ICONIC SITE DEVELOPMENT AND LEGITIMATING POLICIES:
The changing role of water in Dutch identity discourses

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ABSTRACT

This paper focusses on the role of iconic sites in the legitimation of policies. Traditionally the legitimization of administrations is based on national communities. The undermining of these territorial communities, through globalisation and individualisation, make iconic sites more important to anchor spatial identities and link these between groups and across scales. Traditional thick spatial identities based on a historically formed nested hierarchy of local, regional and national territorial communities are in decline. Administrations have to rely more on thinner, more forward looking identities. The spatiality of iconic sites makes them useful to communicate a consistent identity discourse linking different types and scales of spatial identities of administrations and populations. This paper differentiates between backward looking heritage sites and forward looking flagship sites previewing an ideal identity to be realised in the future. The ways these types of iconic sites are used in identity discourses by administration to legitimise policies is illustrated by an analysis of how local identity discourses on waterlogged backlands are linked with the changing national policies of water management in the Netherlands. This shows how the administration of the city region of Arnhem-Nijmegen uses a newly constructed park as an iconic site in their spatial identity discourse.

Keywords: iconic sites, legitimation, spatial identity, new regions, sustainable water management, heritage

HIGHLIGHTS

1. The decline in territorial identities undermine the legitimacy of the nation-state
2. Iconic sites anchor spatial identities across scales, time and between communities
3. General policies on sustainability can be legitimised through local flagship sites
4. Heritage sites and flagship sites are linked to thick and thin spatial identities
5. New regions use iconic sites to anchor spatial identities locally and across scales
1 INTRODUCTION

“The struggle for life of the basin soil farmers has been so hard and bitter that they hardly take an interest in general development, technical training, education, organized cooperation and association. Thus the population themselves present a problem, which needs solution as much as technical and economic problems. (...) Will they ever be gripped by the ghost of the modern world?” (Translated from: de Jonge 1954, p. 56)

This first quote is from a book written in the 1950s and sponsored by the Dutch government on the problems of the waterlogged river backlands in the central part of the Netherlands. The central government embarked at that time on the modernisation of the area between the Rhine and Meuse. Partially financed by the American Marshall Aid, the Dutch state created in 1950 a special commission to organise and oversee all different policies towards drainage, infrastructure, land consolidation, education and community development (Van den Ban 1961). These policies transformed this area into a modern well-drained agricultural region. At the end of this book the author wrote “The area along the great rivers is finally starting its march to a better future.” (Translated from: de Jonge 1954, 46).

“In line with the master plan Park Lingezezen the basis for landscaping is the 12th century landscape of human cultivation. The design will recreate characteristics from the period before the diking in of the rivers. Changing water levels, natural vegetation, and extensive grazing will create in the near future images of a landscape reminiscent of the primeval glacial valley.” (Translated from: Bosch, de Weerd 2009, p. 41).

This second quote is from a current planning document on the development of a large new park partly based on restoring the traditional waterlogged backlands which were drained only half a century ago. The transformation of the waterlogged backlands into an endless open landscape of modern pastures helped the development of efficient dairy farming which was seen as a symbol of modernisation at the time, but which is now in decline. The transformation of this area from a modern agricultural area to one focusing on water retention and recreation reflects the shift towards a more sustainable form of water management in the Netherlands. The quotation above shows how these water retention projects are sold using the language of heritage. This is an example of a widespread strategy to legitimise new policies by developing iconic sites. The first part of this paper develops a conceptual framework on the use of iconic sites to communicate spatial identities and legitimise new policies. The second part of this paper applies this to how new policies of water management in waterlogged backlands in the Netherlands are legitimised through the development of iconic sites. As suggested by the two above quotations, this is linked to a new interpretation of regional identities. The modernistic negative stereotyping of regional identity of the river backlands is now positively reinterpreted and used to legitimise new more sustainable water management policies.

Iconic sites have always been important vehicles to communicate spatial identities. Nation-states erected many monuments like the Arc de Triomphe or the Brandenburg Gate to mark heroic victories of the nation. Historic places like Westminster Abbey and the White House exemplify the historic continuity of states. These and many more historic sites have a special meaning in national identity discourses. These heritage sites are icons incorporating and communicating special characteristics and qualities of national communities. The special qualities of iconic sites for the communication of spatial identities are linked to their spatiality and their relation with time. Heritage sites frequently incorporate a message to the future by for instance linking the poverty of the past, as exemplified by for instance the rural poverty shown by old farm houses, with the present prosperity which will...
become even better in the future (Harvey, 2008: 19; Graham et al., 2000: 2). This paper will argue that not only historic heritage sites, but also some purposefully constructed new sites have similar iconic qualities in the communication of spatial identities.

The use of the past for the present in heritage sites is mirrored by the use of the future for the present in flagship sites. These flagship sites have become important devices to communicate and legitimise new policies. Their links with the past tend to focus more on rupture than on continuity. De-industrialisation, in particular, forced many Western cities to attract new businesses by promoting a new positive image of their city through marketing techniques. Flagship sites of urban regeneration at redeveloped waterfronts like the Guggenheim in Bilbao, the Docklands in London, the World Trade Centre in New York, or the opera house in Oslo are used as icons of renewal in the communication of an attractive identity to the outside world. Flagship sites are used to legitimise the change from economic policies based on industrialisation to a service economy. Governments increasingly use flagship sites to show the ‘best practices’ of implementing different kinds of new policies.

The most effective way to communicate and legitimise policies is to combine the back-ward looking perspective of heritage sites with the forward-looking perspective of flagship sites. Heritage sites are therefore frequently combined with flagship sites. This is clearly visible in many waterfront developments and old industrial regions, where the preservation of old buildings as icons of old industrial labour is combined with new flagship developments as icons of new employment opportunities for the creative classes (Healy 2000; Verheul, 2012: 87; Doucet, 2010).

The first part of this paper starts by discussing the role of identity and iconic places in the legitimisation of power. After discussing different types of spatial identities, this paper focusses on the role of different types of iconic sites – heritage and flagship sites - in the communication of spatial identities. There are many discourses on spatial identities in which iconic sites are used to legitimise policies. The iconicity of heritage and flagship sites is part of these specific identity discourses. Iconicity is not a spatial property of a site, but is based on its specific role in the communication of a particular spatial identity discourse.

The second part of this paper analyses the use of two iconic sites to legitimise new forms of water management in the Netherlands. It focusses on the changing appraisal of the waterlogged river backlands, which shifted from a negative image of unused wetlands which had to be drained and modernised, to a new positive image based on heritage and flagship sites of water storage. It discusses how these iconic sites are used to legitimise the shift in Dutch water management from building ever higher and stronger dikes, to widening river beds and building water storage facilities inside the dikes. The huge increase in expected peak water volumes for the rivers due to climate change transformed the focus of Dutch water management from containing water to giving water more room. New forms of rainwater storage are further legitimised by linking them to ecological and recreational functions. These iconic sites not only show how future water management could look like, but also legitimise these policies by referring back to the history of Dutch water management and linking this to national and regional identity discourses.

We focus on two iconic sites (see Map 1). The first one, De Regulieren, started out as a heritage site which was spared modernisation as a result of local resistance in the 1960s. These waterlogged backlands were initially preserved as a nature reserve and later became more a heritage site for local agriculture and a flagship site showing the ecological and recreational benefits of rainwater storage. The second one, Park Lingezegen, is an urban park in the backlands in the urban region Arnhem-Nijmegen. It is not only the flagship site of new sustainable forms of water management, but it also used in the creation of an attractive identity of that new urban region. These case studies show how the iconicity of sites is embedded in changing identity discourses. They also show how iconic sites can legitimise policies by linking different regional and local identity discourses with national and global discourses on sustainability.
2  LEGITIMATING POWER ACROSS COMMUNITIES

This section discusses the role of identity discourses in the legitimation of power. It shows that different types of spatial identities legitimise power in different ways. The difference between backward and forward looking types of identity discourses will be examined in the next section to link this with the role of different forms of iconic sites in the communication of spatial identities.

Legitimacy is rooted in the identity of a community. Legitimacy is according to David Beetham - a leading political philosopher and political theorist on the legitimation of power - based on the correspondence between the norms prevalent in a community and how power is exercised (Beetham, 1991: 8). Power is not just a matter of capacities and resources alone, but power also depends on the cooperation of the others, based on normative considerations and not just on incentives and sanctions (Beetham, 1991: 38). According to Beetham, legitimacy is based on the coherent but changeable combination of three dimensions: legality, expressed consent and justifiability. Legality refers to adherence to the established rules of acquiring and exercising power. The expressed consent of the population with the power structures in society is either mobilised, through oaths and the participation in mass events, or results from elections. Justifiability is based on social norms on the purpose of government and the source of political authority. Power “must derive from a source that is acknowledged as authoritative within society; it must serve ends that are recognised as socially necessary, and interests that are general.” (Beetham, 1991: 149). Justifiability is not only based on the source, but also on how regulation serves a shared communal interest. This socially specific defined common interest should be met by an adequate and efficient performance of the political system (Beetham, 1991: 70, 86). This common interest is linked to the values and identity of that community. “(T)he legitimation of power rules is not only the development and dissemination of an appropriate body of ideas, or ideology, but the construction of a social identity by a complex set of often unconscious processes, which make that identity seem ‘natural’, and give the justifying ideas their plausibility.” (Beetham, 1991: 78).

The identity of communities is linked to the spaces they inhabit. Traditional identities are rooted in the history of a community within a territory. These identities focus on communalities based on their long history; the characteristics of the territory, like landscape and iconic historic buildings; the characteristics of the population; and their political, cultural and economic achievements (Hobsbawn, 1990; Smith, 1986; Castells, 2010). National identities are built on the mosaic of traditional regional and local identities. Nation-state building involved the institutionalisation of distinct regional stereotypes based on tradition in fixed regional territories. The national identity was conceptualised as crowning these traditional regional identities. Regional identities based on historically naturally bounded regions were seen as important for the formation of active national citizens (Paasi, 2013: 6).

This hierarchical ordering of national and regional identities is now challenged especially by the emergence of ‘new regions’. Through their cooperation in new regions local administrations try to cope with the growing challenges they are faced with linked to the diminishing role of nation-states and the mounting exposure to (global) competition (Keating, 2008; Hooghe & Marks, 2003; Rodriguez-Pose & Sandall, 2008; Castells, 2010). These new regions are sometimes based on the amalgamation of adjacent territories, but are frequently networks, linking sometimes non-contiguous local administrations across different scales with non-administrative partners, like businesses (associations) and other organisations of stakeholders. The organisation of these new regions is more based on the horizontal cooperation between policymakers of different public administrations and non-state actors in networks, than on a fixed territorial hierarchy. New regions frequently cover different policy fields, are often short-lived, partially overlap in space and lack clear spatial borders. As a consequence, local actors are confronted with many different regions (Terlouw & van Gorp 2014). This transformation and rescaling of statehood results according to Neil Brenner (2004: 10) in ‘mosaics of scalar organization’ which cut across the classical nested administrative hierarchies.
“Legitimating identity seems to have entered a fundamental crisis because of the fast disintegration of civil society inherited from the industrial era, and because of the fading away of the nation-state, the main source of legitimacy.” (Castells, 2010, 70). This is especially the case for new regions which are too unsettled and fluid to establish a collective identity, unlike firmly established administrative regions, such as provinces and especially nation-states. The identities of new regions are much thinner and forward-looking than the ‘thick’ backward-looking identities of traditional regions and regionalisms based on the shared history of a regional community. Thick regional identities value the region as a political goal in itself, while thin regional identities are based more on a utilitarian legitimation of the effectiveness of especially economic policies. Moreover, thin regional identities are more functional and linked to sectorial policies and special interests, while thick regional identities are more integrative. Thin regional identities are thus created around a few, mostly economic, characteristics while thick regional identities cover a broad range of cultural, social, political, environmental and economic characteristics (Terlouw 2009). Regional identities can be further differentiated based on the different perspectives of stakeholders. Administrations and populations frequently have conflicting views on their present and preferred spatial identity. Table 1 differentiates between communicated, conceived, ideal and desired identities. This distinction is based on a method to effectively communicate company brands through aligning these different identities into one coherent identity discourse (Balmer & Greyser, 2002). This approach has also been applied to cities and regions (Trueman et al. 2004; Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005; Kaplan et al., 2010). The communicated identity is based on a representation of established characteristics. The official communications of administrations in particular selectively use those qualities which fit their political aims. Communicated identities range from the implicit identity present in for instance policy documents, to explicit marketing campaigns to attract visitors. The effectiveness of this communicated identity is based on the correspondence with the conceived identity based on the perception of the region by different groups within and outside the region. The ideal identity is the goal of the policies of the administration. The ideal identity either amends current deficits or adapts the region to the expected changes in its environment which are now frequently linked to global competitiveness. This thin ideal identity promoted by administrations has to link up with the thicker desired identity of the population to legitimise these new policies. Whereas the ideal identity focuses on the efficient realisation of specific policy goals in relation to the outside world, the desired identity is thicker and much broader. The desired identity is based on the vision of a better future for the whole population and rooted in their established values and norms. Table 1 depicts the dominant relations between these types of identity, their time perspective and the type of stakeholders.

Table 1 Identity types, stakeholders and time perspective

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<tr>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Time perspective</th>
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<td>Administration</td>
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Regional identities are now regarded as crucial for the legitimation of the policy choices of new regions and the mobilisation of support for these policies (Bell, 2010; Cox, 1999; Habermas, 2001; Paasi, 2013; Harrison, 2010). These identities are more used as a political device than a reflection of popular consciousness. As Paasi (2013: 3) puts it: “Rather than as an empirical entity defined in terms of its inherent qualities or as the product of the identification of its inhabitants, regional identity is understood [...] as a social construct that is produced and reproduced in discourse.” These regional identity discourses combine to different degrees aspects of different types of spatial identities.
3 ICONIC SITES AND COMMUNICATION OF SPATIAL IDENTITIES

The communication of a consistent identity discourse linking different types of spatial identities with the ideal identity aspired by administrations gives legitimacy to their policies. There are many different forms of communicating spatial identities ranging from tweets to buildings. In the consumption based late modern era, images and the visual media have become very important for the marketing of products and leisure opportunities. Images are very effective to communicate the values on which the individual consumer choices are based (Giddens, 1991; Chaney, 1996; Bauman, 2001; 2004; Castells, 2010). Images are also important for the communication of spatial identities and the representation of spaces ranging from iconic national landscapes to flagship projects of urban regeneration (Rose, 2001; Smyth, 1994; Kelly, 2013; Verheul, 2012; Brace, 1999; Healy, 2010; Cosgrove, 2009; Kaplan & Herb, 2011; Baker, 2012; Hoelscher, 2009; Daniels, 1993). Iconic sites are becoming more important as consumerist spaces where iconic architecture in for instance waterfront developments is used to bolster the position in the interurban and regional competition for visitors and investors (Skair, 2010; Doucet, 2010; Smyth, 1994). Iconic sites are not only important themes in the communication of spatial identities in different media (Maar, 2004; Zimmerman, 2007), but the experience of visiting makes them different from other types of image based communications.

Their materiality and spatiality makes iconic sites into a special and potent type of sign. Many semiotics build on Peirce’s famous division of signs into icons, indexes and symbols, based on different relations between the signifier and the signified (Chandler, 2007; Lyons, 1977; Mitchell, 1986). In symbols this relation is purely conventional. Indexical signs are based on the causal relation between the signifier and the signified, like smoke indicating fire. In icons this relation between signifier and signified is based on likeness. “An icon is a sign fit to be used as such because it possesses the quality signified.” (Peirce, 1998: 307). There are many different types of icons. Images are the most general form of icons. They are selected and transformed to signify meanings in a cultural context. “Iconicity (...) will always be dependent upon properties of the medium in which the form is manifest.” (Lyons, 1977: 105). Icons are not only images used in communication, but can also be based on other types of signifiers. The materiality of the signifier ranges from highly fluid and replicable pictures in the social media, to sacred unique objects in remote places.

Their materiality gives iconic objects special communicative qualities in addition to their visual characteristics. This has a long tradition in religious practices (Mitchell, 1986: 113). The icons in byzantine Christianity are both images and material incarnations of what they represent (Verheul, 2012: 29). Icons are used as bridges between the invisible world of God and the human world God has created. Icons embody a specific aspect of the divine totality. They are archetypes of universal values embodied in a specific object. Icons are not only important religious objects, but are also important for collective identity formation. For instance the diaspora of Pontian Greeks from the Black Sea area regard their ancient icons as a crucial part of their identity (Bruneau, 2000: 566-568).

Not all iconic objects are mobile (see figure 1). Location is sometimes a crucial aspect of an iconic object. Spaces ranging from landscapes to monuments can also be iconic. Landscapes are important elements of spatial identities. National identities, in particular, are linked to specific, mostly rural, landscapes (Kaplan & Herb 2011; Brace, 1999; Paasi, 1996). “As exemplars of moral order and aesthetic harmony, particular landscapes achieve the status of national icons.” (Daniels 1993, 5). The selection of landscapes and the accentuating of specific elements are part of political choices made to promote a specific national identity. This ideological bias is not only present in the representation of landscapes, but also in their formation. “Landscapes throughout the world and through time have been constructed with specific ideals in mind, often by ideologically driven governing elites.” (Hoelscher, 2009: 137). New regimes, in particular, erect new monuments to legitimise their interpretation of national history and construct public buildings, like schools, courts of law and municipal offices, to communicate the message of national identity to every corner of their territory (Alderman & Dwyer, 2009; Baker, 2012).
Differentiation based on:

Relation signifier-signified: icon based on likeness

Materiality of the signifier

Location

Spatial form

Time focus: future or past

Figure 1 Iconic sites as a special type of sign

3.1 Iconic Sites

“Our lives are not only lived in the flow of daily routines. (...) For societies and social groups, some places express special qualities about themselves and their cultures in their buildings, landscapes and ambiances. (...) We think of them as iconic places to go to in cities, whether we are residents or visitors. They are different to the neighbourhoods where most people in urban areas dwell” (Healy, 2010: 123).

Iconic sites are more demarcated, homogenous and constructed than the vaguely defined, historically grown and heterogeneous landscapes. Iconic sites are like gateways linking the ordinary world of the everyday life with another world. For instance the removal of modern elements in and around the Stonehenge site is intended to improve the visitor experience of this special place (www.english-heritage.org.uk). Ideally, an iconic site is clearly demarcated from the ordinary world of everyday life. It has a border across which people enter a different world with a clear defined meaning. We visit these special places because they are different from our living environment (Verheul, 2012: 10; Doucet, 2010). The event of visiting is more active and intensive than just a visual glance. Iconic sites communicate their meaning not only through images, but also through the experience of visiting. Such monothematic places overwhelm individual identity. People leave their individuality and the multiplicity of their everyday life identity behind and enter a collective world with a homogenous meaning. The visual spectacle of for instance extravagant architecture dwarfs individual identity during the visit to the iconic site. The visitors also strengthen the meaning of iconic sites. The presence of many others with similar identities reinforces the specific identity of an iconic site (Sloterdijk, 2004: 638-641; Edensor, 2009). There is a circle of representation between the frequent representation of iconic sites in the media, the type of visitors they attract and their interpretation of this site. Visitors are through media representations primed to associate iconic sites with the communicated identity (Zimmerman 2007; Hymans 2010; Rose 2001).

Iconic sites are becoming more important anchors of collective identities, while the transformation of the territorial nation-state undermines the use of borders to define collective identities. The identity of the nation-states was based on the horizontal demarcation of territories protecting inhabitants against the outsiders across the border. Iconic sites on the other hand can vertically align different identity discourses. Iconic sites are, unlike territories, not linked to a distinct scale level, but can connect the current multitude of new thin spatial identities (Castells, 2010: 68-69; Cidell, 2006; Healy, 2010: 126; Verheul, 2012: 87; Doucet, 2010).
3.2 Heritage And Flagship Sites: Looking Back And Looking Forward

Heritage sites are widely used to demonstrate the glorious past of the community. They are frequently used to symbolise the durability and legitimacy of the nation-state (Harvey, 2008; Smith, 2006; Graham et al., 2000; Nora, 1989). The interpretation of the glorious past focusses on those values which are useful for the legitimisation of the current regime based on tradition. Heritage sites are frequently transformed for this purpose. The removal of new elements strengthens the experience of visiting the past in the present. This passage from the ordinary world to the heritage site is demarcated through for instance signs and fences. The trips to heritage sites are also a distraction or refuge from the monotony of everyday life (Smith, 2006: 30-31, 82; Harvey, 2008; Lowenthal, 2005: 82).

Heritage sites not only link the present with the past, but the timeline is frequently extended to the future. The Janus face-like looking back and looking forwards in time, using both a mythical history and the promise of a bright future is a common theme in nationalism (Hobsbawn, 1990; Smith, 1986; Nairn, 1975; Flint & Taylor 2007). Heritage sites which are linked to the poverty of the past in particular - like the poplars used for clog production discussed in the case study of De Regulieren - or to important innovations - like Dutch windmills - are part of a discourse of national development. The national path of development is extended from a poor past, through the wealthy present, to an even better future (Harvey, 2008: 19; Graham et al., 2000: 2).

This outlook on the future is still linked to historic sites, but other sites have a similar legitimating function as traditional heritage sites. The function of the backwards time travel of heritage sites away from everyday life (Smith, 2006: 72-74, 82) can be mirrored to the forwards time travel of visiting recently built flagship sites. These present the ideal identity of a better future to the population. Administrations can legitimise their vision of the future through the construction of flagship sites where the better future of tomorrow is already visible and visitable today (Terlouw, 2010). Thus despite their differences heritage sites and flagship sites both serve as icons in identity discourses.

Flagship sites mark out aspired change, “flagship developments became the most fertile ground for testing their application to policy and practice in the future” (Smyth, 1994: 23). The flagship sites provide visitors with a “demonstrable icon or ‘flagship’ with which to promote their city in a landscape of competition between cities” (Healy, 2010: 124). Local administrations use the construction of urban icons to communicate the ideal identity needed to be different and competitive. These flagship projects are frequently contested from other interpretations of what the local identity is and how it should be changed or remain unchanged (Verheul, 2012: 7, 20, 46; Pløger, 2010). Instead of policy discourses based on fear and nightmares, flagship projects are based on hope and dreams of an alternative future (Verheul, 2012: 72; Doucet, 2010; Smyth, 1994; Bianchini et al., 1994; Edensor, 2009). Many are used to legitimise the change from economic policies based on industrialisation to an urban service economy. For instance flagship sites of urban regeneration at redeveloped waterfronts like the Guggenheim in Bilbao or the opera house in Oslo are used as icons of renewal in the communication of an attractive identity to the outside world. But also local green flagship sites are used to promote more sustainable policies (Newman et al., 2009). The connection iconic flagship sites make between global policies for a sustainable future and the spatial identity of inhabitants strengthen the local legitimacy of these global policies. This is further discussed in the second part of this paper.

Figure 2 shows the relations between the present and the past of heritage sites and the relations between the present and the future of flagship sites. Present political power is legitimised through both the historiographical interpretation of the past and the imagined ideal future communicated in policy scenarios. Heritage sites are the result of both the preservation of old artefacts and their interpretation from the present. Besides these backward looking historiographical discourses, also the forward looking scenarios in policy documents presenting a future ideal identity can legitimise
policies. Flagship sites are conceptualised by looking back from this long-term ideal future, to the short term of the construction of these sites.

Viewed from the future, flagship sites are very similar to heritage sites. Whereas heritage sites mark important historic events, flagship sites mark recent policy changes towards a different future. Viewed from the ideal future presented in policy documents, flagship sites are important markers of the transition towards the future. While heritage sites present a selective interpretation of the past to legitimise current policies, flagship sites are based on the selective imagination and conceptualisation of the future to legitimise new policies. Successful iconic sites create a positive synergy between the conservation of the past and present, and an ideal future (Verheul, 2012: 315).

Figure 2  Legitimation through backward and forward selectivity of iconic sites
Note: Looking backwards from the future is partially based on Dirk Spennemann’s (2007) ideas on selecting new objects as the heritage in the future.

4 ICONIC SITES AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE ROLE OF WATER IN DUTCH IDENTITY DISCOURSES

The iconicity of heritage and flagship sites is embedded in identity discourses on the origins and destiny of communities. To understand the role of specific iconic sites it is therefore necessary to analyse the discourses in which they are used. These identity discourses are reflected in the communications of administrations in which these sites are discussed. Through policy documents, brochures, websites and other media like newspapers the iconicity of sites is communicated. The analysis of our two case studies De Regulieren and Park Lingezegen is based on how these sites are presented in these types of communications. The specific sources used for this are referenced to when these two iconic sites are discussed in detail. We study how these sites are presented as iconic in identity discourses and not how these are perceived by the population.

They combine the storage of rain water with the development of ecological and recreational functions. Both are now used as icons in the communication of discourses on new forms of sustainable water management and linked to spatial identity discourses based on combinations of different types of identities. Their origins are however very different. De Regulieren is much older and is more a heritage site which is now also used as a flagship for water storage. Park Lingezegen is
still under construction and is part of the emerging competitive regional identity discourse of the urban region Arnhem-Nijmegen. It started more as a flagship site in the intertwined discourses on sustainability and healthy urban living, which is now increasingly linked to regional history. Despite these differences their current iconicity is part of the changing role of water in Dutch identity discourses. Using what Paasi (2013: 3) described as a “geo-historical, multi-layered approach”, it is therefore helpful to outline the evolution of the role of water in Dutch identity discourses to better understand the current communications on these sites. Water has always been an important element in Dutch national identity discourses. The role of water has shifted in recent decades from water as the enemy controlled by modernity, to water as an integral part of a sustainable everyday-life. We therefore start with an historical overview the relation between water and the construction of a Dutch national identity based on academic and other general sources. After this introduction of the context of the evolution of the role of water in Dutch identity discourses, we analyse the role of the iconic sites De Regulieren and Park Lingezeugen in the identity discourses of administrations based on the administrative communications on these sites.

4.1 Water And Dutch National Identity

The first Dutch heritage site selected in 1995 for the world heritage list of UNESCO was the island of Schokland which is now part of the land reclaimed from the sea which “symbolizes the heroic, age-old struggle of the people of the Netherlands against the encroachment of the waters.” (http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/739). The struggle against water is an important aspect of Dutch national identity. Water was important for the construction of national identity at a time when other commonly used building blocks of national identity could not be used. Aspects like religion, culture and political history divided more than united the Dutch population, while these were the basis of the different denominational identities. From the late 19th century till the 1960s, the divisions between religious communities were institutionalised in a system known as pillarisation. In this system of social separation each social group organised their own social and welfare institutions. They also had their separate educational systems in which very different versions of national history were taught at Protestant and Catholic schools which solidified the loyalty to religious communities, but hindered the development of a national identity (van Ginkel, 2004). Pillars became separate nations without much mutual solidarity (Lijphart, 1984). The national struggle against water is one of the few historical discourses not linked to religion. Water management is also more suited to create the idea of a national community than other shared interests, like economic growth or healthcare, while it sets the Netherlands apart from other countries. The struggle against water also unites different regional histories of water catastrophes, dikes, sluices, polders and windmills into one national discourse on water management (Metz & van den Heuvel, 2012: 285). The struggle against sea flooding at the coast, the building of new polders, the controlling of the large rivers and the draining and cultivation of waterlogged areas elsewhere, linked the national and regional identities based on the struggle against water. The two iconic sites analysed later on in this section are located in the waterlogged backlands in the Rhine estuary.

4.2 Modernising The Backlands Between The Large Rivers

The barren waterlogged backlands between the rivers attracted special attention from the Dutch state from the early 20th century onwards (Heezik, 2007; Waterschap, 2009). The drainage of these backlands between the large rivers had deteriorated over the centuries due to soil compression and rising water levels in the Rhine. In the early 20th century about 60% of the fields were flooded in winter (Linge-commissie, 1927: 53). These backlands were only extensively used by poor peasants as
The central government modernised these waterlogged backlands in the Rhine estuary in the 1950s through drainage, infrastructure, land consolidation, education and community development (Van den Ban, 1961). Many local farmers opposed the mandatory character of the land consolidation process and the forced move from their old family farmhouses to modern farmhouses far away from their ancestral villages. They regarded this expropriation as illegal and contrary to the traditional way of life in their local village communities. The frequent outvoting of land consolidation proposals in the ballot of landowners reflected this widespread local resistance. On the national level these policies were legitimised based on support in national elections and a new legal framework which counted the large numbers of non-voters as supporters (Van den Berg, 2004). These modernisation policies were further justified by branding those resisting as backward individuals who were still stuck in the traditional egoistic local culture (De Jonge, 1954: 20, 45). The values of the local communities were rejected as contradicting the modern national values, and these backlands were depicted as badlands of modernity (Hetherington, 1997).

4.3 De Regulieren: From A Heritage Site Opposing Modernity To A Flagship Project Of Sustainable Water Management

In the 1960s another more successful local opposition emerged which resulted in the development of De Regulieren as a nature reserve and a heritage site. This opposition was no longer centred on traditional farmers opposing the modernisation of rural life, but was based in the new middle classes in the suburbanising towns who had ecological concerns and recreational demands. The improved infrastructure across the rivers opened this rural area for commuting. The new suburbs in the rural towns attracted growing numbers of educated white collar workers. These could successfully link the local opposition to agricultural modernisation to the growing importance of environmental issues in Dutch national politics. Culemborg, the town closest to the Dutch urban core, expanded strongly (see Map 1). It had the strongest population growth (28%) in this area in the central Rhine estuary in the 1960s (CBS, 2003; De Bruin, 1988). When in 1969 the government decided that the rural area around Culemborg (Van den Bergh, 2004) was also to be modernised through drainage improvement and land consolidation, this met with an effective local opposition. They formed in Culemborg an action committee which - contrary to the traditional opponents of land consolidation - formulated its objections in the same language as the national planners. They justified their position by using the authoritative source of knowledge in society. Their education gave them the necessary skills to effectively link local resistance based on the protection of the conceived regional identity, with new national policies based on a more environmentally conscious ideal national identity. They wrote a report which opposed the governmental plans for agricultural modernisation using scientific analyses of the negative ecological effects of these plans. They linked this to the most recent national spatial plans which no longer focussed on maximising agricultural production in rural areas, but started to give room for nature and recreation areas (Van Beek et al., 1972). They also used two members of parliament who had their political support base in this region to lobby the national government based on the arguments presented in their rapport (Handelingen, 1972: 3741; RD, 1972).

The opposition by this action committee resulted in the creation of the nature reserve De Regulieren in the most waterlogged part of the area to be restructured (see Map 1). The drainage of this area with many old ponds used for trapping ducks would have had the most negative
The government acquired it in the land consolidation process and handed it over to the provincial nature conservation foundation in order to develop it as a nature reserve (RD, 1979: Vos, 1990). De Regulieren is gradually expanding. Its core area now covers almost 300 hectares and the management of many adjacent fields has become more environmental friendly. De Regulieren has gradually been restored to an ecological valuable wetland. Exotic types of poplars have been replaced by native willows and alders as part of the restoration of the traditional rural landscape. One pond dug out for trapping ducks dating back to the Middle Ages has been restored, and the water level has been raised by tapping into the centuries old aquifer. De Regulieren has thus been reconstructed as a typical heritage site, which focusses on the preservation of aspects of a traditional way of life. Its position was further strengthened as part of a national greenbelt to regulate urban growth, provide recreation facilities and as part of an ecological national network. (Gelderland, 2009; 2012; Overbetuwe, 2010: 75-76).

The near flooding in 1995, which prompted the forced evacuation of 250.000 inhabitants, accelerated the transformation of Dutch water management based on the modernistic values of man conquering nature, to a more sustainable approach based on adapting to nature. Instead of dike reinforcement and increasing pumping capacity, new policies focus on adapting to a wetter and more erratic climate by giving more room to rivers and local rain water retention. The increased risk of flooding changed the Dutch water management from locking water out by building ever stronger flood defence systems, to living with water by giving water more room in places where it does not endanger humans (Roth et al., 2006; Van der Brugge et al., 2005; Metz, 2012; Staatsbosbeheer, 2003; De Jonge 2007). The use of parts of the traditionally waterlogged backlands for new rainwater storage facilities in the future is part of this paradigm shift. It is not easy to generate public support for this partial flooding of agricultural land re-cultivated only half a century ago. Initially, national technocrats formulated large scale plans to transform most of these backlands into a huge new green river (Staatsbosbeheer, 2003; Lutijn, 2002; De Bruin et al., 1987). But this ideal of sustainable water management for the whole of the Netherlands contradicted the desired regional identity of the local population who feared they would have to move. Water management now focusses on the gradual increase of local water storage facilities in the backlands. These affect each time only a relatively small number of stakeholders, which hinders the mobilisation of opposition in the local communities. De Regulieren is currently used as iconic site in many regional policy documents demonstrating how new policies on sustainable water management can be locally implemented and supported (LOP, 2008: 54; Geldermalsen, 1999; 2010: 20; Gelderland, 2005; 2009).

The symbolic meaning of this iconic place for regional identity has changed. It started out as part of the bad backlands whose lack of development and water problems contradicted the modern Dutch national identity based on economic progress and the domination of nature. Local peasant opposition was unsuccessful while the values of their local community did not match those at the national level. De Regulieren was spared modernisation because the opposition of conservationists rooted in the new middle-classes could successfully link up with emerging national ecological policies. Other values were subsequently added to this initial ecological iconic site. Its restored pond dug out to trap ducks demonstrates the traditional poverty and hard life of the peasants who had to augment their income as a Fowler. Besides being a heritage site it is now also used as a flagship site showing the regional population - with still vivid memories of the forced evacuation in 1995 - the positive effects of controlled localised seasonal flooding. It legitimises the new policies of sustainable water management through the creation of a recreational landscape in a barren polder, which is explicitly linked to the traditional thick regional identity and the new national policies of sustainable water management. Its communicated identity in policy documents links a new, more sustainable ideal Dutch national identity, with the conceived traditional regional identity linked to heritage and the desired regional identity of the population, based on leisure and recreation.
4.4 Park Lingezegen: A Sustainability Flagship Site Creates A New Urban Regional Identity

This last section discusses how Park Lingezegen is developed as a flagship site of sustainable development and as an attractive icon to strengthen the thin identity of the urban region Arnhem-Nijmegen. Arnhem and Nijmegen are located near the German border on the opposing edges of the glacial valley through which several Rhine branches flow (See Map 1). Until the 1980s these two cities expanded away from each other. In 1988 they were jointly designated by the central government as one of the 7 urban development hubs in the Netherlands (Handelingen, 1990). Arnhem, Nijmegen together with the nearby more rural municipalities started to cooperate in order to profit from the extra funding by the national government for infrastructure and urban development. In the 1990s this cooperation focussed on the urban expansion of these two cities into the intermediate rural area. In the 2000s the character of the municipal cooperation shifted from managing quantitative urban growth to qualitative improvements. The development strategy of this new region shifted from developing a strong infrastructure and promoting its central location in the urbanised Northwestern core of Europe, to promoting and developing a distinct regional identity (KAN, 2005: 19; SAB, 2010). They thus want to connect their thin administrative ideal identity with a thicker desired identity for the whole population and thus strengthen their legitimacy towards the people living in the Arnhem-Nijmegen region. But the success of new regions like the Arnhem-Nijmegen region depends also on their ability to compete with other regions for the attention and resources of the central state. The funding of these regional administrations comes primarily from the central state and not from the contributions from the participating municipalities. The few million Euros the municipalities contribute to the budget of the region Arnhem-Nijmegen are dwarfed by the almost 100 million Euros provided by the central government (Stadsregio, 2011). To attract these central funds new regions frame their policies using the language of the national policies by for instance focusing on competitiveness based on regional characteristics and identity.

The construction of Park Lingezegen is important for the further development of the urban region Arnhem-Nijmegen. The key policy document on the ideal future identity of this region regards it as crucial for realising its key long term policy goals of strengthening identity, quality and variety (KAN, 2005: 99). Park Lingezegen whose basic outline will be ready in 2013 will be the largest urban park (1500 Ha) in the Netherlands (http://www.gelderland.nl). Its construction is 54% funded by the central government, for 18% by the province and water board and for 28% by the cooperating municipalities (Lingezegen, 2008: 7-8).

Park Lingezegen consists of five distinct areas which accommodate different lifestyles. De Park area is named after a castle whose last remnants were demolished more than two centuries ago. The outlines of the castle grounds will be made visible in the landscape by planting hedges and trees. This heritage site will be part of the grounds for large scale events for up to 50,000 visitors (CAB 2010, p. 50-51). Waterrijk will accommodate water recreation and different cultural recreational facilities to accommodate the creative classes (KAN 2005, p. 51; Bosch 2010). Its lakes, which were the result of sand extraction, will also be expanded for water storage. Its wetlands will be further developed as part of an ecological corridor. In particular, the banks of the river Linge will be widened and lowered and more clearly marked by tree lines as the main characteristic spatial element in Lingezegen (SAB 2010, p. 17) “The character of the landscape will completely change. The spatial structure will be based on water, reed-land, marshes and forests, referring to the landscape before the cultivation of the backlands.” (Translated from: SAB 2010, p. 37). Landbouwland will remain an open agricultural area and made more suitable for cyclists and visitors with an ecological lifestyle. Farmers will be encouraged to move away from intensive farming and adopt more sustainable forms of agriculture and the selling of regional products to visitors (SAB 2010, pp. 27, 42; Overbetuwe 2010). De Woerdt will become an urban estate with woodlands, orchards and avenues. De Buitens will be developed as an exclusive residential neighbourhood with new country houses in a wooded landscape. The profits from this upmarket housing will be used to partially fund the creation of Park Lingezegen (Overbetuwe, 2010, p. 22, 29-34, 66-67; SAB 2010).
The creation of Park Lingezegen is a key project to improve the living conditions in the Arnhem-Nijmegen region (KAN, 2005: 7; SAB, 2010: 24). “Promoting the image of the ‘good life’ is the basis for the improvement of the competitiveness of the region to create enduring bonds with the inhabitants, companies and visitors.” (Translated from: KAN, 2005: 14). They want to promote regional integration by improving the living conditions in all participating municipalities (ibid: 15). Strengthening a distinct regional identity is seen as crucial for the competitiveness of the region (ibid: 17). Instead of the two competing established thick urban identities of Arnhem and Nijmegen, the urban region Arnhem-Nijmegen wants to base its thin identity on quality of life, culture, social cohesion, recreation, facilities and amenities linked together in a characteristic river based landscape (ibid: 19). Park Lingezegen is communicated by the urban region Arnhem-Nijmegen as part of its urban identity (ibid: 101). Agricultural rationalisations, the strong quantitative growth in recent decades of urban housing, infrastructure, greenhouse farming and sand extraction have diminished the quality of the rural areas in the urban region Arnhem-Nijmegen (SAB 2010, 16). “This threatens identity and sustainability.” (Translation from: KAN, 2005: 99). “In Park Lingezegen the present homogenous landscape will be transformed into a varied and diverse landscape which expresses the character of this river area and the Betuwe.” (Translated from: SAB, 2010: 37; see also: Overbetuwe, 2010). The combination of different functions like water storage, ecological development, cultural historical heritage, recreation and new housing, gives Park Lingezegen its distinct identity (KAN, 2005: 83). This regional identity will look backwards and forwards. It will link the heritage of cultural-historical genesis of this region in the distant past, with the new knowledge based networks which give this region a place in the wider world. These identities will be linked to the characteristic river based landscape that will be given a new dynamic again (KAN, 2005: 21-23). The sustainability flagship projects in Park Lingezegen join these thick and thin aspects of regional identity together.

Park Lingezegen is becoming an important iconic site for the region Arnhem-Nijmegen while it links different policies at different scales. It is not only the administration of the urban region Arnhem-Nijmegen that uses Park Lingezegen as the centrally located green heart of the ideal identity of the Arnhem-Nijmegen region; it is also becoming a part of identity discourses of many other administrations and stakeholders operating on different spatial scales. At the local level, small rural municipalities use it predominantly as a heritage site to protect their traditional characteristic values and thick local identities (Overbetuwe, 2010). It also develops sites related to the Roman heritage and new sites commemorating the allied airborne landing in the Second World War. These thick local identities are linked to thin forward looking identities at other spatial scales. On the European level it is part of a project on Sustainable and Accessible Urban Landscapes (www.parklingezegen.nl). It also gets INTERREG IVB funding to organise summer schools linking climate change with regional identity formation (www.cchangeproject.org; Matton& van de Wal, 2011: 21). It is also the site where a water plant for biomass production and water cleaning will be tested in an EU funded project of the University of Nijmegen. On the national level it is a crucial part of ecological corridor connecting wooded nature reserves on the opposite banks of the glacial valley and is since 2010 an official green belt to keep the conurbations of Arnhem and Nijmegen apart. The urban rain water retention in Park Lingezegen is also a local implementation of the new national policies towards more sustainable forms of water management (Overbetuwe, 2010; Rivierenland, 2009; SAB, 2010: 20). On the regional level the recreational possibilities and green character of Park Lingezegen is also used as part of a larger Health Valley in which the provinces of Gelderland and Overijssel cooperate with the Arnhem-Nijmegen region, other municipalities and many private and (semi-)public partners, in order to stimulate technological innovations in healthcare (www.health-valley.nl). It is also part of Food Valley, in which municipalities and the agribusiness sector cooperate, and of two Greenports (www.greenportbetuwsebloem.nl). Through the construction of a Crystal Palace in Park Lingezegen all these new regional forms of cooperation will be connected. It will show how through cooperation between different types of farmers and the food industry a more sustainable future is possible. It will be a flagship site within Park Lingezegen showing the population how a new sustainable future is possible through the connection of new technologies in food, health and energy (www.parklingezegen.nl; Fontein & Kranendonk, 2010; KAN, 2005: 25-29). Thus while the
administration of the Arnhem-Nijmegen region is the key actor in the development of Park Lingezegen, other administrations and local stakeholders also use it as an iconic site which links their identity discourses. Park Lingezegen is then used in slightly different ways. The municipalities on whose territory the park is developed use it more as a heritage site to protect their thick local identities, while others focussing on other characteristics use it more as a flagship site for sustainable development.

5 CONCLUSION

Despite the differences between forward looking flagship and backward looking heritage sites their function of communicating specific values in identity discourses to legitimise policies are very similar. Heritage sites and flagship sites are also frequently combined in identity discourses. This can be strengthened through their spatial proximity in for instance Park Lingezegen, or through the combination of both heritage and flagship elements in one iconic site like De Regulieren. Iconic sites communicate spatial identities in an impressive way and link different identity discourses across scales. Our case studies showed how administrations use iconic sites to link more traditional local identities with the future oriented policy goals for a more sustainable national and global society. Iconic sites can link the ideal identity on which the new policies on sustainable water management are based with the desired identity based on the established conceived identity of the population. De Regulieren developed from a heritage site to a flagship site on new forms of water management. Park Lingezegen started as the new central recreational area for the urban region Arnhem-Nijmegen, but recently its role in the new identity of the urban region Arnhem-Nijmegen has been strengthened by its incorporation of several sustainability flagship projects. These iconic sites link identities across time (thick and thin) and scale (local and global).

Iconic sites are thus powerful elements in spatial identity discourses. Whereas national identity discourses based on territories are fragmented through migration, global economic relations and new forms of regional multi-level governance, iconic sites can connect different spatial identities. Iconic sites can link the different backward and forward looking identities of the population and the administration. The deliberately homogenised spatial characteristics, combined with the physical experience of visiting these sites bordered off from the everyday life of the population, give iconic sites special qualities to communicate spatial identities. While heritage sites present a selective view of the past to communicate a spatial identity, flagship sites preview the ideal identity of the future. Both backward looking heritage sites and forward looking flagship sites are used to justify administrations. In this way iconic sites can legitimise administrations based on the shared norms of a community which is no longer based on the assumption of separate territorial communities. In our mobile and fluid world without fixed territorial havens, iconic sites become more important as anchors of spatial identities.

6 REFERENCES


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Map 1 The study areas