



Representations of the LOIRE VALLEY



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Colophon

Title	Representations of the Loire Valley
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Research	This study tries to capture the role of local actors in the place promotion of the Loire Valley. In particular the focus is on how visual materials are used in order to represent the heritage site.
Keywords	Loire Valley, heritage, place promotion, visual analysis
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The front page shows 6 photographs which were taken by the author during several fieldtrips.

From left to right it shows respectively

- (1) View on the nuclear power plant of Dampierre, picture taken from the small village of *Arcole* near *Gien* in the *département du Loiret*.
- (2) View on riverbank (*Île Simon*)
- (3) "*Place Plumereau*" in Tours
- (4) Grain storage close to railway
- (5) Pont Wilson
- (6) Château de Sully-sur-Loire

Preface

This thesis has been written in behalf of the completion of the *Master Cultural Geography* at the Faculty of Spatial Sciences at the University of Groningen.

During the fieldwork excursion in Catalonia in 2007, my attention was drawn to tourism in relation to place promotion. The role in this process of the locale actors was reviewed. In the course "*Representation of Places*" the focus had been on representations of a tourism region in Canada. In this respect I was given enough inspiration to the subject. It was interesting to apply the concepts of representation and place promotion on a world heritage site like the Val de Loire.

A concise literature study has been done in order to obtain knowledge of the main concepts: representation and tourism, but also heritage and region. Also intensive fieldwork has been undertaken by spending a couple of months in France. I studied at the *École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Versailles*. There I was supervised by Mr. R. Sabatier and Madame S. Noweir. I would like to thank them as they supported me through the process of data gathering in a strange country. Also they offered me assistance to think critical about my subject, this by providing literature which emphasized other (non-geographic, French e.g.) approaches and by bringing up discussions with students.

I would like to express thanks to drs. P. van Steen who made my stay in France possible. Thanks to his effort I was able to study at a French university. I thank my fellow students that accompanied me during the process of the actual writing of my thesis. This support varied from (many) coffee breaks in the University Library to mental support, or a combination of both. I thank A. de Jonge MSc. for his cartographic help. I am grateful to my family which supported me in many ways.

Finally I would like to thank my first supervisor professor dr. D. Strijker for his personal and academic support. Thanks to him and his assistance I could complete this project in an accurate way.

Merci à tout le monde.

Groningen, August 2009

Résumé

Dans ce mémoire il s'agit de la Vallée de la Loire, une région qui est située dans le centre et l'ouest de la France. En particulier l'accent est sur le Val de Loire, un part de la région qui est déterminé par UNESCO. Dans l'année 2000 le Val de Loire était proposé Patrimoine Mondial. Selon UNESCO (2000) le Val de Loire est "*un paysage culturel exceptionnel le long d'un grand fleuve qui témoigne du développement harmonieux d'interaction entre les hommes et leur environnement sur deux mille ans d'histoire*".

Cette recherche se concentre sur le rôle des acteurs locaux en concernant la représentation de la région et à quel point ils soutiennent l'image d'un paysage exceptionnel. Il semble que la région ne possède que des sites naturels exceptionnels. Une image qui est volontiers communiquée par des autorités qui promeuvent la région. Les acteurs qui sont impliqués dans la recherche sont les conseils municipaux, départementaux et régionaux, mais aussi les comités de tourisme et les offices de tourisme. En outre les Chambres d'Agriculture et les Chambres de Commerce et d'Industrie dans la région sont incluses dans la recherche.

Enfin les matériaux visuels des 38 acteurs sont analysés systématiquement, en attachant des codes sur le matériel, chaque code représente une association ou un aspect de l'image. Ensuite, une analyse de contenu a été appliquée.

Premièrement, il semble qu'il y a une relation entre l'échelle et le genre des associations. Il semble que les institutions qui agissent sur un niveau plus haut utilisent plus d'éléments généraux (comme le fleuve, des sites naturels) que les acteurs locaux. Par ailleurs ces acteurs utilisent des éléments qui sont plus distinctifs, ce sont souvent des bâtiments historiques qui sont caractéristiques pour une certaine commune ou ville.

Puis, le type d'association dépend du type d'acteur. Il semble que les autorités locales et touristiques maintiennent volontiers une image idyllique et harmonieuse, ce qui est également l'image communiquée par UNESCO) en utilisant des caractéristiques évidentes. D'autre part il semble que même ces éléments évidents (comme les châteaux et le fleuve) manquent totalement dans la représentation des autres acteurs. Apparemment les autres acteurs ont pas besoin d'image crée par UNESCO pour communiquer leur message.

Abstract

This thesis is about the Loire Valley a region that is mainly located in the centre and west of France. In particular emphasis is laid on the Val de Loire which is the area as defined by UNESCO. This part of the Loire Valley is put on the World Heritage list in the year 2000. According to UNESCO (2000) this is “*an outstanding cultural landscape of great beauty, containing historic towns and villages, great architectural monuments (the châteaux), and cultivated lands formed by many centuries of interaction between their population*”.

The research focuses on how local actors represent this region through means of visual materials and in which way they sustain the image of an idyllic landscape as claimed by UNESCO. Apparently it is a region which contains a rich heritage and has attractive nature. Something that is willingly communicated by the local authorities that need to promote the region. The actors used in this study are local governments and tourist organizations, and in addition the *Chambre d’Agriculture* and the *Chambre de Commerce et d’Industrie*. The actors operate on different scale levels which are respectively the *région*, *département* and *commune*, except for the Chambers of Commerce and Chambers of Agriculture that only operate on the regional and departmental level. Eventually the visual material of 38 different actors is involved in this research. The research material is analyzed in a systematic way by attaching a set of codes to a photograph. Each code represents an association or aspect of the depiction then a content analysis is applied.

First, it appears that there is a relationship between the scale level and the type of associations. The organizations that operate on a higher scale level seem to make more use of binding elements as rivers, natural sites in their representations than the actors. In turn the local actor uses images to distinguish itself from its neighbor by referring to particular historic buildings. Second, the type association is dependent on the kind of actor. It seems that local governments and tourist organizations stick to the (repetitive) idyllic view as claimed by UNESCO and thereby make use of self-evident identity markers which become almost cliché. On the other hand the strong identity markers like castles and the river seem to be neglected by the agricultural and commercial actors, implying that they have quite a different story to tell which does not correspond with the story as told by UNESCO.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Motivation research

This research will focus on the Loire valley and specifically the region between approximately Orléans (Département du Loiret, 45) and Angers (Département de Maine-et-Loire, 49). Many images of the region can be found that show historic villages, old castles and natural sceneries.

A certain part of the Loire valley is put on the world heritage list of UNESCO. The region is described as *“an outstanding cultural landscape of great beauty, containing historic towns and villages, great architectural monuments (the châteaux), and cultivated lands formed by many centuries of interaction between their population and the physical environment, primarily the river Loire itself” (UNESCO 2000).*

Apparently a justification of this inscription is the presence of many architectural and rural cultural monuments. An interesting question is in which way architectural and natural heritage contribute to the representation of this region.

A quick search on Google results in attractive images of beautiful river sceneries and well maintained castles. Besides this idyllic view, there are other ‘stories’ as well. It is almost impossible to imagine that for example agriculture is absent in the region. Also the presence of industrial activities cannot be denied.

A question might rise if the agricultural and commercial functions fit within this ‘idyllic’ image that has been mentioned above. Another interesting subject might be power and power relations. It is in the interest of for example tourist organizations that an idyllic image is maintained. However, the region has of course many other actors with likewise different interests, of which some might be conflicting.

1.2 Aim research

Regions (in this case the Loire valley) are represented in different ways and with different purposes. An idyllic image is often communicated by local tourist organizations and international travel agencies. Furthermore the inscription on the World Heritage List of UNESCO might affect the representation of the region. This representation is very limited indeed. It might be possible that this idyllic image is linked to the nature of a place like a river (“le dernier fleuve sauvage en Europe”), thereby neglecting other images like agricultural and

industrial activities. Hence the aim of this research will be *to find out how this idyllic view of the Loire region is communicated and by whom.*

1.3 Hypotheses and predictions

The main question of this research will be how the Loire Valley is represented. The following sub questions will contribute to answer this question.

Which meanings are conferred to the Loire Valley?

To discover how the Loire Valley is represented materials from the main actors are used. How do they want the region to be represented?

Which actors are involved by the representations of the Loire Valley?

The main actors in the region and their roles with concern to the image of the Loire Valley will be investigated. These are mainly tourist organizations and local governments. However, also other actors like agricultural and commercial organizations have 'their' representations which are expected to be different.

Which associations dominate by which actor?

With regard to a particular place meanings are attached by different groups of people, this can be addressed as a 'place identity'. A concept like identity should be considered as a plural. Identity is produced and reproduced by individuals. Therefore in a plural society there can be many identities that are attached even to a single region by likewise many individuals. Though often there is an identity that dominates above others.

Which elements dominate the representations?

It can be expected that some elements dominated the representation above others. Often a cultural region is 'created' by certain powerful actors. It is expected that these actors attach importance to a positive idyllic view of the region. Consequently some elements are whether or not deliberately) ignored.

Which associations dominate by which scale level?

As organizations are organized on different scale levels, it is interesting to investigate if there might be differences between the scale levels. Are there any variations that differ from the 'main image'?

1.4 Definition area

The river Loire originates in southern France and is the longest river in France.

It flows into the Atlantic Ocean at Saint-Nazaire near Nantes in the west of the country (see fig. 1.1).



Fig. 1.1 Loire river (Maine-et-Loire info)

The Loire Valley is largely located in the centre of the country which comprises the administrative regions of *Centre* and *Pays de la Loire* (see fig. 1.2).



Fig. 1.2 Loire Valley (allthingsfrench.net)

The area alongside the Loire river between Sully-sur-Loire and Chalonnes-sur-Loire has been put on the world heritage list see (fig 1.3). It is this part of the region that is known for the presence of many architectural monuments.



Fig. 1.3 Val de Loire (Mission Val de Loire)

When actors use the term “Val de Loire” actually often this part of the region is meant. Here the region is precisely defined with boundaries. However like with all regions the Val the Loire

is invented by someone and is therefore a 'construct'. It depends on which characteristics are used in order to define the region and it is also important to know who defines.

1.5 Bookmark

First, some theoretical concepts will be elucidated. Cultural representation in relation to power will be discussed in Chapter 2. Next, in Chapter 3 focuses on visual representations, and then Place Promotion is clarified in Chapter 4.

Second, in the chapters 5, 6 and 7 the focus will be more specifically on the Loire Valley itself by introducing the concept region and by defining the precise research area. The geographical context of the Loire Valley is described and further explanation is given of the area as a heritage site.

Third, the *actual* research can be found in Chapter 8 followed by a conclusion and discussion in Chapter 9.

Chapter 2 Representation and Power

This chapter will discuss the concept of representation. Moreover attention will be paid to the concept with respect to power relations.

To represent something means 'to depict' or 'to describe'. Representations can vary from poems, paintings, pictures, stories and films etc. But to represent can also mean 'to symbolize'. Then the depiction stands for, or is a substitute for the re-presented object (Hall, 1997).

The following example makes this clear: a picture of a pipe represents a pipe, but it is not the pipe itself. This is showed by a painting by René Magritte's from 1929. The painting is part of the series *La Trahison des Images*, which means the Treachery of Images. It shows a depiction of a pipe with an underline saying "*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*". It is assumed that a common answer to the question "what is this?" would be a pipe. So the object pipe is replaced by its representation. Essentially it is not a pipe, but a depiction of it which is in its turn paint on fabric. It can be said that it is agreed that the object pipe has certain characteristics and that the depiction can be recognized as such (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001). And therefore it *is* a pipe.

The idea of what a pipe should look like is apparently shared by a broader range of people. According to Holloway and Hubbard representation implies the existence of a shared system of meanings (= culture) from which people draw upon.

It is through representation that meaning is communicated. A representation is based on signs that are dependent on context and/or culture. In order to communicate effectively meanings need to be shared by a larger group or society, otherwise the message is lost.

We give things meaning by how we represent them, by the images of them we produce. Meaning is socially constructed through means of human thoughts and practices. Meaning is not simply being transferred, but produced, reproduced.

Hall (1997) argues that representation does not necessarily reflect what 'really' exists in the world. First a representation is partial, so only some parts are represented. Secondly there is the selective nature of a representation; some aspects of reality are emphasized and other 'seemingly less important' elements are neglected. Thirdly a representation can be distorted, if an element is emphasized its characteristics can be exaggerated or manipulated in order to

communicate the message in a more powerful way. Moreover the silences may be as important as the texts.

In case of representing there is always an individual or group which creates it (i.e. its 'author') with certain objectives. It is the author (creator) that selects the way of representing, the images being communicated, and influences by there the way of thinking about the subject of the representation. Therefore representation is more and more connected with the notion of *power*. Holloway and Hubbard (2001) postulate thus justly that representations are rarely innocent, *being enmeshed in a complex cultural politics by promoting certain senses of place in favour of others*.

Rightly Bonin (2001) states concerning to representations: from who, a system of values for which practices, and for whom?

It may be clear that the way of representing is affected by its author(s) and his/their intentions. Therefore the representation of a region not only depends on the qualities of the area, but in the same way on (the power of) the actors behind the representation.

Chapter 3 Visual representations

The visual is considered to be a very powerful instrument. To most people, of all our senses the visual is our most useful and by extension most acute (Rose, 2007).

The social world is in part a seen world, available to most of its participants via the media of vision (Ball & Smith, 1992). In order to make interpretations of the world visual (background) knowledge of the context is required, when using visual portrayals like maps, paintings and photographs.

According to Rose (2007) images are an important means through which social life happens. There is a wide range of images from shocking photographs in the newspaper to very personal holiday pictures, photos in popular magazines, tourist guides, academic textbooks, and advertisements etc. It is said that the 'visual' is a very powerful sense. Manghani et al. (2006) refers to the increasing importance of visual representations and mentions in this case the gradually expanded print culture and the increasing emphasis on advertising not the product, but the image or identity of the brand.

Ball & Smith argue (1992) it is photography that has been regarded as the major way of representing the world, therefore photography has a powerful claim to realism. In a sense photographs are able to shape our perceptions of place and can constitute collective notions of a place (Schwartz & Ryan, 2003). A photo represents an instant moment and is regarded as 'true' in contrast to for example artistic representations.

Scott (1997) states that it is often assumed that a photograph of a place is considered as true as the 'real' place. Also that photographs of the depicted landscape will be evaluated the same as the actual place.

People tend to 'know' about the place as they have seen a depiction of it without really visiting the place physically. For example many have an impression of how New York City looks like without actually having visited the place. In other words visual images tend to be really close to 'truth' or claim to be very close to 'reality' (Schwartz & Ryan, 2003). However, photography remains a socially constructed practice. This means it should be situated; like all representations photos are, even though close to reality, selective, partial and distorted.

Also photographs are never innocent. It must be noted that representations are imbedded in power relations. The maker produces an image that is seen and experienced by the viewer. Therefore visual representations can be used for different reasons and are made by individuals or groups with various objectives. Some authors speak about power relations that are imbedded within visual representations. According to Cartier & Lew (2005) representations of space are mobilized in the service of power.

Some groups are more powerful than others and are more capable to communicate their meanings which can become dominant. One can think of advertising photographs constructing a world that surrounds that image in a way that intended by the advertisers (Alvarado et al., 2001).

Photographs of places shape our perception of them. Some say they make 'imaginative geographies', blurring the distinction between real and the imagined.

The fact that photography is not only a way of image making, but also a means to communicate meanings also brings to the fore issues of authorship, authority, authenticity and audience (Schwartz & Ryan, 2003). Thus it is always important to contextualize, which means that a photograph should be considered in the context (Rose, 2007). Hence the background of the 'author' the individual or group who produces the picture ought to be reviewed, but also always the circumstances of its production should be taken into account (Ball & Smith, 1992).

In this research the emphasis is on how the region visually is represented and on the role of visual imagery of the involved actors.

Chapter 4 Place promotion

In Chapter 2 and 3 representations in relation to power has been discussed. Representation can be used for showing how places are imagined by different social groups (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001). In addition representations must be seen in the perspective of power relations. Meanings are transferred with a particular reason. The individual or a group (“the author”) is using place imagery to conjure certain feelings or emotions with regard to a place. So a holiday advertisement involves a deliberate attempt to evoke positive associations with a place. This can be an exotic destination where rustic images of sunny white beaches, a blue sea and palm trees should convince the ‘reader’ to spend his money on that holiday package from the tourist organization.

But also governmental bodies (or other commercial organizations) can use place imagery to promote a city, region or an entire country. Del Casino (2000) introduces the concept of identity formation as a representational process and states that identity categories are themselves representations.

Here place promotion is defined as *the conscious use of publicity and marketing to communicate selective images of specific geographical localities or areas to a target audience* (Gold & Ward, 1994). Problem: nor the product (in this case the place), neither the customers are clearly defined.

As mentioned before the nature of the communicated images tend to be selective, partial and fragmentary. In the case of place promotion only images that are likely to evoke positive feelings are used. With respect to tourist imaginations mostly pictures of idyllic landscapes and historic villages (nature and naturalistic concepts) are preferred above pictures of industrial sites and modern office buildings. Consequently, advertisements are remarkably similar in design.

However, when a municipality or county considers itself as dynamic and innovative it is likely that they do not want to use rustic images where it seems that nothing has changed over the past few decades. This probably would not attract investors which will probably be their target group.

In order to draw as many visitors or investors as possible places should distinguish themselves and emphasize what makes them more attractive than other places (Cresswell, 2004) . So in addition to ‘factual’ descriptions, visual images are important in order to induce associations. Visual representations play a major role as visual images like photographs can

be very powerful. They create a structure of expectation: the signifier slips free from the signified (Crang, 1997).

According to Bailly (1993) a place, position or geographical expanse only takes on its meanings in accordance with the images (representations) attributed to it.

Chapter 5 Regional perspectives

5.1 Introduction to the concept region

Regions are constructed and various perceptions are used, it depends on which characteristics are applied in order to define a region (De Pater, 2002). In addition it is important to note that it is essential *who* defines a region.

Paasi (2003) argues that a region is related in different ways to political, governmental, economic and cultural practices and discourses. Often there is an overlap between regions and smaller regions can be contained in a greater one.

Europe of the regions

The European Union comprises 27 Member States. Central objectives are to reduce economic and social disparities, to show solidarity and to remain competitive.

The whole European Union is covered by one or several objectives of the cohesion policy. To determine geographic eligibility, the Commission bases its decision on statistical data. Europe is divided into various groups of regions corresponding to the classification known by the acronym [NUTS](#)¹ (common nomenclature of territorial units for statistics). The NUTS were introduced in order to provide a uniform system with regard to regional statistics in the European Union (European Commission, 2009). A NUTS region is based on administrative boundaries and there are three levels defined. NUTS level 1 is the greatest entity and consists of large parts of a Member State. In the Netherlands these are the four 'landsdelen' (North, East South and West). NUTS level 1 is subdivided into smaller NUTS level 2 regions these are called 'provincies' in the Netherlands. These areas are in turn divided into even smaller regions on a NUTS 3 level. In the Netherlands these are the 'COROP'-areas, which is often an area with a main town surrounded by a service area (Eurostat, 2009). The municipalities are left aside.

The economic and social disparities among the countries and their 271 regions are great. European regional policy is designed to bring about concrete results, furthering economic and social cohesion to reduce the gap between the development levels of the various regions. From a scientific approach, regional policy brings added value to actions on the ground. The policy helps to finance concrete projects for regions, towns and their inhabitants. The idea is to create potential so that the regions can fully contribute to achieving greater growth and competitiveness and, at the same time, to exchange ideas and best practices. This is the

¹ NUTS (Nomenclature des Unités Territoriales Statistiques)

main purpose of the new initiative '[Regions for economic change](#)'. The whole regional policy is in line with the priorities set by the EU for growth and jobs (see the [Lisbon strategy](#)) (European Commission, Regional Policy, 2009).

France and the regions

The French administrative system is characterized by a highly centralized structure (Winchester, 1993). The national administration is located in the capital Paris. Then there are the sub hierarchical levels which are respectively the 'région' which is in the classification of Europe of the Regions: NUTS level 2, the 'département' which is NUTS level 3 and the 'commune'. As mentioned before the municipality has no NUTS classification.

In an administrative perspective France is divided into 26 NUTS level 2 regions (*régions* in French) and 100 departments (*départements* in French, which is NUTS level 3). The lowest governmental levels consist of 36,682 municipalities (these are *communes* in French) (INSEE, 2008).

The 'commune' is the basic administrative unit which is led by an elected mayor. The communes were formed from former parishes after the Revolution in 1789 (Winchester, 1993). The commune is responsible for the land use planning. In some cases the commune owns property (see fig 5.1).



Fig 5.1 Château de Sully-sur-Loire²

The second administrative unit (NUTS level 3) is the 'département' which is the main level of local administration. Like the 'commune' the départements' were instituted after the 1789

² Regularly these are heritage sites that need protection and then the local government is responsible for the upkeep. Often the income generated by tourist visits is by far not sufficient (Benhamou 1996), so the commune needs to find subsidies to fund the high maintenance costs.

Revolution. The departmental government is concerned with infrastructure and gradually more the administration is occupied with the implementation of planning programs.

Then there is the 'région' (NUTS level 2) which is introduced only a few decades ago. Originally the task of the regional government was making planning documents. However today it has rather a consultative and coordinating role and the regional government is given sufficient finance to make real impact on planning and economic development issues (Winchester, 1993). Other fields concern public services and education. Also important for the region is the finance of cultural events like expositions, promotional campaigns as well as the financial support of museums. The region is also responsible for the management of some historic monuments which should per case be negotiated with the central government (Boyer et al., 2005). So therefore the Région (NUTS level 2) functions as an *intermédiaire* between the local governments (department NUTS level 3) and the central government, the State.

Other organizations like regional development agencies and Chambers of Commerce have adopted the same spatial jurisdictional system (Eurostat, 2009). Hence a Chamber of Commerce is organized on the regional level as well as on the local level.

Nonetheless it is difficult to state that these divisions correspond with regions in a sense that the citizens feel attached to it. In other words, that there is automatically a shared regional identity or regional consciousness. According to Paasi (2003), regional identity points to the multi-scalar identification of people with institutional practices, discourses and symbolisms that become institutionalized. This process consists of the production of territorial boundaries, symbolisms and boundaries. So it is produced. Paragraph 5.2 will discuss the Loire Valley as a region. The emphasis will be on how the region is defined.

5.2 Loire Valley or *Val de Loire*

As mentioned before the river Loire has its origin in southern France and with a length of 1,013 km it is the longest river in France. From its source in the Cevennes in southern France the river flows north to Orléans in the *Région Centre* and then westwards where it finally reaches the Atlantic Ocean at the estuary at Saint-Nazaire in the *Région Pays de la Loire*, which is south of Brittany (*Région Bretagne*).

The Loire Valley, in French called the *Vallée de la Loire*, is largely situated in the *Région Centre* and the *Région Pays de la Loire* (NUTS level 2) which are the administrative regions. It is good to bear in mind that Loire Valley does not refer to an administrative entity.

The *Val de Loire*, the region as defined by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), is only a part of the *Vallée de la Loire*. According to UNESCO this region is considered as *an outstanding cultural landscape*, this refers largely to the area along the Loire River between Sully-sur-Loire (*Région Centre*) and Chalonnes-sur-Loire (*Région Pays de la Loire*). The area is characterized by mainly small and middle towns (Verdelli, 2006). With regard to town planning the basic starting point of new developments is often the river, as the river because of its characteristics challenges and constraints with concern to planning. This is also because infrastructural axes which have been basically unmodified over the years are mostly, like the river, east-west oriented. These are essentially the road- and railways as the river itself is not appropriate for extensive navigation. The region *Val de Loire* and its characteristics and challenges should be considered in a broader context. Like with all regions, boundaries are arbitrary depending on characteristics chosen by certain groups. What about the broader region and what about other activities?

Thus with Val de Loire the heritage site is meant. However, as mentioned above, administrative (and therefore statistical) boundaries do not correspond with the other definitions of regions. The term region can be interpreted in many different ways. *Région* has purely an administrative connotation³. Here it concerns an official term as defined by French law in 1972 (Boyer et al., 2005). *Région* has to be considered in the perspective of the European Union where the regional division serves also statistical purposes (see paragraph 5.2). Therefore the *Région* (NUTS level 2) is not considered as a region with a specific regional identity and it is merely meant as an institutional entity. The (assembly of the) *Région* should coordinate the planning of its own territory.

Boyer et al. (2005) states that with regard to local identity it is the *département* (NUTS level 3) which people tend to feel attached to, not the region. The question concerning the alteration of the system with regard to license plates registration illustrates this very well. The French government has passed on to a more centralized system (Europe 1, 2008). This also meant that the number of the *département* was no longer depicted on the license plate. This led to protest in the country, as people wanted to remain this item.

In order to get a more specific view on the Val de Loire and its context the focus in the following chapter will be on the region Centre and Pays de la Loire and on some of its major themes.

³ *Région: établissement territorial*, doté d'une assemblée au suffrage indirect (Boyer et al., 2005)

Chapter 6 Geographical context

6.1 Geographical characteristics

The *Région Centre* is with 39,537 km² one of the largest regions of France. Historically it is composed of former smaller regions which were Touraine, Orléanais and Berry.

The northern part of the region is strongly industrialized in the 1960s (INSEE 2008). This explains the presence of some high-tech electronic companies like LG and Braun. In addition there are several cosmetic and pharmaceutical companies (Pfizer, Christian Dior). In contrast the southern part of the region is mainly characterized by heavy industries and agricultural related businesses. The heart in terms of economic dynamics and employment consists of the two large agglomerations of Orléans and Tours. These cities had in 1999 respectively 166,000 and 156,000 employment opportunities (Boyer et al., 2005). The service sector is remains the greatest sector in these towns.

Furthermore the *Région Centre* possesses an image that is for the most part agricultural. Mostly the soils in the region have been highly appropriate for agricultural activities. This counts in particular for the lowlands and the plateaus. With regard to agricultural land use it is the cultivation of wheat that claims the most space. In the Centre region (surface 39,500 km²) are 23,490 km² is used for arable farming (almost 60%). From this part 12,420 km² is used for the cultivation of wheat in 2007 (INSEE, 2008). Second are the crops that are used for the production of vegetable fats and oils. This can be grains, sunflowers or rapeseed. In 2007 3,930 km² is used for this kind of crop growing. (INSEE, 2008)

Also public organizations related to agriculture and landscape can be found in the region like INRA (*Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique*), which is a research institution for agriculture and ONF (*Office National des Forêts*) an organization that studies the role of forests. Another example is the IFEN (*Institut Français de l'Environnement*), a research centre which operates under the Ministry of Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development. In addition there is the CNRS (*Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique*) for scientific research (Boyer et al., 2005). Many of these organizations contribute to the 'green image' of the region.

6.2 Influence of Paris, shift of industrial activities

An important aspect is the geographical situation with respect to the proximity of Paris. This may have in a sense a *negative* impact on the region with regard to the settlement of some businesses as companies prefer the capital above for example Orléans. In this respect the region can be considered as a semi-peripheral region. In the 1980 the state government initiated a decentralization of traditional industries. As a result numerous industries, among which some car or car related industries, were located in the region (Cheize & Chédemail).

The close distance to Paris has influenced the type of branches during the years. New businesses have replaced traditional ones, because some industries like the defense industry or some car related industries like *Matra automobiles*, had difficulties (Boyer et al., 2005).

Between the 1960s and 1980s also public services have been transferred by the State government (Cheize & Chédemail, 2003). Because of its public character these organizations were less exposed to risks than traditional industries.

In terms of accessibility the infrastructural connections with Paris are good. Also the good life standards in the region offer a certain counter-balance to the crowded capital of Paris. This means that the proximity of the capital has on the other hand a *positive* effect. Due to the proximity and good infrastructural connections, among which a TGV high speed rail (Paris-Tours takes only 1:10 hours instead of 2:19 hours by normal intercity train), people could commute between the region and the capital. In 2008 the *département du Loiret* launched a promotional campaign in which the draw attention to the favourable characteristics of the Loiret⁴ (Conseil Général du Loiret, 2008). This was partly a visual campaign emphasizing the exceptional characteristics of the territory. Buses and walls of metro stations in Paris carried advertisements from this département, with no pollution and crowds. It was used as some sort of counterpart of a city which is crammed full of cars, people and buildings. The campaign consisted of two approaches a touristic and a more economic approach. According to the magazine *Stratégies* the budget of the campaign was 1,8 million Euros (Marketing territorial, 2008), but if this actually resulted in more visits or settlements is not known to the author.

⁴Promotional campaign by the Conseil Général du Loiret, www.leloiretvousréussit.com

Chapter 7 Heritage

7.1 UNESCO and World Heritage

There are several ways to deal with the past. It is the historical discipline that relates and explains selected aspects of the past. Archivists and antiquarians deal with preservation and conservation of physical remains of the past (Graham et al., 2000). Heritage however deals with the ways in which people use those physical remains nowadays. So heritage can be described as contemporary use of the past (Graham et al., 2000).

It was in the year 2000 that the Loire Valley was inscribed as a world heritage site, an outstanding cultural landscape of great beauty.

The World Heritage Committee (WHC) adopts certain guidelines concerning the inscription of cultural landscapes. According to the Operational Guidelines of UNESCO (2005), paragraph 47 Cultural Landscapes *'are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal'*

Aplin (2007) describes the implications of the guidelines applied by the World Heritage Committee. One implication is the relationship between nature and human activity. This is expected to remain largely unchanging the future. However, a nomination should not constrain people and keeping away from modern economic developments. Besides, like cultures, landscapes tend to evolve over time (Aplin, 2007).

7.2 Inscription of the Val de Loire

The Loire Valley includes roughly the area along the Loire River between Sully-sur-Loire and Chalonnes-sur-Loire. It stretches about 280 km and it has a surface of 800 km² and is the largest heritage site inscribed in France (Mission Val de Loire, 2008).

The central government and local authorities initiated already decades ago studies to manage the Val de Loire. In the beginning central items were how to combat flooding and to support low water levels. Later on this cooperation was focused on the aim of reconciling economic development and environmental protection. A major step has been done in 1994 with the approval by the French government of *le Plan Loire Grandeur Nature*, a coproduction

between governments and environmental protection organizations. The project meant the implementation of the first management plan for the river. Main themes of this project were the security of the residents, the protection of the environment and economic development. Now the plan is in its third stage (2007-2013) (Mission Val de Loire, 2006; CIADT⁵, 2007).

After the nomination of the Loire Valley by France to the World Heritage Board (WHB) recommended in a meeting in 1999 the inscription of the Loire Valley on the World Heritage List, though the actual inscription has been postponed until the year 2000. By far the inscription as a World Heritage Site has not been an undisputed one. The reason why the inclusion in 1999 has been deferred was that the nominated area included a nuclear power station of Dampierre⁶, along the Loire river between Gien and Sully-sur-Loire, département du Loiret. In 1999 12 out of 19 WHC members voted for inscription, however 2/3 majority is needed (WHS, 2009) UNESCO (1998) does not mention the name of the power plants explicitly.



Fig. 7.1 Dampierre (Loiret) Nuclear Power Plant

Obviously this would not correspond with the historic and natural characteristics of the site. After important revisions of the boundaries the inscription succeeded (Verdelli, 2006). The Loire Valley is described as “*an outstanding cultural landscape of great beauty, containing historic towns and villages, great architectural monuments (the chateaux), and cultivated lands formed by many centuries of interaction between their population and the physical environment, primarily the Loire itself*” (UNESCO, 2000).

⁵ CIADT Planning Committee: *Comité interministériel pour l'aménagement et développement du territoire*, since 2005 CIACT: *Comité interministériel pour l'aménagement et compétitivité des territoires*.

⁶ Nuclear Power in France: <http://www.world-nuclear.org/info/inf40.html>

The nuclear power plant is still there, although it is now no part of the area. Only the boundaries have been altered. On the other hand, two other nuclear power plants are not integrated in the area. This concern the plants of Chinon and Saint-Laurent-des-Eaux, local authorities choose a different approach by making the plants part of the policy of promoting the area. The argument is that also these elements are part of the landscape and of the story of human interaction with the landscape. Chinon has a museum and Saint-Laurents-des-Eaux has recently housed an information centre, both attracting visitors (Loire France, 2009)

According to Mission Val de Loire (2006) the inclusion of the Val de Loire on the UNESCO list of World Heritage sites in 2000 brought international recognition and acknowledged the efforts made over a long period, in particular since 1994, with the creation of the first management plan for the river, the Plan Loire Grandeur Nature.

La Mission Val de Loire is the operational body for the management system for the World Heritage site and is financed by the state and the two connected region Centre and Pays de la Loire. This organization is among others watching over the use of the label 'World Heritage' (Verdelli, 2006).

Chapter 8 Analysis of Visual Materials

The region has been explored by public transport and by car to get a general view of the region (in particular the region between Tours and Sully-sur-Loire). In order to get a more detailed impression walking tours to several places have been made as well. Local tourist offices were visited and materials (brochures, maps, postcards etc.) could be collected. Also pictures were taken in order to determine other stories/elements that do not occur in the representation of touristic actors or others. And several touristic actors in the field have been approached through means of semi-structured interviews with staff members, in order to find out what is important to them, which elements are crucial according to them with regard to the communication to the visitors.

8.1 Introduction

The above mentioned materials have been used in order to find out how the actors in this field represent the region. On the one hand the emphasis will be laid on the representations in the context of place promotion and tourism. On the other hand however the 'stories' of other actors were examined. These are the 'stories' of the actors in the commercial and agricultural field. In order to capture the messages of the various actors as well written texts and visual images from brochures, tourist guides, documents and internet websites are used. As texts are not necessarily narratives, but can also be images, photographs, or work of arts for example, they are meaningful matter in a sense that a text means something to someone, it is produced by an individual or a group in order to transfer meanings for someone else (Krippendorf, 2004).

So a text, for example a photograph, speaks to someone about phenomena in the world and communicates meaning. It is important to notice that texts have only meaning relative to particular contexts. The meaning of a text does not exist in itself. Texts are produced and therefore texts have objectives, they are communicated and need to be interpreted. The way how we see and interpret the world depends on how the world is represented by others. How do individuals or groups communicate their meanings and interpretations of their 'being' in the world to others? A means to represent the world is by the 'visual'.

8.2 Materials and Methods

But first a selection has to be made of this wide array of visual material. Therefore a systematic approach is required. In order to get a more specific view on the representations

of the Loire Valley a content analysis has been applied. The analysis has been used on images of different actors that contribute to the representations of the area. The method of content analysis in general will be elucidated. According to Krippendorf (2004) content analysis is '*a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use*'. This method is useful when vast amount of visual materials have to be analyzed, according to Leeuwen & Jewitt (2001) it is an empirical (observational) and objective procedure for quantifying recorded materials, using reliable, explicitly defined categories (values on independent variables).

The messages of the actors in the tourist industry will be analyzed as well as the materials from actors in the agricultural and commercial field. For the interpretation of the messages of the selected actors a coding procedure is required. In this case the recorded materials are photographs. To these pictures codes of independent variables can be attached. This means that to each photograph must be given a code or a set of codes, the codes refer to the depicted elements. This can be a castle, a river, cathedral but also associations with wine, education or transport e.g.

A content analysis explores the relationships between different coding categories (Rose, 2007). It should be mentioned that the analysis takes into account no more than the 'manifest' content of what is depicted, so it cannot capture underlying meanings with regard to the depiction. There should be no doubt of what kind of object is portrayed, within the analysis there should be no room for different interpretations. In theory a second researcher doing the analysis should have the same results. If this is not the case the coding categories should be adjusted.

However, when it comes to the analyzing the photographs, it is almost unavoidable that difficulties occur when interpreting the depictions. For example a picture showing a castle and a river does not lead to problems, but what about a castle and a van. Should the photograph be coded only 'Castle' or should it have in addition the code 'Transport & Accessibility'? Then it comes to compositionality and the intention of the creator. Content analysis is no capable to capture this, but the research has been done as carefully as possible.

In order to investigate the representations of the Loire Valley it is necessary to have a good overview of the actors by choosing different approaches over a wider area.

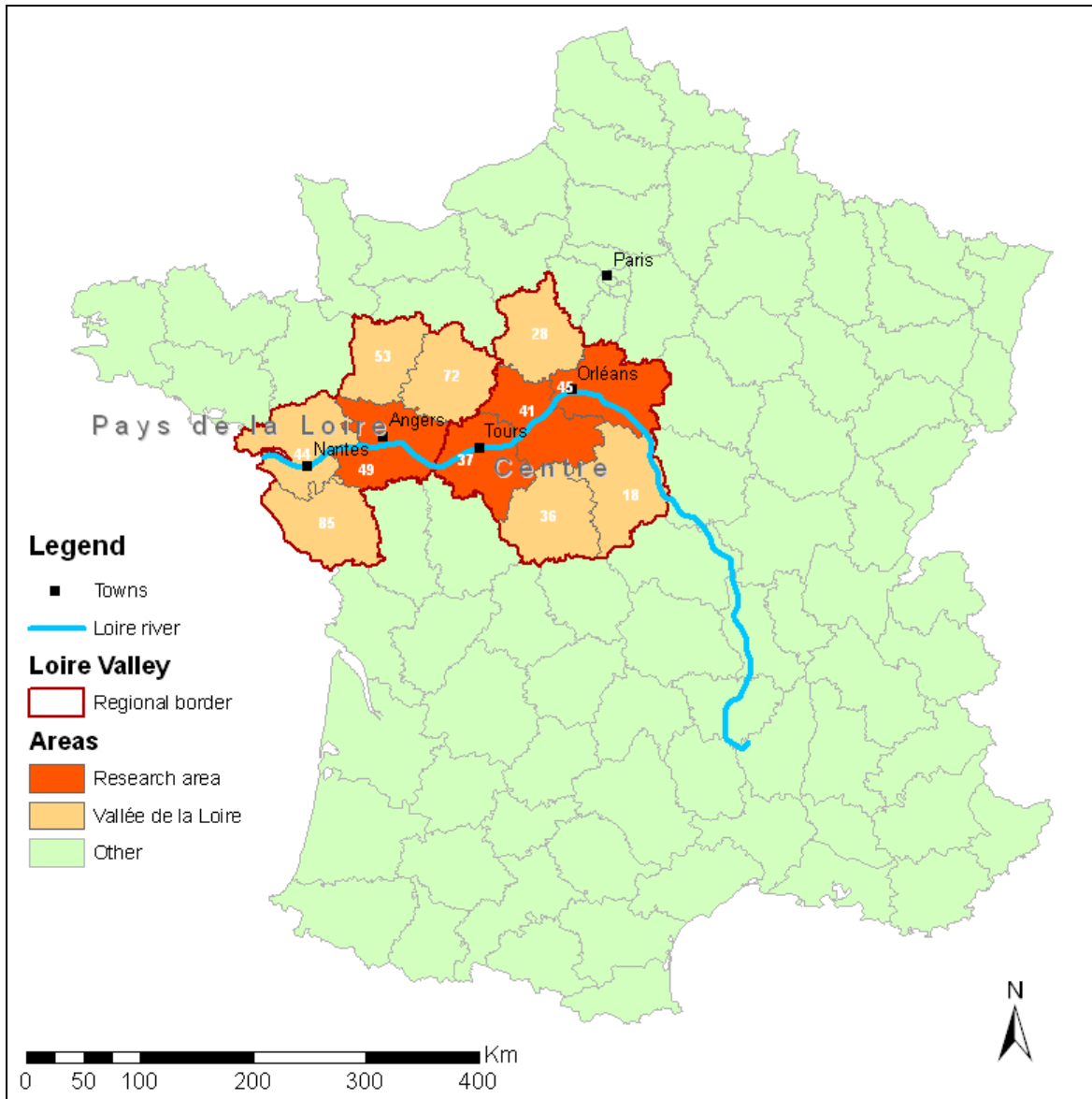


Fig. 8.1 Loire Valley in France (GIS)

Local governments: with concern to place promotion it would be logical to involve the local governments. As mentioned before local government in France can be divided into three subdivisions, respectively: the regional government, NUTS level 2 (*régions*), the departmental government, NUTS level 3 (*départements*) and the communal levels (*villes*). A large area as the Loire Valley is situated in several governmental entities. As showed again in figure 8.1 the whole valley stretches from large part of the centre of France west of Bourgogne to the Vendée region where the river Loire flows into the Atlantic Ocean.

As stated before this research mainly focuses on the Val de Loire, which is the area designated by UNESCO and which concerns only a part of the whole Loire Valley (see fig. 8.2). The Val de Loire is located in two NUTS level 2 regions: Région *Centre* and Région *Pays de la Loire*, so the local authorities of these regions are included. As well as four departments (NUTS level 3) which the river crosses in this region, these are respectively the *Loiret (45)*, *Loir-et-Cher (41)*, *Indre-et-Loire (37)* and *Maine-et-Loire (49)*. The other departments *Vendée (85)*, *Loire-Atlantique (44)*, *Mayenne (53)*, *Sarthe (72)* and *Eure-et-Loir (28)*, *Indre (36)*, *Cher (18)* are not part of the Val de Loire, however these remain related to the river, though these are not included in the research.

With regard to the communal level a selection has been made, as there are many communes in the region. For this research some major towns that lie along the Loire river (except for Chinon which is located along the river Vienne) are included. An attempt has been done to make a balanced representation of the involved governmental actors. Figure 8.3 shows the governmental institutions in its hierarchy. Concerning the local authorities the research makes a distinction between the *Conseil Général*, which is the main administrative institution as a whole and the tourism department of this governmental body. On the communal level it is the *office de tourisme* that is responsible for the promotion of the town and its surroundings.

Chambre d'Agriculture: an organization that represents the interests of farmers and agricultural organizations. The geographical division of the *chambres d'agriculture* corresponds with the division of government bodies. So the chamber is organised as well on a regional level as on a departmental level. There is no representation on a communal level.

Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie: a board of trade that represents the interests of entrepreneurs, companies and businesses. Like the *chambres of d'agriculture*, the boundaries of the areas in which a chamber operates correspond with the jurisdictional boundaries of the local government. So here also a chamber is represented on both a regional level and a departmental level.

It can be expected that the chambers of commerce and chambers of agriculture have other interests than local governments. Therefore it is likely that their representations differ from local governments as well.

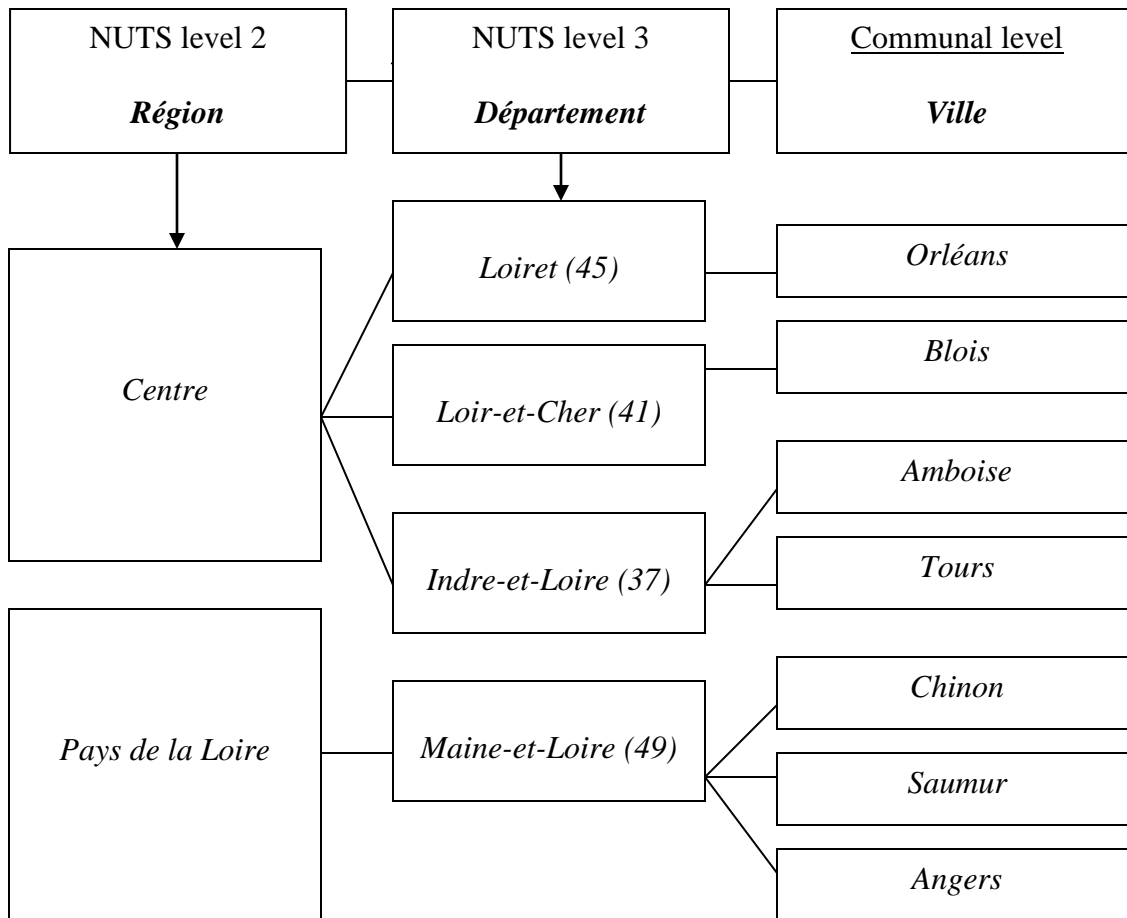


Fig. 8.3 governmental institutions Val de Loire

Figure 8.3 illustrates the organizational structure of the actors divided over 3 scale levels used in the research.

The procedure as described in Rose (2007) is used.

- (1) Finding images: in this research photographs of websites from the different actors are used. This is to get a complete overview of all the actors involved. A website is an appropriate means to find out how an organization wants to present itself to the outside world. In this case all the photographs of the homepages of the mentioned actors are used.
- (2) Coding categories: categories were chosen by means of the collected physical material (brochures, maps, documents, travel guides e.g.) in the region itself and as a result of the semi-structured interviews. It was possible to extract elements that occur often and define categories. It was also useful to get a main impression of how

different actors in the touristic field represent the region. Also a category 'other' has been introduced to make it exhaustive.

- (3) Coding images: then each photograph (N=340) has been attached a code or a series of codes. To a single photograph several codes can be attached when there are more elements depicted. For example a photograph that depicts a river, castle and a bridge is coded as follows: in the case of photograph 254, number '9' refers to the town of Amboise which is on the communal level (=3) and the actor is the *office de tourisme* (=2). The occurrence of an aspect is coded '1', if a certain element is not depicted than the aspect is coded '0'. This all has been combined in one SPSS-file which contains 340 cases (=photographs) tested on 32 aspects which are the independent variables. Eventually this has lead to a SPSS file of 32 x 340 cases of 10,880 cells.

Example:

Photograph	Place	Scale	Actor	River (1/0)	Castle (1/0)	Bridge (1/0)
254	9	3	2	1	1	1

- (4) Analyzing the results: then content analysis can explore the relationship between the different coding categories. However therefore clear research questions have to be formulated.

8.3 Statistics

Research questions

1. Which categories dominate by which actor?
2. Which categories dominate by which scale level?
3. Do governmental institutions have a more balanced representation?
4. Are there any cases that do not correspond with the 'main image'?
5. Which aspects are (deliberately?) ignored by certain actors?

By means of the analysis the categories have been linked to the photographs of the different actors. Table 8.1 shows the overview of the actors used in the research.

Actors:	Conseil Général or <i>Ville</i>	Conseil Général <i>Comité</i> <i>Tourisme</i> or <i>office de</i> <i>tourisme</i>	<i>Chambre</i> <i>d'Agriculture</i> (chambagri)	<i>Chambre de</i> <i>Commerce et</i> <i>l'industrie (cci)</i>
Centre	X	X	X	X
Pays de la Loire	X	X	X	X
Loiret	X	X	X	X
Loir-et-Cher	X	X	X	X
Indre-et-Loire	X	X	X	X
Maine-et-Loire	X	X	X	X
Orléans	X	X		
Blois	X	X		
Amboise	X	X		
Tours	X	X		
Chinon	X	X		
Saumur	X	X		
Angers	X	X		

Table 8.1 overview actors

Table 8.2 shows the categories which were chosen on account of the collected material based on a first sample. It gives already an impression which elements may appear on the pictures of the analysed material which are the photographs from websites.

Categories (depicted elements):	
River	Navigation
Castle	Hot air balloon
Bridge	Other sports activities
Religious building (church or Cathedral)	Cultural events
Historic site	Arable farming
Historic building (single)	Stock farming
Other building	Horticulture
Museum or art piece	Other associations with farming
Natural site	Industrial activities
Market	Accessibility and transport
Gastronomy	Education and research
Wine (or association with wine)	Other
Cycle (or association with biking)	

Table 8.2 categories depicted elements

In order to answer the mentioned research questions the data has been imported in an SPSS file. Then statistical analyses were performed with SPSS 16.0 for Windows (SPSS Inc.). First, crosstabs were made so that the potential relationships could be examined. The outcomes demonstrate which particular elements can be found on the pictures of a specific actor. Also the percentages are showed of the elements used by a certain actor or on a particular scale level. Second, a *chi-square test* has been executed. A *chi-square test* explores the relationship between two independent variables (Norušis 2008). In this analysis the outcomes of the results show:

- (1) if there is a relationship between the *scale level* and the elements depicted elements. Table 8.3 shows the distribution of photographs by scale.
- (2) if there is a relationship between the *actor* and the depicted elements. Table 8.4 shows the distribution of photographs by actors.

Scale	Photographs N=340	(in percentages)
région	81	23,8%
département	127	37,4%
ville	132	38,8%
Total	340	100%

Table 8.3 photographs subdivided by scale

Actor	Photographs N=340	(in percentages)
Conseil général	133	39,1%
Comité du tourisme or office de tourisme	153	45,0%
Chambre d'Agriculture (chambagri)	25	7,4%
Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie (cci)	29	8,5%
Total	340	100%

Table 8.4 photographs subdivided by actor

8.4 Results

A two-tailed p-value of <0.05 was considered to be significant. It is important to mention that the outcome only shows *if* there is a relationship. Table 8.5 shows which significant relationships can be found between (1) the elements and the 'Scale Level' and (2) between the elements and the type of 'Actor'.

An outcome in this table shows that there is a significant relationship between a certain 'River' and the 'Scale Level'. This means that the variable 'River' is some way dependent on the 'Scale Level', it does not tell in which direction the relationship should be interpreted. For the interpretation the crosstabs are needed. Then it becomes clear that the river occurs more often on photographs from actors on a higher scale level the, than on photographs from lower scale level.

The table (8.5) also show that there is also a significant relationship between 'River' and the type of 'Actor'. Again, the outcome only refers to the presence of a relationship, not to the interpretation. When consulting the crosstab it appears that the local authorities and touristic

actor often make use of depictions of rivers than other actors. In brief, the table should be interpreted as described above. The crosstabs can be found in the appendix.

Category	Scale	p-value	Actor	p-value
River	x	,000	x	,000
Castle	x	,029	x	,040
Religious building (church or cathedral)	x	,012	x	,041
Historic site	x	,005		
Historic building (single)	x	,000	x	,000
Other building	x	,015	x	,000
Natural site	x	,000	x	,000
Gastronomy			x	,033
Wine (or associated with wine)			x	,000
Navigation	x	,001		
Hot air balloon	x	,000	x	,004
Arable farming			x	,000
Stock farming			x	,000
Horticulture			x	,000
Other associations with farming			x	,000
Industrial activities			x	,003
Accessibility & transport	x	,039		
Other	x	,005	x	,000

Table 8.5 relationships variables

Table 8.5 also shows several very strong relationships (these are the outcomes with a significance level of .000⁷).

⁷ There are fewer than 5 chances in 10,000 of a difference at least this large if the null hypothesis is true (Norušis 2008). [H0: there is no relationships between the two independent variables]

Chapter 9 Discussion and conclusion

In order to get a good understanding on how the Loire Valley is represented: it is good to reconsider the sub questions that help to answer the main question.

Which meanings are conferred to the Loire Valley? Or which elements are used in the representation of the Loire Valley that imply specific associations or evoke certain feelings? With regard to tourism the emphasis is mainly on the attractiveness of a place. According to Cartier & Lew (2005) in place promotion aspects are overemphasized. As with place promotion it stresses the beauty and harmony which is bestowed on an area.

It might be of use to still have the definition in mind of UNESCO for the Val de Loire: *“an outstanding cultural landscape of great beauty, containing historic towns and villages, great architectural monuments (the châteaux), and cultivated lands formed by many centuries of interaction between their population and the physical environment, primarily the river Loire itself” (UNESCO 2000).*

It seems that the representation corresponds with this image. Bear in mind that the nomination on the World Heritage List is often mentioned by the tourist actors. As mentioned in the theoretical framework it depends also on the actors behind the representation, quality is something that has been attached by some groups, in this case UNESCO and it seems like that local authorities take over this image

When creating a sort of top list, the elements of most occurring aspects matches exactly the definition used by UNESCO. On the whole it is the element river that dominates the representation (Often in combination with the appearance of a town or bridge, but there were also many pictures where the river was portrayed in natural scenery. The river here is literally continuity as it appears on a wide array of pictures.

1. River	N=74	(21,8%)
2. Natural site	N=62	(18,2%)
Other	N=62	(18,2%)
3. Castle	N=50	(14,7%)
4. Historic site	N=34	(10,0%)
Total	N=340	(100%)

Also there are many depictions of natural sites. This differs from aerials views to more specific natural sceneries. The combination was often with the river where the emphasis was laid on the vastness of the landscape. Man and man-made structures often seemed to be absent. This seems to correspond with the argument of Gold & Ward (1994). They state that nature and naturalistic concepts have a powerful hold in contemporary promotional work. It is difficult to judge the category other as the array differs to some extent. Perhaps a subcategory of family/children had to be created as they appear quite regularly on pictures where they took part in several sports activities in a (natural) setting which always appears to be nice and friendly and harmonic. It obviously excludes for example the significant natural hazards of the river which. Then there are the castles that account for 14,7% of the pictures. While in an absolute (physical) sense there is plainly a vast amount of castles. These are strong symbols that emerge repeatedly in combination with its natural or historic (idyllic) surroundings. The castles can be considered as icons and give the region some kind of legitimacy. Next there is the historic site which also fits in the image of great beauty. Depictions of peaceful sites (often without the urban fabric, like cars, litter e.g.) sustain this image. The categories have in common that they include the *positive* aspects of the rural landscape and hence evoke positive feelings about the place.

Which actors are involved by the representations? Furthermore which categories are dominated by which actor and do government institution use a more balance representation? Also it is interesting to mention the cases that do not correspond with the 'main image'. In addition is the tendency of hiding certain elements by certain actors. This implies the partiality, selectivity of a representation, because the representation is made with a certain objective.

First it is notable to mention that in an absolute sense, local governments (and its tourism departments tend to make use of photographs more often than the chambers of agriculture and commerce do.

1. Conseil Général	N=133 (39.1%)
2. Comité de tourisme and Office de tourisme	N=153 (45.0%)
3. Chambre d'Agriculture	N=25 (7.4%)
4. Chambre de Commerce et l'Industrie	N= 29 (8.5%)
Total	N=340 (100%)

The chambers of agriculture and commerce use in turn they use more written texts, obviously they do not have to convince tourists to visit the region and therefore they do not need to draw attention to the 'beauty' of the region. In addition their clientele seem to be more text-oriented. Moreover to describe the region as idyllic where nothing has changed over the past decades would not contribute to the message that it is attractive for new businesses to settle down (see Chapter 4 about Place promotion).

Also the analysis demonstrates that the actors often use images that correspond with their own objectives and probably have different audiences. As Chambres of Commerce try to convince businesses and not tourist, this results in another type of message. However a Chamber of Commerce (but this also counts more or less for a Chamber of Agriculture) apparently does not make use of images to tell their story. Crang (1997) refers to touristic images as these create some kind of experience, which makes it possible for the reader to evade from what is actually 'out there'. A Chamber of Commerce or Chamber of Agriculture does not need to 'slip free' from this reality, it needs an approach that is more factual, and in order to reach their goals written documents are sufficient.

Table 8.5 illustrate that there were 15 (justified) relationships (p -value <0.005) of which 10 had a significance level of .000, which meant there is a very strong relationship. In concrete this meant that the organizations mainly used photographs that served images that were rather obvious. It would be interesting if also these organizations make use of apparent strong identity markers like castles and of course the river. Sometimes this is the case, but cannot statistically be justified. An answer to the question if local government, have a more representative view, as a local governments represents a more general interest, can also not be verified, as they often make use of the strong images that according to the characterizes the region, and sometimes they use other images that lay emphasis on good transport opportunities and good living conditions, but the analysis is not capable to anticipate on this notion.

Which elements dominate the representation? A question that helps to answer this is to examine the categories that dominate by a specific scale level.

With regard to the distribution of photographs, the division is more equal than by the pictures of the actors.

1. Région	N=81 (23.8%)
2. Département	N=127 (37.4%)
3. Ville	N=132 (38.8%)
Total	N=340 (100%)

Table 8.5 demonstrates that 11 significant relationships can be found with regard to scale and other independent variables. Of which 4 categories had a very strong relationship with scale. These were respectively river, single historic building, natural site and hot air balloon. It is noteworthy that the river occurs more often on a regional level than on the two other lower levels. This counts also for the natural site and hot air balloon. This counts the other way around for the single historic building category. It is the river and the natural sites that bind the region. This is in contrast with the historic buildings that are 'unique' and places (local authorities have to distinguish themselves in order to attract visitors, see Chapter 4 Place promotion). With regard to the hot air balloon category: this has probably something to do with the Région Centre as an actor, as many photographs of balloons portray the same balloon, the analysis cannot capture the difference between different balloon. It is worth to mention that the balloon in question also carries the Région Centre logo.

In order to summarize the main question the research confirms that more meanings can be attached to one single region and that objectives, audiences differ and therefore the representations are diverse. It is difficult to speak of one single identity of the region, also in mind that there is no such fixed entity, although some (powerful) groups have defined it as a single region. However it remains a region (which implies difficulties with regard to boundaries) which should be considered in a broader context. This is already showed by the fact that the area is located in different administrative entities, but there are many groups involved, groups (omitted in this research) that maybe do not feel attached to something as World Heritage, a term that has been designated from above.

Limitations and recommendation for further research

There are some limitations with regard to the method. To begin with, content analysis cannot capture the interpretations of a photograph. It can only take into account the manifest content of the photograph, not the different interpretations when it comes to the compositionality of a picture (see paragraph 8.2). From the results of the content analysis no conclusions can be drawn with regard to the intention of the maker. Second, a choice had to be made with regard to the type of visual materials. The analysis in this study is based on photographs used by

actors on internet websites (homepages). This had a practical reason as more actors can be reached. The collected material could not be used for the analysis, it appeared that a large amount of the brochures, tourist guides etc. were produced by sometimes 2 or 3 different actors. Thus a clear distinction between the different actors could not be made. In this case an internet website was more appropriate. In a modern and global society the internet is an important means of communication. An internet website is an ideal tool for an organization to present itself to the outside world. In this case other types of visual materials like paintings, films, maps have been left out of consideration in order limit the research. In some way the information on the website rapidly changes (for example the information of cultural events), however the overall message is considered to remain alike irrespective of the date. Third, the amount of visual materials (which is important when taking into account a content analysis) is not only dependent of the creator, but also of its technical capability and opportunities. Finally the position of the researcher has to be considered, as the researcher *chooses* the materials that he or she *thinks* is important and need investigation. Nonetheless the research has been done in a concise way.

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Websites (analyzed material)

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Centre	www.regioncentre.fr	www.visaloire.com
Pays de la Loire	www.paysdelaloire.fr	www.enpaysdelaloire.com
Loiret	www.loiret.com	www.tourismeloiret.com
Loir-et-Cher	www.cg41.fr	www.tourismeloir-et-cher.com
Indre-et-Loire	www.cg37.fr	www.tourisme-touraine.com
Maine-et-Loire	www.cg49.fr	www.anjou-tourisme.com
Orléans	www.orleans.fr	www.tourisme-orleans.com
Blois	www.ville-blois.fr	www.loiredeschateaux.com
Amboise	www.ville-amboise.fr	www.amboisevaldeloire.com
Tours	www.tours.fr	www.ligerus.com
Chinon	www.ville-chinon.com	http://tourisme.chinon.com
Saumur	www.ville-saumur.fr	www.ot-saumur.fr
Angers	www.angers.fr	www.angersloiretourisme.com

	Agriculture: <i>Chambre d'Agriculture</i>	Commerce: <i>Chambre de Commerce et l'Industrie</i>
Centre	www.centre.chambagri.fr	www.centri.cci.fr
Pays de la Loire	www.agrilianet.com	www.paysdelaloire.cci.fr
Loiret	www.loiret.chambagri.fr	www.loiret.cci.fr
Loir-et-Cher	www.loir-et-cher.chambagri.fr	www.loir-et-cher.cci.fr
Indre-et-Loire	www.indre-et-loire.chambagri.fr	www.touraine.cci.fr
Maine-et-Loire	www.maine-et-loire.chambagri.fr	www.maineetloire.cci.fr

Postscript: experiences with the French academic system

Part of the preparations for this Master thesis has been executed in the region itself. I spent three months in France so I could gather information for my theoretical framework and for my research. I was supervised by Monsieur Sabatier and Madame Noweir from the *École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Versailles*.

I also followed the course "*Architecture et Territoire: problématiques en contexte*", this gave me the opportunity to get understanding of the French planning system. This was also useful considering my thesis as it gave me comprehension how government institutions work when dealing with planning issues.

The organization with regard to the Master thesis differs from the organization at the University of Groningen. As the Master is divided over two years, so is the Master thesis, called *Mémoire* in French. It consists of a M1 (*Mémoire 1*) and a M2 (*Mémoire 2*). M1 aims at the data gathering and dealing with theoretical concepts, the M2 course prepares for the actual writing. I advised to join the students in M1. The Architecture and Territory course was part of the M1 module.

Of course I experienced some difficulties and sometimes the language caused some minor problems, but in that sense the students and teachers were helpful. All in all it was a great experience, to do research in another country, to share ideas with people from another discipline. And living near a great city of Paris is not too bad, at least in my case..