pajottenland is coordinator of the project receives negative reactions by people from Zennevallei.

In **West Cork** the regional branding process was started by the local action group of LEADER in 1994, through a bottom-up initiative. The development of the regional brand and the regional development strategy was done mostly by the local action group, in cooperation with

other regional associations and rural entrepreneurs. The (political) independence of the initiators was evaluated as very positive for the regional development, because this guaranteed a neutral and apolitical determination of priorities and strategies. Only from 2007 onwards, local authorities were involved in the project as well.

- The case studies prove that top-down initiatives do not always have the intended results and can cause difficulties or resistance at regional level. However, if a bottom-up project is not facilitated or acknowledged by higher policy levels, in practice this can lead to difficulties for the implementation of a project. As such, it can be concluded that a regional development trajectory has the highest chance to succeed if it combines top-down with bottom-up approaches.

One regional development agency versus institutional fragmentation

A second distinction can be made for the institutional setting in the case study regions. While in some regions (Les Deux Ourthes, Westhoek) there is one institution responsible for the implementation of an integrated regional development strategy, other regions (Meetjesland, Haspengouw, Gaume, Pajottenland) have plenty different associations, each responsible for one aspect of the development of the region.

In the province of West-Flanders, there is a strong emphasis on and responsibility for the regional level. The provincial government divided the province into four regions and delegated some responsibilities and policy domains to the regional level. The province decides on the general policy, but each region can adjust this policy to the specific needs of the region and the regional context. Streekwerking **Westhoek**, the regional development team in the region Westhoek, is a network organisation that is an intermediary level between the province and the municipalities of the Westhoek. Streekwerking Westhoek implements region-specific policy for agricultural, touristic, environmental, economic, cultural and social domains and facilitates inter-sectoral dialogue and coordinates a number of integrated programs. These tasks are implemented in cooperation with the province, the municipalities and some civic associations that work on regional level on the socio-economic, cultural and natural development of the Westhoek. Thanks to this working method Streekwerking Westhoek is able to remain a catalyst for linking discrete projects into an integrated regional development strategy.

In the region **Les Deux Ourthes**, the Parc Naturel des Deux Ourthes (set up in 2001) is the regional development agency with four interrelated objectives: nature conservation, environmental protection, spatial planning and economic development. Without doubt, the establishment of the Parc Naturel is a huge asset to the region of les Deux Ourthes. The presence of one regional development agency targeting these different objectives assures integrated regional development. Nevertheless, it has to be acknowledged that there are also a couple of problems associated with the working of such a broad institution. Some stakeholders mentioned the preservation of the natural landscape has become much more important than the stimulation of the local economy, even though both were considered to be main objectives of the Parc:

“There should be an actor responsible for economic development. (...) Sustainable development contains the word development and not conservation. I have the impression that there is too much focus on conservation, that we will go back to the past. Yes, we have to preserve what we have, but this shouldn’t completely inhibit the development of activities.”

A second problem associated with the operation of an organisation like the Parc Naturel des Deux Ourthes is the overlap with other, already existing institutions. There’s a risk for a lack of coordination and cooperation because there is not enough communication between the different stakeholders and because the different institutions put their own interests above the interests of the region as a whole. Because of this, the possibility exists that the region does not realize its full development potential.

Both **Meetjesland** and **Haspengouw** have a more dispersed institutional setting. There is not one regional development agency, however nearly all important fields of regional development are represented by a particular organisation or association. In Meetjesland, however, there are also a number of organisations that are working across the different sectors rather than in a specific sector. With the development of the multi-sectoral Streekplatform in 1995, this organisation has taken up the role of a central coordinator. This multi-sectoral focus at the scale of the region has resulted in a polycentric governance structure.

- To set up a regional development process that starts from the regional identity, it is very convenient that all steps of the process, from the management of the natural and cultural capital to their commercialization in agricultural and touristic products, are overlooked by a single body. The presence of one regional development agency responsible for the implementation of integrated regional development can definitely boost the development processes. A regional development agency that targets social, cultural, natural and economic development objectives, can serve as a catalyst for linking discrete projects into integrated development strategies, for which it mobilises resources and provides an organisational infrastructure to facilitate implementation.
- Nevertheless, it has to be acknowledged that there are also a couple of problems associated with the working of such an institution. In some cases the persecuted pluri-disciplinarity is much more easily achieved in theory than it is implemented in practice. Because different members of the organisation aspire to different objectives, there’s a risk for a narrowed focus or actions going into opposite directions. A second problem associated with the operation of one regional development agency is the overlap with other, more sectoral institutions.

3.2.5. Cooperation and coordination

This section deals with the way the different sectors and actors cooperate in the regional development processes. Cooperation can take place on several levels: cooperation with similar organisations within the region; or cooperation with different organisations or sectors within the region. The differences in working area of the regional associations and power games between the stakeholders can influence the possibilities for cooperation. Next to cooperation within the region, there are opportunities for collaboration with other (inter)national regions.

Cooperation among different sectors and actors

There's a large amount of institutions working in the **Gaume**, all with an explicit focus and a specific working area. The respondents mentioned that there is good cooperation among similar actors, but however that there is not enough cooperation among actors that have a different focus. Several stakeholders mentioned the lack of organisations that work on the development of the Gaume as such. This can be explained by the fact that the Gaume is not an administrative entity. A lot of institutions are thus fragmented in their geographical scope. Not only the stakeholders of the organisations mention the fragmentation and the lack of collaboration; this was also criticised by the residents:

“There's a need for the establishment of a central structure that groups the economic actors, the tourist actors, the environmental actors, the local action groups, the cultural associations, etc...”

In order to cope with this, the idea of a natural park was launched. Several organisations are convinced that the establishment of a natural park with extended power and financial means will ultimately lead to the initiation, the concretisation and the structure of a myriad of development projects on regional level.

In **Haspengouw** nearly all important fields of regional development are represented by more than one organisation or association. The crucial point here is that different organisations working in the same field do not only manage to work together, but that they are also very conscious of the fact that partnerships with other organisations can lead to environmental, ecological and economic benefits. In fact, it is an enormous advantage for the region that environmental organisations, landscape associations and heritage institutions are aware of the economic potential of historic relics, cultural traditions and agricultural landscapes. At the same time, tourism organisations take the natural, the (agri)cultural and the symbolic value of Haspengouw very seriously. The production of an expensive television program to promote the touristic potential and the agricultural products of the region is an example of where such interactions can lead.

The willingness to work together at the regional scale is an important strength of **Meetjesland**. Streekplatform+ takes up a central position in the institutional setting. The goal of this platform is to bring all stakeholders of Meetjesland around the same table. These stakeholders are defined as broadly as possible: from public to private, from nature to culture, from welfare to economy. The commitment of all stakeholders was strengthened by their involvement in the long-term vision “Meetjesland 2020”, which they all signed. However, recently, the focus of Streekplatform+ on integrated development has become particularly problematic because important authorities – such as the regional economy and the regional labour market – have been taken over by SERR-RESOC Meetjesland, Leiestreek and Schelde. Before the creation of the SERR-RESOC, Streekplatform+ was the only regional development agency. As such, the transfer of authorities to the SERR-RESOC meant that it had become more difficult to collaborate for the integrated development of the Meetjesland.

The long tradition of supra-local cooperation in **Westhoek** results in the implementation of several integrated projects and quite some positive results of the ongoing development processes. The regional consult and cooperation has grown bottom-up since the 1970's and this tradition has built the experience with thinking and working on regional level rather than on municipal level. The presence of one regional network organisation, Streekwerking

Westhoek, who is linking the regional organisations and Westhoek municipalities, facilitates cooperation. Another stimulating factor is the location of the regional associations and Streekwerking Westhoek in one “regional house”. This stimulates regular inter-sectoral meetings and offers opportunities to collaborate.

- Once organisations and institutions, working in the same sector, work together in an efficient way, it is important as well that networks are established to unite the different groups of organisations and sectors. Regular consult and cooperation between different actors and sectors facilitate integrated regional development processes.
- In order to successfully integrate regional identity in regional development, the actions of all stakeholders have to be harmonized and synchronized in a very wide range of fields. The task of the coordinator is to have all participants on the same wavelength on the objectives and future actions for the rural development processes. In order to avoid overlap between actions by different actors or actions going in opposite directions, it is crucial that all participants agree on the focus of each association.

Demarcation of working areas

Several case study regions (Pajottenland, Gaume, Les Deux Ourthes) gave evidence of the influence of the demarcation of the working areas by the regional associations on their cooperation. The different development associations who are active in the region **Pajottenland** usually don't have the whole territory of Pajottenland as a target area. In some cases the associations work for an area that is larger than Pajottenland. Other associations however, have a smaller target area. Pajottenland+, the local action group of LEADER, is only working in those seven rural municipalities that comply with the LEADER criteria. Another discussion on the demarcation of the region has to do with the provincial tourism policy and the merger of Pajottenland and Zennevallei into one tourist subregion. The two regions are now forced to work together in several regional development projects, while there's no tradition of cooperation and both regions feel they are too different to collaborate. A member of the steering committee of the regional branding project mentioned that the frictions between the regions complicate the implementation of the project:

“Our working area is now Pajottenland and Zennevallei, these regions are not the same. So Zennevallei thinks it is very difficult to start regional branding under the name Pajottenland. The people from Zennevallei told us that they don't agree with that.”

These differences in demarcation and working areas cause problems for cooperation in practice, not only because there's unwillingness to collaborate with another, different region, but also because of administrative difficulties. The unwillingness for cooperation and discussions about the true demarcation of Pajottenland are also negatively influenced by the provincial top-down decision on the provincial tourist regions.

Similar problems can be found in the region **Les Deux Ourthes**, where each natural, cultural or economic cooperative assembles another set of municipalities. The six municipalities of the Parc Naturel des Deux Ourthes are divided over four different Maisons du Tourisme, for example. The result is that efforts of the Parc Naturel always run the risk that they are being

counteracted by projects of other intercommunal institutions. Simultaneously, there is also a danger that different institutions working within the borders of the Parc cannot come to an agreement.

- The cases indicate that a widely accepted consensus on the demarcation of the region facilitates cooperation. The differences in demarcation and working areas don't only result in unwillingness to collaborate with another, different region, but also cause administrative difficulties.

Power of actors

Although cooperation is important for the alignment of the different actors and a common vision for the regional development, the case studies gave evidence of the negative influence on cooperation by power games between actors.

In the regional branding project in the region **Westhoek**, there's discussion between the project partners on the focus of the regional brand. While the economic partner wants to stress the dynamic, innovative character of the regions, the provincial tourism department wants to emphasise the calm, rural and quiet aspects of the region. A major part of their means and attention goes to the preservation of those characteristics. The other project partners think this focus will confirm the negative image of the region and will paralyze the regional development. However, the provincial tourism department is a big public enterprise who has the money and the power to decide on how the Westhoek is promoted. In practice the provincial tourism department makes strategic choices for tourism development, sometimes without much consideration for the input from the regions.

In **Meetjesland**, there's a power struggle between Streekplatform+ and SERR-RESOC. The research revealed that there's not enough cooperation between the two organisations. Before the creation of the SERR-RESOC, Streekplatform+ was the only regional development agency. As such, the transfer of authorities to the SERR-RESOC meant that it had become difficult to work on the integrated development of Meetjesland. While Streekplatform+ focuses on the municipalities of Meetjesland, RESOC also works in the municipalities in the Schelde and Leie region more to the south. In other regions, this tension between SERR-RESOC and the Streekplatform was absent. The power struggle between the two demonstrates how difficult it is to let different regional development agencies cooperate.

The interviews indicated that the relation between the farmers' union in **Pajottenland** and the local nature development organisations like Natuurpunt and Opbouwwerk Pajottenland is tense. Farmers fear that their land and position is threatened by upcoming nature conservation or touristic development projects. The farmers' union has a strong position in the region and is rather reluctant for cooperation with nature or tourism associations:

“The representative of the farmers' union plays a very negative role in this region, he really is an inhibitory factor. He only has attention for the farmers' sector and tries to channel all the money to projects that benefit only to farmers and that are not always appropriate. This is very sad and it also generates irritations from other regional associations. It is then the task of the people from LEADER Pajottenland to undo the harm he caused and to convince people to join their regional development projects.”

Several stakeholders mentioned the rigid attitude of the farmers' union and complained about the fact that the majority of the regional development funding and efforts go to agricultural projects.

- Cooperation among actors is negatively affected by the power games between them. In practice, the most powerful actors steer the regional identity and the related regional development processes into their preferred direction.

Cooperation with other regions

Cooperation with other regions gives the possibility to learn from their experiences and to share knowledge on theoretical and practical aspects of identity-based regional development. **Meetjesland** has had intensive contacts with the regions West Cork and Groene Woud in order to get more information on the organisation of their regional branding projects. Next to that, they cooperate with Antwerpse Kempen and **Pajottenland** for the implementation of their regional branding project. The three regions meet regularly to discuss on and exchange experience about the administrative and practical aspects of the regional branding projects.

Three years before **Haspengouw** made it into the spotlights with Katarakt, a television program that took place in the region, representatives of the tourist organisations already went to other regions that appeared in television series. In order to learn, they did not only visit the Scheldeland region in the province of Antwerp (which received a lot of tourists after the screening of another television program), but also the English regions where *Pride and Prejudice* and the *Da Vinci Code* were filmed.

Cooperation with outside regions is not always wanted, like for example in the **Gaume**. At this moment, the ties between the Gaume and the French regions to its south are very good. Because the identity of the Gaume is strongly dependent upon the negation of everything that is ardennais, the connection with the neighbouring Belgian regions is rather weak, however. Both in terms of objectives for the development of regional products and tourism, the regions strongly differ and disagree. So instead of working together or looking for links with the Ardennes, the Gaume focuses on emphasising the differences of the Ardennes, which complicates cooperation with the Ardennes.

- Next to (inter-)sectoral cooperation within the region, cooperation with other regions is important as well. This gives the possibility to learn from other experiences and exchange knowledge.

3.2.6. Economic sustainability of the projects

Another important aspect of regional development processes is their financing. This chapter deals with the negative effects of the dependency on subsidies and the implementation of alternative financing mechanisms. Another important aspect is the capacity of the regions to attract funding to the region.

The research revealed that all Belgian case study regions depend largely on European, Belgian or Flemish funding. A first problem associated with these subsidies is that long-term visions

are difficult to develop and implement because the financial streams are rather vulnerable and unpredictable. The citation by one of the stakeholders of Meetjesland confirms this:

“Continuity and sustainability are also criteria for the selection of funded projects, but there are no guarantees that after the termination of the time span, the project can continue. (...) If there is no structural funding, it is not simple for the associations.”

A second problem is that cooperation between different sectors is discouraged because the subsidies are generally aimed at only one sector. This sometimes results in multi-sectoral organisations trying to stimulate coordinated actions even though they are not able to finance them. Another problem is the huge bureaucracy that is associated with these funding bodies.

Because of the aforementioned problems, the regions Haspengouw and Groene Woud have tried to implement alternative financing mechanisms. While Haspengouw didn't manage to put the system in place, Groene Woud succeeded in the establishment of a regional account.

A number of stakeholders in **Haspengouw** argued for the introduction of alternative financing mechanisms, through the imposition of a levy on tourist accommodations. Nature development organisations, landscape institutions and farmers hoped that such a levy could be organized in a sustainable way as a visitor payback system. This means that the income of the tax would not only be used to invest in the tourist infrastructure, but also in projects related to the landscape, the agriculture and the natural environment of the region:

“Let people come and experience and observe nature, so that they are informed and sensitised about its value. But this results in a pressure on nature and landscape. The tourists should partly have to reimburse for this as well. That link is not that well visible yet. Most of the times, if we talk about a tourist levy, the money is reinvested in new tourist infrastructure, but not in landscape or nature.”

However, despite all efforts to implement the tourist levy, until now the actors didn't succeed in putting the system in place. The fact that the tourist levy failed to materialize in a way that it would not only be used to invest in the tourist infrastructure, but also in projects related to the landscape, the agriculture and the natural environment of the region, shows the complexity of these alternative financing mechanisms. If the economic development of Haspengouw is to be continued in a sustainable manner, then it will be crucial to replace the existing project subsidy system with a visitor payback system that takes effects on the long term into account. A consequence is also that there are a lot of people who contribute to the economic growth of the region without getting compensated for it.

In **Groene Woud**, in the Netherlands, the local action group of LEADER, in cooperation with Rabo Bank, has started a regional account. Companies and local authorities can open a “regional” saving account and get an interest on their savings, conform the market. The account owners can dispose of the savings and the interest. Rabo Bank donates an extra amount on top of this interest which is going to the regional fund. This amount is 5% of the total of all interests on all regional savings accounts. The money of the regional fund is then transferred to the local action group of Leader and is used to finance sustainable regional development projects. This mechanism has resulted in more than 200.000€ annually, that were spent on sustainable regional development projects.

The research indicates that some regions are better in attracting funding than others. In both **Meetjesland** and **Westhoek** for example, some respondents mentioned that the regional institutions there have much experience with Flemish and European programmes. They are very well informed about the different programmes, have knowledge of the requirements and are efficient in writing project proposals. The president of a local tourist association mentioned that the possibilities for development projects was an enormous advantage for their own functioning:

“In my opinion, Streekwerking Westhoek has done a great effort to generate means of European subsidies. Streekwerking Westhoek offered us many possibilities for cooperation in regional development projects.”

In **Westhoek** this efficiency is related with the history of cooperation and the capacity of the staff of the regional network organisation Streekwerking Westhoek. The staff members know very well what is going on in the region and are efficient in linking associations to write a project proposal.

- The dependency of all case study regions on external, project based, hence temporary financing, is a weakness for their regional development processes. This inhibits the implementation of long-term visions for the region and discourages integrated regional development.
- The implementation of alternative financing mechanisms can be a solution for these problems, but is until now, not applied in the Belgian case study regions.

3.2.7. Involvement of residents

A final aspect of our analysis handles the involvement of the residents in the regional development projects focused on regional identity. Throughout the case study regions there's a difference in the main focus of the development projects. In some projects specific attention is paid to the residents as a target group. Other regions focus mainly on the attraction of outsiders to the region and underestimate the potential role of the inhabitants and grassroots organisations. This chapter discusses the degree of involvement of residents in the regional development projects. The research revealed that the lack of involvement of residents can lead to an increasing unwillingness to accept some negative consequences of regional development projects. However, the involvement of residents is not enough, passionate leaders who are willing to start up grassroots organisations or projects are indispensable for the regional development projects in rural regions.

In several case study regions (**Westhoek**, **Pajottenland**, **Meetjesland**) the residents get involved in regional development projects through membership of regional associations or voluntary assistance in projects. In **Westhoek** there's a great pride of the residents for their region and we can state that the greater part of the residents are real ambassadors of the region. Many people are willing to dedicate themselves to their region and are active in different associations.

The catchphrase of the regional brand of **Meetjesland** “maak het mee” (get involved) is not only applicable to outsiders who are invited to experience the region, but also to insiders who are asked to participate in the regional development process. The fact that regional institutions

such as Streekplatform+, Regional Landscape and Toerisme Meetjesland VZW have adopted the logo together with the catchphrase, does not only show their cooperation, but also that they are serious about the participation of the residents of the region:

“Meetjesland, maak het mee” is a good synthesis for us. It doesn’t only invite to come and experience [the region], but also to help and build it. We don’t believe in what we are doing, but only in what others do. We can only support [people] and make them enthusiastic and push them in the good direction.”

However, despite these efforts by the associations to involve the residents, many of the residents complained that the current participation mechanisms only allowed for a very slow and partial involvement in the regional decision making process. Another criticism made by the residents is that the extensive number of different associations and institutions enlarges the distance to the residents.

If the residents feel that they didn’t get involved in the regional development programs, there’s a risk that they won’t accept the ongoing projects. People who are living and working in **Haspengouw** are not always positive about the developments taking place in their region. Especially in the spring (when the fruit trees are blooming) and in the summer (when a lot of people take a short holiday) there are a lot of inconveniences associated with the abundance of tourists. In case of tourist over-consumption, residents and farmers do not only look at the financial benefits, but also at the social, cultural and economic harm. Next to that, the data show that different aspects of the economic development of Haspengouw could be initiated and supported much more by the local population. This is under the condition, however, that there would be a bigger willingness among the stakeholders to allow for a bottom-up approach. A lot of respondents that completed our questionnaire indicated that they wanted to dedicate their time and energy to the region. If the institutions working in Haspengouw would take the enthusiasm and the potential commitment of the residents seriously, then they would do more effort to involve the local people in their plans and projects.

“This is something we face daily, when people don’t want something, it will never be realised. (...) The moment that the residents themselves want to realise something (...) it will be possible. It is much more important to convince people to do something than to regulate everything through legislation.”

To get so far, they need to communicate and cooperate much more with the residents. This kind of communication would also decrease the other complaints about the inconvenient consequences of tourism.

The involvement of residents is not enough, however, in almost all case study regions the importance of some motivated leaders and their actions became very clear. Initiators are enthusiastic people with a passion for the region, who start up development projects and look for linkages and cooperation with other associations.

The history of Streekwerking **Westhoek** shows that the regional cooperation started bottom-up in the 1970’s by a number of motivated initiators who have been actively involved since then in different regional development projects. They originally started looking for synergies between farmers and nature development organisations on regional level. At the beginning their working area was more concentrated on the southern part of the region, but later on they started cooperation with organisations from the northern Westhoek as well. Their initial focus

broadened, many other partnerships were made and their efforts finally resulted in the regional network organisation Streekwerking Westhoek. These initiators, now working at different regional organisations, still play an important role in the region and its development.

The foundation of the local action group in **Pajottenland** was made possible by the efforts of two stakeholders from the municipalities as well as the regional associations, who convinced several associations to unite their activities on a regional scale. Since the loss of one of the initiators, the dynamics in the region seem to decrease and until now there hasn't been replacement for his commitment.

- The development of a region based on the regional identity cannot be merely focused on outsiders. The involvement of the residents and attention to their needs is crucial for their acceptance of identity-based regional development processes.
- Communication is a key issue in involving the residents into regional development and turning them into ambassadors of the region.
- Passionate and motivated initiators are indispensable in every regional development process. However, the dependence on a small number of initiators threatens the future continuation of the projects.

3.3. Conclusions

In this section, we have concentrated on seven different fields that guide regional development processes and regional branding exercises rooted in regional identities. The first three fields looked at the role of regional characteristics, regional locations and regional identities. The other four fields dealt with the role of regional institutions, institutional cooperation, financing mechanisms and the involvement of residents. By looking at these fields in eight different regions, it became clear, first of all, that there is no catch all solution that fits every region. In practice, there is no such thing as a blueprint institutional organisation that guarantees successful regional development processes, for example. While it is very convenient that an integrated, regional development agency overlooks all steps of the regional development process, from the management of the natural and the cultural resources to their commercialization, it has to be acknowledged that a combination of different institutions can achieve the same results. In the same way, it should not be questioned whether a successful regional development process is initiated top-down or bottom-up. Depending on the local situation, a combination of both approaches can turn out to be the best solution.

In this way, it becomes clear that the development of a regional development trajectory should not start from what should be, but from what is. While foreign examples, best practices and exemplary cases can be used as a guide, every regional development process has to start from the local context and the place of regional characteristics, identities, institutions and residents therein. This also implies that some regions can benefit more from a regional development process rooted in regional identity than others. While regional branding is often considered to be a one fits all strategy that can be applied in every region, it has to be recognized that the initiation of such a regional development process is dependent upon the natural, the cultural, the agricultural, the geographical, the symbolic, the insitutional and the civic qualities of the region. Even though these qualities can be enhanced by the regional actors, it has to be acknowledged that some regions start with an advantage over others. Because regional branding is not the only way to establish regional development, it has to be questioned

whether regions which lack the natural, the cultural and the agricultural qualities to establish strong regional identities, or which lack the motivated people or networks of regional associations, should not consider alternative regional development strategies. Even though regional actors can play an important role in the manipulation of the regional identities and the regional development trajectories, an alternative approach might be more successful.

When regional actors decide to set up a regional branding process, a couple of things have to be taken into account. First of all, it is crucial to look at the geographical location of the region. Apart from the natural, the cultural and the agricultural characteristics of the region, the regional development process can also be influenced by its location vis-à-vis towns and cities. At this moment, inhabitants of towns and suburbs are regarded much more as a threat to the rural character of a region than as initiators of interesting processes or prospective buyers of agricultural and touristic products, however. Secondly, it has to be acknowledged that the current dependency on external financing is an important weakness in the initiation of a regional development process. At this moment, this dependency inhibits the development and the implementation of long-term visions for the region. By way of alternative, the instigation of alternative financing mechanisms would stimulate the development of regional development plans that go beyond immediate successes or quick wins. Thirdly, it is crucial that regional development strategies target both insiders and outsiders. In the ideal scenario, such strategies focus as much on the enthusiasm and the commitment of local residents and initiators as on the spending power of tourists and investors from outside the region.

In any case, it should be noted that regional branding exercises and other regional development trajectories stimulate competition between different municipalities, between different regional visions and between different regions. Within the region, this competition can revolve around the regional characteristics to be promoted, the regional identity to be created or the regional development trajectory to be chosen. In a number of case studies, it was signalled, for example, that regional development agencies and other stakeholders discriminated between municipalities that adhered to the stereotypical image of the region and those that did not. Because the former were generally able to take more advantage of the subsidies available for regional development, there is a danger that regional branding processes reproduce intra-regional inequalities. Between different regions, there is a similar risk that regions with a lot of potential manage to claim most financial means. Because regional identities are often understood in binary oppositions – think, for example, about the dichotomy between the Gaume and the Ardennes – regional development trajectories based on regional identities do not only result in inter-regional competition for financial means, but also in rivalry about images, identities and meanings. Taking a bit more distance from the actual practices, the conclusion must be that sustainable development will not be attained as long as regional development processes push different regions, different municipalities and different stakeholders into a competitive struggle to create a positive regional identity and to attract tourists, investors and residents.

To counter such a competitive spiral, it is indispensable that different actors cooperate and coordinate their actions inside and across different regions. Especially when there is not a single regional development agency or regional coordinator, regular consult and cooperation among the different associations and sectors is crucial for an integrated development process at the scale of a particular region. In practice, both the regional demarcation used by different actors and the power games between them can disturb or complicate regional branding projects. While such cooperation and coordination at the scale of the region are often

achieved, similar actions that surmount the boundaries of a region are very rare. Nevertheless, it is crucial to deepen and harmonize the relations between the stakeholders of different regions and different policy levels if regional development trajectories rooted in regional identities are to be set up in a sustainable way.

4. THE ROLE OF THE FARMER IN IDENTITY-BASED REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

While the previous section investigated the link between regional development and regional identity, in this section the focus will be on the role the farmer can play in these processes. To investigate this, interviews were done in the four Belgian cases of Meetjesland, Haspengouw, Les Deux Ourthes and Gaume with farmers and other stakeholders involved in the development of these regions. Next to the interviews, a survey was done with farmers in the same regions. This methodology is well described in section 3.1 of this document.

From the interviews different roles can be identified which farmers play in the process of regional development on the basis of a regional identity. The role which was mentioned most is farmers' contribution to the identity of a region, mostly through the effect of agriculture on the landscape, but also through the conservation of cultural heritage and the production of regional products. Farmers can contribute to a region's identity on their own initiative or stimulated by regional or higher level organization or government. The contribution to the identity of a region can either be positive, making the region more attractive, or negative, reducing the attractiveness of the region. Next to the contribution to regional development through the effect of agriculture on regional identity, the sector can also be affected by this regional development. Regional development processes can result both in economic gains as well as economic losses for farmers. The economic gains for farmers will be discussed in detail in sections 5.2 and 5.3. Economic losses can be caused by restrictions in farm management as a result of the regional development processes. Restrictions mentioned were leaving a strip of farm land next to foot- and bicycle paths uncultivated and not being allowed to uproot standard fruit trees in certain regions. Problems with tourists were also mentioned: stealing crops, leaving garbage on the fields, blocking entrances to fields and hampering the works. A final role of the farmer in regional development is the one of the resident being informed about the processes going on in the region, and sometimes being invited to participate in the decision-making around regional development processes.

Also in the survey, farmers were asked how they believe to be involved in the regional development processes in their region (Figure 8). Out of a total of 450 farmers in the sample, 79% indicated they try to integrate their farm in the landscape, by choosing appropriate construction materials and investing in farmyard plantation, and 68% claim to contribute by taking care of nature or the landscape. About 52% of the farmers claims to be aware of regional development initiatives, through brochures, local newspapers, websites, etc. Around 19% of the farmers says to promote the region in own promotion material, e.g. for farm tourism or a farm shop, and another 18% claims to be involved in the production of typical local products. Of the 450 farmers in the sample, about 12% claim to embellish the region under the authority of a local government or organisation, often involving tasks of landscape management. About 10% of the farmers in the sample says to have been involved in the development of a strategy for regional development, a kind of future plan or vision for a region. Finally, the involvement of farmers in regional development processes is not always positive, since 12% of the farmers indicate to already have protested against a regional development project, in the planning phase or in the phase of implementation.

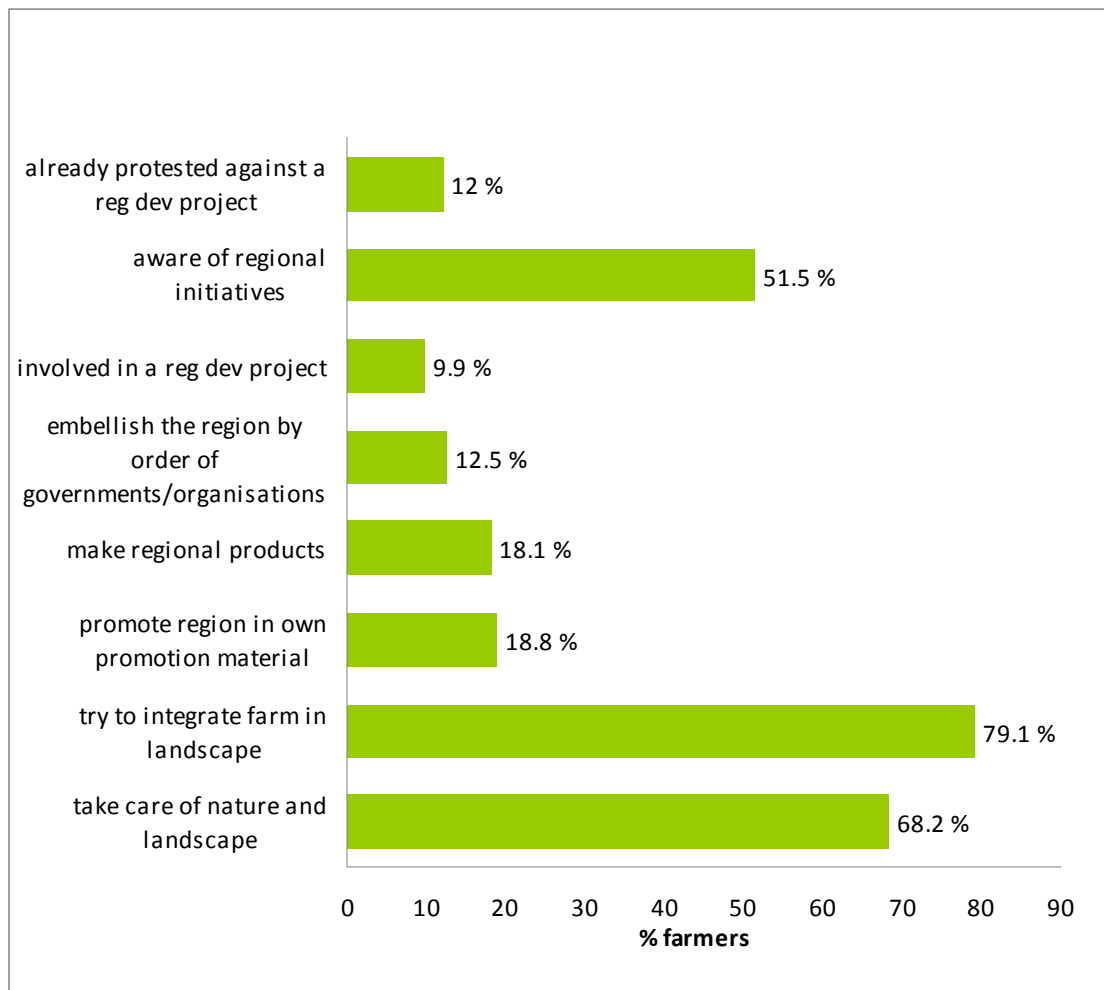


Figure 8. Involvement of farmers in regional development processes (result of farmer survey)

Both the interviews and the farmers survey indicate that the most important role of farmers in regional development processes based on regional identity is the contribution to regional identity through management of the landscape. In this end report, we will therefore focus specifically on this role of the farmer in identity-based regional development. We first give a theoretical description of the relationship between regional agriculture, landscape, identity and branding. Then, the results of the interviews with farmers and regional stakeholders are reported according to three research questions:

1. In which ways do farmers influence identity-based regional development processes through landscape management?
2. How is the role of agriculture evaluated by farmers and non-farmers?
3. How can farmers be better involved in the whole landscape-identity-development process?

Section 3.3 ends with some conclusions and policy recommendations.

4.1. Literature and theoretical approach

“It seems that there is a growing need of individuals, daily operating in a globally organized network society, for local and regional places with an identity they feel a bond with (Castells, 1997).”

Today, in the context of globalization, there is renewed interest in regional identity based on specific landscapes and regional culture. An important element of this regional identity is the landscape created by local practices. Because of its large land use, agriculture plays in this an important role. In the EU, agriculture cultivates on average about 40 per cent of the land (Eurostat, 2010), and agricultural buildings and practices are often part of local cultural heritage. Shifts from traditional agriculture over productivist and post-productivist agricultural practices have led to important shifts in the landscape produced by agriculture and thus the regional identity connected to it (Mather, et al., 2006). In regional branding processes, locally embedded practices and heritage are recuperated to build upon a unique regional identity that can be used to create an economic, ecological and social sustainable environment. It is clear that because of its important influence on the landscape, agriculture can and has to play a key role in such regional branding processes. In particular the multifunctionality of agricultural practices needs to be reviewed in this context.

Over the ages, regional differences in soil types, climatic conditions, history and culture, policies and the proximity of input and output markets have led to substantial regional differences in the agricultural practices among regions (Van Hecke, 1995; Wilson, 2001). This has not only led to differences in farm types but also to differences in practices, intensiveness of production and the degree to which new technologies are applied. Because farm types, practices and technologies were in harmony with the local circumstances (soil, climate, markets) this created clear differences among regions. However in the last 50 years, due to globalisation, technological developments, social migration and modernisation of agriculture, regional differences in agriculture are disappearing, which causes typical elements of local farming systems and regional differences to gradually fade away (Vos and Meekes, 1999). Over the past decades productivist and post-productivist farming models had less interest in keeping traditions and regional differences as they did not contribute to the economy of regions and their farming sector. However, today under influence of tourism, the culinary interest in local cuisines and other processes, regions and also the farming sector have rediscovered the interest of preserving local practices and farming (Sims, 2009). In what can be called the multifunctional paradigm (Burton and Wilson, 2006), regions and their farming sector try to turn back the evolution of uniformisation of agricultural practices and structures. This goes further than only a renewed interest in local food production but is linked to restabilising the links among agriculture and local environment, nature protection, water management, protection of cultural heritage, preservation of local landscape elements and so on.

In order to know whether agriculture has the potential to contribute to such a process, it is important to investigate how the impact of agriculture on the landscape is perceived both by people living in the region as well as by visitors and tourists. Research by van Dam et al. (2002) showed that people associate the countryside mostly with morphological and visual aspects, such as green areas, farms, meadows and cows. Openness of landscapes, which can often be attributed to agriculture, seems to be a significant predictor of overall attractiveness of a region (Rogge, et al., 2007). Furthermore, evidence exists that when agriculture would disappear in a region, there would be a negative impact on landscapes, cultural heritage and

agro-ecological systems (Calvo-Iglesias, et al., 2006; Daugstad, et al., 2006; Dramstad, et al., 2001; MacDonald, et al., 2000).

However, agriculture may also have negative effects on landscapes and landscape interpretation. For example, the so called “mess-ification” of the landscape, created by farmers using all kinds of non-endogenous materials or constructions on their farms, destroys the typical farm elements which often contributed to landscape creation. Farms have therefore often developed negatively from an architectural and landscape point of view. Neatness, however, which refers to the feeling that the agricultural environment is properly managed, is one of the most important factors in a positive landscape perception (Antrop, et al., 2006). Moreover, modern agricultural practices have been and still are one of the main polluters of the environment and responsible for the degradation of landscape elements, nature values, although public authorities have already established important policies to prevent this.

The specific landscape that is created in a region forms an important element of what is called regional identity. Regional identity involves first of all the characteristic elements of an area which distinguish it from other areas, but is also linked to regional or local history, traditions, culture and folklore. However, regional identity is more than only the existence of such characteristic elements but is based both upon the meaning attached by local people or visitors to these elements and the way people develop an attachment to the region (Kruit, et al., 2004). Because regional identity is a social construction, regions can have more than one identity (Paasi, 2003).

The use of regional identity into marketing of products and services may be done by several actors individually or collectively (Kruit, et al., 2004; Simon, 2005). When it is done collectively, it can be called regional branding. Several actors can benefit from regional branding: the real estate sector can benefit from an increase in the value of residential property in an area (Cheshire and Sheppard, 1995; Garrod and Willis, 1992a; Irwin, 2002); the tourism sector profits from higher prices of rural accommodation (Fleischer and Tchetchik, 2005b; Vanslebrouck, et al., 2005); local products might more often be eaten in local restaurants or sold in local stores (Bessiere, 1998b) and so on.

Key question is whether (multifunctional) agriculture, contributing to this identity, may also profit from it. Where literature exists that multifunctional farming at individual level has the potential to be profitable through diversification activities (selling of farm products, rural tourism, ...) (e.g. Hjalager, 1996; McNally, 2001; van der Ploeg and Renting, 2000), less evidence exists on models in which agriculture can benefit from regional branding and be at least remunerated for the contributions made to the creation of landscapes, identities and brands. One possibility is that efforts of farmers to contribute to the branding process are remunerated by (local or regional) governments. This could be a logical solution if, e.g., the activities under the regional branding umbrella generate higher taxes for the local or regional authorities (income or real estate taxes). Another possibility is the creation and construction of private financing mechanisms within the branding process from which farmers can profit or be remunerated. Possibilities described in literature are landscape auctions, landscape funds, local associations between farmers and other sectors, and so on (e.g. Cappon and Leinfelder, 2008; Padt, et al., 2002; Van Gossum, et al., 2009). Furthermore, as already said farmers can also profit from an attractive regional identity through increased incentives for farm tourism, recreation, on-farm selling or processing of agricultural products. According to Donkers et al. (2006) such a regional value chain, delivering high quality products and contributing to environment, nature and landscape, can survive without lasting subsidies.

Theoretically the above gives an indication that the multifunctionality – identity – regional development circle, which is visualized in Figure 9, can be developed and works.

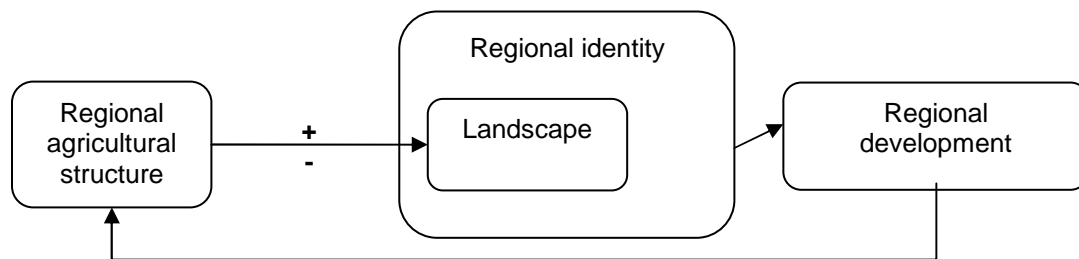


Figure 9. The circle of regional agriculture, landscape, identity and development

However, in practice this seems not so easy, as the following results section will reveal.

4.2. Results and discussion

As was mentioned already, this results section is based on the interviews done with farmers and regional stakeholders in the Belgian cases of Haspengouw, Meetjesland, Gaume and Les Deux Ourthes. First, the role will be discussed of agriculture in landscape management in the framework of identity-based regional development. Secondly, the viewpoint of farmers and organizations will be given on the question whether farmers should be involved as landscape managers in identity-based regional development processes. Finally, if organizations or governments want to involve farmers as landscape managers in identity-based regional development processes, the third part of the results section gives some recommendations on how to do this.

4.2.1. Role of agriculture in landscape management in the framework of identity-based regional development

Based on the research, we found that farmers' contribution to the landscape, and hence to regional identity, can be categorised in four ways, based on the intentionality of the action, the initiative taker, the type of influence on landscape and the type of involvement.

Firstly, the interviewed organisations and farmers mentioned an unintentional contribution of farmers to the landscape. The use of land for agriculture creates a specific ecosystem, with matching fauna and flora (Love and Spaner, 2007). Especially in the Flemish cases, agriculture's influence on the landscape is perceived as very important. However, farmers can also intentionally influence the landscape, by maintaining small landscape elements, removing garbage, etc. Some of the farmers interviewed, deliberately use only traditional building materials when renovating their farm buildings, in order to conserve cultural heritage and better fit the farm in the landscape.

Secondly, although in the previously mentioned examples the initiative was taken by the farmers themselves, in other cases farmers are approached by local organisations who are active in local development to ask for their active contribution to embellish the region. Activities mentioned under this category were the planting of flowers or hedges to improve the quality of walking or bicycle routes, planting standard fruit trees, protecting brooklets, etc. Farmers are also sometimes asked to let their animals graze in nature reserves or on roadsides, dikes, etc... In the project 'Life Otters' in the region Les Deux Ourthes for example, organisations work together with farmers and stimulate them to:

“put barriers to protect the brooklets on their pastures, provide watering places, etc.”

Thirdly, a distinction can be made between positive and negative effects on the landscape. Far more interviewees have mentioned a negative impact of agriculture on landscape than a positive one. Negative effects can be caused by farm buildings which don't fit in the landscape because of their architecture, the colour of the buildings or their size. An organisation of Meetjesland mentioned that

“the scaling-up of agriculture means that farms are becoming bigger [...] I don't always like them, those big white boxes, plumped down in the landscape.”

There were also complaints that large industrial-type farms destroy the landscape by removing trees or dikes to facilitate tillage and cultivation. Another problem mentioned was the problem of untidy, neglected farm yards or fields, giving the landscape a disordered look. This is also mentioned in literature (Antrop, et al., 2006). Another example encountered was the fact that because of a lack of measures against erosion, soil from the fields can make roads dirty and unattractive for tourists and recreants. The main positive effect of agriculture is the fact that it opens up the landscape, which contributes to its attractiveness (Rogge, et al., 2007).

Fourthly, farmers can be involved in the practical management of the landscape or in the decision-making process on identity-based regional development and landscape management. In the study areas the involvement is, according to farmers as well as organisations, done through membership of farmers in municipal socio-cultural and touristic boards, local commissions on rural development, the general assembly of regional organisations, or through a more informal contact between the parties.

4.2.2. Should farmers be involved as landscape managers in the identity-based regional development process?

Within the interviews several sets could be distinguished which relate to why farmers should or should not be involved as landscape managers in the identity-based regional development process. A distinction was made between the viewpoint of organisations and of farmers.

Viewpoint of organisations

Why yes?

The reasons for involving farmers are fourfold: opportunistic, ideological, practical and social reasons. Some reasons focus on landscape management in general (as part of the regional identity) while some focus on the specific role of agriculture in identity-based regional development.

A first type of reasons for involving farmers directly in the identity-based regional development process can be labelled as opportunistic reasons. The involvement will lead to better results at lower costs:

“We have had sunken roads of which the municipalities [of Haspengouw] really didn’t know how to manage them. [...] we had to find a solution to manage them [...] in a sustainable way. Then we decided to cooperate with an organisation of farmers doing landscape management.”

Identity-based regional development only works if everybody in the region participates, because only then the region as a whole can be made more attractive. Therefore farmers should be involved, which will at the same time lead to a higher acceptance of the development process amongst farmers. The positive effect of participation on the social acceptability of policies is described in literature (see e.g. Richards, et al., 2007).

Secondly, the organisations believe that incorporating agriculture is necessary because of ideological reasons. They believe it is obvious that part of the job of a farmer is to take care of the landscape, to have a good knowledge about nature, to prevent negative effects such as erosion, to integrate farm buildings in the landscape and to avert the landscape being switched into an industrial one. It just is a farmer’s duty.

“In earlier days, the municipalities [of Haspengouw] often had an ‘edges person’ mowing the road edges and it was often a farmer. It is time for farmers to stand on their dignity, to become proud of the landscape, that they don’t stick only to their arable land but go further and take care of their whole environment.”

Thirdly, the organisations want to involve farmers in identity-based regional development because of practical reasons. Farmers own or lease a large part of the land and already manage it within their day-to-day work. Moreover, they are often rooted in the region and work closely to the land, which provides them with a lot of knowledge. This knowledge on land-use, landscape dynamics and local cultural heritage may not easily be collected from other sources (Calvo-Iglesias, et al., 2006).

“You can’t escape it. 70 per cent of the region’s surface is agricultural land. That’s a lot... then we as a landscape organisation [in Meetjesland] would have to be very stupid not to consider this as very important in the development of the landscape, its quality...”

Finally, a few organisations want to involve farmers in the identity-based regional development process because of social reasons. Involving farmers in the practical implementation of identity-based regional development might increase local employment and

therefore keep money within the region. It helps to keep agriculture viable, to prevent it from disappearing and can create more appreciation for local farmers.

Why not?

Although many organisations want to involve farmers in the identity-based regional development process, some do not want to pay farmers for this. On landscape creation in general, organisations state that farmers already get a lot of incentives and support, and that they should try harder to benefit from existing channels. One organisation claimed that a nice landscape doesn't necessarily come from farmers: a well-managed industrial zone can be as well integrated in the landscape as a farm. Two organisations believe farmers don't have the time or the capacities to be involved in landscape management. Lastly, it is stated by two organisations that farmers are not the cheapest providers of a nice landscape. For example, in the case of nature organisations, managing nature areas that are not used by agriculture is more rewarding than those which are used by agriculture. When farmers don't use and manage the nature area, then nature organisations receive a management allowance which is higher than the lease payment they would get if farmers manage the nature area.

Related to identity-based regional development itself, one organisation says that it's difficult to integrate agriculture in this process because the agriculture in the region is so diverse that different policies would be necessary, causing high costs. Some organisations say they don't have enough time or financial means to organise participation of farmers in identity-based regional development. Moreover, the more people you involve in local decision-making, the longer it takes before you reach a consensus.

“The inconvenience is that taking decisions becomes more difficult, because inevitably, the more people there are, the more the opinions are divided...”
(organisation in *Les Deux Ourthes*)

In literature, this argument has been used to advocate the inefficiency of decentralisation and participatory governance (Meynen and Doornbos, 2004). According to De Vries (2000) however, participation could also lead to a higher efficiency of governance because it reduces the decision load through sharing the decision-making process with more people.

Viewpoint of farmers

Why yes?

The motivations for being involved are again fourfold (ideological, economic, image and practical issues), showing similarities with the reasons formulated by the organisations. It is important for the interpretation of the results to stress again that only those farmers were interviewed who are already involved in multifunctional agriculture.

The motivation mentioned most by farmers for an active role in identity-based regional development is an ideological one. This motivation is similar to the ideological reason mentioned by the organisations. Farmers want this active role in regional development out of respect for nature and the landscape; because it satisfies them to keep the region clean and

beautiful for other people; because they want farm buildings with charm and a soul and not industrial boxes; because they find standard trees, hedges, pools etc. beautiful; because they want to contribute to the wellbeing of their region, etc.

“I [a farmer in Haspengouw] like it to drive around in the village with my tractor and to be respected and seen as someone who has respect for nature and takes care of the environment.”

This result is striking, given that research shows that the self-concept of the farmer is still largely influenced by production-oriented identities, despite the paradigm shift in policy circles (Burton and Wilson, 2006).

The second motivation for an active role in identity-based regional development is gaining an extra income. However, the money farmers get for these activities is not that much, so there has to be some ideological motivation involved as well. This ideological motivation is important, because if farmers have internalized policies and their goals, in particular those regarding nature and landscape, then there is a higher probability that these policies will be effective (Stobbelaar, et al., 2009).

“[According to a farmer in Meetjesland,] the reason why more farmers are engaged in landscape management: [is] because they are more aware, but also because they are partly compensated for this.”

Farmers with farm tourism or recreation have said to engage in nature and landscape management to attract customers. This second economic motivation can be compared with the opportunistic reason formulated by organisations.

Thirdly, some farmers claim they want to be involved in identity-based regional development to improve the image of farming (parallel with the social reason described by the organisations). Farmers are concerned about their image, which has worsened over the last decades due to a loss of connection between society and agricultural production (Meerburg, et al., 2009). As a result they want to be involved in nature and landscape management, embellishing their farms, etc. to improve their image (and the image of their products) towards other locals, their family and friends and society as a whole.

“...planting hedges, trees, embellishing the farm, put some green here and there...Farmers want agriculture to have a positive image” [according to a farmer in Haspengouw]

Finally, a few farmers claimed that the extra activities connected to regional development were taken up because they didn't have a large effect on the farm management anyway. At some moments in the year, farmers have more time available and can easily take up extra activities. Concerning parcel edges, one farmer claimed he doesn't mind that these edges are sown with a flower mix, because it is difficult to manage them anyway. So, as was the case for the organisations, practical reasons are also important.

Why not?

The most mentioned reason why farmers are not involved in identity-based regional was a lack of knowledge. Many farmers indicate that they have little knowledge on initiatives for regional development in their region, or that they don't know organisations involved in this. Some say that if you don't ask the organisations yourself to be involved, then this won't happen.

The farmers feel it's difficult to participate or won't participate in local landscape management because of reasons related to policies. They fear that this will go along with too much bureaucracy, to which they have a great aversion (Vernimmen, et al., 2000), and will create extra costs. The conditions to get subsidies are also not always understood by farmers. For example, why can you only get subsidies for old varieties of standard trees, while new standard trees produce better and more fruits and have the same effect on the landscape.

“When I [a farmer in Haspengouw] look at the rateable value [which influences the lease price], it's historically determined that the rateable value of standard tree orchards is the highest. Then you have to imagine: to have a standard tree orchard, you should be an idealist, like me.”

Some regulations are considered to be unfair, like the fact that the legal destination of your farmland can change when you use it for nature or landscape purposes.

“I didn't have contacts with the Parc Naturel des Deux Ourthes. Being a farmer [in Les Deux Ourthes], I'm afraid that they will put up zones and restrict us, a bit like with Natura 2000...”

The short term of projects, the uncertainty about receiving a payment, not knowing the level of payment, the lack of flexibility in rules, and the vagueness of rules are also mentioned as a negative factor by farmers. Some farmers believe that the approval of local projects (e.g. in LEADER) is sometimes politically influenced. It is indeed a challenge for LEADER managers to deal with the self-interest of local people in power (Oedl-Wieser, et al., 2010). These reasons all contribute to the lack of trust a farmer has in the regional development process.

The interviews also revealed that some of the reasons used for being involved in the identity-based regional development process, can just as well be used to explain why farmers are not involved. On the economic motivation, it was found that many farmers believe being involved is not profitable. Costs will arise when engaging in these activities. For example, when a farmer has ecological grasslands this might be better for nature and landscape, but gives a worse quality of hay. On the issue of image, the farmers mention certain obstacles, such as tasks related to landscape management are not the kind of tasks a real, successful farmer does. Other farmers might look down on farmers involved in these kinds of activities. According to Burton (2004) many farmers still attach a high symbolic value to production oriented activities and believe their status depends on this.

“So I [a responsible for an organisation in Haspengouw] asked the farmer whether he wanted to rebuild some of the chapels in our region. The man had also renovated his house and stables. The farmer said: “I can't do that, what are people going to think of me. I won't sit on my knees next to a chapel and then everybody passes and says ‘Has it come this far already?’”

On the issue of practical concerns, the farmers say it's difficult to participate in regional development because of practical concerns, like a lack of time. Trimming hedges, for example, has to be done at the time of the year when there is most work on the farm. Another practical concern is that landscape management doesn't fit with every type of farming.

4.2.3. How to better involve farmers in landscape management in the framework of identity-based regional development?

Despite the fact that there are also drawbacks, the previous sections indicate that involving farmers in landscape management, in the framework of regional development processes, can have benefits for farmers and regional organisations. If organisations want to involve farmers in the identity-based regional development process, what is the best way to proceed?

Using the analyses from before, we can work around four concepts: opportunistic-economic, ideological, practical and social-image-trust.

Based on the interviews, the best way to get farmers involved in regional development is to make this financially interesting. Involving farmers in this economic part is important:

“If I [an organisation in Haspengouw] take on a [landscape management] job for €1000 and I go and ask a farmer whether he can do it for this price, he is hesitating. If I however discuss first with the farmer how much work it requires, how much taxes he would have to pay, and then ask him “what if we would put a price of €1000 on it?”, then the farmer will agree more easily.”

The main problem will be where to get enough financial means to compensate farmers. Farmers themselves suggested decreasing the rateable value on land with standard trees, or organizing competitions for the best looking farm or farmland as an incentive for a better integration of farms in the landscape. Another solution is the creation of regional funds for landscape management. In the case of the region Groene Woud in the Netherlands, this fund is linked to a special savings account: people save money on an account of a particular bank, which deposits part of the capital on the account into the regional fund. Not to forget, regional development could provide economic benefits to farmers by creating more opportunities to diversify their activities and take up farm tourism, or processing and sales of regional (labelled) farm products. By communicating this to the farmer, sustainable solutions can be found.

An attractive compensation payment can however not be sufficient to convince farmers to get involved in landscape management. Some farmers fear negative effects on their image when they would engage in these activities, because they still attach a high symbolic value to the classical production activities. Involving farmers in identity-based regional development requires creating a positive attitude towards this issue and activities related to this. This relates again to the importance of farmers' internalization of policy objectives (Stobbelaar, et al., 2009). There is a need to convince farmers of the value of their patrimony, of the important role they play in the countryside, etc. This needs to be done by people who are trusted by farmers, and should be incorporated in agricultural education.

“Financial means are important, very important, but if it’s not between the ears of the farmer then it has no use. If he doesn’t understand, then his efforts will lack verve. [Meetjesland]”

It will also be very important to communicate this role of the farmer to the public, in order to increase the appreciation of the public, e.g. by working with signs indicating that the landscape is provided by the farmer. Some organisations do efforts to communicate their strategy to the local public through folders, local newspapers, and local events. Positive reactions of other people can arouse pride and give farmers a positive attitude towards landscape management. According to Dessein and Nevens (2007) the affinity of farmers with nature and the visual attractiveness of their farm has a strong and positive influence on their pride. The general image of agriculture, however, only seems to have a weak influence on pride.

A third recommendation, mentioned by the organisations and farmers, is to facilitate the practical aspects of an involvement in regional development, like helping them with paperwork, giving them advice, organizing activities at times when there’s not much work on the farms, providing farmers with plant material, and a gradual introduction of policies and educating farmers in their new role. Agricultural education can contribute in changing the attitude of farmers, but seminars or courses can also be organised for farmers at local level to try and change their mindset towards taking up landscape activities. These courses can also go deeper into concrete benefits for the farmers and their region as a whole.

Competition between farmers as well as with other sectors as a result of stimulating alternative activities too much should be avoided. Farmers as landscape managers shouldn’t take over the task of the gardeners’ sector, nature organisations in reserves, etc. It is important that these different actors don’t compete, but find common objectives and reach synergy. Therefore, farmers should be stimulated to cooperate, also with other groups, within the identity-based regional development process. According to McGinnis (2005), support for cooperation should especially be given in the start-up phase, but the government shouldn’t be involved too much in the coordination of these initiatives. Cooperation will have advantages such as:

- cutting costs, as was the case for a landscape management organisation by farmers in Haspengouw in which one farmer manages all hedges and receives the rewards from other farmers to do so;
- saving time, for example in Haspengouw farmers are working together with hunters for the management of parcel edges, creating a perfect habitat for birds;
- allowing for a better coordination of local initiatives, increasing their compatibility, and stimulating learning.

However, the main recommendation has to do with trust and social aspects. Personal contact seems to be important here: if organisations want farmers to be involved, asking them personally will have the biggest effect. Also important is to have trustworthy individuals and organisations to convince farmers. Governments need to be careful with changing the legal destination of farm land to nature. The fear for this is often keeping farmers from getting involved in landscape or nature management. For farmers to trust that regional development won’t have negative impacts on their farm, it is necessary to involve them in the planning

concerning this topic. Participatory governance can lead to building trust at the local level since during the process of policy making, different views (which sometimes conflict) are heard and this increases the transparency and credibility of the final policy (Richards, et al., 2007).

“[...] pollard willows standing beside a pool, they were all gone, razed to the ground. Just because the farmers feared that these natural elements would result in the spatial destination of their farmland being changed to nature land. Stupid policy according to me. They should have told the farmers: our intention is to create more nature values, but we will do this through you.” [according to a farmer in Meetjesland]

4.3. Conclusions

This section dealt with the opportunities for farmers to be integrated in identity-based regional development processes using landscape management. It is clear that in rural areas agriculture, as a major land user, has a substantial impact on the landscape. From literature we learned that landscape is an important component of regional identity and that multifunctional agriculture may contribute to enhancing this regional identity by emphasising more the non-economic functions such as environmental management and landscape protection. The specific identity which results from these processes can be a source of benefits for several actors in a region such as the tourism or the real estate sector and can be incorporated and enhanced collectively in an identity-based regional development process. Farmers can actively contribute to this process or be involved in the building of the process. Key question is how agriculture itself can profit from successful regional development, to which it contributes. Identity-based regional development could create an economic dynamic in which contributions to the creation and preservation of the landscape are auto-financed: the landscape generates income from, for example, tourism and recreation and part of this money can then be reinvested back in the landscape at least if adequate financing systems are developed and good governance is developed.

The results section provides some ideas for good governance in identity-based regional development policies. Firstly, these policies should go along with a good communication strategy to increase awareness of farmers and to avoid resistance. Personal communication seems to be most effective, especially if it is done by people who have some knowledge on the agricultural sector and who are trusted by the farmers. Results and literature suggest that farmers' participation in regional development can be stimulated if they internalize the goals of these policies. Agricultural education can contribute in this regard, but it could also be obtained by making the role of the farmer as a landscape manager visible to the people.

Cooperation between local organizations is also important because it can increase the efficiency of cooperation with farmers regarding landscape management. This underlines the importance of a common strategy for regional development at a higher level. Cooperation with local farmers and financial aspects should be important elements of such a strategy. In a common financial strategy it would also be good to investigate possibilities to attract money for landscape management from local companies or private people, e.g. in a regional fund. Further initiative and research in this respect should concentrate on successful modalities and examples to attract money for landscape management from these private sources. In this respect a further comparison of Belgian initiatives with initiatives in other countries could be interesting.

5. ECONOMIC BENEFITS AS A RESULT OF REGIONAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

The third part of the MUSICAL project deals with the role of multifunctional agriculture in relation to the rural (regional) development perspective. Rural development aims at repositioning the rural within the wider society, by making the rural more attractive, more accessible, more valuable. This repositioning occurs through the elaboration of new interlinking mechanisms, new forms of governance and re-patterning processes, activities and networks within rural regions. It is all about the further unfolding (or revitalization) of the amenities (or resources) contained in the rural – amenities that are important to the society as a whole (Van der Ploeg and Roep, 2003). In that perspective, agriculture is conceived as inherently multifunctional, since it may/must have multiple outputs (e.g. agricultural commodities, landscape amenities, et.) that may contribute to several societal objectives at once (OECD, 2001).

Figure 10 shows that the focus within part 3 is on three research topics: the influence of a multifunctional agriculture on rural (regional) actors, such as the real estate and tourism sector (5.1), an assessment of alternative financing mechanisms for the provision of public services (by multifunctional agriculture) in which private actors play an important role (5.2), and the influence of regional identity on possibilities for farm diversification (5.3). Because of the distinct character of these three subsections, and unlike the structure of the other result sections, conclusions will be formulated after each subsection.

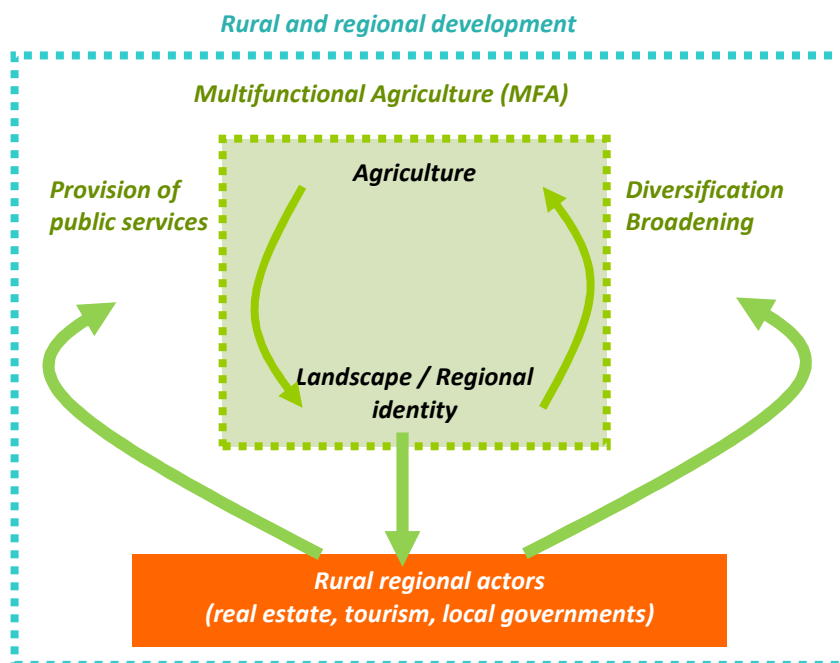


Figure 10. *The three research topics within the third part of the Musical-project*

5.1. Effect of multifunctional agriculture on private sectors in a region

The objective of this part of the project is to look at the potential regional development based on an agricultural identity of a region, has on a specific economic sector, namely the real estate sector. Therefore, within this work package, the economic effects of agrarian-regional identities are analyzed.

We believe that certain landscapes may have a positive influence on the prizes of real estate, but also on water companies, local shops or tourist accommodation. Therefore, we want to find out how agriculture –maybe unconsciously- affects the economy in certain regions, and which effects a more or less multifunctional agriculture has on real estate prices and prices for tourist accommodation.

5.1.1. The effect of multifunctional agriculture on the real estate sector

By the end of the first project phase, the research on the relationship between (multifunctional) agriculture and real estate prices has been completed. Data for Belgium have been collected at municipal level and for four different years (1990, 1995, 2000 and 2005) leading to a large dataset. Per year 589 useable observations are gathered. The municipalities are spread over four urbanization classes of the rurality index classification, ranging from rural, over semi-rural and semi-urban to urban (Lauwers, et al., 2004).

The relationship has been estimated using a hedonic pricing function based on a log-linear model. The hedonic pricing functions for house prices (P_h € per house) and development land prices (P_l € per m²) are the following:

$$P_h = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 AI * PR + \alpha_2 VP + \alpha_3 PS + \alpha_4 PR + \alpha_5 YE + \alpha_6 AL * UR + \alpha_7 GL * UR + \alpha_8 MFA * UR$$

$$P_l = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 AI * PR + \alpha_2 VP + \alpha_3 LS + \alpha_4 PS + \alpha_5 PR + \alpha_6 YE + \alpha_7 AL * UR + \alpha_8 GL * UR + \alpha_9 MFA * UR$$

The results on housing prices are given in the second and third column of Table III and the results on development land prices in the fourth and fifth column.

Table III. Regression results for housing and land prices as dependent variables, Belgium, 2006

		Housing prices		Developm. land prices	
		coefficient	prob.	coefficient	prob.
Year (base = 1990)	1995	0,086	**	0,100	**
	2000	0,228	**	0,404	**
	2005	0,571	**	0,981	**
Province (base = Limburg)	Antwerp	-8,560	**	-1,212	**
	West-Flanders	-1,241	**	-1,708	**
	East-Flanders	-1,244	**	-1,792	**
	Flemish Brabant	-1,082	**	-1,708	**
	Henegouwen	-1,246	**	-1,548	**
	Luik	-9,159	**	-1,252	**
	Luxemburg	-8,900	**	-1,491	**
	Namen	-1,588	**	-1,995	**
	Walloon Brabant	-1,067	**	-1,845	**

Average income	Antwerp	0,850	**	1,122	**
	West-Flanders	1,183	**	1,617	**
	East-Flanders	1,178	**	1,686	**
	Flemish Brabant	1,033	**	1,597	**
	Limburg	-0,040	**	-0,106	**
	Henegouwen	1,166	**	1,394	**
	Luik	0,845	**	1,092	**
	Luxemburg	0,822	**	1,310	**
	Namen	1,521	**	1,822	**
	Walloon Brabant	1,021	**	1,705	**
Variation in prices		0,188	**	0,189	**
Average lot size				-0,340	**
Percent land used by public services		-0,003		0,008	
Percent arable land	rural	0,000		-0,001	**
	semi-rural	-0,001	**	-0,003	**
	semi-urban	-0,001	**	-0,003	**
	urban	-0,002	**	-0,003	**
Percent grassland	rural	0,001	**	-0,005	**
	semi-rural	0,002	**	-0,001	*
	semi-urban	0,001	**	-0,002	*
	urban	0,000		-0,003	**
Percent nature conservation	rural	-0,005	**	-0,006	**
	semi-rural	0,000		0,000	
	semi-urban	0,001		0,007	**
	urban	-0,002		0,000	
Percent processing	rural	0,005	*	-0,009	*
	semi-rural	-0,004	*	0,010	**
	semi-urban	0,000		0,006	
	urban	0,003		0,006	*
Percent direct sales	rural	-0,003	**	-0,001	
	semi-rural	-0,001	**	-0,003	**
	semi-urban	0,000		-0,001	
	urban	0,000		0,001	
Constant		9,799	**	6,496	**
Adjusted R ²		0,877		0,923	
F-statistic		364,013	**	611,148	**

** : p-value <0.05

* : p-value <0.10

Structural, neighbourhood, community, location and time-related attributes

Most of the signs for the variables on the non-environmental attributes are as expected. House prices and land prices have increased (even after correcting for general inflation) over the years. Housing prices are about 57% higher in 2005 than in 1990 while land prices have increased with about 98% in Belgium.

Furthermore, there is a significant difference in the development land prices according to the location within provinces. Limburg is the province with the highest land prices. Namen has the lowest land prices. It should immediately be mentioned that we also included the interaction term province and income, which will explain the low coefficient on e.g. Flemish Brabant knowing that in fact land prices are very high in this province. At the same time we look at the variable average income in the municipality. A positive significant coefficient was found, as expected (Hardie, et al., 2001; Palmquist, et al., 1997). In each province, an increase in average income leads to an increase in housing prices (except for Limburg): a 1% increase in average income leads to an increase between 0.8% and 1.5%. The higher housing price might be caused by the higher willingness to pay for a house by richer people (who have more money to spend) or by the higher willingness to accept for selling houses of richer people (who only want to sell at a high price). Both effects will positively influence the hedonic price because it describes the equilibrium between offer and value functions. When it comes to average income and development land prices, we also find a positive relationship, but with a slightly higher elasticity: a one percent increase in income leads to an increase between 1.1% and 1.8%. These coefficients need to be interpreted together with the variable province. It means that on average the land prices are high in Limburg, but they do not increase when average income increases. However, the land prices are relatively low in e.g. Flemish Brabant, but an increase in average income will lead to a substantial increase in land prices.

A variable stating the average size of the sold lot is used in the analysis of development land prices. The results show that whenever more land at one time is sold, the average price decreases. A sold lot that is one percent larger leads to a decrease of the price per m² of 0.3%.

The greater the heterogeneity in the housing prices within the municipality, the higher the average housing price, as was expected (e.g. Palmquist, et al., 1997). Similar results are found for development land prices: when there is more variation in the land prices, the average price is higher.

The coefficient on the variable percent land used by public services is not significant in the regression on housing prices nor in the regression on land prices. This might indicate that there is either no relationship between the offer of public services and prices or that the used variable is not the best one. The variable certainly does not reflect the efficiency of public services which might be more influential than the land area public services use.

Environmental attributes

The main purpose of the analysis was to find out whether agricultural activities can be included as attributes and whether there is a difference between multifunctional and non-multifunctional agriculture.

It seems that the area of arable and grassland in a municipality are attributes related to the price of a house or development land. More arable land has a significant negative impact on development land prices and housing prices in almost each urbanization gradient. This confirms the results of other authors (such as Le Goffe, 2000) stating that cultivated land has a negative relationship with prices. More grassland has a positive impact on house prices but a negative one on development land prices. Remarkably, in urban regions the impact of grassland on housing prices is insignificant.

Next to that, it has been investigated whether multifunctional strategies are related to real estate prices. Three types of activities are looked at. First of all the percentage farmers involved in nature conservation is looked at. It can be assumed that farmers taking care of nature will create a nicer landscape view and limit some of the negative externalities of farming (like odor, water or air pollution). We therefore expect a positive relationship with prices especially in those areas where agriculture is already under a lot of societal pressure, such as the semi-rural and semi-urban areas. It seems that the only significant impact in these areas is found on land prices and is positive. An increase of one percent point in the number of farmers with conservation programs leads to an increase of 0.7 percent in land prices in semi-urban regions. When it comes to housing prices, we didn't get the expected results. In most areas there is no significant relationship between nature conservation and housing prices. Only in the rural areas a significant relationship is found but the coefficient is negative. Within this area, where agriculture takes up most of the land, actions undertaken by farmers to conserve nature do not seem to be valued in house prices.

The expected relationship with the second type of multifunctional activities is different. Processing is an activity that does not create open space landscapes and can much more be related to intensive farming activities. As was found by Palmquist et al. (1997) considering hog operations, creating more buildings or noise and odour distress will lead to lower housing and land prices. This is found for housing prices in the semi-rural and for development land prices in the rural areas. In the rural areas, a positive coefficient is derived for housing prices. In this region, the positive effects of having an on-farm processor nearby (such as access to fresh food products) overcome the negative externalities. Also in the urban and semi-rural areas we found a positive impact on development land prices.

Lastly, on-farm selling has been investigated. It is rather difficult to predict what the relationship will look like, because on-farm selling does not contribute much to the landscape nor does it relate to industrial activities with many negative externalities. However, we only found negative significant relations: in rural and semi-rural areas the impact of on-farm sales is negative on housing prices and development land prices.

In general it can be stated that although there is some relationship between multifunctional agriculture and housing and land prices, the impact is limited and only leads to a small increase in the explained variation (increase of about 0.5% in adjusted R^2). The impact furthermore differs (shifting from positive to negative) according to the urbanization gradient and to the type of multifunctional activities.

5.1.2. The effect of multifunctional agriculture on the tourism sector

Tourism is an important economic sector, within the EU (Danciu, et al., 2007) as well as in Belgium. In 2007, the sector 'hotels and restaurants' encompassed 44,392 enterprises (7.4% of the total number of enterprises in Belgium) and created an annual turnover of 10 billion euro (0.71% of the total). The sector created direct employment for 172,322 people (4.5% of the total) and indirectly for another 70,652 people (using an employment multiplier of 141% (Federaal Planbureau, 2010; Statistics Belgium, 2007)). Moreover, the sector has an output multiplier of 183% which means that the total impact of a shift in tourism output on the Belgian economy will even be 83% larger than the initial shift.

If there exists a link between tourism and regional identity, it can be assumed that this will be important within the Belgian economy.

The link can go in two directions (see Figure 11): regional identity might influence tourism, but tourism might as well influence the identity of the region. Both links can be enhanced through the landscape of a region: tourism creates a certain landscape which will influence the identity and an identity can be reflected in the landscape that attracts (or discourages) tourism.

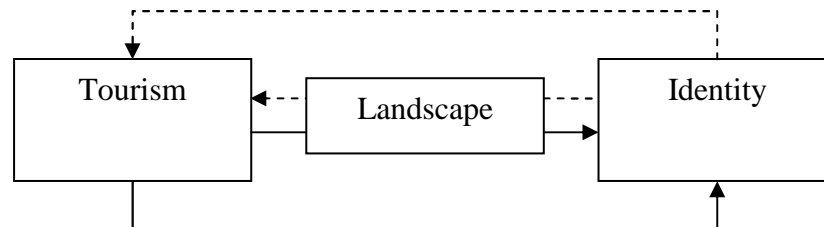


Figure 11 The relationship between tourism, landscape and identity

Tourism creates and develops regional identity

Tourism is strongly implicated in the construction and reproduction of identities at a number of scales (Light, 2001). In literature it has been shown how tourism might contribute to the formation of the tourists' and visitors' identities, might lead to a transformation of the identities of the hosts and might as well generate and consolidate new images and identities for the region (Ballesteros and Ramirez, 2007). It is stated that tourism will create regional symbols and images (Ploner, 2009). It will be part of the process of identity building (Light, 2001) and helps to create a representational identity (Ploner, 2009), which can be used for branding the region.

Parkes, Australia, is an exemplary case of how tourism can create an identity. Parkes is a remote village that has created a tourism product around Elvis Presley, who never visited the village and to whom there exists no other link than an enthusiastic fan. He started a yearly festival, inviting Elvis imitators which has grown so much that by now the village is associated with an Elvis culture and identity. It is an example that shows how 'tradition' can be constructed from tourism activities (Brennan-Horley, et al., 2007).

Some authors however believe that tourism will wipe out regional identity instead of sustaining this identity. Due to globalization processes, tourism becomes more and more interregional which will create standardized landscapes so that regional diversity will decrease (Soovali, et al., 2003). In order to satisfy the needs and wants of many different tourists, some concessions on identity might have to be made. The identities and representations of a community will be affected by tourism (Ballesteros and Ramirez, 2007).

Regional identity stimulates tourism

The previous relationship is often seen as the more classic relationship between identity and tourism. However, one can go beyond this by accepting that identity will have an impact on

tourism, such as heritage tourism (Ballesteros and Ramirez, 2007) or local food tourism (Sims, 2009).

Tradition can be an effective means of branding a place and stimulating tourism (Connell and Rugendyke, 2010). Although this might at the same time be a bottleneck for tourism development. For example, within many former soviet regions, the differences in identity between regions within one country or one interesting tourist place and their history might endanger cooperation between the regions in order to enhance tourism (Nilsson, et al.). Another example is the case of food tourism. Everett & Aitchison showed that there exists a clear correlation between increased food tourism and the creation of regional identity (Everett and Aitchison, 2008). Local foods can be conceptualized as authentic products that symbolize the place and culture of the destination. And thereby they can play an important role in the sustainable tourism experience because it appeals to the visitor's desire for authenticity within the holiday experience (Sims, 2009).

In the case of agriculture, literature shows that it will create a specific landscape, which will contribute to the regional scenery. This scenery will thereby obtain a certain identity and this might lead to enhanced tourism. For example in Vermont, 84% of the tourists appreciates the current agricultural landscape. 58% would be less inclined to visit the region when this landscape would change or disappear. This while 15% of the economy in Vermont is based on tourism (Wood, et al., 2000). It can thus be expected that an agricultural landscape will result in economic benefits through tourism. Based on research in Israel, Fleischer and Tsur (2000) concluded that the landscape value of farming through recreation is substantial, amounting to \$119 million per year, which is substantially higher than the returns to farming of \$25 million per year. However, not every type of agriculture has positive effects on rural tourism. Vanslebrouck et al. (2005) found that agricultural landscape features such as meadows and grazing cattle positively influence the willingness to pay of tourist for rural accommodation. However, intensive maize cultivation has an adverse impact.

The importance of regional identity in tourism

Westtoer has found that there is a trend amongst tourists of growing interest to know and appreciate the identity of a region. They state that a region is becoming more and more a part of a larger scaled environment, in which nature and culture are the two most important aspects to create the identity of the region. Therefore we believe that regional identity will be important in regional tourism. However, in contrast to when we were studying the impact of regional identity on property prices, in which we were able to use a hedonic pricing method, in order to estimate the exact value of identity or landscape on house prices, this is not possible for tourism. Detailed tourism data (especially on revenue) are not available for the case studies nor for Belgium in general. Therefore we use a different approach here, namely we will try to identify the main reasons for people to decide on a holiday destination and to find out whether regional identity, or characteristics attached to this, are important or not.

Based on the Flash EuroBarometer (European Commission, 2010) we found that EU27 inhabitants choose their holiday destination based on the environment (31%), the cultural heritage (24%), entertainment (15%), gastronomy (7%), art (5%), festivals and other events (5%) and other reasons (8%) (figures from 2009). Earlier in the MUSICAL project we have defined that the environment as well as cultural heritage are important building blocks for

regional identity. Although the exact relationship between some of the reasons and regional identity is not straightforward, one can assume that festivals, entertainment and gastronomy might be some kind of branding of regional identity. Therefore we can assume that regional identity is one of the reasons for tourists to choose their destination.

A difference can be observed between members of different EU countries. Tourists in the Netherlands, Ireland, the UK and Norway only mention the environment (or the overall attractiveness of the region) as most important reason for choosing a holiday between 13% and 16%. In countries like Finland, Austria, Lithuania, Slovenia, Hungary and Iceland the percentages rise up to 40-44%. Belgium is somewhere in the middle: 27% of the responding tourists say they choose their destination based on the environment. When it comes to choosing a destination based on cultural heritage, Denmark, Turkey, Norway, Cyprus, the Netherlands and the UK where scoring high (more than 30%). Again Belgium was somewhere in the middle with 26% while the average for the EU 27 was 25%. Entertainment, the third most important reason is mentioned by 18% of the tourists in Belgium, compared with 15% all over Europe. Norway is completely at the bottom with 7% while in Ireland this reason is mentioned by 29% of the tourists. So in general, tourists come to Belgium, for reasons all linked to landscape and identity, similar to reasons for visiting other EU countries.

5.1.3. Conclusions: effect of an agricultural identity on private sectors

Taking into account some difficulties, such as the fact that real estate prices are dependent on many factors and that data on these prices is limited, it can be seen from the analysis that agriculture and more specifically multifunctional agriculture has an impact on real estate prices. We found that more arable land usually has a significant negative impact on development land prices and housing prices. This confirms the results of other authors (such as Le Goffe, 2000) stating that cultivated land has a negative relationship with prices. More grassland on the other hand has a positive impact on house prices but a negative one on development land prices.

The impact of multifunctional agriculture differs according to the type of multifunctional strategy. Nature conservation generally seems to have a positive effect on land prices, but there is no significant relationship with housing prices. On-farm processing, an activity that does not create open space landscapes and can much more be related to intensive farming activities, seems to have a negative effect on housing prices. However, in the rural areas, a positive coefficient is derived for housing prices. For on-farm selling, finally, only negative significant relations were found.

The literature study on the effect of regional identity on tourism also revealed that agriculture does have an influence on e.g. the prices for rural accommodation, but that the type and extent of the influence depends on the type of agriculture. Furthermore, the literature revealed that there is not only an impact of regional identity on tourism, but that tourism can also affect regional identity. To our knowledge, however, there is no research describing the effect of rural tourism on farmers' professional decision making.

So it seems that multifunctional agriculture can have a positive effect on certain economic sectors in a region, and therefore can contribute to the region's economic sustainability, although this effect depends greatly on the type of agriculture. In regional development or branding processes, it can therefore be interesting to make use of the agricultural elements of a

region. However, this may require the development of a specific regional strategy for the development of the agricultural sector, which has a social basis in the local farming sector and which is adopted by the majority of the farmers in the region.

5.2. Alternative financing of multifunctional agriculture, based on regional identity

It is observed that at present new institutional arrangements are emerging in relation to the provision of (quasi)public services –in particular the so-called ‘green services’– (Oostindie, et al., 2006) and that the provision of a range of ‘green services’ is increasingly being realized through individual or collective contracts between farmers and other local/regional actors (companies, citizens, local governments, etc.). All these new initiatives refer to alternative financing of multifunctional agriculture and are to a large extent illustrative of a new rural development paradigm.

Depending on the public good characteristics of the green services, whether they represent a use value or a non-use value, the public and private demand for these goods/services differs (see Figure 12). Nature (or biodiversity and natural habitat) involves in most cases non-use values that are strongly site-specific and for which the public demand outweighs the private demand. With regard to landscape, accessibility and living conditions, use-values and the private demand will become more relevant (OECD, 2001).

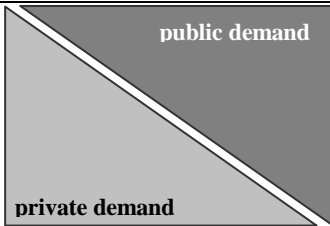
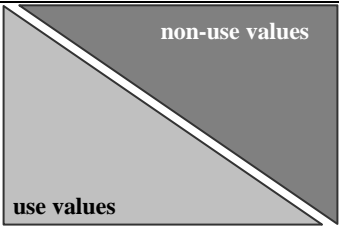
goal	good/service	demand	values
nature	nature management		
landscape	landscape management		
accessibility	facilities to improve accessibility		
living conditions	appropriate land use		

Figure 12. Overview of the goals of, the demand for and the values related to the different public goods of multifunctional agriculture

Because of non-excludability and non-rivalry², governments usually supply pure public goods (like biodiversity or natural habitat). However, ‘green services’ that are linked to the use values of landscape, to accessibility and environmental conditions, can be capitalized through a private demand. The concept of alternative financing therefore implies that private actors are (financially) involved in the provision of ‘green services’. This also means that there is a potential for agriculture’s contribution to regional identity to be financed privately, which will be the focus of this part of the research.

In this part of the report, the following issues will be discussed:

- the interpretation of alternative financing of multifunctional agriculture (MFA) in the broader context of rural development and other societal tendencies/evolutions;
- the typology and the characteristics of different alternative financing mechanisms for MFA;

² A good is non-rival when it can be consumed by one individual without decreasing consumption opportunities for the same unit for other consumers. Non-excludability of a good means that the benefits of the good are available to all.

- the public and managerial support for alternative financing;
- the preconditions for the development of alternative financing.

5.2.1. Alternative financing in a broader perspective

Narrowing the concept of alternative financing to private participation in the provision of some public services, would ignore the broader context in which the concept of alternative financing has to be situated. Therefore, some broader trends will be discussed below so as to sketch a broader framework in which the phenomenon of alternative financing has to be understood.

A first trend deals with the changing role and composition of the countryside. The countryside is becoming a place of interest to a much wider range of actors than just farmers (Caalders, 2000) and is no longer considered the sole player in the Belgian countryside. Moreover, the countryside transforms from a pure production space to a production and consumption space (Marsden, 1999). As evidence of this observation, Braaksma & Bos (2007) point out that investments in landscape (services) yield mainly benefits for housing and recreation and for the inheritance of this landscape. Residential housing and recreation (or tourism) turn out to be the new economic bearers of the countryside and therefore will be very important in developing alternative financing.

Secondly, there seems to be a shift in governance, both vertically and horizontally, and this is particularly evident in the domain of agriculture and countryside. Policy aims and legal frameworks for agriculture and rural development are largely formulated at a European level, whereas the actual implementation and specification of these aims and frameworks is designated at the regional level. Besides the vertical shift, there is also a horizontal shift. Rural development is increasingly a joint responsibility of governments, private enterprises and civil society organizations. This explains the growing attention for new forms and mechanisms of coordination and cooperation between farming and non-agricultural interests, especially within rural areas (but also with society at large) through the construction of new territorially based institutional arrangements. Also bottom-up approaches are on the rise and are an important part of various new modes of rural governance that are based on participative principles. The concept of joint responsibility will be the basis for the establishment of an alternative financing construction supporting landscape and nature management.

Thirdly, it is observed that, under the influence of processes of globalization and individualization, regions gain a central role in the creation of identity (see also work package 1.2.). Regional identity and awareness refer respectively to the degree to which people identify themselves with and belong to a region (Paasi, 2002b). The willingness to participate in alternative financing will depend on the awareness of and the involvement of rural residents and other private actors in a certain region/locality. At the same time there is also a trend of consumers searching for the 'real' thing, authenticity and meaning in their life. Here, images and symbolic meanings are becoming more and more prominent in reaching consumers. People do not simply buy products anymore, they buy experiences. It is clear that landscape amenities (and environmental quality) will play a major role in the experience/perception of the 'rural' and likewise in regional policies that are oriented towards improvement of the 'quality of life'.

As a conclusion, alternative financing can be defined as all kinds of territory based and innovative institutional arrangements³ with regard to the provision of ‘green services’, realized by a close collaboration between diverse rural actors (farmers, inhabitants, local governments, regional organizations, etc.). Institutional innovation is crucial in creating a more responsive and stimulating environment for multifunctional agriculture (as provider of ‘green services’) and is expressed in the shift in (financial) responsibility from public towards private actors and with a stimulating and facilitating role for governments at different levels. Alternative financing is complementary to governmental payments (e.g. agro-environmental agreements) for nature and landscape management and fits within (or supports) broader goals of rural development.

5.2.2. An overview of the existing and potential alternative financing mechanisms

The main goal of this chapter is to give an overview of promising alternative financing mechanisms in Belgium and in the Netherlands. The reason why the inventory is limited to both countries, is that the circumstances in which the transition to rural development (and to multifunctional agriculture) takes place, are quite similar.

Three clusters of alternative financing mechanisms

Padt et al. (Padt, et al., 2002) have listed different alternative financing mechanisms for ‘green services’ (landscape & nature) in relation to the motives – ideological or economic – and the effectiveness of the investments for nature and landscape – high or low (Figure 13). The motives are marked out on the horizontal axis and are in fact an aggregate of semi-quantitative scores of the motives for each mechanism of different groups of actors (citizens, companies, intermediary organizations and local/regional governments). On the vertical axis, scores of effectiveness – that correspond to the degree to which the envisaged AFM contributes to the realization of nature and landscape– are plotted out.

On closer examination, three clusters appear.

- The first cluster (cluster I) contains investment forms that are based on voluntary contributions of private actors (individuals, companies, institutions) and are mostly ideologically inspired (e.g. sponsoring, financial adoption). Therefore these alternative financing mechanisms generate ‘warm money’. This cluster of AFM’s is oriented towards landscape management and covers the direct private demand for countryside stewardship activities (or so-called ‘green services’) from a sense of social responsibility. Mechanisms within this cluster also aim to strengthen the social basis for the conservation and management of rural landscapes (and the included wildlife and heritage).

³ Institutional arrangements can be circumscribed as informal/formal rules for the broad spectrum of coordination mechanisms used by providers and demanders in order to acquire a desired amount/qualities of services (OECD, 2001).

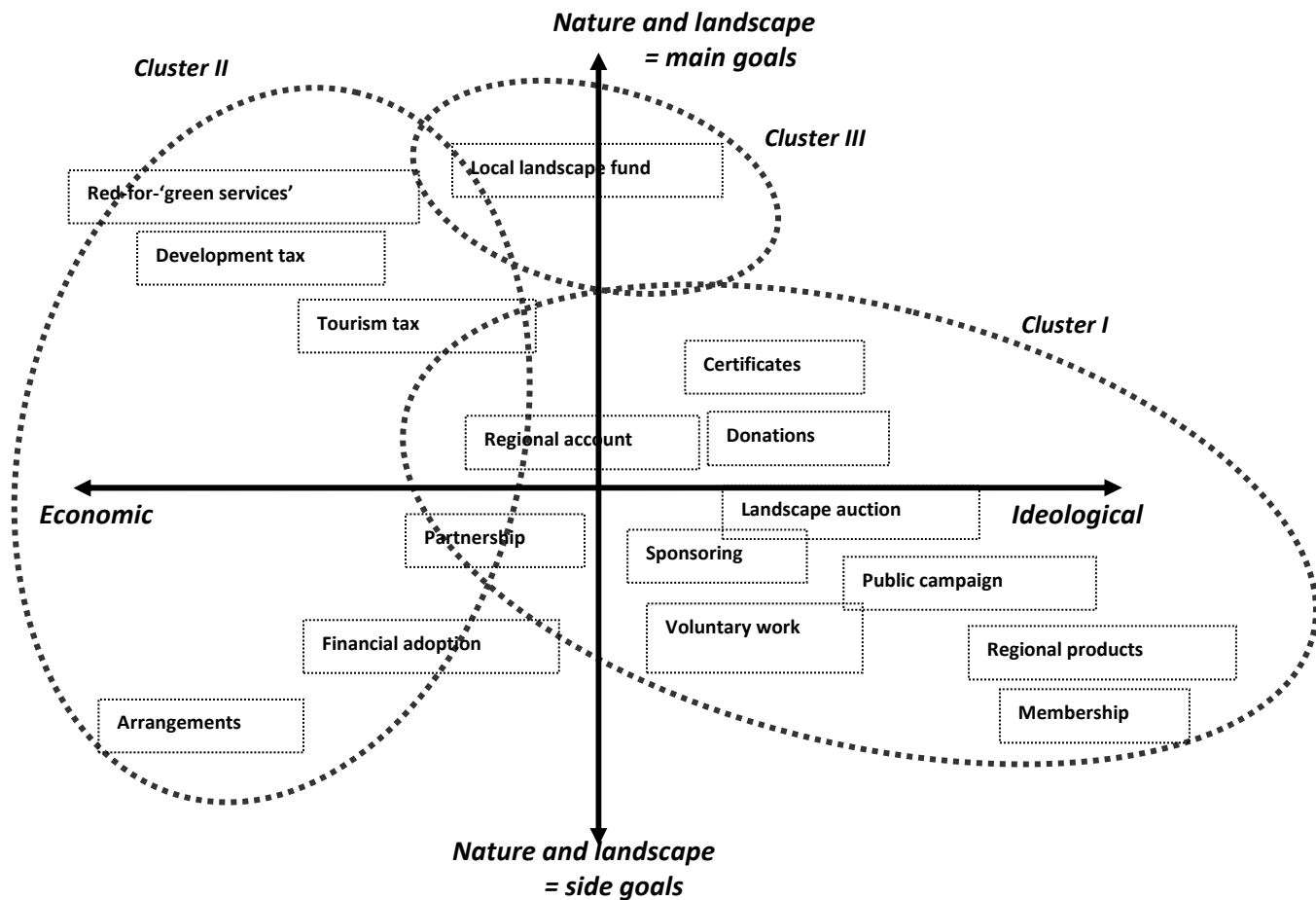


Figure 13. Overview of the different alternative financing mechanisms according to the motives and to the extent they contribute to nature and landscape (based on Padt, et al., 2002)

- The second cluster (i.e. cluster II) encompasses financing mechanisms that are directly related to the use or misuse of the landscape. The basic principle of these instruments is that the added value of (or damage caused by) the use (or misuse) of the rural landscape has to be reinvested in nature or landscape. The AFM's within this cluster meet the indirect (private) demand and are justified by three sustainability principles (the 'polluter pays', the 'user pays' and the 'beneficiary pays'-principle). A lot of instruments are linked with tourism and recreation (e.g. landscape arrangements, tourism taxes, visitor payback), others are linked to new developments in the open space (e.g. 'red-for-green' and development taxes). Also included in this cluster are the different partnerships between private (and in some cases public) actors and farmers regarding the delivery of 'green services'. The instruments high on the vertical axis (e.g. taxes and 'red-for-green') are more coercive and need stronger governmental regulatory interventions. Furthermore, since governments are primarily involved in acquiring those means (by taxes or by legislation), this implies that the legislative procedures can also be restrictive elements in the development of these instruments. The main goal of this cluster is to generate private means that can be used for the remuneration of diverse public services/goods.
- Finally, the third cluster (cluster III) contains instruments that put forward landscape as a policy priority. In particular, different forms of fund constructions are aimed at, since

funds in principle cluster private and/or public means from which the public services can be remunerated more effectively and efficaciously. Payment occurs through interests or directly through invested capital. Depending on the goals of the fund, it is named 'landscape', 'regional' or 'green' fund. In contrast with the first two clusters, that refer to the origin of the financial resources (direct and indirect private demand), this cluster relates to the way in which collective services could be remunerated, namely through a fund. The private means that are included in the fund construction, are mainly coming from AFM's that belong to the other clusters (I en II).

Table IV. The characteristics of the three clusters

	Cluster I	Cluster II	Cluster III
Relation to nature/landscape	<i>Financial management of the landscape</i>	<i>Use/Misuse of the landscape</i>	<i>Landscape = policy priority</i>
Underlying principles/motives	<i>Ideological motives</i>	<i>'user pays'-principle 'beneficiary pays'-principle 'polluter pays'-principle</i>	<i>Bundling of private and public means</i>
Strengths	<i>Contribution to the social basis for landscape management</i>	<i>Generation of private means</i>	<i>Effectiveness and efficiency of landscape policy</i>

Promising alternative financing mechanisms

In this chapter a few promising alternative financing mechanisms within each cluster will be selected and further elaborated.

The selection of promising AFM's is based on the degree in which these mechanisms underpin the four processes of the rural development perspective (embedding, diversifying, intertwining and connecting) and on the effectiveness/efficiency in the realization of 'green services'. Concerning the first cluster, AFM's are chosen that have the capacity to connect a broad range of rural actors and are able to intertwine (or interweave) various sectors resulting in win-win situations. Within cluster II, effectiveness and/or efficiency will be important criteria in the selection of AFM's. Besides the motivation of the choice and the description of the suggested alternative financing mechanisms, also the characteristics of each alternative financing mechanism were described.

Table V. The selection of alternative financing mechanisms

Cluster of alternative financing mechanisms	Selected financing instruments
Cluster I: ideologically inspired investment forms	- <i>Landscape auction</i> - <i>Regional account ('Streekrekening')</i>
Cluster II: Alternative financing mechanisms related to the use/misuse of landscape	- <i>AFM's linked with recreation and tourism Visitor Payback</i> - <i>AFM's connected to new developments in the open space 'Red-for-green services' 'Transferable development rights'</i>
Cluster III: fund constructions	- <i>Regional or landscape fund</i>

Landscape auctions

The concept of a 'landscape auction' has been applied a few times successfully in the Netherlands since 2007 and is developed by the expertise centre Triple E. At a landscape auction multinationals, conservation organizations, farmers, individuals and/or other businesses can bid for biodiversity or landscape elements on offer. In addition, it is important to point at the fact that a 'buyer' (or 'bidder') for a landscape element is not (becoming) an 'owner', but gets the opportunity to adopt (or to sponsor) a 'green service'. The buyer can get in exchange for a financial contribution, a certificate, an allowance to maintain the adopted landscape and/or a tax-deduction. For businesses a landscape auction offers a convenient way in which corporate social responsibility (CSR) can be put in practice. Other private actors (e.g. schools, citizens) have more ideological reasons to participate in a landscape auction.

Examples of landscape auctions in the Netherlands (in the 'Ooijpolder' and in the 'Midden-Delfland' area) show that two important preconditions determine to a great extent the success of a landscape auction. First, it is necessary to have an appealing 'story' which is embedded in the identity and/or the attractiveness of the relevant area. People and organizations that already show some awareness of and involvement in the envisaged landscape, will demonstrate more willingness to support the landscape (the identity). This seems to be closely related to the second precondition, namely the presence of a social network that is oriented towards landscape (management and development). The network can act as a medium through which the landscape auction can be organized and communicated. Besides, it is also important that the landscape auction does not stand on its own, but that it is embedded in a long term vision (and a related action plan) on the landscape.

Regional account

The regional account ('Streekrekening') is a unique and innovative concept that has been applied for the first time in the 'Groene Woud' region (the Netherlands). The mechanism – also indicated as the 'money machine' - aims at creating a structural flow of monetary means for particular goals (e.g. financial support for 'green services'). At the centre of the mechanism is the (regional) account, in which different actors (governments, companies, inhabitants) can put an amount of money. The bank agrees to hand over a percentage (5%) of the total amount of interest payment (on the invested sum) to a fund that has been established in order to make use of these available (financial) means. Furthermore, the account holders have the possibility to transfer a part of the received interest to the fund. In particular these contributions are mostly ideologically inspired and contribute to the social basis for landscape management. The concept is, apart from being innovative, simple and transparent in implementation. Despite the efforts that have to be made for convincing people/organizations of the benefits of having a regional account, the transaction costs turn out to be reasonable. It is concluded that this mechanism has a lot of potential, but it has to be embedded in a vision on landscape development. It has no sense of 'creating' money, if there are no well-defined targets to reach.

Visitor Payback

The concept of visitor payback is oriented towards ‘valueing’ (the landscape of) the touristic destination. It seeks to convert the emotive value that visitors attach to their destination area into a financial value. It is based on connecting those people charged with conserving the features that attract visitors (e.g. farmers, nature conservation organizations) to the visitors/tourists who enjoy these pictures.

Tourism/recreation businesses are providing services/products (for consumers) that receive a lot of added value due to the surrounding landscape qualities. The mechanism of Visitor Payback allows reinvesting the added value, which is obtained voluntarily from visitors/tourists, in the management and further development of the landscape. The value added is to a great extent depending on the context (e.g. the attractiveness of the landscape) and product. With respect to the latter it is observed that differentiated products such as landscape arrangements have more value added than commodity products (e.g. walking maps, bed & breakfasts). But at the same time, more promotional investments are needed in order to sell these differentiated products/services to consumers.

Visitor Payback proves to be a labor intensive and time consuming activity, since substantial efforts have to be put in persuading tourism businesses and other actors. Payback tends to raise relatively small sums of money and therefore relies on significant funding to cover the administrative costs so donations can be devoted to beneficiary projects (Wassenberg, 2002).

Red-for-Open Space

‘Red-for-Open Space’ gathers a set of AFM’s for which financial means for ‘green services’(in the open space) are generated by allowing new developments (= the so-called ‘red’ developments). In essence, there are two ways through which the so-called ‘red’ (residential housing, expansion of an industrial plant, etc.) could be linked to the ‘green’ (i.e. landscape, nature, etc.). The first possibility is that within one project plan ‘red’ and ‘green’ developments are simultaneously being developed by settling the benefits and costs in one project envelope. Since there is a spatial relation between both, the ‘red’ takes advantage of the presence of ‘green’ which is reflected in the increase in value of the ‘red’. The mechanism provides a reinvestment of the value added in the development of new landscape and nature elements and thus takes the ‘beneficiary pays’-principle for granted. The second class of AFM’s can be applied at a higher scale. As the spatial relation gets weaker, the financial relation will become more significant. The guiding principle for this second class of AFM’s is that of ‘the polluter pays’ or ‘green as a compensation for red’. For example, Governments could impose taxes (e.g. development taxes) for new industrial developments in the countryside as a compensation for the ‘pollution’ of the landscape. The received financial means could support ‘green services’ in places that have no spatial relation with the authorized ‘red’ developments. The main aim of these AFM’s is a global quality improvement. Also the mechanism of ‘transferable development rights’ belongs to this second category and will be discussed next.

The most important advantage is that the financial responsibility for the development of the landscape shifts towards private actors. Consequently new financial sources could be tapped. Despite the great potential of ‘red-for-green services’, there are still a lot of

constraints/disadvantages that have to be overcome. First, people still think according to the traditional division of city and countryside and have emotional objections to new developments in the countryside. Secondly, it is hard to find a good balance between ‘red’ and ‘green’ and between the (social) ‘costs’ and ‘benefits’.

Finally, the promising concept of ‘node estates’ (or in Dutch ‘knooperven’) is discussed as a specific type of ‘Red for Open space’. A ‘node estate’ is actually the outcome of a reorganization of a farm complex when the complex loses his original agricultural function and/or where new functions (like residential housing) offer a lot of opportunities. The restructuring consists of a spatial division of the residential area on the one hand - i.e. the buildings, the access roads and the related (mostly linear) landscape elements – and the farm land on the other hand. The farm land is sold to neighboring farmers, whereas the residential area is sold to private parties. But an important element in the sale is that the owners (of the residential area) are supposed to manage (and develop) the landscape elements in the area. Since a lot of rural actors (new inhabitants, farmers, local governments) are reconnected through the establishment of a ‘node estate’, a lot of opportunities are ascribed to this instrument. It is concluded that this mechanism fits very well the rural development perspective.

Transferable development rights

The instrument of transferable development rights (TDR) has been applied in the United States since the 1970s and is often part of a policy intended to protect and preserve spatial assets, such as nature or landscape. Such an instrument does not interfere with ownership rights, but allows them to be enjoyed at a different location by other owners without imposing a financial burden on the government. This is done by awarding development rights to landowners in areas where non-profit developments are being stimulated (i.e. the sending sites). These development rights then become a condition for allowing profitable developments to be realized and have to be sold by the claimants (of development rights) in the sending sites to developers in the receiving sites (Bruil, et al., 2004; Dieperink, 2010).

Before transferable development rights programs are adopted, an analysis must be carried out of the consequences of the program in- and outside the contours of the receiving and sending site and of the actors that are involved in the program. Another important question is how the program should be supported by governments (through supportive or thwarting action). Consideration must be given in the negotiation of development rights to the degree in which market forces will be permitted, together with the chosen transfer mechanism (Bruil, et al., 2004).

Fund constructions

Fund constructions and in particular ‘landscape’, ‘regional’ or ‘green’ funds are initiated by local (or regional) governments and/or organizations that want to preserve and/or improve landscape qualities. An essential characteristic of funds is that the necessary means – whether public and/or private – are bundled. Actually, it is seen that most of the funds are ‘fed’ by public means (of the different governments involved). Financial contributions by private

parties are provided from a sense of social responsibility through investing forms that belong to cluster I, but are at the moment of minor importance. A fund construction is not a goal in itself, but it is a way through which continuity of available financial means for and coherence in the realization of 'green services' could be guaranteed. In this way landscape funds are essential in setting up alternative financing. Since a lot of dimensions are attributed to fund constructions, landscape or regional funds can differ to a large extent. Dependent on the context (attractiveness of the landscape, urbanization, etc.) and the actors involved, the dimensions will be filled in differently. First there are the intrinsic goals of the fund: these could be narrow (e.g. landscape management of hedges) or broad (e.g. sustainability aims). Furthermore the goals could be demand-driven (by residents/tourists) or supply-driven (by farmers). A second dimension concerns the financial goals. Funds could be 'fed' by private means and/or by public means. Dependent on the proportions of the financial means that are bundled in a fund, one could opt for a long-term investment fund that remunerates landscape services through the annual interests or for a short-term 'spending fund' that is dependent on the annual intake of financial means. The first has a more structural character and is as such more adapted to the management of landscape and/or nature, the latter on the other hand is more adapted to non-recurrent investments in landscape development. The third dimension concerns the organization of the fund. The establishment of a fund can be initialized top-down (by governments or other regional organizations) or bottom-up (by agri-environmental cooperatives).

5.2.3. The governmental role

Although the development of the open space – as well as the delivered 'green services' – are mainly a product of private actions, it is clear that governments determine to a great extent the rules for those actions. Indeed, governments can act and intervene in different ways in order to steer the spatial development (of the open space) in the desired direction (Needham, 2005).

The first way to steer private actions is through market regulation (= regulating role of governments). Governments can designate destinations (nature, agriculture, et.) to specific areas by means of spatial implementation plans. Furthermore, they can also enforce burdens on building permits concerning the realization of specific 'green services'. So governments steer the market (in 'green services') through imposing conditions and prohibitions. Market regulation is applicable in particular 'red-for-open space' services'-mechanisms since governments are closely involved in public private partnership where they are responsible for the spatial planning procedures. This way of intervening is also characteristic for the permissive way of planning.

Secondly, governments can act themselves on the land market. In the case of market action (acting role of governments), the development of for example nature is the result of public actions. Land development, nature development and agro-environmental agreements are instruments which are at the disposal of government agencies (i.e. the Flemish Land Agency) that are responsible for the management of the open space. Market action seems relevant when considering fund constructions (cluster III) in which governments can invest a substantial amount of financial means whether for landscape management or for the compensation of the costs linked to the set-up of a landscape fund.

Governments can also intervene in a market (for 'green services') by means of market stimulation (stimulating role of governments). All kind of subsidies or fiscal stimuli can incite

private actors to develop landscape, whereas taxes or charges dissuades them from unwished developments. Market stimulation is less coercive than market regulation, since the private actor still has the free choice of acting, but does not always produce the desire result. Market stimulation is widely applied with regard to alternative financing. Fiscal stimuli, certificates and subsidies are relevant for stimulating voluntary contributions of private actors (most AFM’s in cluster I), while as taxes seem efficient in stimulating AFM’s that try to cream off the value added of new developments (cluster II).

Finally, governments dispose also of the possibility of market structuralization (structuralizing governmental role). Authorities define a structure and rules in which voluntary transactions between private actors occur. The system of transferable development rights is a good example of market structuring.

It is clear that there will be no alternative financing without substantial support of governments (at different levels). The facilitating roles of the governments with regard to alternative financing is dependent on the cluster of alternative financing mechanisms aimed at and are represented in the table below.

Table VI. The governmental role for different (clusters of) alternative financing mechanisms

Cluster	Suggested financing mechanism	Governmental role
Cluster I	- Landscape auction - Regional account ('Streekrekening')	- stimulating - acting / stimulating
Cluster II	- AFM's linked with recreation and tourism Visitor Payback - AFM's connected to new developments in the open space 'Red-for-green services' 'transferable development rights'	- stimulating - stimulating / acting / regulating - stimulating / acting / regulating & structuralizing
Cluster III	- Regional or landscape fund	- acting / stimulating

5.2.4. Optimality of and coherence in the use of alternative financing mechanisms

Besides the facilitating role of governments, there is also the question of ‘optimality’ and ‘coherence’ of the mix of alternative financing mechanisms used for supporting ‘green services’. The new theory on policy instruments, ‘Smart Regulation’, define following requirements for the optimal use of mechanisms/instruments (Van Gossum, et al., 2009). Some of these requirements will be discussed in relation to alternative financing mechanisms.

An important requirement for the construction of alternative financing is that a broad range of instruments is preferably used. The central argument is that in most circumstances, the use of multiple rather than single policy instruments and a broader range of (regulatory) actors, will produce better regulation (Gunningham and Gabrovksy, 1999). Since all three clusters and the instruments within the clusters (see Table V) have their specific strengths and weaknesses, it is important that the mix of instruments contains a wide range of alternative financing

mechanisms of all three clusters. Which alternative financing mechanisms work within a specific area is context-specific since it is highly dependent on the social network, the characteristic land uses within the area and the involvement of different actors in the area.

Fund constructions (cluster III) combine both efficiency and effectiveness and are therefore essential in setting up alternative financing. In most of the best practices that have been studied for this survey (e.g. 'Groene Woud' and 'Ooijpolder-Groesbeek'), several instruments from cluster I (like landscape auction, regional account) were linked to a fund construction. The mechanisms that belong to cluster I are mostly based on voluntarism and show low reliability when used in isolation. Therefore these AFM's (from cluster I) are often combined with fund constructions. Highly coercive and interventionist AFM's from cluster III (e.g. tourism or development taxes, 'red-for-green services'-mechanisms) may cause resistance from those who regard them as an unjustifiable and intrusive intervention in their affairs (Gunningham and Gabrovksy, 1999) and tend to score very badly in terms of political and social acceptability. Nevertheless, these AFM's have the virtues of high predictability and often high efficiency and are therefore essential for a well-balanced structure of alternative financing mechanisms. In some places there are plans of bringing AFM's of cluster III (like Visitor Payback) into practice and linking them to a broad financing construction (for landscape and nature development). It is concluded that the three clusters are to great extent complementary and it is recommended that all 3 clusters are preferably represented in an alternative financing construction.

5.2.5. The acceptability analysis on alternative financing

In the preceding sections an overview (of the characteristics) of promising and potential alternative financing mechanisms has been given. In this section the results of our research with regard to the social basis for alternative financing are discussed. In particular, the public acceptability (among citizens and non-governmental organizations) and the managerial acceptability (among public servants of governments of different levels and democratically elected representatives) have been assessed in two different spatial regions/contexts, respectively the 'Meetjesland' and the 'Leievallei' region.

The 'Meetjesland' region

The first focus group took place in April 2008 at the 'Plattelandscentrum' in the municipality of Sint-Laureins. 15 participants who were mainly representatives of the agricultural and tourist sector, attended the focus group. The main results concern the basis for alternative financing from an agricultural and a tourism point of view.

If the contracts between farmers and other (private) parties contain some performances in return, farmers are often afraid that the good/service will be coercively claimed and controlled by the financers (demander). It is important that both the farmers and the financers act voluntarily and that is in particular the case with mechanisms in cluster I. Farmers also state that coordination and guidance with regard to the provision of public services are important preconditions to the conclusion of a contract. Both factors seem important in lowering the transaction costs involved. Nevertheless, the economic aspects of the mechanisms seem to be

decisive, as the farmer expects to get at least a satisfying remuneration (compensation) of the costs for the provision of ‘green services’.

A last reflection concerns the agricultural support for alternative financing. Some of the participants stress the fact that ‘production’-farmers are often not interested in managing the landscape and diversifying their activities. This could hinder the set-up of alternative financing mechanisms.

Also the tourist sector made some important statements concerning the proposed alternative financing mechanisms. The tourist sector shows a great willingness to invest in landscape (management). However there is also a deep concern that all those contributions will endanger the region’s competitiveness. This is in particular the case for the ‘Meetjesland’ region, where the tourist sector is at the moment in a rather premature (but steadily growing) stage. The voluntary system of Visitor Payback is in this situation preferable compared to the more coercive system of ‘tourism taxes’. Moreover, Visitor Payback contributes substantially to a broader social basis for landscape (management). If the tourist sector decides to take initiatives towards the use of alternative financing mechanisms, it will be important that there is coherence in and coordination of the application of these mechanisms.

A second focus group in the ‘Meetjesland region’ was organized in June 2009 in the Cleythil hotel in Maldegem. The workshop was framed in a series of courses concerning creative management (‘Creatief Besturen’) of landscape quality and was oriented towards local governments. The workshop was conducted by the Sub-regional platform ‘Streekplatform+ Meetjesland’. 24 participants – mostly representatives of the municipalities that constitute the ‘Meetjesland’ region – participated in the workshop.

Although all the municipalities of the ‘Meetjesland’ region did subscribe the regional plan in which the improvement of the landscape quality emerges as one of the strategic goals, local governments show little willingness to invest/participate in alternative financing of landscape. This observation is linked to a more fundamental problem. Apparently, the rural municipalities of the ‘Meetjesland’ region complain that the public means they receive of Flemish governments in order to manage the open space are insufficient. That’s why they make a plea for a reorganization of the municipal fundings.

Most attendants of the focus group stress the importance of a local landscape fund. Moreover, they consider it as the backbone of a sustainable financing construction of the landscape. The managerial support for fund constructions contrasts sharply with the absence of their economic support for this mechanism (cf. supra). It is also observed that an important precondition for alternative financing in general (and for a landscape fund in particular) is lacking, notably the long term vision on landscape and nature.

A last result concerns the mechanism of landscape auctions. Most participants agree that this alternative financing mechanism has a chance of success if some preconditions are met. Firstly, a landscape auction must be embedded in a ‘good story’ and has to be accompanied with an extensive information campaign. Moreover, the landscape that will be sold by auction must have a certain attractiveness in order to persuade the local/regional actors to invest in landscape and nature. Finally, some participants mentioned that a landscape auction shouldn’t be organized as an isolated initiative towards the management of the landscape. A better and more sustainable/stable option is that is framed in a long term vision on and/or in a landscape fund for landscape management.

The main conclusion is that in the ‘Meetjesland’ region the social basis for alternative financing is considerable. With regard to the public support, both the tourist and agricultural sector show interest in alternative financing of landscape, in particular when it concerns mechanisms that are based on voluntariness of both the claimants (e.g. the tourist sector) and the suppliers (e.g. the farmers). Both sectors also stress the importance of coordination and coherence of the application of different alternative financing mechanisms. A landscape fund which is able to connect other favourable mechanisms can offer both continuity and coherence in the construction of alternative financing of landscape in the region. The managerial support for alternative financing is substantial, but it is not accompanied with a financial support from local governments.

Nevertheless, some important preconditions for the set-up of alternative financing seem to be present in the region. First of all, the polycentric governance structure in the ‘Meetjesland’ region allows the different regional organizations and sectors to interact with each other, which results in an increased trust among all regional actors. Since alternative financing requires a close collaboration between all parties involved, trust can play a crucial role in connecting the different rural actors and intertwining diverse sectors (agriculture, tourism, etc.). The fact that many actors have attended the focus groups is an indication as well of the good functioning of the social network in the region. Intermediary regional organizations, such as the regional platform ‘Streekplatform+’, seem also vital in the motivation of potential participants for and in the set-up of (a focus group concerning) alternative financing of landscape.

Secondly, the awareness and the involvement of people and organizations in the landscape qualities and the identity of the region seem to be substantial. This implies that people show more willingness to participate in supporting the landscape. But as already mentioned, in some peripheral areas of the region citizens and organizations seem to be less attached to the region. This is probably an argument for developing alternative financing mechanisms at a lower scale which can make them more manageable and surveyable. The social and symbolic-cultural capital in the region are to a great extent the foundations for regional development in general and for developing alternative financing mechanisms in particular.

The ‘Leievallei’ region

The sole focus group in the ‘Leievallei’ region was organized in April 2009 in the municipality of Lauwe (Menen) in cooperation with the Intermunicipal Development Agency ‘Leiedal’ and the Province of West-Flanders.

Before discussing the results of the workshop, some important introductory remarks have to be made. Firstly, in the preparation of the focus group, it seemed very difficult to persuade private actors of the importance of (a workshop concerning) alternative financing. As a consequence, a limited number of private and public local/regional actors has actually attended the workshop. Moreover, it makes it more difficult to extract some relevant conclusions about the social basis for alternative financing in the ‘Leievallei’ region. Secondly, half of the participants were not rooted in the area and were mostly connected to organizations or institutions at a regional level that are oriented towards developing (the landscape qualities of) the open space (e.g. the Flemish Land Agency, the Province of West-Flanders). In order to acquire more information from the focus group, individual questionnaires had to be filled in

by all participants. The main results are based on these questionnaires and on the group discussions.

A first observation concerns the territorial delineation of the 'Leievallei' area. As opposed to the 'Meetjesland' region, the delineation of the 'Leievallei' region is not so univocal. Does the 'Leievallei' area correspond to the jurisdiction of the Intermunicipal Development Agency (IDA) 'Leiedal'? Or does it correspond to the open space close to the river 'Leie'? Since the territory is not so well delineated, also the awareness of and the involvement (of local/regional actors) in the region will be less.

A second observation concerns the capability of the social network to initiate and develop alternative financing within the region. At a lower scale (than the scale of the jurisdiction of the IDA 'Leiedal'), an integrated vision on the open space that borders to the river 'Leie' has been initiated by the Province of West-Flanders and developed by the IDA 'Leiedal' in mutual consultation with other important actors. The vision is also accompanied with an action plan and to a limited extent a communication plan. Nevertheless, communication and participation of local actors are crucial factors in creating a social basis for the landscape vision (and thus for alternative financing of landscape). The Province has only recently started a few initiatives (residents' meetings concerning small projects, walking trails that reconnect the urban with the open space along the river 'Leie') to fill in this need.

In conclusion we can say that at a lower scale a social network and an integrated long term vision for landscape development in the area close to the river 'Leie' have been set up. Both are essential factors for the development of alternative financing. For the moment, the social basis for alternative financing is questioned, since residents and other private partners in the urbanized surroundings aren't hardly involved in and therefore not willing to invest in (the management of) the landscape.

Results concerning the social basis for different (clusters of) alternative financing mechanisms

It is observed that there is a considerable support for the ideologically inspired investing forms, such as the landscape auctions and regional accounts. These mechanisms both require and reinforce the social basis for landscape management. For example, to organize a landscape auction it is clear that a broad social basis for landscape development is needed. But a landscape auction itself is also able to reinforce the social basis. In addition, the regional account ('Streekrekening') generates a lot of means (the so-called 'money machine') and is therefore a more effective instrument (than other instruments in this cluster). Participants of the focus groups also mentioned that both instruments are preferably framed within a long term vision on (the development of) the landscape. In that way coherence between different investments/initiatives can be guaranteed more. In addition, the transaction costs linked to the set-up of alternative financing mechanisms within cluster I seem to be relatively high. Some best practices in the Netherlands – i.e. the landscape auction in the 'Ooijpolder' and the regional account in the 'Groene Woud' region - show that embedding both investing forms within a broad and strong social network concerning landscape development, can considerably reduce the transaction costs. As a final remark, it is also noticed that the willingness to invest (by means of alternative financing mechanisms in cluster I) is dependent on the awareness of and the involvement in the landscape (qualities).

With regard to the second cluster of alternative financing instruments that are linked to recreation and tourism, it is noticed that the support for less coercive mechanisms which are mainly based on voluntariness (like ‘Visitor Payback’ or landscape arrangements) is relatively high. On the other hand, tourist taxes will often induce resistance, but could be introduced in regions where tourism and recreation are well developed and where the tax is explicitly communicated as a target charge (for landscape development). The support for alternative financing mechanisms that are related to new developments (the so-called ‘Red for Open Space’-mechanisms) is substantial if the mechanisms do not have a strong impact on the surrounding landscape and if they at the same time contribute to rural development. For example most participants were favourably disposed towards the concept of ‘Node Estates’ (‘Knooperven’) since it strongly contributes to rural development through reconnecting different rural actors and creating social cohesion within the area. Governments at different levels are crucial in facilitating alternative financing mechanisms from the second cluster. In general governments are not so willing to participate in these mechanisms since the facilitating process demands a (pro)active role of governments which is in fact difficult and time-consuming. For example development taxes imposed on new developments in the open space, are not met with general approval of most participants, even if the mechanism stands for an equitable redistribution of (social) benefits and costs and is inspired by the ‘polluter pays’ principle which is a salient principle of ‘sustainable development’.

The third cluster actually contains only one sort of mechanism – i.e. fund constructions – but demonstrates at the same time a wide variety due to many dimensions that are attributed to fund constructions. Most participants are convinced of the fact that fund constructions are the cornerstone of a sustainable financing construction for landscape development (and management) since they are inherently linked to public monetary sources and/or other alternative financing mechanisms from cluster I or II that generate financial (private) means.

5.2.6. Conclusions

In order to set up alternative financing, some important preconditions must be fulfilled.

First of all, it is important that private actors are aware of and feel involved in the region (Figure 14) before they will show some willingness to participate in/support alternative financing of landscape. A second precondition concerns the availability of a strong and coherent social network in which trust can play a crucial role in connecting the different rural actors and intertwining diverse sectors (agriculture, tourism, etc.) and therefore in the set-up of alternative financing mechanisms. The third precondition related to the presence of inspiring persons and/or intermediary organizations as drivers for the establishment of alternative financing mechanisms and as motivators of potential participants in alternative financing. The first precondition is related to the presence of attractive landscapes and (territorial) identities and refers as such to the symbolic-cultural capital in a region. The second and third precondition are linked to the social network and represents the social capital in a certain area. It is concluded that the social and symbolic-cultural capital in the region are to a great extent the foundations for developing alternative financing mechanisms in particular and for regional development in general.

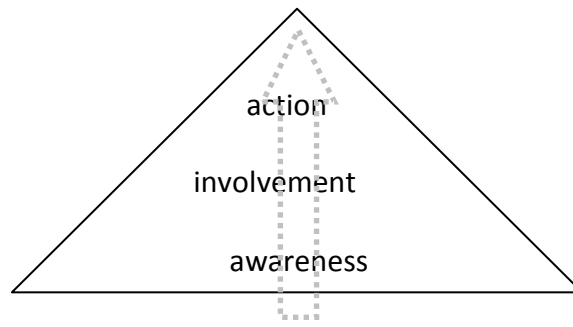


Figure 14. *The ‘willingness to contribute (action) depends on the involvement in and awareness of the region (and regional identity)*

Alternative financing of landscape development/management both requires and reinforces the social basis for and the long-term vision on (the management of) the landscape. For example a fund construction without a long-term vision on landscape management has only little chance of success. Likewise, in order to organize a ‘landscape auction’ a broad social basis is needed and simultaneously reinforced (Figure 15).

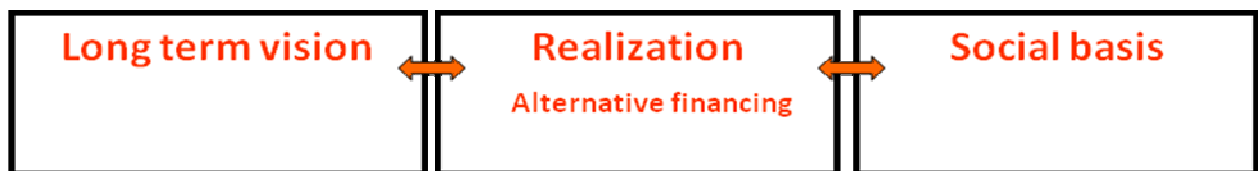


Figure 15. *The development and management of landscape require a long term vision, a strong social basis and instruments that are able to carry out the vision.*

The ‘three clusters’ approach of alternative financing mechanisms presents an overall picture of the existing/possible financing mechanisms (and their potentials) and offers at the same time a powerful framework for the selection of an optimal and coherent instrument mix. It is concluded that the three clusters are to a great extent complementary and it is recommended that all three clusters are preferably represented in an alternative financing construction that aims at developing and managing the landscape.

The outcomes of the three focus groups demonstrate that there is a broad support for alternative financing mechanisms that are based on voluntariness (e.g. Visitor Payback, landscape auction).

A lot of opportunities are also seen in fund constructions (cluster III), in particular when it is combined with private funding. Both require a close cooperation between diverse regional stakeholders (farmers, governments, regional organizations, etc.) and are in that way strongly related to the amount of social capital in the region. On the other hand, coercive and interventionist alternative financing mechanisms which also have a major impact on the surrounding area (e.g. some ‘red-for-open space’ mechanisms) don’t get general approval of most rural actors and thus are not broadly supported. Nevertheless, these mechanisms seem essential in the set-up of a stable and coherent alternative financing construction since they can provide a substantial amount of private means.

The participation of private stakeholders and local governments in the focus groups was considerably low, although higher in the ‘Meetjesland’-region. In addition, also the

willingness to participate in alternative financing seems much greater in the Meetjesland-region. In contrast with the 'Meetjesland'-region, the institutional shaping of the 'Leievallei'-region hasn't yet reached the stage of accumulating enough cultural-symbolic capital so that people (inhabitants, regional and local/regional representatives) are aware of and feel involved in the region and the region's identity. Since it is observed that the attachment of private and public actors to the region is not so homogeneous, this could be an argument for decreasing the scale (for developing alternative financing mechanisms) to a more manageable and surveyable one.

It is also clear that there will be no alternative financing without substantial support of governments (on different levels). Governments can act and intervene in different ways in order to set up an alternative financing system. Dependent on the alternative financing mechanism, governments can make use of market regulation, market action, market stimulation and finally market structuralization. In particular the role of local and regional governments is becoming more significant, since alternative financing is in essence territory based and is realized through close collaboration of local/regional rural actors.

5.3. Benefits from regional identity for farmers through farm diversification

Next to the alternative financing mechanisms, another possibility for farmers to profit from their contribution to regional identity is through farm diversification. Farm diversification means that, next to the income from the production of food and fibre, farmers try to get an extra income from other activities such as farm tourism, home processing and sales, etc. In this section, we will first give a literature review on agricultural development through regional identity and then we will describe the results based on the interviews with farmers and the survey with farmers and residents in the cases of Haspengouw, Meetjesland, Gaume and Les Deux Ourthes.

5.3.1. Agricultural development through regional identity

To answer the question whether agricultural development can profit from regional identity, the link will first be described between regional identity and general economic development in a region. Secondly, the effects on the agricultural sector will be described in depth. To conclude this section, some success factors will be given which could increase the economic effects of regional identity on a region and on its agricultural sector.

Regional identity and economic development

Before theorizing the link between regional identity and the development of a region it is important to distinguish between regional identity and the identity of a region (Paasi, 2002b; Paasi, 2003). The identity of a region refers to the recognizable particularities of a region: the natural and cultural landscape. Regional identity, on the other hand, rather refers to how people identify themselves with a region. As such, regional identity becomes a social construct.

It is this regional identity which will incite people to start up initiatives to develop the region. The degree of awareness of a region's identity and the feeling of attachment to the region, positively influence the efforts done to design a region (Keating, 1998, cited in Antonsich, 2010). This affective bond between people and a territory that encourages local development interventions is defined by Oliveira et al. (2010) as *terrabilia*. It completes the formerly known concept of *topophilia*, which means the love for a place or the affective bond between people and a place (Tuan, 1990, cited in Oliveira, et al., 2010), insofar as it integrates the need of development of a territory. According to Antonsich (2010), however, while the region seems to gain more importance in Western Europe nowadays, which is visible in decentralization of governance structures, territorial attachment of people hasn't increased. And if regional identity and territorial attachment is present, this also doesn't necessarily mean that this will have political consequences (Tomaney, 2007).

Many studies exist also on which aspects of regional identity can induce a benefit for the local economy. Ray (1998) delineates many markers of cultural systems which could trigger regional economic development: traditional foods, regional languages, craft, folklore, local visual arts and drama, literary references, historical and prehistoric sites, landscape systems and their associated flora and fauna, etc. According to Albino (1997, cited in Oliveira, et al., 2010), the valorisation of the "ancestral typicality" should automatically form a part of local development strategies, insofar as it could lead to new local innovations. He points out the predominant role of heritage or traditions, as development resources. Other studies stress the role of music, theatre or sports. Indeed, through the sets of values they propagate, sport or art

can be a substantial element of regional identities. As such they can be used as regional branding tools and a starting point for regional economic development (Gibson and Connell, 2003).

Benefits from regional identity for the local economy

According to Ray (1998) there are four modes of using regional identity in regional development. The first mode is based on the promotion of a local and typical product, which can be the local history and culture like in cultural tourism or a more tangible, for example, agri-food product such as Parmigiano Reggiano. The second mode of using identity in regional development is centered on the entire territory and is aimed towards outsiders. This is the case for the Tornio Valley region, for instance, which is on the border between Finland and Sweden (Prokkola, 2007). The region has used its particular heritage of being an unnatural border to attract tourists. The third mode is also centered on a territory but instead of trying to attract outsiders to the region, regional development is aimed towards the local people. The case of West Cork in Ireland, which created its “Fushia Brand”, is a good example of this. Insiders became more aware of the own qualities of their region through the LEADER co-operative promotion initiatives, with the diffusion of calendars, posters, brochures, etc. (Messely, 2009). Making inhabitants aware of the attractiveness of their region can be a goal in itself, to excite collective pride, but it can also represent a trigger for the endogenous development of this region. The trigger would lie in an increased self-confidence of insiders (local collective organizations or individual) to carry out development actions. As such it opens the door to “new economic opportunities, innovation and a socio-cultural vibrancy” (Ray, 1998, p. 7). The fourth mode of using regional identity in regional development is a mix of the three previous modes. Regional development is aimed here at protecting the local economy by controlling the impacts of the global economy on locality. Regional identity is therefore understood as more than just a way to raise the economic prosperity of the region. Regional branding, which is a sort of commoditization of a region, would be an illustration of this mode (Messely, 2009).

It has been highlighted in several researches that the valorization of regional identity can generate an increased attractiveness and dynamism of the region and a rise of flows of resources to the region. The resources can be human as well as material, financial or intellectual (Romanelli and Khessina, 2005). Human resources in a region can be investors but also tourists or residents. For example, in Branson, Mississippi, USA, the strong musical theatre identity has attracted many country music artists, investors as well as audiences to the region (Chiles, et al., 2004). In the case of the Tornio Valley, Finland, the strengthening of regional identity gave rise to an increased cooperation between the Swedish and Finnish municipalities in the border area, which is not limited to tourism. In this way, strengthening regional identity contributed notably to creating networks and social capital. Besides human and social capital, also financial resources can be attracted to a region by the creation of regional identity. For example, local natural resources and other natural amenities as features of a region’s identity can be the basis of a prosperous local economy by, for instance, attracting retirees. This might provide benefits such as increased tax revenue or increased community services (Poudyal, et al., 2008).

Benefits from regional identity for farmers

How farmers are related to regional identity has shifted during the last years, due to some evolutions in society. In Western Europe, the share of farmers in the rural population is declining, while other societal groups are gaining more importance, such as employees, retired people, middle-class workers, etc. Bessi re (1998a) points out that on the one hand, this shift in society leads to a dilution of peasant identity, which is on the other hand also paradoxically reinforced since urban and new rural populations view agriculture as a kind of “lost heaven”. The countryside is understood as a place of genuine life, with a wild nature and true relationships: eating local and traditional products form a part of this whole myth. In that way, local food is linked with emotions and can be seen as a symbol, a sign of communion and sharing, a class marker (such as champagne) and a regional emblem (Bessiere, 1998a). The modern consumer is quite demanding concerning the origin and the nature of the product or service and wants to be closer to the producer.

Farmers are well positioned to reply to this demand by diversifying their activities and thereby valorising regional identity. Agrotourism is one form of diversification which can benefit from an attractive regional identity. Not only does it represent a chance for farmers to increase their income, it can also add value to other products or services the farm provides (Beall, 1996, cited in Comen T., 2009). Next to direct economic effects on agriculture, Das and Rainey (2010) have shown that agrotourism can also have a positive impact on the retail and service sector, in terms of income and employment. Moreover it might stabilize the local economy. On top of that, this type of diversification has a social function: it brings the agricultural, tourism and catering sectors in a region together and creates new links between farmers and non-farmers (tourists or resident). In this way, agrotourism can contribute to social capital building and can promote good relations between farmers and other citizens. Getz and Carlsen (2000), finally, argue that agrotourism can be a means to support rural lifestyles.

Many studies show or suggest that the first purpose of diversification for the farmer is generating an additional income (Mahony, et al., 2004, cited in Barbieri and Mahoney, 2009; Bowler, et al., 1996). Diversification on the farm will mitigate risks which are inherent in agricultural production, because non-farm income is less sensitive to market fluctuations than the income from agricultural production (Kilic, et al., 2009). But as the example of agrotourism above shows, it can also generate non-economic benefits such as increased social contact and a better quality of life for farmers and their family (Barbieri and Mahoney, 2009).

Success factors for gaining from regional identity on the regional scale

It is evident that in order to be able to profit from regional identity, the region should be attractive for people. Agriculture can play a role here. Poudyal et al. (2008), for example, showed that the percentages of cropland and pastureland are positively correlated to the inflow of people, such as retirees, in a region. Next to other natural features, these agricultural elements expand the possibilities for recreation, increase aesthetic beauty and quality of life. Next to this, there seems to be a kind of symbiosis, i.e. a mutual causal link, between regional identity and the health of the local economy. Romanelli and Khessina (2005) point out several causal links, which show that regional identity is strengthened by some features of a healthy regional economy, such as: frequent interactions among residents, a common and coherent representation of the work organization in the region within its population, a wide range of

outsiders interacting with insiders, and finally the presence of a small amount of specialized industries.

Success factors for gaining from regional identity on the farmer's scale

According to Comen and Foster (2009) the success of agricultural diversification depends on the following factors: the location of the farm, its financial viability, the accessibility of viable markets, technical aspects of farm management, the degree to which the farmer can tune his production to market needs, the government's price support, the farmer's labor management skills, his interest in learning, market knowledge, etc. Most of these factors are linked to work organization and task management. Other studies, however, show that social relationships and communication between farmers and non-farmers are also of high importance. Dufour et al. (2007) illustrate this through the example of Coteaux du Lyonnais, in France, where a public forum has been created on the basis of the local agricultural identity (local products, landscape, social network...). Peyrache-Gadeau and Fleury (2005, cited in Dufour, et al., 2007) confirm the beneficial effect of this kind of initiative, which makes use of the cultural and territorial dimension of the farming activity and contributes to promoting multifunctionality in agriculture. Exchanges between farmers and local governments through practical projects or local commissions can also increase the extent to which agriculture can benefit from regional identity (Vandermeulen, et al., 2006). Finally, also the attitude of the farmer towards diversification and his degree of commitment, attachment and enthusiasm will play a role. Dufour et al. (2007) built several typologies of farmers according to their attitude to multifunctionality. The profile with the highest chance of gaining advantage from regional identity through diversification would be the "corporate and local innovator". These farmers consider their activity as inherently multifunctional: producing food but also taking part in the local development and the preservation of the local heritage, developing non-market products, working in an environmentally friendly way, etc. Autonomy and innovation are the driving forces behind their agricultural practices. They are strongly linked to their territory (typically, they sell on the local market), they pay attention to the organization of their work, the work of other people of the farm and finally they take time for non-farming activities. Marsden and Smith (2005) define these farmers as ecological entrepreneurs.

This part of the project tries to expand the limited literature available on the effect of regional identity and development on farm diversification and the competitiveness of the local agricultural sector.

5.3.2. Results: The farmers' perspective

One way for agriculture to profit from regional identity and development is through diversification. According to the literature review, regional identity provides farmers with opportunities to diversify. This is further explored for the four Belgian study regions.

In the questionnaire, farmers were asked whether they had diversified their activities or not. They could indicate the following types of activities: on-farm sales, on-farm processing, farm tourism, recreation, nature and landscape management, care activities, organic farming and catering on the farm (Van Huylenbroeck, et al., 2007b). There was also a possibility to add other activities. Using a binary logistic regression model, an attempt was made to determine the factors influencing the probability that a farmer diversifies. The probability of having farm diversification was linked to several variables which, according to the literature, have an influence on this: a) socio-demographic factors such as age, education, family situation,

membership of organizations and b) farm characteristics such as size of the farm, type of production, income from farming and the number of employees. Next to these variables, other variables were added which are linked to regional identity and regional development: how does the farmer evaluate his region, what does he think about the effect of regional development initiatives on his region as a whole and on agriculture in particular, and how is the farmer involved in these initiatives. As a result of multicollinearity, not all influencing variables could be kept in the model. The retained model, which best explains the probability of farm diversification, is shown in Table VII.

Table VII. Binary logistic regression model explaining the probability of farm diversification.

Variables		B	Sig.
Participation_reg_dev		1.093***	0.010
Attractiveness		0.243	0.515
Information		0.135	0.648
Organization_membership		0.215**	0.043
Age		0.132*	0.099
Age ²		-0.002*	0.063
Production type	cattle	0.100	0.727
	pigs and poultry	-1.429***	0.008
	horticulture/fruit&vegetable	-0.149	0.693
	crops	0.255	0.450
	Reference: mixed farms		
Size_ownership		0.011*	0.078
Constant		-3.811*	0.055
Chi-square for model (p-value)	33.816 (0.000)		
Nagelkerke R ²	0.123		
Cox & Snell R ²	0.092		
Chi-square for Hosmer-Lemeshow (p-value)	7.850 (0.448)		

Significance level: ***= 0.01, **=0.05,*=0.1

The model shows that factors related to regional identity and the regional development process can have an influence on the probability of farm diversification. When a farmer has been involved in the development of a strategy or vision for regional development, the probability of taking up diversification on the farm increases. Giving farmers a voice in the regional development process could indeed create opportunities for them. They could, for example, argue for walking or biking routes to pass by their farm so that they can profit from recreants stopping for an icecream or a drink, or lobby for a shop selling regional farm products. However, the observed relationship could also be an effect instead of a cause: because the farmer has diversified his activities, he is invited to participate in the development of a regional strategy. Diversification can indeed increase the visibility of a farmer for the public, and diversifying farmers often have a broad social network which will be shown later in this section. Although the influence is not significant, the model also suggests that when a farmer is informed about initiatives to develop the region (through folders, regional newspapers, websites, etc.), the probability that he has taken up diversification increases. Awareness of initiatives to embellish the region or to increase the possibilities for tourism and recreation could trigger farmers to take up extra activities to benefit from this. Finally, the

model also gives an indication, although again not significant, that the more a farmer finds his region attractive for people outside the region, the higher the chance that he has taken up diversification. Hence, increasing the attractiveness of the region could increase the number of farmers engaging in diversification activities.

Concerning socio-demographic variables, the model shows that the more organizations a farmer belongs to, the higher his probability is to have diversification on the farm. The organizations taken up in the questionnaire were: (local) farmers' organizations, environmental organizations, social organizations, sports clubs, political parties, etc. This confirms results from previous research, showing that farmers with a well developed social network have a higher chance of starting up diversification. The age of the farmer is also significantly influencing the probability of diversification: the older the farmer is, the higher the chance of having diversification. This increase, however, is only valid till the age of 33. From age 33 onwards, the probability of having diversification decreases again. Finally, the model retained two farm characteristics significantly influencing the probability of diversification: the production type and the amount of land in ownership. Compared to mixed farms, as a reference category, pig and poultry farmers have a significantly lower probability to engage in diversification. This can be explained by the fact that diversification should be compatible with farm management and for some types of farms this may be difficult to combine. Finally, the model confirms another finding from literature: farmers with more land in ownership have a higher probability to take up diversification. This indicates that starting up diversification requires some entrepreneurship, and maybe –for some activities- also the consent of the landowner.

The model suggests that regional identity and regional development can positively influence the decision to start with diversification on the farm. When farmers were asked this question directly, only 22% of the farmers disagree, while 28% of the farmers agree that regional development initiatives increase their possibilities to start up diversification activities. A majority of 50%, however, is indecisive about the statement. There are significant differences between the four cases. In Haspengouw, the case with the most advanced regional development process, the percentage of farmers agreeing with the statement (37%) is significantly higher than in the other regions. In Gaume however, where the regional development process is least advanced, a majority of 44% of the farmers disagrees that regional development increases the possibilities to start with diversification, which is significantly higher than in the other regions. The main obstacle they identify for not diversifying their activities is that it's not profitable, with 46% of the farmers agreeing. Other important obstacles are the complexity of applying for subsidies for diversification, 45% agree, the fact that it's difficult to combine with other activities on the farm, 42% agree, and a lack of support from authorities, which is the case for 41% of the farmers. 28% of the farmers claim it's difficult to attract customers.

For diversification to increase the competitiveness of the agricultural sector in a region, it is essential that the activities provide economic gains. As the results from the question about obstacles for diversification already reveal, no significant correlations were found between income variables in the database and the fact whether the farmer has diversification or not. The results suggest a slight influence of diversification on farmers' income, with 72% of diversifiers claiming their income decreased the last 5 years compared to 77% of non-diversifiers, but this difference was not statistically significant (Chi² test, $p= 0.280$). It also doesn't mean that there is a higher percentage of diversifiers whose income increased during the last five years: the diversifiers who didn't see their income decrease claim that their income stayed equal.

Although the economic benefits of diversification are not so clear, the effects it has on a region are quite distinct. Compared to 47% of non-diversifiers, 58% of diversifiers claim the visual attractiveness of their farm improved over the last 5 years (Chi² test, $p=0.041$). There is also a significantly higher percentage of diversifiers claiming that biodiversity on their farm has increased during the last 5 years, 41% compared to 23% of non-diversifiers (Chi² test, $p=0.000$), and that the farm's contribution to society has improved, 36% compared to 18% of non-diversifiers (Chi² test, $p=0.000$). This proves that multifunctional agriculture does have an influence on the region's attractiveness, ecological and economic sustainability, but there is still no clear answer as to whether farmers can also financially benefit from this through diversification. The next section, where the role of the consumer in the rural area is investigated, tries to provide more insight into this matter.

5.3.3. Results: the consumers' perspective

One of the diversification activities through which farmers can gain an extra income is the sales of own products on the farm. Farmers selling products on the farm can benefit from identity-based regional development processes through their marketing activities, because they could link themselves to a powerful regional brand, or through an increase in potential consumers who come from outside the region for tourism or recreation. In this section, however, the focus is on the potential consumers living in the region. In the inhabitants' questionnaire, respondents were asked whether they buy products on the farm. They had two answer possibilities: sometimes/often or seldom/never. Using a binary logistic regression model, the factors were determined which influence the probability that an inhabitant buys products on the farm. Next to socio-demographic variables, such as age, education and family situation, the influence was assessed of variables related to the region and regional development. Due to multicollinearity, not all variables could be kept in the model. The best model which could be obtained is shown in Table VIII.

First of all, the model shows that there are clear differences between the regions. Compared to the reference region of Les Deux Ourthes, the probability that an inhabitant will buy products on the farm is significantly higher in all other regions. The probability is the highest when the inhabitant comes from Haspengouw. As already mentioned in the previous section, in Haspengouw the regional development process is most advanced. In Les Deux Ourthes, where the regional development process is still in a very early stage and where the identity of the region is also still unclear, the probability that an inhabitant will buy products on the farm is smallest. This result suggests that regional development processes can increase the willingness of the inhabitants to buy regional products directly from the farmer.

Next to the region, the inhabitant's feeling of belonging to the region determines the probability that he or she will buy products on the farm. The model shows that the weaker the inhabitant's sense of belonging to the region is, the smaller the probability that he or she will buy products on the farm. The negative signs mean that compared to the reference category of having a very strong sense of belonging to the region, for all other categories the probability that the respondent will buy products on the farm is less. As mentioned in the literature review, good regional development processes not only aim at attracting tourists from outside the region, but also try to create a stronger link between the inhabitants and their region. An increased feeling of belonging to a region can therefore be the outcome of development processes. This in turn could, according to the model, benefit farmers who are involved in direct sales of regional products.

Table VIII. Binary logistic regression model explaining the probability that inhabitants buy products on the farm

Variables		B	Sig.
Region	Meetjesland	0.849**	0.028
	Haspengouw	1.394***	0.000
	Gaume	0.800*	0.054
	Reference: PN2O		
SenseBelonging	very weak	-1.190***	0.006
	weak	-0.880***	0.009
	medium	-0.852***	0.001
	strong	-0.481**	0.032
	Reference: very strong		
LengthStay	< 3 years	0.113	0.791
	bet 3 and 8 years	0.469	0.242
	bet 8 and 15 years	0.582	0.137
	> 15 years	0.778***	0.008
	Reference: born in region		
OwnContribution		0.635***	0.000
Constant		-0.132	0.749
Chi-square for model (p-value)		57.531 (0.000)	
Nagelkerke R ²		0.079	
Cox & Snell R ²		0.112	
Chi-square for Hosmer-Lemeshow (p-value)		5.922 (0.549)	
Significance level: ***= 0.01, **=0.05, *=0.1			

In the questionnaire respondents were asked how long they were already living in the region. The reference category for this variable are people who were born in the region and still live there. Compared to this category of people, the model shows that the people who are not native to the region have a higher probability of buying products from local farmers. Within this group, the probability of buying on the farm increases with the number of years the respondent has lived in the region. It is stated in literature that people who are native to a region in general are less aware of its positive aspects than people who migrated to the region. In regional development processes it often takes outsiders to point out the region's strengths and weaknesses and make local people aware of these. The same phenomenon could apply to the question of buying regional products from a local farmer, and could explain why people who migrate to a region are more likely to buy at the farm.

A final factor influencing the inhabitants' probability to buy products at the farm is the extent to which they feel they contribute to the development of the region. Respondents were asked whether they contribute somehow to achieving a better region with a higher quality of living. A contribution could be translated as being an active member of organizations striving for a better region, being involved in the activities of these organizations or in another way, voluntarily and on one's own initiative. Compared to people who claim not to contribute in any way to the development of the region, people who do say to contribute have a significantly higher probability of buying products directly from the farmer. A possible explanation could be that contributing to the development of the region somehow increases the connectedness to the region and appreciation of the region and its products. People contributing to the

contributing to the development of the region might also have a more extensive social network and may be more stimulated by other people to buy on the farm.

The analysis showed that none of the other socio demographic characteristics (such as age or education) were significant.

The important influence of the connection of consumers to the region on their decision to buy on the farm or not can also be derived from the reasons the respondents give to buy on the farm. The most important reasons why they buy products directly from the farmer are being proud of their region and the freshness of the products. For both, 70% of the respondents claimed this was a reason for them to buy on the farm. The third most important reason why people buy on a farm, with 55% of the respondents claiming this is an important reason, is the fact that these products are produced in a more natural way. The most common reason people give why they don't want to buy on a farm is because it's easier to buy everything you need together in one supermarket. This reason was given by 61% of the respondents. 12% doesn't buy on the farm because there is only a limited choice and 8% doesn't buy on a farm because they don't know where to buy and which farmer sells which products.

5.3.4. Discussion and conclusion

This part of the project tried to provide an answer to the question whether regional identity can have a positive impact on the development of agriculture in a region, and whether it would be beneficial for regional development policy to focus on strengthening regional identity. In four Belgian regions, two in the Flemish part and two in the Walloon part, questionnaires were collected from inhabitants of the regions and farmers in particular. The selected regions differ with respect to their identity and their stage in the regional development process.

A possible way through which farmers could gain from regional identity, is by diversifying their farm activities and taking up, for example, direct sales and processing of farm products, farm tourism or landscape management. How regional identity is developed in a region, however, also plays a role. In Haspengouw, which has a strong identity and an advanced regional development process, the percentage of farmers believing that regional development provides them with opportunities to diversify is the highest. In Gaume, on the other hand, which also has a strong identity but where there are not so many initiatives taken to further develop the region, the percentage of farmers believing that regional development provides them with opportunities to diversify is the lowest. These results show that not only should the identity of a region be attractive for farmers to gain from it, there should also be a clear vision and plan to further develop this identity and to use it to create benefits for the region. The results also show that when farmers are somehow involved in the regional development process, for example in the development of a vision for the region or by doing practical tasks for regional development organizations (e.g. regarding landscape management), there is a higher chance that they will take up diversification. Involvement of farmers in these processes can make them aware of the opportunities regional identity can give them, but they can also steer the process as such that they could also benefit from it (e.g. by making sure that walking and biking routes pass by their farm).

Taking up diversification, however, doesn't guarantee that farmers can also make a profit from it. The questionnaire gives an indication that diversification doesn't increase farmers' income, but rather compensates losses from agricultural production so that in the end the farmers' income remains equal. Obstacles identified by the farmers to gain from

diversification, next to the fact that it can be difficult to combine with other farming activities, are a lack of support for diversification from authorities and difficulties to attract customers. Regional development and branding processes could however facilitate attracting customers to farms. Results from the inhabitants' questionnaire show that in regions where the regional development process is well advanced, the probability that inhabitants buy products on the farm is higher. Results also show that the more the inhabitants feel they belong to the region and the more proud they are of their region, the more likely it is that they will buy products on the farm. By making the region more attractive, and trying to involve the inhabitants in its development, regional development and branding processes can stimulate locals to buy local products from farmers. This stresses the importance of focussing on inhabitants in regional development processes, because it can lead to a sustainable supply of customers. Special attention should be paid to inhabitants which were born in the region, because they are least likely to buy products from local farmers. Finally, a possibility to gain more economic benefit from diversification could be to sell different products of different farmers together in one shop, which is easily accessible. One of the main obstacles for inhabitants to buy on the farm was namely the fact that it's not so convenient, because of the limited choice in a farmer's shop and the fact that the homeselling farmers are spread over the region. This shop could then also provide its customers with a detailed plan of the region showing the locations of the farmers with home sales and what they're selling. As such, personal contact between the farmer and the customer is still possible and facilitated.

Finally, the research indicates that farms with diversification are visually more attractive, create more biodiversity and have a generally higher contribution to society than farms without diversification. As such, by creating more opportunities for diversification, regional identity doesn't only stimulate agricultural development, but is also benefiting the region as a whole.

6. GENERAL CONCLUSION: MULTIFUNCTIONALITY AND REGIONAL IDENTITY AS PARADIGMS FOR A COMPETITIVE AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

The main **hypothesis** of the MUSICAL project was that multifunctional agriculture, through its contribution to regional identity, has the potential to increase the competitiveness of rural regions, which in turn could increase the competitiveness of agriculture. As such a regional dynamic would be created in which it pays to maintain the agricultural landscape and which brings regional development processes to a higher level. The methodology of the project was mainly based on an **extended (comparative) case study** and grounded theory approach. Data were collected through interviews, questionnaires and focus groups in a total of seven Belgian regions: Haspengouw in Limburg, Meetjesland in East-Flanders, Westhoek and Leiestreek in West-Flanders, Pajottenland in Flemish-Brabant, and Parc Naturel des Deux Ourthes and the Gaume in Luxemburg. Two best practice cases abroad were also taken up in the study: West Cork in Ireland and Groene Woud in the Netherlands. All these regions differ significantly in their degree of rurality, geographical and economic characteristics, characteristics related to the identity of the region and perceived characteristics related to regional development processes. The diversity in case studies yields a high variety in perspectives and thus maximum possibilities to investigate regional development processes based on regional identity and the role agriculture can play in these.

As previous research already indicated, regional identity in rural areas is highly influenced by **agriculture**. The largest contribution of agriculture to regional identity is through the management of the landscape in rural areas, but this influence is not always positive as witnessed by the sometimes poorly integration of modern farm buildings in the landscape. Through its main effect on land use and landscape, the presence of agriculture has an influence on regional identity and attractiveness of a region. Next to that, the presence of multifunctional agriculture influences real estate and tourism prices. Our results prove that this highly depends on the type of farming and farming practices with positive effects mostly linked to typical grassland. Our results also indicate a positive relation between regional identity effects and nature conservation by farmers. More intensive agricultural practices tend to have negative effects on tourism and real estate.

Although agriculture highly influences and contributes to the identity of rural regions, it is not the only factor present influencing regional image and identity. Rural areas may in fact have many identities, of which the agricultural identity is one besides cultural, social, historical and others. These identities (often based on stories, images, customs) are influencing each other and are subject to change and evolution. Therefore, in this project, identity is concluded from a **constructivist viewpoint** to be a subjective, multiple, manipulatable and power laden concept. As a result, different actors in a region may want to use different identities or aspects as a starting point for regional development. In many regional branding initiatives, regional identity is used as a starting point to create a more distinctive image or reputation, which helps to increase regional competitiveness. However, if different actors prefer different identities as a starting point for these processes, this can lead to competition and power play, both within as between regions.

While this project has focused on identity-based regional development linked to agricultural identity, we want to underline that this is only one of **the possibilities to start up regional development processes**. Each region should chose given its geography, natural, cultural and agricultural characteristics an own development path. Intensive agriculture, for example, might be a perfect starting point to stimulate a region's economic development, be it not

through a tourism or branding strategy. Another example is the development of a nature park in a rural area that has specific and unique natural assets. It is also not certain that regions with attractive natural, cultural and agricultural characteristics are able to build up a strong regional identity. There are a couple of conditions that need to be fulfilled in a region before this is possible.

A first one relates to (multi-actor and multi-level) **cooperation**. A good identity-based regional development process starts with shared ideas among a strong network of people and solid partnerships. Cooperation in regional development is already understood by many regions, involving different levels of government and various stakeholders in the process. Cooperation between different policy levels is also important in identity-based regional development, with lower levels pulling the process and higher levels facilitating and providing support. A combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches therefore seems ideal. Cooperation with other regions can also be important, even if they are urban. Rural areas often tend to fiercely protect their rural identity from urban intrusion, while the proximity of cities and an urban market can actually be an advantage to the regional branding process. A second condition is **coordination**. Identity-based regional development can be approached from different angles and partners within a region. However, there is a need for a central local actor who integrates all these initiatives and ensures that everybody is pulling at the same end of the rope. A smooth central coordination is however a challenge, since different actors do not always understand each other and there is often an overlap of this central organisation with other, more sectoral, organisations, again giving rise to disputes over power. Thirdly, **communication** and **participation** are important. Involvement of local people is crucial and the development process should be targeted at improving the situation in the region for all stakeholders and residents, not only for a small group of specific economic actors. If local people profit in an uneven way, unintended effects such as resistance against the branding process cannot be avoided. It is also optimal for the promotion of the region if the residents themselves recognize the identity, are proud of their region and can act as ambassadors.

The MUSICAL project focussed on the role of a specific local actor, namely the **farmer**. Like other local actors and residents, farmers should be involved in the process of regional development. In the cases studied, the majority of the farmers were aware of the processes and initiatives of identity-based regional development in their region. A large majority also feels they were involved and contributed to this, especially by their role in landscape management although their contribution is wider than this. Although farmers often take own initiative, organizations involved in identity-based regional development can stimulate coordinated action by providing financial support to farmers for specific actions contributing to the attractiveness of the region. This already takes place in some of the regions studied. Reasons to involve farmers are based on opportunistic (because they already manage a large part of the landscape), over ideological (farmers should be involved as custodian of the landscape), practical (it's just cheaper) to social (to support local agriculture) arguments. Farmers also have different motivations to participate. Either they consider it as a kind of moral duty, or they find a certain pleasure and pride in it or they do it because they can benefit financially from it. Another reason that is often mentioned, is the improvement of the public image of farming through their contribution to the attractiveness of the region. The most common reason why don't get involved, is because of the ignorance of the possibilities. However, farmers also mention some drawbacks, such as a fear for bureaucracy, loosing flexibility, being constrained in farm management in the future, vagueness of rules, fear for their image as a farmer, practical concerns such as a lack of time, machinery, knowledge or because they believe it is not financially profitable to be involved. Stimulating farmers to get involved is

mainly about creating trust, preferably through a personal contact with the farmer. Farmers need to know what they can expect and need to have trust in this. Involvement must be financially attractive while also information on the practical aspects is an important factor to get farmers' involvement. Finally, communication to the public about the farmers' role can enhance farmers' pride about their contribution, which may also be an important factor to get more involvement.

However, there are also good reasons why regional development organisations don't want to involve farmers. An important factor hereby is the lack of funds. In general financing of (identity-based) regional development processes seems to be a weak point. This is because the money available is often project based and thus of a temporary nature. This severely limits possibilities to attain a long-term vision for the region and it discourages integrated regional development. Exploring **alternative financing** was therefore an important part of this project. We have investigated alternative ways to finance the construction of an attractive regional identity. The focus was on discovering ways to finance farmers' involvement, with the possibility for the money to be used and distributed to other involved actors as well. Different financing mechanisms have been studied and documented. Based on an acceptability analysis in two of the regions, it can be concluded that voluntary mechanisms are the most acceptable for the actors involved. However, voluntary schemes, such as donations through a regional account or landscape auctions, do not guarantee that enough money can be collected to sustain the development process in the long run. The best option seems to use a combination of different financing mechanisms in one region: voluntary mechanisms, together with taxes/payments linked to the use of the landscape, and fund constructions. Especially fund constructions seems to be promising. For these alternative financing mechanisms to work, however, there are also some conditions that need to be fulfilled, which are also mentioned as factors of successful regional branding. There is a need for a strong network in the region with inspiring persons or central organizations who take the initiative for the establishment of the mechanisms. Secondly, there needs to be a long-term vision on the landscape, a vision which needs to be shared by the inhabitants, who are the potential suppliers of money for these mechanisms. Direct involvement and attachment to the region is therefore an important factor and may require decreasing the scale of the region in which the alternative financing mechanisms are developed. Finally, government involvement is essential in developing these mechanisms, for market regulation, stimulation and structuralisation.

Another objective of the MUSICAL project was to assess whether agriculture can profit from the identity of a region to which it contributes. This is possible through alternative financing, in the way that farmers are compensated by economic sectors profiting from the regional agricultural identity. However, the agricultural sector itself may also profit directly from this identity, e.g. through **diversification** activities such as farm tourism or home sales of farm products. The research showed that in regions where the regional development process is more advanced, and where inhabitants are more attached to the region, there are more farmers taking up diversification and also more people buying products on the farm. However, in line with previous research, we couldn't prove that diversification also means an increase in income for the farmers, rather it compensates losses in agricultural production so that in the end the income remains equal. As such, it may however prevent farmers from marginalisation and thus leaving the sector. The research also indicates that farms with diversification are visually more attractive, contribute more to increasing biodiversity, and contribute more to societal expectations than farms without diversification. So diversification does increase the sustainability of the sector, but for farmers to make an extra profit out of it, the market still

needs to be further developed. Specific promotion of local agricultural products in the identity-based regional development process could help in achieving this.

This leads us to conclude that multifunctional agriculture, through its contribution to regional identity, has indeed the potential to contribute to rural competitiveness. The agricultural sector itself can also profit from this through alternative financing and diversification, although to achieve this, a couple of conditions also need to be fulfilled. These conditions, some of which were already mentioned in this conclusion, will be further elaborated in the next section of policy recommendations.

7. POLICY SUPPORT

The first three parts discuss policy recommendations for policy actors who want to set up regional development processes based on regional identity. The last part contains recommendations for the European and regional rural development policy.

- Regional identity is an important resource for collective action as well as for place branding strategies that build on the uniqueness of a region. Regional identity is a dynamic, social construct and it is possible to create a regional identity that can be used to develop the qualities of the region.
 - However, in order to create a regional identity, there have to be regional assets or resources to anchor the identity on. Although different people and stakeholders may claim different regional identities, a certain consensus on the dominant identity is required. The creation of regional identities is on the one hand dependent on the presence of cultural, natural or agricultural assets in the region. On the other hand, the presence of motivated people and networks of regional associations is indispensable in the creation of regional identities and the implementation of identity-based policy. Regions that lack strong regional identities or the possibilities (cultural, natural, economic assets or networks among the different regional actors) to create regional identities should consider regional development strategies not focusing on regional identity.
 - Creation of regional identities and implementation of identity-based policies are gradual, time-consuming processes.
 - As mentioned before, identity is a dynamic concept and should not be fixed in time and content. This requires openness to new or external influences. Identity involves a dialectic between continuity and change and regional actors have to stay open for new perspectives on identity, for example when new opportunities emerge. Identity-based regional development can also be enriched by considering external developments as opportunities and linking up to them, instead of seeing them as threats.
 - Participation of all regional stakeholders is essential in the creation of regional identities and it stimulates social relations and shared identities. Communication about the regional development objectives, future actions and required input from the stakeholders is essential. The residents have to be considered as key stakeholders and should be involved from the beginning. When the residents and regional stakeholders support the regional identities, they are all ambassadors of the region and strengthen the identity-based policy.
- An important local actor, on which a large part of this project was focussing, is the farmer:
 - Farmers manage a large part of the land in rural areas and can therefore contribute to a large extent to the attractiveness of rural regions, mostly through landscape management which was the main focus within this project, although their role is broader than that. At the local level, the best way for actors to stimulate participation of farmers in identity-based regional development processes is through personal contact. Trust needs to be built up so that farmers can be sure about what to expect from their participation without vagueness and fear for sudden changes in plans. They also need to be guided in the practical aspects, like assistance with paperwork, advice about practical issues in landscape management,

availability of a machine park for landscape management, if possible planning tasks in periods where work on the farm is limited, etc.

- Another important stimulus for farmers is a financial compensation for the service they deliver. Alternative financing mechanisms at local level, like landscape funds, can possibly provide money for this (see further recommendation). Another possibility could be decreasing the rateable value of agricultural land with certain landscape elements, such as standard fruit trees and hedges, so that it becomes interesting to have this from a tax perspective.
 - Farmers can also profit from regional identity through farm diversification, like farm tourism or home sales of farm products. Farmers having these extra activities on their farm often report a lack of support from authorities and difficulties to attract customers. Customers on the other hand claim it is not convenient, for example, to buy at the farm because the range of products sold at one farm is too limited, and because they don't know where all the farmers with diversification are located. At the local level, providing regional farm products at one sales point could be a solution for this. Because personal contact with the farmer is also appreciated by the customer, this sales point could provide a map of where the diversifying farmers in the region can be found.
 - Convincing farmers to participate in identity-based regional development can be easier if farmers have internalized the objectives of the regional development policies. Farmers should be convinced that it is important to preserve local cultural heritage and to increase the attractiveness of the region for the inhabitants. This internalization can be stimulated through education, but also by giving farmers the feeling that their role is valuable to and appreciated by society. Therefore, communicating this role of the farmer as landscape manager to the public is important, so that farmers can develop a feeling of pride.
 - If farmers are to play a role in identity-based regional development processes, e.g. through landscape management, it is important to make sure that this doesn't create competition with other groups in the region who are already involved in this, like nature organizations or organizations for social work. A choice can be, for example, to only involve farmers in larger landscape management tasks, involving the use of machinery. As such, different landscape managers can effectively work together.
- When setting up an identity-based policy, it is important to strengthen the local qualities by fostering existing identities and stimulating the development of new regional identities.
- It is crucial to recognise the diversity of rural areas. There's a wide diversity in regional identities, both inside and outside the region. Next to that, every place has its typical economic, cultural, social and environmental assets that make each place unique. As a consequence, a policy action that resulted in positive consequences in one region is not directly transferable to other regions. It is impossible to generate a blueprint standard procedure for identity policies.
 - The development of a long term vision on identity-based regional development is essential for success. This long term vision has to link discrete projects into integrated programmes and has to serve as a basis for mobilising resources and providing organisational infrastructure to facilitate the implementation of development projects. All regional stakeholders have to be involved in the

development and implementation of the long term vision, with a clear consensus on the focus of each partner.

- Initiators of an identity-based policy should be aware of overestimating the potential of regional identity as a starting point for regional development. When regional identity is considered as a holistic concept, without concrete content, there's the risk that the identity-based policy will remain a hollow concept, that is not supported by the stakeholders and residents.

➤ Recommendations for rural and regional development policy:

- The European rural development policy has to continue strengthening the regional, place based approach, through the LEADER programme, leaving opportunities to the regions to develop their endogenous potential and to form networks among rural actors. In the case of the European regional development policy, it is crucial to provide sufficient attention and means to the development potential of rural regions, recognizing their leading role and strengthening rural-urban linkages. Next to that, there is a need for co-ordination and synchronisation of the regulations and required criteria for the European development funds.
- One of the major weaknesses in the rural development processes in all the regions is their dependency on short-term funding. The European, Belgian, Flemish and Walloon funding bodies should provide long-term financing possibilities in order to assure the development of long-term regional development strategies.
- Another possibility to overcome the dependence on external funding is the stimulation of alternative financing methods. Different financing mechanisms were discussed in this document, and based on an acceptability analysis in two Belgian regions, it seems that voluntary mechanisms are most acceptable for the actors involved. However, these do not guarantee that enough money can be collected in the long run. The best option seems to be the combination of different financing mechanisms in one region: voluntary mechanisms, together with taxes/payments linked to the use of the landscape, and fund constructions. Especially these fund constructions seem to be promising. For these alternative financing mechanisms to work, however, there are also some conditions that need to be fulfilled, some of which were already mentioned as conditions for successful identity-based regional development. There is a need for a strong network in the region with inspiring persons or central organizations as drivers behind the establishment of the mechanisms. Secondly, there needs to be a long-term vision on the development of the region and its landscape and it is important that inhabitants, who are the potential suppliers of money for these mechanisms, are aware of this and feel involved in the region's plans. Attachment to the region is therefore important, and may require decreasing the scale of the region in which the alternative financing mechanisms are developed. Finally, government involvement is essential in developing these mechanisms, for market regulation, stimulation and structuralization.
- The continuing disparities between the rural areas, especially in Flanders show that the traditional rural development policies and agricultural support systems have not worked well enough. There is a need for a strong Flemish rural development policy, with a corresponding rural development fund, that recognizes the diversity of the rural areas. The Flemish rural development policy has to leave more

flexibility and responsibility to the rural areas to implement an integrated rural development strategy, adjusted to the local needs and opportunities.

- Through the Communal Rural Development Plan (Programme Communal de Développement Rural, PCDR), the Walloon rural development policy offers the communities the possibility to develop and implement an integrated rural development strategy that is adjusted to their local needs and opportunities. Its participative approach is evaluated positively by the regional actors and offers possibilities for the creation of networks among actors. However, since this local approach doesn't facilitate the creation of regional identities or the development of identity-based policy on a regional scale, there is a need for policy measures that enable the development and implementation of regional identities and development strategies.
- In the context of globalization, the supra-national level becomes more important and rural development has become a multi-actor and multi-level story. There is a need for mechanisms that ensure the effective coordination and integration of all local development programmes at the level of rural areas. This could be improved by a right combination of top-down and bottom-up initiatives. It is the task of the central policy actors to facilitate bottom-up initiatives by local actors and where necessary, institutionalize them to a certain extent, but still leaving room for creativity and without fixating too much. Simultaneously, the top-down efforts of the central policy makers to initiate local action, have to match the interests of the local actors, such that they are willing to react to them.
- Regional branding exercises and other regional development trajectories can stimulate competition between different municipalities, between different regional visions and between different regions. Within the region, this competition can revolve around the regional characteristics to be promoted, the regional identity to be created or the regional development trajectory to be chosen. Between different regions, there is a risk that regions with a lot of potential manage to claim most financial means, or that there is rivalry about images, identities and meanings. Sustainable development will not be attained as long as regional development processes push different regions, different municipalities and different stakeholders into a competitive struggle to create a positive regional identity and to attract tourists, investors and residents.

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Contactforum “Multifunctionality and local identity as paradigms for a sustainable and competitive agriculture” (22 maart 2011, Prof. dr. ir. Guido Van Huylenbroeck)

Summary

The aim of this contactforum is to present and reflect on the results of the MUSICAL project (Multifunctionality and local identity as paradigms for a competitive and sustainable agriculture), which is a research project financed by the Belgian Federal Science Policy. The main hypothesis of the MUSICAL project is that multifunctional agriculture, through its contribution to regional identity, has the potential to increase the competitiveness of rural regions, which in turn could increase the competitiveness of agriculture. As such a regional dynamic would be created in which it pays to maintain the agricultural landscape and which brings regional development processes to a higher level. This hypothesis was investigated through a methodology which was mainly based on an extended (comparative) case study and grounded theory approach. Data were collected through interviews, questionnaires and focus groups in a total of seven Belgian regions and two best practice cases abroad. These proceedings describe the results of the three main parts of the MUSICAL project: the relationship between regional identity and regional development, the role the farmer plays in identity-based regional development and the economic benefits of regional identity.