

Branding our landscapes: some practical experiences from the LIFESCAPE project

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Abstract: *Our landscapes, the people and nature within them and the economies they support are changing rapidly. Regional landscapes have been shaped through millennia of human activity and its associated impacts. In doing so, we have also transformed ourselves. The unique expression of nature and culture within each landscape provides a backdrop against which people – mostly unwittingly – structure their own identity. We develop together with our landscape. It gives us a sense of place and reveals our relationship with the land over time. It is this rich reservoir of meaning that is being exploited when farmers and other rural entrepreneurs offer their produce and services under a regional label. It provides them with a distinctive feature and a competitive edge in global markets. But regional branding has much more interesting effects for local communities. Branding our landscapes can be defined as a powerful way for capacity building and enhancing social capital in a particular region. It stimulates the establishment of the necessary conditions for sustainable regional development by developing a sense of regional identity and an awareness of natural and cultural qualities. Promoting the regional landscape will thus help to create network structures and coordinate the efforts of farmers, small firms and individuals that would otherwise stay isolated and less effective. LIFESCAPE – YOUR LANDSCAPE is a European funded project for interregional cooperation and societal learning (INTERREG-III B NWE), aimed at creating new relationships between people and organisations based on a common interest: maintaining and enhancing the beauty and identity of their regional landscape. LIFESCAPE combines “livelihood” and “landscape”, the individual benefits and the common good, in one concept. Regional identity and social networks, rather than regional borders, are taken as a frame of reference. The focus is on regional pride, responsibility, and solidarity. Uniquely, through the work of its 14 partners, in five countries, LIFESCAPE has also been able to demonstrate these principles in practice through the delivery of a series of pilot projects.*

Keywords: regional branding, landscape, social capital, regional identity.

Introduction

In 1874 William Hesketh Lever was the first entrepreneur to sell soap under a brand name (ECORYS, 2006; Unilever, 2007). A few years earlier he and his brother had entered their father's wholesale grocery business in Bolton in the North of England. The Lever Brothers Company started manufacturing a new type of household soap devised specially for them. The product, Lever's Pure Honey Soap, contained copra or pine kernel oil, which enabled this soap to lather more easily than the traditional soaps made of animal fats. Until then, soap had been a commodity and was produced and sold in long grey bars. Shopkeepers would simply cut a piece off for their customers when required. Unusual for the time, William gave their soap a brand name – Sunlight – and sold it as ready-made tablets wrapped in distinctive packets. 'Sunlight Soap,' a name that still sounds familiar today, is one of the first examples of branding and marketing.



Lever wanted to compete with other soap merchants for the patronage of urban citizens of the late 19th century. His strategy of branding enabled him to advertise his product, pointing out its specific features and qualities. Lever's revolutionary new product helped popularise cleanliness and hygiene in Victorian England. It was “to make cleanliness commonplace; to lessen work for women; to foster health and contribute to personal attractiveness, that life may be more enjoyable and rewarding for the

people who use these products” (Unilever, 2007). The name and fame of his Pure Honey Soap could be communicated to more people, thereby promoting the product with a wider range of potential customers without the soap tablets actually being present. Lever’s idea was highly successful and was soon followed by others. The acknowledgement that naming and marketing is essential for industry’s success has become a cornerstone of the economics of our modern day consumer society.

The identification of products with a particular geographical region or country is even older and can be linked to the age-old practice of trade. Trade has always been a crucial ingredient of human development. It enables specialisation and can be traced back some 35,000 years with the first evidence of a more settled lifestyle of *Homo sapiens*, with burial sites, cave drawings, and a dramatic increase in the variety of tools and artefacts (Diamond, 1997; Beinhooker, 2007). In a more recent past tea, silk, and spices came from China, India, or the Orient and were highly valued for that.

A well-known historic example of regional branding is the introduction of the classification system for France’s best Bordeaux wines in 1855. This example illustrates clearly why changing circumstances require a different way of communicating product quality. It is not coincidental that this classification system was commissioned just before the World Exhibition in Paris. With large numbers of people from around the world coming to visit Paris, the true meaning of the regional names of the various Bordeaux wines – familiar to the regular French public – could no longer be taken for granted. A substantial group of potential foreign customers would have no means of identifying a good wine coming from the Bordeaux production areas. Therefore, at the request of the Emperor Napoleon III, brokers ranked the wines according to a château’s reputation and its customary trading price, which was directly related to quality at the time. The result was the Bordeaux Wine Official Classification of 1855. The wines were ranked in importance from first to fifth growths (French: Les Grands Crus classés en 1855) (Wikipedia, 2006).

Referring to the place of a product’s origin has already been practised for centuries, but is experiencing a modern day revival. The renewed interest in regional branding, in particular related to a new type of farming industry, comes at a time when global competition for farmers is increasing. For many farmers, controlling production costs is no longer enough to ensure profitability. They have to look for a different perspective. In a globalising world there is a need for people to be able to identify with the place where they live or come from. Origin specific products and services, being marketed and valued as such, can thus take advantage of the context provided by globalisation and the increase of global trade relations. Regional branding of products and services can provide farmers with a competitive edge in global markets and a much needed premium income.

However, as we argue in this paper, we believe that there may be more to this renewed interest in regional branding. A strong regional identity not only has economic but also more profound social benefits. Regionally identified products and services can be seen as an indicator of regionally based economic relationships and cooperation. Alternatively, we would like to define *branding regional landscapes* as a powerful way for capacity building and enhancing social capital. It stimulates the establishment of the necessary conditions for sustainable regional development by creating a sense of regional identity and an awareness of the existing natural and cultural qualities. Promoting the regional landscape qualities – still visible and obvious, but their rapid change also a cause for concern to many who live there – will help to create essential network structures and coordinate the efforts of farmers, small firms and individuals that would otherwise stay isolated and less effective.

This paper builds on the work that is being done within the framework of a project that was set up as part of the INTERREG IIIB-programme for North West Europe. LIFESCAPE – YOUR LANDSCAPE is a European funded project for interregional cooperation and societal learning, aimed at creating new relationships between people and organisations based on a common interest: maintaining and enhancing the beauty and identity of their regional landscape. Regional development can be brought to a higher level through European cooperation, because international contacts provide opportunities to appreciate different ways of doing things when examining the issues in one’s own region. LIFESCAPE is about broadening the horizon of people. There is no blueprint, only learning by doing.

LIFESCAPE combines “livelihood” and “landscape” – the individual benefits and the common good – in one concept. Regional identity and social networks, rather than regional borders, are taken as the frames of reference. The focus is on regional pride, responsibility, and solidarity. LIFESCAPE – YOUR LANDSCAPE was conceived to demonstrate the synergy between landscapes, people working together, and economic development. Empirical knowledge has been gained through the successful implementation of twenty trans-national subprojects by fourteen partners in five countries, sharing experiences to find new approaches. These twenty regional projects can be seen as a collection of

experiments for implementing the LIFESCAPE logic in real life situations. Each one offers a different way to deal with ecological challenges in a specific type of regional context. The activities touch upon many facets of society: from education to practical landscape management and from spatial planning to farming. LIFESCAPE involves children, businesses, and local communities by developing educational, communicative, financial, and social activities. Two of those – the South Downs Marketing Ltd. and the regional savings account for Het Groene Woud – will be addressed explicitly in this paper. Other examples can be found on the website of the LIFESCAPE project (www.lifescapeyourlandscape.org). LIFESCAPE draws upon a work in progress. It is a work which is never complete, a never ending story, because the landscape, its people, and their relationships are continuously changing.

Setting the scene: we live in a globalising world

Our landscape is changing. The distribution of wildlife and the texture of the landscape are the product of complex interactions. The basic physical qualities of rock, soil, and climate have set the scene, but the detail has been shaped through millennia of human activity, past as well as present land use and land management, and its associated impacts; not least by the age-old practice of farming. The changing landscape mirrors the changes of our daily life and we now live in the era of globalisation. Following World War II, the reconstruction of infrastructure and industrial production in Europe and Japan paved the way for the establishment of an integrated global trade system. Initially, during the Cold War period, there were three different and separate ‘worlds.’ They were divided in political terms and mirrored the struggle between two economic systems—capitalism and communism.

Then, after the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, the emergent global economy experienced a sharp upturn. The number of participants of the now global economy rose in one go, from one and a half billion to six billion people, thus creating an enormous potential for trade and consumption, but also involving serious environmental and social consequences. Since then the combined effect of a demographic explosion and a fundamental makeover of the world economy has become more and more visible in everyday life (Barber, 1995; Friedman, 1999; Richard, 2002). Globalisation was enabled by the revolutionary changes in transport and telecommunications. In fact, the creation of the global fibre-optic network during the craze of the dot-com bubble and the exponential growth of digitized information and application software to handle it, set the stage for what Thomas Friedman (2005) identifies as the next phase of globalisation. Its unique character is the newly found power for individuals—rather than for national states or multinational corporations—to collaborate and compete globally. It is useful to think of globalisation in terms of three levels: firstly the primary process of global trade, economic expansion, and the dominance of free-market neoliberalism; secondly the good and bad political, social, and ecological consequences that become apparent as a result of the process of primary globalisation; and thirdly the response aimed at a more sustainable and global kind of governance that is evoked by those secondary consequences (Van Seters, De Gaay Fortman & De Ruijter, 2003; Van Seters, 2004; Stiglitz, 2007).

Within the time span of one or two generations our modern societies have become adrift and footloose. We have stopped growing our own food and moved on in the world of business, service providers, and entertainment. People and companies are less bound to a particular region and move elsewhere more easily to settle down. Several secondary trends of globalisation can be observed that are relevant for our present argument. Firstly, food production has been industrialised; it has become far more efficient in order to feed a growing urban population. Our farming practices have always been changing over time, but since the mid 20th century there has been a sharp acceleration across Europe. Initially, after the Second World War, the primary target was to provide enough food at reasonable prices. Later the export of agricultural produce and the contribution of agriculture to the gross national product became important targets too. For a long time farmers have organized themselves nationally – supported by their governments and by the European Common Agricultural Policy – to strengthen agricultural production and stimulate the sales of specific commodities. There were still many farmers around and their power was in numbers, organizing themselves according to the commodity they produced, which could be anything from beef, wheat and milk, to tomatoes and strawberries. The total production increased even though the costs of land and production went up and commodity market prices dropped. Specialisation, concentration, and vertical integration can be observed as major trends in farming practices. They are mirrored by similar processes within the processing, shipping, and retail sectors. Overall, fewer companies have gained a greater control over the food economy and food production is characterised by independently operating, highly specialized

production chains. The Netherlands, a small country with the world's biggest exporting agro-sector after the United States, demonstrates the success of these modern farming practices (LNV, 2007).

*Table 1. Company structure
Number of farms in Noord-Brabant*

Source: CBS 2007	1996	2002	2006
Arable farming	2,173	2,189	2,203
Horticulture	3,098	2,645	2,459
Cattle & dairy farms	7,682	6,305	5,539
Intensive animal husbandry	4,010	2,782	2,272
Others	2,640	1,967	1,707
Total	19,063	15,888	14,180

*Table 2. Type of agricultural production in Noord-Brabant
Commercially cultivated land (ha)*

Source: CBS 2007	1992	2002	2006
Grassland	120,712	102,248	103,042
Arable land	132,311	139,831	136,336
Horticulture outdoor	19,157	21,254	22,254
Greenhouse crops	868	1,196	1,278
Total	273,844	266,138	259,793

Table 3. Livestock in Noord-Brabant

Source: CBS 2007	1992	2002	2006
Cattle (total)	961,000	657,000	635,000
Dairy related Cattle	294,000	214,000	211,000
Pigs	6,037,000	5,062,000	4,969,000
Poultry	30,245,000	28,371,000	25,636,000

Secondly, given the right circumstances, the patchwork landscape of small-scale, traditional farming has been replaced by intensive farming and large-scale monocultures. While agricultural production became more efficient, the number of farms and farmers and the overall area devoted to agriculture became smaller. The trend can be illustrated by the figures of the Dutch Province of Noord-Brabant, still an agricultural stronghold today (table 1, 2 and 3). Tomorrow probably even fewer farmers and smaller areas will be needed to feed the world. Farmers working under less favourable circumstances have been pulling out and will continue to do so. They retire or are drawn towards new opportunities for jobs provided by towns and cities. Urban and more developed areas are thus attracting more and more people and economic activities, while a great part of rural and peripheral territories seem condemned to desertification and abandonment. The consequences may be quite substantial for our landscapes, the face of Europe. For who will manage the European countryside in ten years' time when most farmers have gone out of business? With an estimated 60 or 70 percent of bird and plant species depending on traditional farming activities for their continued survival, Europe has more to lose than just a pretty face. What will be the economic and social effects of this development? Will we be able to strike a sustainable balance in the near future?

Another secondary trend of globalisation to be stipulated here, the third one, is that production and consumption are now segregated and have altogether become separate domains. The place where goods and services are actually produced is no longer directly related to the specific area where these goods and services are needed, sold or used. Food is travelling further than ever before, often hundreds of miles from where it was produced to where it is consumed. The first steps undertaken by William Hesketh Lever by introducing the concept of Sunlight Soap has led to the establishment of multinational corporations with global production chains servicing a worldwide consumer market. The importance of marketing and branding for our modern day consumer society can be viewed as a testimony to the gap that exists between modern producers of food and consumers. In general, the

origin of a product became less important and informative as a token of product quality. In our globalizing world the Grands Crus' classification system for Bordeaux wines has been the exception – certainly at least for a long time. Trade marks and global brand names have taken over on many occasions as a way for potential customers to identify with a certain product, its characteristics, and quality.

A fourth and final trend we want to draw attention to is the disintegration of social networks. Our stock of social capital, the very fabric of our connections with each other, is changing (i.e. Putnam, 2000). Of course, not only the food production system has been confronted with an increase in scale, involving the disappearance of small farms, local abattoirs, processing plants, and food distribution systems. Scaling up is happening in industry and public services alike. Globalisation is affecting our educational system and public health sector. Wiskerke (2007) tells the story of a merger of 28 formerly independent welfare units, convalescence centres, and healthcare institutes in the Province of Limburg in the Netherlands. The new organisation is now looking after more than 45,000 clients and has decided to centralize its catering facilities to reduce costs. Food supplies are purchased centrally and contracted out based on public procurement rules that require a European tender. The unintended side-effect of the large-scale tendering has been that former suppliers like local bakers, butchers, and greengrocers no longer qualify. Individually they cannot supply the quantities and range of products needed, and therefore cannot even enter the competition. Nationally and internationally operating food suppliers, well experienced with European regulations on public procurement, have taken over. The turnover of local shopkeepers has plummeted resulting in a severe set back for the regional economy. The welfare institute also lost out in the bargain. The meals provided are no longer characterised by regional ingredients and typical flavours people are familiar with. This disrupts their eating habits and aggravates health problems, eventually even counteracting the originally intended cost reduction.

Taken together these four trends indicate that the gap, both physical and metaphysical, between urban life and rural entrepreneurs is getting bigger rather than smaller. There is no turning back to the 'pastoral idyll' of the 18th century poets and romantics. Whilst the rural landscapes of those times were certainly attractive and more diverse, they were also the source of poverty and deprivation. We need to step forward. Urbanization – the increase in the urban share of the total population – is inevitable and is now a familiar image of the greater proportion of North Western Europe. About two hundred thousand people a day leave the countryside worldwide for life in the city. According to the United Nations the world has reached an invisible milestone by 2008. For the first time in history, more than half the human population will be living in urban areas, with an unprecedented scale of growth in the developing world. The current concentration of poverty, slums, and social disruption in cities around the world and the environmental damage done by modern civilization does paint a threatening picture of urban life.

However, this urban life also represents our best hope of escape. Experts and policymakers increasingly recognize the potential value of cities and their surroundings to the long-term sustainability and management of ecosystem services. Our challenge, therefore, is about re-creating attractive urban based landscapes that are rich in wildlife, that host and support 'living' communities with vibrant local economies and, above all, landscapes that are able to reconnect our presently often segregated rural and urban societies. "Rejecting the lavish inefficiency of the suburbs and learning how to integrate densely orchestrated urban communities with agricultural greenspace and healthy natural habitats will be essential to building a one-planet society" (Robertson, p. 54, 2007). This challenge contains the basic elements that help us to define the specific qualities of sustainable regional development in North West Europe and elsewhere. We cannot be retrograde and turn back to the past; traditional methods will not feed our growing urban populations. Modern agricultural technologies combined with informed decision making and a deeper understanding of the values of strong communities and ecologically resilient landscapes, as well as the expertise of how to maintain and construct them, can create a new balance between urban and rural life. The LIFESCAPE project was set up in this context to explore the interface between urban and rural life and to find out how urban inhabitants can better benefit from the values the countryside has on offer.

Defining regional branding: GIs and brand protection

For a few years now, due to globalization, interest in branding regional images has been increasing. Branding enables a region to be distinguished from others by making its name stand out and sound more familiar. Regional Branding is aimed at creating a more distinctive image or reputation which helps to increase regional competitiveness. It also supports individual entrepreneurs and local farmers

in marketing their products, capturing value-added and building their supply chains in order to access local as well as international markets. Historically, agricultural producers have sought to remain profitable primarily by minimizing costs. Today, an increasing number of agricultural producers are investigating how to increase profits through product differentiation. Regional branding, in conjunction with an effective marketing program, can help agricultural producers and processors develop more profitable operations. A well-designed label conveys a set of values that is associated with the area it represents. The story the label tells distinguishes its product from the mass marketplace. It establishes a basis for consumer patronage and consumer loyalty, and helps to create and support legal protection (Lilywhite et al, 2005; Derden-Little & Feenstra, 2006).

Regional or geographic branding has been facilitated and protected against false descriptions by various legal methods, trademarks, and appellations. They generally protect against suggestions that a product has a certain origin, quality or association when in fact it does not. Some of these methods are enforced by national laws; others through international conventions and trade arrangements. A Geographical Indication (GI) testifies to the link between a given quality, reputation or other characteristic of a product, a service or a cultural expression and its geographical origin. It is used restrictively for the purpose of identifying a particular type of product if the particular product or its constituent materials indeed originate from a particular area and meet certain standards. Items that correctly state geographical origin and meet quality standards may be endorsed with a government-issued stamp which acts as the official certification to the consumer of the origin and quality of the product. When appropriate, this certified product quality could include a particular manufacturing process as well (e.g., Roquefort cheese; to qualify as Roquefort, cheese must be made from milk of a certain breed of sheep, and matured in the natural caves near the town of Roquefort in the Aveyron region of France, where it is infected with the spores of a fungus, *Penicillium roqueforti*, that grows in these caves).

GIs have been introduced as an intellectual property tool and are protected under the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property. This convention was the first major international treaty, established in 1883 and designed to help the people of one country to obtain protection in other countries for their intellectual creations. The need for international protection of intellectual property became evident when foreign exhibitors refused to attend the International Exhibition of Inventions in Vienna in 1873 because they were afraid their ideas would be stolen and exploited commercially in other countries. Today, 184 countries are contracted under the Paris Convention which is administered by the World Intellectual Property Organization, a specialized agency of the UN (World Intellectual Property Organization, 1967). Presently GIs are further protected internationally under the 1994 WTO Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement. The TRIPS Agreement, article 22, 1, formally defines GIs as follows:

Geographical indications are [...] indications which identify a good as originating in the territory of a Member, or a region or locality in that territory, where a given quality, reputation, or other characteristic of the good is essentially attributable to its geographical origin (World Trade Organization, 1995).

International trade has made it important to harmonize the different approaches and standards that governments have adopted in the past to register GIs. For example, the GI system used in France is known as the 'appellation d'origine contrôlée' (AOC) and dates back to the early part of the twentieth century. Under European Law, the protected designation of origin system came into effect in 1992. It regulates the following indications: Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) and Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG). Foods that are entirely produced, processed and prepared in a given geographical area are protected by a PDO. In contrast, a designation of PGI requires that only one phase of production, processing or preparation occur in a specific region. For a TSG designation the product name itself must be specific or express the specific character of the foodstuff and the product must be traditional or established by custom (European Commission 2003).

Historical differences and vested interests make harmonizing international protection of existing GI standards a tedious and complicated process. In many countries in the world the protection afforded to GIs by law is similar to the protection afforded to trademarks. Both serve as a marketing tool; they are an important guarantee of quality and represent valuable business interests (Babcock & Clemens, 2004). Europe, unlike other parts of the world, has a long tradition of associating certain food products with particular regions. The EU is therefore, not surprisingly, at the forefront of efforts to strengthen the protection of GIs worldwide and negotiating to have the WTO's definition refer to a wider category of products (Babcock & Clemens, 2004). The EU has registered some 4800 GIs. Furthermore, consumers in Europe highly appreciate GIs and are ready to pay a premium price for origin-

guaranteed products. Italian "Toscano" oil, for instance, is sold at a premium of 20% since it was registered as a GI in 1998 (European Commission, 2006). For reasons of practicality some products that were traditionally made in a specific region are not subject to the PDO, often due to the quantities in which they are consumed; for example, the world consumption of Cheddar cheese is many times the amount the region of Cheddar itself could feasibly produce. Hence the name "Cheddar" is not protected, but the more-specific name "West Country farmhouse Cheddar" is. In contrast with this EU policy the United States generally opposes protection of geographical designations of origin. However, there are some exceptions, including: "Florida" for oranges; "Vidalia" for onions; and "Washington State" for apples (Babcock & Clemens, 2004). The U.S. position on GIs also seems to contradict the encouragement U.S. producers are getting presently from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to move away from production of homogeneous commodities and towards production of value-added products that can increase returns (Lillywhite et al, 2005). The problem is that many of the GIs that are protected elsewhere are commonly used as generic terms in the United States and Australia. Currently, the EU has 41 such labels including Champagne, Feta, and Parma Ham. This issue is further complicated because many of the names used are already protected under registered trademarks outside the original region of production.

A third option: a new perspective for rural entrepreneurs

For a long time scaling-up in order to reduce costs, or stepping out of business have been the only two options for farmers. Recently, however, a third category has come to the fore: farmers who are getting involved in nature management and focus on providing food and services for nearby urban communities. The move towards multi-functional agriculture and a local community-based agricultural production system, supported by a regional brand, is gaining momentum and can be regarded as a way of meeting some of the major challenges of modern life. Inspiring examples are becoming available where a course of action is being pursued by regional initiatives that can bridge the growing gap between urban life and rural entrepreneurs. Take for instance the Cornwall Food Programme, an initiative of five healthcare trusts in Cornwall, in marked contrast with the example described earlier of the merger of health care institutions in the Province of Limburg. The Cornwall Food Programme started in 2002 and is aimed specifically at procuring supplies in a sustainable manner and at health education (http://www.localfoodworks.org/web/sa/saweb.nsf/localfoodworks_info.htm). The initiative is funded nationally and even by the EU; the programme works in partnership with several government agencies. Through their support of local suppliers, growers, and producers, the five Trusts are encouraging the local economy. By offering contracts for longer periods local businesses are allowed to develop and grow. In addition to the economic benefits, a reduction of 'food miles' results in lessening environmental impact. Closer partnerships through the supply chain require less packaging, making another contribution to reducing environmental pressures. But also long-term health effects are expected for patients by using more local and fresh, organic produce. A Sustainable Food Procurement manager was initially appointed to oversee the introduction of local fish, milk, cheese, eggs, and yoghurt on hospital menus. Subsequently, plans have been carried out for establishing an in-county facility to purchase locally grown farm products and to prepare, produce and cook up to 5,000 hospital and canteen meals a day for all of the NHS in Cornwall (Wiskerke, 2007).

An growing number of agricultural producers are investigating how to increase profits through product diversification at farm level in response to changing consumer interests, for example: by opening up a farm shop with local produce, by taking in lodgers and providing bed and breakfast facilities, by contracting nature conservational work, or by providing day-care for the mentally handicapped. At the same time they are often trying to re-establish the links missing between their farm and the local community that may help them provide these products and services more efficiently. For a long time farmers have been organizing themselves on a national scale primarily according to the commodities they produce. Now, appearing at the other end of the spectrum, there are associations that aim to increase the viability of local agriculture in a much smaller area. Their power is no longer based on the number of farmers involved, but on the number and quality of the relationships they manage to develop with other stakeholders in the region. Promoting regional identity by using a kind of regional branding – that is: creating a more distinctive image or reputation for this particular region based on the awareness of existing natural and cultural qualities – may be looked upon as a promising strategy in support of a number of bottom-up initiatives. This time, however, the primary motive of regional branding is not to add a distinctive feature to farmers' products in a global market. Local farmers, entrepreneurs, and government officials in this context want to encourage a regional image with a strong sense of place and identity in order to strengthen the social fabric and create additional

economic opportunities in the region. Regional branding is thus taken primarily as an instrument to build local production chains and, more generally speaking, to revive the relationship between rural and urban society. The LIFESCAPE project has explored this idea through a number of activities in different regional settings. They all used the landscape as the defining characteristic. The activities touch upon many facets of society, but are all aimed at connecting people with their landscape. Some of our experiences have been collected in a guide book entitled: *Branding our landscape*, in support of regional marketing initiatives (LIFESCAPE, 2007). Two initiatives – the South Downs Marketing Ltd. and a regional savings account for Het Groene Woud – are described below.

The South Downs Marketing Ltd.

The South Downs cover an area of 1,641 square kilometres in the South East of England; a line of hills that runs from Winchester in the west to Eastbourne in the east. It is a landscape that supports a range of nationally and internationally important habitats and a great diversity of species. Recognised for its beauty, peace, wildlife, natural resources, and heritage it was originally designated in the 1960s as two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB): East Hampshire AONB and Sussex Downs AONB. In 1999 the total area was proposed to become the South Downs National Park. The appropriate Government decision is presently awaited. The area is home to some 115,000 people, with a further 1.2 million within 5 kilometres. There are over 39 million day visits to the South Downs each year, with an annual visitor expenditure of £333 million.

For centuries the South Downs have been grazed by lambs destined for the tables of London and Southern England. They created the unique quality of the chalk uplands, rich in wildlife and biodiversity. Unfortunately, a substantial part of the original chalk grassland was lost when large tracts of land were ploughed for post-war intensification of agriculture. The *South Downs Branding Initiative* was included as part of the LIFESCAPE project. It was set up to ensure landscape conservation through extensive agricultural management and to restore at least 10% of the original chalk grassland by re-introducing sheep farming. The aim of the initiative is, furthermore, to encourage those working on the land of the Downs to adopt practices that contribute to the biological qualities of the area and to create sustainable economic conditions for farmers to thrive. In order to succeed, local populations must become much more connected with the landscape and their commitment needs to be translated into active support.

The development and subsequent promotion of the South Downs Brand, based on the familiar image of the South Downs landscape, is to encourage local people to buy local produce from local suppliers and understand the benefits of doing so. Within the same framework the South Downs Lamb project was launched, starting off by communicating the financial benefits of joining the scheme to local farmers. The South Downs Marketing Ltd was subsequently set up to bring farmers, conservationists, and retailers together to produce excellence in food. This Limited company started in 2004 and now, after three years, has an annual turnover of £700,000. With 22 shareholders, 18 suppliers, and 46 retailers it is successful and has ambitions for further expansion. Farmers that joined the scheme have received premiums of £130,000 over the last three years (see Table 4 for current pricing). For them sheep farming has certainly become more profitable. By buying and eating South Down lambs meat the link is being re-established between producers and consumers in the area.

Table 4: Current pricing of South Down Lamb Marketing Ltd. (SDML)

	SDML	Market	Incr. %
April – Aug 2007	€3.80 (£2.65)	€3.37 (£2.35)	+ 13%
Sept 2007	€3.80 (£2.65)	€3.09 (£2.15)	+ 23%
Oct 2007	€3.66 (£2.55)	€2.87 (£2.00)	+ 28%

Farmers face much uncertainty nowadays. They have to deal with market fluctuations, changing weather conditions, highly contagious diseases, and complex, expanding legislation, while at the same time they do not have any control over prices. Their supplier prices rarely drop, while prices offered by retailers can be very volatile. The solution offered by the South Downs Marketing Ltd is to market quality food, to introduce fixed pricing to farmers and retailers, and create market differentiation by introducing indigenous breeds and a better service. It is not all about price, but it is about values. The

company produces local food for local people. It guarantees the public succulent, tender and delicious meat from the unique chalk landscape of the South Downs. The strategy is to motivate the supply chain of suppliers, abattoir, and retailers, and bring in appropriate levels and types of funding. It links the required environmental protocols with brand and product development, and tries to remove as much business uncertainty as possible by setting prices for a longer period of time and shortening the supply chain. This in turn creates opportunities for farmers to control and expand a profitable business, while improving the conditions for a more sustainable biodiversity. It will also help to educate and influence the consumer as well as government officials about what is needed and what is offered. Policy makers must fully understand the enormous steps required to take a food business from producing commodities to marketing products.

A regional savings account for Het Groene Woud

Het Groene Woud in Noord-Brabant is one of the 20 areas in the Netherlands that were singled out and approved by the Dutch Government in 2005 to become a National Landscape. Dutch National Landscapes represent typical Dutch landscapes with historical, natural and cultural values. Het Groene Woud is approximately 35,000 hectares and situated between the cities of Eindhoven, Tilburg, and 's-Hertogenbosch. Over the years, nature and agriculture have worked together to create the present-day, small-scale, scenic landscape. Villages, historical buildings, lively traditions, and customs all add to the unique qualities of this area. Its natural beauty matches its richness in biodiversity, as well as its great socio-cultural values and recreational potential for the 1.5 million inhabitants of the three towns that border the area. The regional identity of the landscape has a strong appeal for many. Currently there are over one hundred projects being carried out in which thousands of people are working together in different settings involving public private cooperation. A regional branding initiative was launched a few years ago with the objective to treasure the core values of the area and inspire a new type of rural entrepreneurship as part of new local networks and production chains, better suited to farming in this densely populated urban area.

Closely related to the branding initiative, another idea has been implemented as part of the LIFESCAPE project. A regional savings account – *Streekrekening Het Groene Woud* – was set up to create an additional source of income in support of the sustainable development of the area and to establish a strong link with the local community (www.streekrekeninghetgroenewoud.nl). The *Streekrekening* is in fact the combination of a regional fund – the Horus fund – and the possibility of opening a special savings account – the Isis saving scheme – with the ASN Bank. Local authorities, private firms, regional organisations, and individual people who open an Isis savings account receive a normal interest rate. However, the bank will donate 0.15% of the annual total capital deposited to the Horus fund. Of course, Isis account holders may decide to donate some of their interest to the Horus fund as well, and many are persuaded to do so. Furthermore, there are several possibilities to contribute to the fund through legacies, regular donations, sponsoring, or regional lotteries that are organised. It is a unique way to express a personal link with Het Groene Woud, and to extend the region's reputation. The first year of the *Streekrekening* has already been a great success with the savings balance of the Isis accounts totalling an amount of 35 Million Euro. The Horus Fund has accumulated the target capital of 200,000 Euro after one year, ready to be used. The link between the region and the people who live there has become stronger by using the image of the landscape.

Conclusions

Our regional landscapes represent the synergy between natural values, people working together, and economic development. Our life and our landscape are two sides of the same coin. Human activity has shaped the land and in doing so, we have also transformed ourselves. The unique expression of nature and cultural heritage within each of those landscapes provides a backdrop against which people structure their own identity. Cultural landscapes give us a sense of place and reveal our relationship with the land over time. They are special to us and contain aspects of our origin through their forms, features, and history of use. This sense of place is thus an important constituent of our sense of identity. And because of that, the loss of our landscape may touch us at a deep and disturbing emotional level, preparing us for action. Moreover, as we form our communities and civil societies, it is our landscape that we have in common and share. It is readily available as a medium for communication and marketing. We need to explore, once again, the interface where urban living meets the countryside. Consequently, the core idea or logic of the LIFESCAPE project has been that we may be able to use this sense of regional identity and mobilize its emotional power by referring to the

visible qualities of our common landscape. Branding our landscape will encourage and coordinate local groups and initiatives. Our regional landscape is ready to be used to help us re-create a bond between people and the environment. Our landscape, once more, will become the product of the lives we choose to lead. School children should know the farmer who produces the milk they drink and the fruit they eat, and vice versa. We need to celebrate and reinforce the places where we – the urban consumers – encounter the regional producers of our food and the custodians of our environment and culture. Our decisions regarding work, food, health, inspiration, and happiness are reflected in the natural world that borders our towns and cities and we had better realize it.

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