

# The experience of rural authenticity in Dutch (holiday) farms



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# **The experience of rural authenticity in Dutch (holiday) farms**

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## SUMMARY

The topic of rural tourism, incorporating the experience of rural authenticity, has been abundantly discussed in academic literature. Yet in practice, the definition of rural authenticity has turned out to be quite problematic, since rurality often seems genuine and easily attainable in the merely visual appearance of the countryside. However, tourists may interpret rural authenticity in different ways. Therefore, my research focusses on Dutch farm tourism as a kind of rural tourism where tourists may experience more than bright sceneries. For instance, one can become familiar with how farmers live in traditional, yet active, farming businesses. In turn, the position of farmers concerning tourist entertainment and performed farm authenticity is accessible and observable for me as a researcher in this study.

Hence, the appreciation of rural authenticity in Dutch farms has been explored from the perspective of both tourists and farmers, including my own position and involvement in the process. This, in my opinion, reflects the whole picture of examining the experience of rural authenticity. In order to explore the experience of rural authenticity, I emphasize the distinction between types of authenticity in tourism studies, thereby referring to the categorization offered by the analytical approach of Wang (1999). Wang explicitly specified three types of authenticity in relation to ontology, epistemological discourses, and the subject and scope of research (see also Cohen & Cohen, 2012; Frisvoll, 2013). These categories are referred to as *objective*, *constructed / symbolic* and *existential / subjective authenticity*. To visualize these distinctions, the photos on the front page represent these categories for Dutch farms. The first image could be an example of an objective and authentic Dutch farm; the second picture shows how authentic activities may be culturally constructed in a farm; and the last photo represents a form of existential authenticity in a farm through my personal experience with this farm by acting in it as a researcher and tourist.

The fieldwork was done on a dairy goat farm named “De Brömmels” and on two dairy cow farms, named “De Blökke” and “Overleekerhoeve”. I used qualitative methods, including informal and semi-structured interviews, participant observation and photo-elicitation.

The results show that in terms of tourist attractions, farm tourism or agritourism are becoming an attraction in themselves, opening a window into the vigorous reality of a rural life on farms. Furthermore, farmers strive to demonstrate rural authenticity through their daily life or created tourist entertainment, simultaneously accomplishing their farm work. However, farm businesses are not always as privileged as farm tourism, which makes rural authenticity more ostentatious. In turn, tourists analyzing authenticity in farms state that authentic equals simplicity, a normal farm life, an ideal picture, wood, green paint, not a huge number of animals, hand-made products, purity, quietness, beautiful nature, nice people, including the farmer’s family and quests in camping, back to nature and animals, farming as the first priority. Attempting to satisfy the expectations of tourists, farmers permit guests to see assets or facets of their farms. For example, goats, a milking process, the work of a farm; connect tourists with a basic life and nature; provide tourists with educational attractions; acquaint tourists with the original history of a farm, and trust people.

It is important to acknowledge that the process of appreciation of authenticity is questionable as it depends on multiple aspects. For instance, the research revealed that, even though theoretically the comprehension of authenticity is supposed to strengthen as soon as tourists are immersed in farm activities, in practice, the majority of tourists on the observed farms prefer passive observation and consumption of an authentic past through tourism practices. Besides, constructions of authenticity can be considered as borrowed constructions of traditions and, consequently, some tourist products, like French goat cheese production and consumption, became accepted in Dutch farm practices over time. Furthermore, although farm landscapes appear to be ideal and romantic, they are successfully used in farm tourism for attracting tourists as the main part of business. In other words, authenticity is as much a commercial product versus romantic farming landscapes.

*Keywords:* rural tourism, farm tourism, objective authenticity, constructed authenticity, existential authenticity, performance, perception, tourist experience

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

*“Consumers want honest and authentic experiences”*

*Joseph Pine (1999)*

Rural areas are seen as a very significant and ever more important part of leisure and tourism. Due to the diversity of rural tourism, it is difficult to delineate an exact definition for this kind of tourism. According to Lane (1994), rural tourism has to predominantly take place in rural areas, be rustic and geographically small, entail the traditional products and services offered to tourists. Furthermore, the growth of rural tourism should be maintained, continuous and locally motivated and steered (Carneiro, Lima & Silva, 2015). These perceptions of rural tourism have been shared widely by many authors (Fagioli, Diotallevi & Ciani, 2014; Garau, 2015) who regard rural tourism as a means to sustainable development as it enables favorable work conditions in rural areas and preservation of authentic customs and traditions.

Rural tourism is built on the incentives of tourists related to the features of rural areas, which can be understood as natural, cultural and traditional environments and possibilities for rest, with space and recreational activities (Carneiro, Lima & Silva, 2015). In the opinion of Bessière, “rural areas are now increasingly perceived as places for entertainment, leisure activities, second homes and as an alternative to urban residential areas” (1998: 21). Therefore, the definition of rural tourism revolves around life in rural areas and rural heritage, which contributes to the social and economic development of locals and provides unique tourism experiences through interactions between rural hosts and guests (Nagaraju & Chandrashekara, 2014).

The development of rural tourism has a very long history. Initially, before the 18<sup>th</sup> century, rural life was associated with a poor style of living, where landscapes were predominantly used for agriculture and partly for aesthetic goals. However, after the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when cities dominated life in the countryside, people began to long for a more peaceful and wholesome life, which could be easily found in the countryside (Taylor, 1994; Berghoff at. all, 2002). The countryside was ascribed to the romantic notion of rural life because of images, folk songs and tourist literature (Newby, 1979). In some works of art, music and poetry in Western society nostalgia for the natural rural life was traced (Ousby, 1990; Murdoch, 2006). Basically, the Romantic period in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century was devoted to the impression of rural life and the pursuit to seek idyllic images there. Literally, after the Romantic period, rural areas have substantially appealed to tourists as a “refuge from modernity” (Short, 1991, p.34), and the Arcadian constructed imagination of the countryside has been replaced with a socially constructed perception of rurality that is searched for by urban dwellers.

Indeed, a rural life seemed ideal for urban dwellers as soon as urbanization grew up; agriculture modernized and landscapes altered (Murdoch, 2006). Looking into the history of the establishment of modern rural tourism, three phases of rural tourism can be identified. *The first phase* is characterized by the arising of rural tourism in parts of Europe in the early 1970s. That time a falling agricultural sector was not able to ensure income to people from rural areas, and rural tourism appeared to be a sustainable alternative to this sector at enterprise, local, national and international levels (Lane & Kastenholz, 2015). In particular, in agritourism or farm

tourism, tourism was sustained by agriculture ministers. Besides, it was the solution to cope with the difficult economic situation in the agricultural sector, which was impacting on rural areas and rural service provision.

*The second phase*, taking place in the mid-1980s, was remarked as the slightly planned and coordinated growth at any level, but it extended across regions and continents. Simultaneously, there was transformation and diversification of rural tourism practices into a complex and widespread business with different niches of activities. The concept of rural tourism over that time admitted various forms of tourism and rural tourism products (Clemenson & Lane, 1997). In general, the staple types of rural tourism, which emerged in the second phase, can be classified as follows (Sasu & Epuran, 2016):

- *farm holidays/agritourism* – the type of tourism arranged primarily in farms as the method to obtain an additional income. One of the distinctive feature of agritourism is that visitors stay in the farmer's houses or the farmer's land, having an opportunity to participate in authentic farm activities in order to get authentic tourism experience. As Daugstad and Kirchengast state, "agri-tourism attracts a target group that is eager to have ostensibly intimate, personalized, and ethically correct experiences in their holidays" (2013, pp. 183-184).
- *wellness tourism* is distinguished by the belief that spiritual health will be reliant on spa products, and new markets are demanded to appear (Lane & Kastenholtz, 2015). This request for health is directly related to rural areas, placed in ecological regions, mountains or thermal sources, which can provide tourists with well-being products (Wolf, Stricker & Hagenloh, 2015).
- *ethnic tourism* – this kind of tourism engages local population for showing uniqueness and the specialties of cultural identity of a place in front of tourists.
- *ecotourism* – this form of tourism integrates conservation, locals, and sustainable development travel, so that this unit does not cause an adverse effect on the environment or involved people. It has been asserted that ecotourism must conform to such conditions as aiming at education and the minimal negative influence on the environment (Nistoreanu, Dorobanțu, Tuclea, 2011).
- *creative tourism* – by choosing this form of tourism, tourists intend to obtain new skills and be engaged in creative activities (Cloke, 2007). Furthermore, as UNESCO marks creative tourism is travel leading to an engaged and authentic experience. (UNESCO, 2006, p.3).
- *culinary tourism* – as the sector of cultural and heritage tourism, this form of tourism consists of natural multiple activities and fundamentals and, as a result, can be treated as from rural dimensions as well. According to Sims (2009), the major reason for travelling is the wish to find out authentic traditional food in certain places, which afterwards conduces to economic and environmental sustainability of a rural region.
- *activity tourism* - encompasses a big range of tourism types which can include such physical activities in rural areas as walking, climbing, skiing or cycling (Weston & Mota, 2012). Additionally, adventure tourism, defined as the purposeful search for risk

or danger by tourists mainly in wilderness, is the part of activity tourism as well (Hall, 1992).

*The third phase* of the development of rural tourism is characterized as twenty-first century growth and competition. Before, it was claimed that rural tourism had no competition, since this kind of tourism was the opposite of mass tourism, and ideal for people who desired to escape from cities. However, upcoming developments like cruise ship tourism and city heritage tourism have arguably started to compete with rural tourism (Hung & Petrick, 2011; Lagroup and Interarts, 2005; Law, 2000). Moreover, unlike rural tourism, these kinds of tourism have flourished due to the expertise and financing from international marketing groups (Gross & Schröder, 2007). At the same time, the amount of funds from the public sector related to rural tourism infrastructure and management have declined, rural tourism to be more financially independent and commercially profitable (Lane & Kastenholz, 2015).

Despite this competition, rural tourism has become a maker of new tourist experiences, and continues to develop. As the history of rural tourism has shown, the meanings and dimensions of rural tourism are immense and, consequently, the diversity of potential experiences, which rural tourism can offer, is boundless. Rural areas appear to ideally meet the needs and aspirations of tourists and to offer touristic experiences, which are in demand in a heterogeneous market. As a rule, this demand is formed by such stakeholders as tourists, destination communities, indigenous suppliers of accommodation and hospitality, institutional agencies (Kastenholz, Carneiro & Marques; 2012).

Research exploring the typology of tourists and the tendencies of the rural tourism market has revealed that there is permanent development in this field due to the high level of education and rich travel experience of tourists attracted to rural sceneries. Besides, the request for rural experience is increasing because of the tourist's interest in natural and cultural heritage, their attention to the environment, their search for a healthy lifestyle and their curiosity about *rural authenticity*. A key concern in the growing development of rural tourism can be found in discussions about authenticity. Here, I would like to quote Pearce and Moscardo (1986), cited by Heitmann (2011: 51):

*“The whole issue of whether or not tourists are satisfied with their holiday experience demands a full consideration of the nature of the tourist environment, the tourist's perception of that environment and the tourists' need of preference for authenticity.”*

MacCannell (1973), who first embarked on the discussion of authenticity in tourist experiences, underlined that the crucial goal of tourists is to seek authentic experience in places endowed with social, historical or cultural sense. Recently, there has been a conceptual shift in the term “authenticity” from being considered as objective to being defined as constructive and more individual. As such, rural tourism full of rural physical attributes and genuine qualities of space, fresh or peace captures tourists, thereby demonstrating objective authenticity, and promises them the unique chance to experience rural authenticity through personal involvement. However, “rural gaze” is the complex of accepted social norms located at the heart of the authentication of rural spaces and therefore, as Abram (2003) points out, while comprehending

the experience of rural authenticity, it is crucial to take into consideration and realize each particular tourist's vision of authentic rurality.

Moreover, the opportunity of getting emotional or spiritual experience goes along with the experience of rural authenticity or emerges as its consequence. For some tourists, rural tourism, which is situated in both natural and built rural environments, is a place for involving in recreational activities with the outdoors and interacting with the natural environment (Kastenholz & Lima, 2012). For others, rural tourism is the best way to cognize themselves, feel the connection with nature and attain an emotional/spiritual experience through their discovery of the countryside. Recent industrialization and urbanization of the end of the 18th and the early 19th centuries not only contributed to the secularization of society, but also endued particular rural landscapes with a divine meaning to content the growing spiritual demand of urban society (de Botton, 2003). As it has been mentioned, during the last two centuries there has been an essential shift in the cultural and social perception of rural areas, which used to seem harsh, mysterious and poor, but now turn out to be potentially sacred and romanticized. Since that time, rural tourism has become associated with the possibility to acquire the experience of authenticity and emotional satisfaction, and is often retained in collective memories as a form of nostalgia.

Farm tourism (or agritourism) represents a type of rural tourism where the multiple performances of farm life can be implemented in diverse settings. Following the definitions of farm tourism, it is worth mentioning that farm tourism as a distinct rural tourism niche signifies an activity situated only in a farm, not merely in a rural area (Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008; Sznajder, Przezbórska & Scrimgeour, 2009; Chen et al., 2013; Tew & Barbieri, 2012). Whereas others specify farm tourism as an activity that is positioned in the wider agricultural settings or landscapes (Thompson et al., 2016; Phillip et al., 2010). Lately, Arroyo et al. (2013) noted that, together with elements of amusement, education and agricultural settings, activities of agritourism should be authentic and based on the facilities of working farms, which seems to be essential in the context of the definition of farm tourism. The romantic remark of DeLyser (1999) emphasizes that the tin roofs of house in the host village is already the attribute of authenticity for tourists. Regardless of any formal meanings bound up with farm tourism, I presume that cultural and material conditions of farm tourism comply with demands of a tourist's longing for rural authenticity, thereby showing rural reality with peaceful landscapes (Urry, 2001). Likewise, the rural location of farms is naturally personified with the opportunity to move readily through the countryside and sense it (Woods, 2011).

Thus, farm tourism appears to be a good example of rural tourism with the opportunity to achieve the touristic experience of rural authenticity. Taking into consideration all the difficulties, in the research, I will attempt to explore perceived rural authenticity in functioning Dutch farms, where agricultural activities are prioritized over touristic ones, from the perspectives of farmers and guests through the elaborated conceptual framework. The understanding of the relationship between the notions of authenticity, farm tourism commercialization and consumption is the way towards examining the whole process of the experience of rural authenticity.

## 1.1. Problem Statement and Relevance of the Study

Perceived authenticity as a key element of tourism in general and rural tourism in particular is one of the most debatable and ambiguous concepts. As a result, there is not much agreement in analytical approaches (Robinson & Clifford, 2012), and the requirements of a social process where authenticity is formed and justified are quite obscure. The problem is induced in tourism studies by the mixed meanings of authenticity, which reflect on philosophical, psychological, and spiritual concepts (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). For instance, authenticity is considered as the originality or realness of artefacts or performances as well as a human true perception of self or environment around (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006).

These philosophical, psychological, and spiritual trajectories pursue understanding the correlation between place, individuals and tourists' behaviors and persuasions (Bruner, 1994; Robinson & Clifford, 2012). Some scholars have operationalized the concepts of authenticity into their own approaches; for instance, Belhassen, Caton & Stewart (2008) have generated the concept of 'theoplicity' on the example of pilgrim authenticity, and Rickly-Boyd (2012) has turned to 'aura', embracing a connection between artefacts, practice, experience and meaning. Alternatively, others have reflected on the process of authentication (Bruner, 1994; Cohen & Cohen, 2012; Xie, 2010) by forming approaches based on the definition of the phenomenon of authenticity as something negotiated and entailing institutions, knowledge and cultural traditions.

Therefore, the problem here is that the conceptualization of authenticity is still blurred. None of these theoretical concepts articulates the whole process of rural authenticity constructed and performed by locals for tourists in the countryside. Accordingly, there is still a lack of information about the way in which rural authenticity is grasped by tourists. This theoretical gap does not allow us to identify the genuineness of performed practices and their incorporation in cultural images, social representations, material values and political discourses.

In order to examine the experience of rural authenticity in farm tourism, we need to elaborate on the concepts of authenticity grouped into *objective*, *constructed* and *existential authenticity* and conceptualize the process of existing and demonstrated rural authenticity. Wang (1999) was the first who has classified diverse theoretical perspectives of authenticity into *objective authenticity* (discussed later by Lau, 2010; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006), *constructed (symbolic) authenticity* (Cohen, 1988; Olsen, 2006) and *existential (subjective) authenticity* (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). These discourses of authenticity will be the core concepts in the conceptual framework in my research (see chapter 2). In my opinion, the notion of rural authenticity deals with locals, agriculture, landscapes and an interpersonal visitor's perception of rural authenticity. All the elements and stages of rural authenticity in the countryside (farm tourism) are dynamic and interlinked and cannot be explored separately from each other.

## 1.2. Research Aim and Question

This research aims to contribute to the investigating of authenticity, by encompassing various theoretical approaches and being practically oriented. The devised conceptual framework will be the basis for exploring the experience of rural authenticity through the relationship between three dimensions, namely *materiality/locality* (e.g. the factual existence of the countryside with rural landscapes or objective authenticity), *social representation* of rural areas (e.g. notion of authenticity via social beliefs and cultural persuasion or constructed authenticity), and *practice* (e.g. the subjective tourist experience of authenticity or existential authenticity).

*The objective of the research* is to explore the touristic experience of rural authenticity in farm tourism by investigating:

How is rural authenticity constructed and performed for and by tourists in Dutch farms?

In the research, I seek to understand how agritourism is organized in active Dutch farms. The construction notion of staged authenticity in Dutch farms will enable me to define how authenticity is determined and transformed in the process of socio-discursive negotiation with different actors, including farmers and guests. By means of understanding the construction of this phenomenon in farms, I would like to explore how this staged authenticity is represented to tourists, for instance through involving tourists in such processes as milking, making cheese or taking care of animals. Staged agricultural performances might implement definite portrayals of rural life via farm stays, parks, rural heritage and other intangible interpretations of rurality for tourists, introducing authentic life in the countryside (Lewis Holloway, 2004). While experiencing rural authenticity in farms and being involved in farm activities, in the meanwhile tourists may also obtain other kinds of experiences through the creation of a memorable occasion for themselves (Pine and Gilmore, 1998).

## 1.3. Outline of this Thesis

The thesis consists of six main chapters (introduction, the theoretical framework, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusion). In this outline, the content of the chapters and the link between these subchapters are presented. The introduction brings information about the rapid development of rural tourism and rural tourist experience, defines the problem statement and the main research question concerning the experience of rural authenticity in the context of Dutch (holiday) farms. In the next chapter, I will look into theoretical concepts of authenticity in tourism in order to search for authentic experiences in Dutch (holiday) farms. I elaborate more on the use of the core concepts (objective authenticity; constructed (symbolic) authenticity; and existential (subjective) authenticity). The third chapter explains the methodology, comprising research design, methods of data collection and data analysis by underpinning the research questions and objective of the research with appropriate methodological choices made in this thesis. The fourth chapter describes the results of this research, incorporating three comparative case studies, which present the observed performance and self-perception of farm authenticity described by farmers and tourists respectively in each farm. The fifth chapter discusses the most significant findings of this thesis by accentuating and relating these findings to ongoing scientific debates and presenting some key concerns for further research. The conclusion provides answers the core research question of this thesis.

## 2. THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1. The Concepts of Authenticity in Rural Tourism Research

Tourists' desires to get the experience of rural authenticity are concerned with their perception of rural performances. In order to uncover the notions of the rural authenticity of the countryside, we need to investigate how authenticity is performed in rural tourism research. On the one hand, the authenticity of the countryside seems an obvious and an inherent element of services and goods offered by rural tourism. On the other hand, in spite of the magnitude of the concepts of authenticity, the feasibility to evaluate, justify and analyze rural authenticity proves to be problematic due to the absence of an explicit conceptual framework. In this chapter, based on the theory of objective, constructed and existential authenticity systemized by Wang (1999), the conceptual framework for exploring the experience of rural authenticity in farm tourism will be discussed.

#### 2.1.1. Objective authenticity

To emphasize the distinctions between types of authenticity in tourism studies in general and in rural tourism in particular, I would like to refer to the categorization offered by the analytical approach of Wang (1999), who explicitly specified three types of authenticity. These types of authenticity vary not only in relation to ontology and epistemological discourses, but also regarding the subject and scope of research (Cohen & Cohen, 2012; Frisvoll, 2013). There are such categories as *objective*, *constructed* or *symbolic authenticity* and *existential authenticity*.

The first category, ***objective authenticity***, pertains to the measurable characteristics of originality of toured objects, based on concrete perceptions of authentic places and an ontology of realism. Specifically, all the physical objects demonstrated to tourists in rural areas are expected to be discerned original without any doubts, whereby authenticity. Within the category of objective authenticity, Boorstin (1961) considered tourists being isolated from the locals and host environment; tourists do not experience reality, but rather attend “pseudo-events” and illusions, which they associate with experience. In contrast, MacCannell (1999) was the first who introduced the quest for authenticity as the main purpose of tourists for travelling and described a tourist like a modern man in general. A tourist here is consequently searching for authenticity in other times and other places because of not being satisfied with everyday modern life. He did not accentuate his attention on the fact that whether the experience of tourists would be “fake” or not, while he asserted that tourists intend to travel for the goal to get the experience of a distinct way of living, find out the difference between destinations and uncover places that remain traditional and untouched by a modern life.

In this sense, from the perspectives of both Boorstin (1961) and MacCannell (1999), the perception of an object-related authenticity is crucial here. Artificial authenticity shaped by locals is primarily performed through physical objects such as traditional attributes and the reproduction of historical events. As a result, there is a particular objective place, which can readily measure the authenticity. It occurs due to historical incidents, which have verified



scientifically and objectively the authenticity of this area (Oh, 2005). Furthermore, according to the objectivist interpretation of the world, truth exists independently from the subject and authenticity, and culture is static and not changeable. Following this discussion, I absolutely agree with Bruner (1994), who criticized the paradigm of objectivism and represented authenticity in a more negotiable way.

In the meanwhile, referring to Goffman's (1959) strict structural division of social organization through terms *front*, when performances as shows are given in front of guests, and *back original regions*, which are hidden, MacCannell (1999) elaborated the new term "staged authenticity". He adjusted "*frontstage*", presenting space for satisfying tourist's expectations, and "*backstage*", concerning intimate spaces of locals with their private life. Ultimately, all the tourists long for the experience of authenticity of a local life, but, in reality, they are entertained by locals through a "*frontstage*" performance and "*backstage*" authenticity is hardly achievable. As follows, first of all, "frontstage" refers to the idea of an objective authenticity. Further, Urry (2003) highlighted that in the era of post-modernity there are different tourists, including some who decline the phenomenon of authenticity by calling this into question.

Yet, despite the critique towards an objective authenticity, tourists can easily attain experience, for example in rural tourism. In this way, a natural *landscape* as the component of an objective authenticity, is a central and potent experience-scape in rural tourism, where natural and human factors interact with each other physically and culturally. The issue of rural tourism experience has been taken into account in recent years (Carmichael, 2005; Kastenholz, Carneiro, Marques & Lima, 2012; Jepson & Sharpley, 2015; Sidali, Kastenholz & Bianchi, 2013), focusing on experience-scapes as a key part, which manipulates the tourist's experience (Dissart & Marcouiller, 2012). In this vein, I fully consent to the beliefs of Marujo and Santos (2012) and assert that landscapes prove to be an indicator of an objective rural authenticity, thereby inspiring visitors, generating images and creating the quality of experience. It is believed that the "beauty" and the "quality of the landscape" signify for people the reasons for visiting definite places (Steen Jacobsen, 2007; Lothian, 1999; Van den Berg & Koole, 2006; Sharpley & Jepson, 2011; Komppula & Gartner, 2013). In turn, due to the set of natural, human and cultural elements of landscape, rural areas are capable of *yielding emotions* and *impressions*, while promoting local products and facilitating the positive and valuable experience of tourists (Prebensen & Floss, 2011; Tung and Ritchie, 2011; Sims, 2009).

Summarizing the perspectives of an objective authenticity, I would characterize rural authenticity through **the materiality (or locality) dimension** in my research (Frisvoll, 2013). This dimension represents tour objects and the existing natural and cultural landscape, enabling people to distinguish the uniqueness of a place acceptable for them and see its authenticity. My point here is that the *material dimension* is not the only one, but one of the aspects towards the recognized authenticity of rural areas. In my research, farms with traditional physical attributes and agricultural landscape as the material dimension are supposed to be a visual appearance of rural authenticity for tourists. These particular objects measure the authenticity in a tourist's grasp. Typical elements such as property, location and the lifestyle of locals in this environment take the key role for tourists, who experience authenticity on this stage and construe these

elements as authentic. *Materiality* is recognized either as a social relation by locals (farmers) who possess it or indirectly by tourists for their personal assessment.

As such, this research will attempt to answer the next sub-research question:

*What aspects of objective rural authenticity are performed by farmers for tourist's experience in Dutch farms?*

The next chapter will recount another concept of rural authenticity in accordance to which authenticity is quite negotiable, not static and entirely socially constructed.

### 2.1.2. Constructed or symbolic authenticity

A second category to consider in this conceptual framework, is ***constructed or symbolic authenticity***. This category refers to the socially constructed and signifies that authenticity can be transferable and dependent on the place and context in which the object or subject is settled, which is why this is a quite negotiable notion. Accordingly, as Pearce & Moscardo (1986) have contended, there are two different points of view towards this complex type of authenticity. *Firstly*, it refers to the strong interaction between hosts and visitors, which interprets authenticity and, hence, not only the material objects are conceived of as the evidence of authenticity. *Secondly*, the perception of authenticity is vigorously influenced by tourist's upbringing, education, culture and life purposes.

In this respect, Cohen (1988) and Bruner (1994) free the concept of authenticity from the object and convey the meanings, which are attached to objects by actors in a social process and established by authority or power. This vision of authenticity demonstrates how processes change some objects by ideas, how differently authenticity is apprehended by various groups, and how these ideas are purposefully created and contested simultaneously. Here, Cohen (1988) explains authenticity as a socially constructed concept, which is not directly offered, but rather negotiated and learned. Authenticity is not constant and fixed owing to its depending on the individual perceptions of tourists (Cohen, 1988):

*Since authenticity is not a primitive given, but negotiable, one has to allow for the possibility of its gradual emergence in the eyes of visitors to the host culture. In other words, a cultural product, or a trait thereof, which is at one point generally judged as contrived or inauthentic may, in the course of time, become generally recognized as authentic, even by experts...(Cohen, 1988: 379).*

Similarly, Bruner (1994) attempts to understand the idea of the construction of authenticity in social processes, paying attention more to how the different meanings of authenticity are applied to social practice, than to how they assess whether objects are visually authentic or not. Furthermore, the same objects can entail completely different meanings being formed by various social groups. Hence, authenticity is not the quality of an object anymore, but rather a cultural value invariably revived in social processes.

Commenting on the *staged authenticity*, elaborated by MacCannell (1999), Wang (1999: 351) states that “things appear authentic not because they are inherently authentic, but because they are constructed as such in terms of points of view, beliefs, perspectives, or powers”. Moreover, “authenticity or truth is still determined by how closely something resembles people’s idea of it. For village life to be authentic, it must accord with how one thinks village life is” (Reisinger and Steiner, 2006: 74). Moreover, in the same vein, Daugstad, and Kirchengast (2013) examine the understanding of authenticity in summer farms in Austria and Norway through the pseudo-backstage concept consistent with the constructivist approach. Their conclusion is that the pseudo-backstage is the invisible and vital part of the interaction between hosts and tourists, which is constructed due to translating authenticity into the social practice of a concrete interaction on agri-tourist settings. At this point, I consent to principles of the constructivist/symbolic authenticity and I presume that in this study these perspectives can be used for the deep understanding of performed authenticity in farm tourism through looking into farm activities offered to tourists.

Based on the ideas of constructed authenticity, I suggest to outline this concept for exploring rural authenticity via **the social representation dimension**, which is one of three dimensions identified in the research. With respect to farm tourism, this dimension comprises tourism entrepreneurs and host’ realms, the design of touristic products and the identification of rurality by people (Frisvoll, 2013). The extent to which tourists perceive places as significant experience depends on the meanings which people attach to the places and how people expound these meanings to themselves. Moreover, it has been suggested that the meanings and symbols can be historically embedded in heritage, shape cultural understanding and make a certain countryside, for example, socially constructed (Gieryn, 2000). Thus, the notion of a constructed or symbolic rural authenticity is formed via the process of social construction and the ability of people to make their own personal interpretations of authenticity. In practice, tourists participating in various farm activities will help to research the representation of staged authenticity by farmers.

In order to shed light on the academic view pertaining to the constructed concept of authenticity, the next sub-research question is expected to consider the concept of rural authenticity in detail:

*How does the socially constructed authenticity of Dutch farms become performed by farmers and tourists?*

However, to be acquainted with personal experience of tourists looking for rural authenticity in farm tourism, the next chapter will narrate the subjective notion of authenticity.

### 2.1.3. Existential or subjective authenticity

A third and final category to consider here, is *existential (subjective) authenticity*. This category can be conceptualized as authenticity perceived by tourists personally, relying on their feelings and previous and actual touristic experience (Heitmann, 2011). From psychological and philosophical perspectives, this authentic experience is bound up with identity, autonomy, individuality, self-development, and self-realization (Berman, 1970) and it is believed to be

personal through the understanding of one's own place in time and space (McIntosh and Prentice, 1999; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). This authenticity is conceptualized as a postmodern repudiation of the ontology of realism and constructivism of object and constructed/symbolic authenticity respectively (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Wang, 1999). In this way, Wang (1999) claims that a lot of activities in tourism which are not object-related might be regarded as a yearning for unified experience or authenticity, which is labelled as "existential authenticity" which:

*...comprises personal or intersubjective feelings that are activated by the liminal process of tourist behaviors. In such liminal experiences, people feel that they are themselves much more authentic and more freely self-expressed than they are in everyday life, not because the toured objects are authentic, but rather because they are engaging in non-everyday activities, free from the constraints of daily life. (Wang, 2000: 49-50).*

Wang (2000:65) indicates two dimensions of *existential authenticity*. Firstly, intra-personal authenticity is introduced as body's feelings of pleasure, relaxation, spontaneity, and control. These feelings can be found by tourists in a short period through self-making, practices and experiences, which are different from everyday life. In a natural touristic experience, people feel more excited and inspired than in routine life. Secondly, inter-personal experience of authenticity is the result of joint experience with a family, friends or other groups of tourists due to the sense of closeness and attachment. In general, existential authenticity in this sense is related to the activity of tourists (Wang, 1999) and state of being aroused by having a good time (Brown, 2007).

Considering existential authenticity within farm tourism context, Di Domenico and Miller (2012) equate existential authenticity to experienced authenticity. The authors draw attention to the staged quality of experiential encounters between the owners of farms and their tourists, by looking into how the organized attractions of hosts conform to the needs of tourists. Farm-based tourism is the inevitable part of the experience of farm tourism settings in the context of rurality. The target of hosts is to create conditions for tourists, allowing them to apprehend idyllic rural environment, and understand farmer's own position. There is a discussion that a working farm is undoubtedly necessary for farmers, but it does not signify that it is the most significant criterion and attribute for tourists (Fleischer&Tchetchik, 2005) as the confirmation of existential authenticity. Busby and Rendle (2000) also stress whether a working farm is a required element of authenticity and debate different concerns regarding authenticity. Di Domenico and Miller (2012), while discussing the views of farmers in the article, are inclined to "existential authenticity" (Wang, 1999) as "hot authenticity" (Selwyn, 1996) or the authenticity of feelings more than knowledge, which permits tourists to deeply experience a rural product through an activity.

According to Di Domenico and Miller (2012), the concept of *existential authenticity* helps to explore farm-based attractions and the degree to which farm family members are engaged in the process and can provide an appropriate product consistent with demands and their own needs. In short, this concept incorporates the relationship between farm family business, tourism practices and identities. In terms of tourism attractions, a farm is getting an attraction

in itself, opening a window into the vigorous reality of a rural life in farms. Aesthetics, place and space are the main aspects of the appreciation of authenticity (Taylor, 1994), which should be taken into account for the satisfaction of tourist's needs.

From my point of view, these aspects of rural authenticity are appreciated especially through existential authenticity, when tourists are able to feel it by means of experience, unlike the object division. I guess due to the experience tourists must be feel their own identity, which is partially forgotten in a modern life; nostalgic moments in their lives; and balance between themselves and nature. In this sense, "farmers are the guardians of the rural landscape" (Lane, 1994:105), who preserve the original state of a farm or modify, adjust and stage it to a certain extent in order to perform rural authenticity. It is essential to enable tourists to believe in the genuineness and reality of their experience regardless of the probable historical authentication of the tourism object. All senses such as sight, hearing, smelling, touch, and taste are activated and facilitate forming the experience of authenticity (DeLyser, 1999).

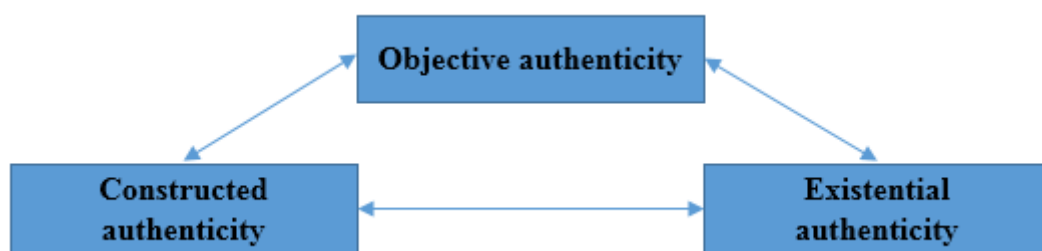
I propose to conceptualize existential authenticity for exploring rural authenticity as **the experienced dimension**. This dimension concerns the host's touristic practices of local people produced in routine everyday life for performing the relationship between the locals, generating tourism products, and the self-reflection of tourists themselves, taking part in this life. Linking this category to the approach of existential (subjective) authenticity, I would emphasize that the *element of practice* is related to a potential existential state of being for tourists. According to Wang (1999) and Belhassen, Caton & Stewart (2008: p.671), "authenticity is an existential state in which one is true to one's real self in a given moment", which is followed by the definition of Selwyn's (1996), who associated the notion of authenticity with an emotional experience, "alienation smashing feeling".

Here, having deepened into emotional experiences, I would like to emphasize the idea of potential spiritual experience in rural tourism through an existential authenticity. According to Jepson and Sharpley (2015), in the case of the existence or pursuit of spiritual or emotional interconnection between people, spirituality is a subjective element of human existence, a relation between the self and the world, the world and specific places. Seeking spirituality, tourists intentionally choose a definite natural environment, which facilitates an emotional harmony between them and their natural surroundings. In our case, the countryside is the ideal example of such a place, because one of the purposes of rural tourists is to be reunited with particular rural areas for finding *spiritual experience* (Ashley, 2007). The level of spiritual satisfaction will obviously result from the previously acquired individual experience, the level of education, the sensory awareness and the expectations of each tourist. Characteristics of the countryside such as seclusion, quietness, free time and open spaces seem perfect for spiritual satisfaction of tourists.

Based on the information, which characterizes an existential authenticity, my fieldwork will intend to cover the next sub-research question:

*What is the role of the relationship between the locals and the self-reflection of tourists and the researcher themselves in attaining rural authenticity?*

Undoubtedly, the three suggested dimensions of authenticity are interconnected and cannot be considered in isolation, while exploring the tourism experience of rural authenticity in Dutch farms. For instance, the difference between objective and existential authenticity is that the first one is referred to an attribute (Olsen, 2006) or artefacts, while the second one is “a potential existential state of being which is about to be activated by tourist activities” (Wang, 2000: 50). However, feelings in both examples are built on a social process, which at the same time exemplifies the presence of a constructed authenticity. Therefore, I contend that in this research it needs to consider a triangle of concepts related to rural authenticity, namely *objective* (the material, the given), *constructed or symbolic* (socially constructed, negotiated), and *existential* (the experienced and self-reflective) which, together, form a conceptual whole (see figure 1).



*Figure 1. The rural authenticity triangle*

The next chapter will give explicit information about research methodology, which has been applied to the research for collecting important data.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter comprises research design, methods of data collection and data analysis by underpinning the research questions and objective of the research with relevant methodological work.

#### 3.1. Research Design as Qualitative Case Study

Since the research aims at comprehending the phenomenon of performed rural authenticity in Dutch farms via exploring the integral elements of authenticity, the construction and performance of authenticity by farmers, and a tourist's interpretation of this authenticity, qualitative research approach was preferred over a quantitative one. According to Boeije (2009), qualitative research exemplifies the opportunity to grasp the main idea of an issue and uncover a social phenomenon through theoretical perspectives, unlike a quantitative research, where the main purpose is merely to justify/test/advance on hypotheses through generalizable data. In contrast, data collection in a qualitative study is set up by using semi-structured instruments that are adjusted to a certain research concern and domain. Thus, deductive thinking here is viewed as underlying; implying that a social phenomenon is examined to find out empirical patterns that evidently can operate together with a theory. I would also add that qualitative research contributes to understanding the meaning which people have constructed, how people make sense of their world and experience it (Merriam& Tisdell, 2009: 13), by collecting and analyzing text, images, or sounds.

The empirical approach adopted for the study employed a multiple embedded case study design. According to Padgett (2016), a qualitative case study explores a phenomenon within the real context of life. The fundamental purpose of a case study is to comprehend something that is unique to the case or cases and, subsequently, to apply the knowledge acquired in the study to other cases and contexts. There are several suggestions for qualitative gathering and analyzing data in a case study approach. First of all, participants and/or cases should be chosen based on their unique characteristics, and, as a rule, sample sizes are not big. Inquiry in these types of studies focuses largely on their defining case features and the differences they exhibit from other individuals/events in the larger population. The main purpose is to derive similarities and distinctive features in each case study for the purpose of implementing it in a larger population. One of advantages of applying a case study approach is that due to focusing on only one or a few instances, a researcher is able to cope with various subtleties and intricacies of the complex social world and gain a deep grasp of a phenomenon (Denscombe, 2014).

As a case study, three farms promoting farm tourism in the Netherlands have been chosen as the most suitable for the reason that these farms visibly demonstrate the variety of rural performances, which are investigated in this research. Consistent with Padgett (2016), cases have to be selected in line with a unique quality. There were three main criteria for the selection. *First of all*, farms needed to be working in present, combining their main farm business as the first priority with running a complementary tourism business. Choosing this requirement, I adhered to the criteria of authentic agritourism of Streifeneder (2016), who in turn used the



typology of Flanigan et al. (2014) and Phillip et al. (2010). As it has been indicated, authentic agritourism should be associated with *an active, functioning working farm*, where “where agriculture is currently being practiced” (Phillip et al., 2010: 755), and regular farm practices should be the first priority for farmers and not be altered for the sake of the commercial tourism business on the farm. This farm needs to have at least a minimum size of an used area for agriculture and livestock that allows tourists to appreciate farm activities. Yet, it is preferable that primitive agricultural facilities for accommodation and food are provided.

The second factor of choice was the presence of the *contact with agriculture*, including direct and indirect interaction. Farmers had to not only lodge tourists in their houses or on their land, which represents an indirect connection with agricultural activities. However, also they allowed tourists to be involved in their routine life by helping farmers, accompanying them or looking at the processes of farm production, which is a direct connection between tourists and agricultural settings with involving in farming life and the production of farm activities (Sharpley & Sharpley, 1997).

Thirdly, farms were desired to *attract Dutch as well as international tourists in order* to warrant the opportunity to explore Dutch rural authenticity from international perspectives.

To be candid, initially, I was struggling to find the most appropriate case study in the Netherlands. However, having visited the holiday exhibition in Leeuwarden on February 3, 2018, arranged by the Dutch company SVR, I met the majority of the representatives of farm stays in the Netherlands, set up useful contacts and purposefully defined places suitable for my research. Those places were not familiar to me, which is why, while gathering data, simultaneously, I played the role of a tourist and I have acquired the experience of rural authenticity for myself as well. Finally, the data was gathered over two weeks, by living a few days in each farm.

The first case study is a small goat farm named “De Brömmels” located in the Woold in Winterswijk. Since 1982 this goat farm has been successfully prospering, with its own cheese factory, a goat cheese shop and a rich assortment of local products. Tourists can participate in making cheese as well as walk with goats through the woods, compare different types of wool (namely knitted, sliver and wool fleece), and discover pottery and antiques. Furthermore, hosts invite guests in their house for food and drinks and particularly in the kitchen for cheese tasting. Due to the permission of the farm owner, tourists are enabled to live on the land of the farm in tents, caravans or wood lodges. On the whole, while collecting data, I spent one week there, from June 30 until July 6, 2018.

The second case study is Hans and Ingrid’s “De Blökke” farm, located in Dinxperlo, in the Municipality of Aalten, Gelderland since 1926. The farm exploits cows, calves, goats and ponies and is, in my opinion, surrounded by beautiful forests and meadows. The farm offers a camping ground and various farm activities, such as working on the farm, collecting and feeding cows and calves, witnessing the process of milking cows, riding a pony and taking a ride on the tractor with a farmer. Another interesting activity is the opportunity to experience the making of buttermilk by the farmer’s wife. Thus, the atmosphere in this farm was friendly and farmers

were happy to share their routine life and farm work. In this favorable environment, I was from July 13 to July 15.

The third case study is a dairy farm called “Overleekerhoeve” placed nearby Monnikendam, not far from Amsterdam, which has been functioning for over 30 years, and since 2006, has successfully developed a farm tourism business. The main orientation of the farm is selling milk from its 60 cows. It is noticeable to remark most of the tourists staying at the farm building are international. I spent two days conducting research in this farm, from July 16 till July 17.

My basic methods of data collection were semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, photo-elicitation and participant observations with farm entrepreneurs and tourists. All the interviews were carried out and recorded by me. Following Woods (2010), research on performing authentic ruralities is inclined to combine both interviews and participant observations. This enables a researcher to personally experience and record results and allows observed and interviewed actors to express and interpret their actions and views in their own natural way.

## **3.2. Methods of Data Collection**

This section provides a detailed description of methods applied to the case study. As mentioned before, the research was carried out by using a qualitative method in order to collect the necessary empirical data and get a deep insight into the understanding of authenticity. A theoretical framework is established as the basis for the interpretation of phenomena emerging from the study.

Data collection is one of the vital parts of the qualitative research procedure (Bruce, 2007), the concrete planning of which through multiple sources will guarantee the achievement of construct validity (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In this research, three staple methods such as informal/semi-structured interviews, photo-elicitation and participant observations were prioritized in the hope that the combination of data collection is anticipated to form a better understanding of complex reality of performed authenticity in Dutch rural areas from the perspectives of all the actors – that is the entrepreneurs, tourists and myself as the researcher particularly. In this respect, the methods grounded on theoretical concepts are crucial for the interpretation of participant’s opinion about the social world and their behavior Boeije (2009).

### **3.2.1. Informal and semi-structured interviews**

In the study, I have used a combination of informal conversations and semi-structured interviews. According to Boeije (2009: 62), interviews can be classified as structured, semi-structured or unstructured. Interviews are one of the most relevant qualitative case study methods facilitating the investigating of unique aspects of the case in deep detail. In this research, I chose semi-structured interviews, which are characterized by a list of topics for the interview, because it corresponded to understanding the social phenomenon of the experience

of rural authenticity and allowed to encompass all the multitude of aspects forming this phenomenon. Semi-structured interviews help to explore opinions, feelings and emotions pertaining to the experience of authenticity in farm tourism in depth rather than only through reported words (Denscombe, 2014).

Informal conversations were enacted predominantly at the beginning of the research to select the case studies for the fieldwork. While attending the touristic fair in Leeuwarden, in the Netherlands, on February 3, informal interviews turned out to become the first step towards a deep insight in the research issue by looking into the relevant field questions, which I had previously overlooked (Bernard & Bernard; 2012). As a positive consequence of conducted informal interviews, my theoretical framework and the research design have been established in such a concrete and thorough manner. During the fieldwork, informal conversations were while participating in farm activities together with other tourists and communicating with farmers in non-official circumstances. At the end of a day, I took notes of informal conversations in my diary as recommended by Agar (1996). Moreover, when possible, a voice recorder equipment was used.

### **3.2.1.1. Sampling, recruitment and access**

As remarked by Morse and Field (1996), it is advisable to use the principle of maximization, when selecting a setting. This notion implies that a logical location and participants in the fieldwork are desirable to entirely examine the researched topic. During the selection of participants, purposive sampling (a priori) was determined as crucial for choosing people intentionally (Curtis et al., 2000). Deductive (a priori) sampling was used for making selection driven by the theoretical framework, leading the researcher from the outset. Patton (1990) points out that the primary goal of the purposive sampling is to incorporate ‘information-rich cases for in-depth study’ (Patton 1990: 182). In this research, after choosing farms, in each Dutch farm stay owners were selected respectively for getting the understanding about the experience of authenticity offered by these places. The farms, as described above, were found while visiting the tour exhibition and recruited in accordance with the research criteria. In general, the sampling was not determined beforehand, and sampling strategies were primarily oriented to uncover and interpret the majority of perspectives and experiences (Ziebland & McPherson, 2006).

Afterwards, each entrepreneur was asked to suggest tourists to be interviewed. The sample size pursued ‘saturation’ related to the notion that the field of interest was completely explained for each category and the relationship between categories are accounted for as well. Denscombe (2014) identifies this method of the sample size as cumulative banked on non-probability techniques such as the purposive, theoretical or snowball sampling. At this stage, snowball or convenience samplings were applied in order to recruit access and establish contacts with respondents. Such parameters as the age “older than 15” and “English speaker” were required by me and taken into consideration. I also intended to interact with tourists who were there alone or with families, stayed a short period or longer than just the weekend, foreigners or Dutch people.

*Interview guides* were made up for both the entrepreneurs of Dutch farm stays and tourists. After being elaborated, the two interview guides were sent to my supervisor, Arjaan Pellis, and was appraised and criticized by him. The pilot interview, pretending to be conducted with tourists in rural areas, was probed in carrying out interviews with peers. The second interview, aimed at the owners of Dutch farm stays was tested in a nearby Dutch farm in Wageningen.

Then, the actual interviews were led according to the interview guide, encompassing the list of topics and potential questions (see Appendix 1, 2). All the research questions were covered by compiled interview questions, which built on the conceptual framework and the requirements towards the selection of the farms. However, the existing of key words allowed to expand definite topics and planned questions into more open realms of the interview, whereby interviewees were encouraged to give broad and free expressions concerning relevant issues. Hence, the interview guide should be evaluated not as the strict order of actions, but rather an intermediate tool of the personal connection between the researcher and interviewees, which is unique and not foreseeable in each case. Therefore, this fact exemplifies the opportunity to derive valuable information in the qualitative research owing to such a diverse method as semi-structured interviews.

To sum up, by using the interview guides elaborated, I have managed to conduct 25 interviews, with a farmer in each farm respectively and 12 tourists at “De Brömmels” farm, 6 tourists at “De Blökke” farm, and 4 at “Overleekerhoeve” farm for covering the core research issues and interpreting them (see Appendix 3). With the permission of the interviewees, the interviews were recorded with a voice recorder and, in the meanwhile, certain notes were made by me.

### **3.2.2. Participant observations**

I adhere to Agar (1996), who says that observations and interviews should mutually interact in order to gain a deep insight into the phenomenon explored, which is why I have also conducted participant observations as another method qualitative research. Due to using observations, we can become more familiar with a concern and acquire valuable information, which then will facilitate more efficient interviews. Participant observation leads to intuitive understanding of what occurs, who or what is engaged, when and why occasions happen, building on the opinions of participants (Jorgensen, 1989). This is a systematic method of data collection that banks on the researcher ability to gather data through his or her senses (O’Leary, 2004: 170).

In order to examine the experience of authenticity and all the consequences, my decision was to take part in an observation as an active participant. Furthermore, my personal experience in the field of rural tourism, as a person who grew up in the countryside, encouraged me to experience and appraise the authenticity of rurality in my own research. In the goat farm “the Brömmels”, I was taught the unique method of goat cheese making. During this activity, I managed to take some photos, which was allowed and took a few notes. However, final notes were taken at the end of a day in my diary. Similarly, at the dairy farm “the Blökke”, I was an active participant of a milking process and driving a tractor. In terms of informed consent, the

farmers and tourists were aware of the purpose of my participation. Through taking part in these activities, I aimed to cover these elements proposed by Spradley (1980):

*What people do:* the performance of traditional authentic farm activities by farmers and engagement of tourists by means of interaction.

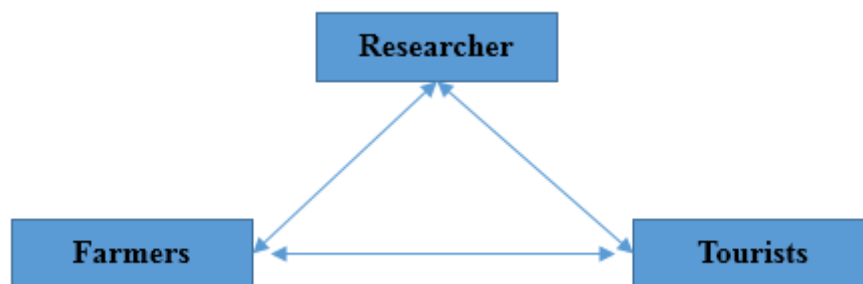
*What people know:* the knowledge of farmers about the process and the opinion of tourists.

*What people create and use:* the demonstration of existing rural life of farmers to tourists.

Additionally, I sought to embrace such aspects of performed farm authenticity as emplacement, which is oriented to the physical presence of objects in a farm and location surrounding me (material space), embodiment related to the position of people in the observed space (social space) and emotions, which pertain to people's mind, mood and reaction (emotional or moral space).

However, I also employed moderate participation, contributing to a good combination of involvement and independence (Spradley, 1980). In all the farms, I observed the preferences of tourists regarding entertainments offered in farms, intending to elicit tourists' desires towards particular elements of rural authenticity. That time, three times a day for one hour, I observed the interaction of tourists with farmers, farm animals and nature by taking notes. In the literature, there are such types of notes as observational or descriptive, methodological and theoretical (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973). In my research, all these kinds of notes have taken place. Yet, observational notes as field notes described the list of events occurring around me during the observation. With regard to theoretical notes, I used appropriate theoretical concepts in order to interpret obtained data for a further analyzing and reporting (Leavy & Hesse-Biber, 2006). In turn, methodological notes reflect upon the role of a researcher's learning experience in a study and favor the enhancing of the quality of research due to noticed mistakes. I should remark that notes taken directly after observations were mainly descriptive pertaining to events and objects. Afterwards, building on theoretical concepts, I expressed my point of view concerning observed processes through methodological notes.

It is important to mention that, in general, participant observation is primarily research experience and relatively unstructured, which is caused by exploratory research questions (Mackellar, 2013). This fact, on the one hand, induces many critiques because of a significant role of interpretation in this case, but on the other hand, the uniqueness of gained data highlights the strength of the method. In general, my observation can be illustrated as the next figure.



**Figure 2.** *The illustration of the relationship between the members of each case study*

### 3.2.3. Photo-elicitation

Photo-elicitation is defined as deriving visual data through photographs (Boeije, 2009). This method is differentiated in the literature as research-generated photo-elicitation, photo-elicitation with participant photographers and elicitation with archival or found photographs (Harper, 2002). In my study, I focused on research-generated visual data allowing me to grasp the phenomenon of rural authenticity and illustrate events organized by farms for tourists. In my opinion, this method is an integral part of participant observations, when the joint implementation of research-generated visual data and participant observations ideally complement each other and produce rich and illustrative data.

Researcher-generated images are images a researcher has taken while gathering data. They are chiefly used as visual records and visual diaries as part of participant observations. These types of methods can be considered to be similar, but Prosser and Schwartz (1998: 122) point out that the main distinction of visual records is “to provide an 'unbiased' record of a reality”. Following this point, these images are acknowledged to provide “extra-somatic 'memory'” (Prosser & Schwartz, 1998: 122). Subsequently, in their opinion, pictures are converted into diaries, where visual information can be biased while analyzing.

Therefore, there are many discussions about the quality of scientific research, which employs visual data collection. Yet, in any case, pictures help to study the social construction of certain realities, including multiple interpretations by different observers. The role of a researcher is still decisive there.

## 3.3. Data Analysis and Its Preparation

All the used methods for collecting data in qualitative research described in the previous chapter produced field notes, digital recordings, transcribed interviews and photographs. However, it must be noted that originally generated data is “raw” data, which has to be prepared for subsequent analysis and the final transformation of data into findings.

According to Boeije (2009), there are a few important aspects of data preparation. First of all, it is necessary to organize various data files for retrieving data. During fieldwork, I was saving gained information in my laptop in different folders consistent with the location of my case studies, the date of data collection, persons from whom I obtained data and the type of information. Secondly, recorded interviews and images must be transcribed. In my research, I transcribed all the recorded interview data manually by listening to records and writing the text down. It is noticeable to emphasize that during the transcription of recordings, the data was slightly changed because gestures, postures, intonations and an eye contact have not generated the meaning of the data anymore. However, this is a big advantage of recording the data, since recordings guarantee the quality of the data and confirm the degree to which the initial data and the interpretations of a researcher conform to each other (Boeije, 2009). In order to supplement the research with the lack of an emotional aspect, I used diaries for participant notes and daily research impressions.

The third component of data preparation is removing from the data all the information that personifies participants and break the promise of confidentiality. However, my participants were not against of including their personal in my interview transcripts, observation notes and diaries. I ascribed no special pseudonym to participants. The last component of data preparation is a specific manipulation with the data for its subsequent entering and processing in software-programs (Lewins and Silver, 2007). In my study, a manual coding was used.

As soon as the data was ready for analysis, I started its coding, being navigated by the principle of Boeije's (2009). She offers to apply *the spiral of analysis*, implying to look for topics appearing from data by means of coding. The qualitative analysis includes segmenting and reassembling the data according to the problem statement by using the complexity of open, axial and selective coding techniques. Applying open and axial coding, I split up the data into smaller parts and subsequently employed selective coding to reassemble the data, thereby separating the data into meaningful parts. Following the opinion of Charmaz (2006), who is persuaded that coding is the first step towards creating analytic interpretations. As such, codes show how well information has been selected, divided and sorted before embarking on an analytical explanation.

I started open coding after the first two interviews, which highlights that the consistency of data collection and data analysis can be switched and it is not always linear. All the collected data was read thoroughly and afterwards separated into fragments. The fragments were collated with one another and assigned with a specific code. I used both a deductive approach of coding based on the applied theoretical concepts as well as an inductive approach, when codes appeared from the gathered data (Flick, 2014). Formulating codes from text, I also extracted codes from the literal terminology of participants known as "in vivo", which contribute to comprehending a particular experience or event (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I was reading through the whole text and summarized the pieces of text, which convey similar meanings, thereby drawing attention to fragments which were meaningful for my research. Coding in qualitative research helps to develop abstract ideas from text and transform them in interpreted data (Charmaz, 2006). The result of open coding was a list of codes or "a coding scheme" (Boeije, 2009) (see Appendix 4). In terms of observation notes, the same method was applied and descriptive and interpretive notes were used as codes. Eventually, open coding was ended as soon as saturation had been reached, signifying that there was necessary no code. Thus, open coding is usually used at the beginning of the research during the gathering of the data.

After further collecting, axial coding was the next step in analyzing data. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998: 96), "axial coding" refers to "a set of procedures whereby data is put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories". The main purpose was to identify which elements were more relevant and which were less meaningful. By using axial coding, I divided categories into subcategories, concretized the realms of each category and reassembled the data. In turn, I determined whether the elaborated codes represented the data sufficiently and assigned new codes to the data if needed. Subsequently, a code tree with the main categories and sub-categories was created. Selective coding was the last type of coding applied to my research after defining different categories. As Boeije's (2009) emphasizes, selective coding seeks for the relationship between the categories in order to



comprehend what is occurring in the field. This type of coding is a logical step intending to combine all the missed codes after the segmenting of the data. Selective coding is an alternative to the selecting of the core category, when particular categories are accepted as theoretical concerns. During this step, I strove to understand whether all the gained data can be portrayed within the conceptual framework. However, I would like to emphasize that in practice the order of the described types of coding was not linear and sometimes open coding and axial coding merged with one another and, simultaneously, axial coding was integrated with selective coding.

### **3.4. Reflection on Methodology**

This chapter reflects on the quality of the research and the ethics issues.

#### **3.4.1. Validity and reliability**

Validity and reliability are one the most meaningful indicators of the quality of the research.

Validity is specific about what we yield in order to estimate. Measurement validity assesses whether the measure constructed for a certain concept indeed measures the intended concept (Bryman et al., 2008). There are face validity and content validity for the estimation of validity (Cutcliffe and McKenna, 2002). By applying face and content validity, I asked my fellows and the supervisor as an expert respectively to take a look at the way in which the interview guide and the observation plan had been constructed in order to get their opinion and approval. Thus, internal validity has been confirmed by mentioned methods of the estimation of validity ensuring that I describe and explain in data analysis the performance of rural authenticity in farms consistent with the research questions. Nevertheless, probable biased interview questions while conducting an interview, not natural behavior of observed people, and the influence of my own prejudices on the flow of interviews can be determined as the shortcomings of internal validity.

However, external validity can be threatened by the lack of statistical generalizability for the reasons that in my research, as in all typical qualitative research, there were only 25 interviewed people in 3 farms, which does not allow for an extensive generalization of results. Moreover, theoretical generalizability cannot be wholly achieved because with regard to nationalities primarily Dutch tourists have been involved in the research. Therefore, I cannot prove that the results of the research also embrace the position of other nationalities and their perceptions of the experience of rural authenticity remains obscure. In addition, the performance of rural authenticity has been examined merely within the Dutch farm context.

Reliability is related to the sequence of measures used in the research. As Bryman and et al. (2008) claim, reliability is confirmed when the repeated measurements of the same phenomenon result in the same outcomes. This fact is acknowledged to be an evidence of the not changeable phenomenon, which does not depend on the time of the project and the method

chosen by the researcher. In short, due to reliable methods, repeated observations and interviews should bring about the same results. However, in qualitative research, reliability of interviews and participant observations can be questioned, because there is no guarantee that in the repeated research similar codes will be assigned to the same fragment of the text and vice versa. Yet, unlike in quantitative research, methods in qualitative research cannot be standardized, which highlights the ability of this method to uncover the phenomenon.

### 3.4.2. Ethics

According to Boeije's (2009: 43), ethics is associated with finding the balance between benefits and risks of harm. Ethical principles are separated into three fields such as informed consent, privacy and confidentiality and anonymity. Pertaining to *informed consent*, the owners of farms and interview participants were aware of that they were researched and gave their consent (Endacott, 2005). Another principle, *privacy*, concerns the interests of participants to regulate the access that others people have to them (Sieber, 2013). In other words, my participants decided by themselves that they were ready to share possessed information about themselves with me, because I, as the researcher, was recognized to interfere in the private area. *Confidentiality* pertains to data (observation notes, digital recordings of interviews, transcripts) and guarantees that the use of the data will protect privacy. Ensuring confidentiality in my research, I did not use the informed content statement, which officially articulates what can be done with information from the permission of informants. Confidentiality is closely concerned with *anonymity*, implying that the names of participants and other personal information (for example, professions, addresses) should be not consigned to the data (Sieber, 2013). Yet, my participants agreed on making their personal information publicly available.

## 4. RESULTS

In this chapter, consisting of three comparative case studies, I will first consider the observed performance and self-perception of farm authenticity described by farmers. Afterwards, I will describe the performance and perceptions of tourists in each farm respectively, subsequently analyzing these observations by means of conceptual insights into objective, constructed and existential theories of authenticity.

### 4.1. “De Brömmels” Farm

In this section, I will consider the performance of authenticity in “De Brömmels” farm from the perspectives of both farmers and tourists. Furthermore, my personal observation and the analysis of gained results will be represented here.

#### 4.1.1. Performance of authenticity

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, Bert, the farmer of “De Brömmels” farm, met me in Winterswijk by car. Having seen this very fancy and old car with the smiling farmer, I anticipated my research on the farm to be interesting and fruitful. Bert narrated that 370 years ago, his family came here and rented a field from a big farmer. They rented approximately 3-4 hectares, and in 1830-1840 they bought them. Later on, Bert’s grandparents built a new house. The farmer directly inherited the business from his parents and then, in 1982, the idea of making camping together with the farm emerged.

This idea is explained by two reasons: “One is getting extra money and the second is to have contact with people from the city. Both are good, we have a lot of people from the city and we gain a lot of money from them. We started with three places for camping in 1988... We started with about 25 cows and 8 pigs. In the first year we bought one goat for fun and in the second year we bought 4 goats and we milked them by hand. In 1989, we milked 12 goats. Then 24, 26, 88 and then in 2001 we had about 60 goats and no cow anymore” (Bert, the owner).

Afterwards, Bert added how the idea of making goat cheese came to his mind: “And the idea, you can see how important it is to go on holiday. Because we were on holiday in France and it was very popular to buy a piece of goat cheese on a market in France. A lot of tourists from Holland did it. And we started with people to try this. “O, we do not want to smell it. Because it smells strange, we do not like it. In those 20-30 years everything changed. People are not talking about how disgusting it is, but talking about: “It is a nice taste, feels good... Yes, it is a very popular product. In the earlier days only a few people who went to France bought it, nowadays everyone is buying goat cheese.” Furthermore, Bert always attempts to distinguish his product by buying new forms, adding various herbs and using different colors for cheese in order to transform it in more traditional and idyll. “We want our products to be out of a supermarket. Because when you put it in a supermarket, you lose your little shop and you lose your contact with a customer” (Bert, the owner).

The location of the farm is typical for a small farm; the extension of the farm can damage a landscape, which is why the farmer decided to make up something unique for a world market. As a result, goat cheese has distinguished this farm. Having asked a question about the authenticity of the farm for tourists, immediately I gained a detailed answer from Bert: “It is breakstone, not modern things used or building cow stables. When you go around, you see cow stables nowadays and the roof is totally made of plastic, outside is from plastic. When you want to get authentic, you need breakstone, wood, green paints, all kinds of these things. Not a huge number of animals.” Referring to the main idea of objective authenticity, I would argue that the imagination of authenticity described by Bert is the example of this kind of authenticity. A breakstone, wood, green paints, not a huge number of animals pertain to the measurable characteristics of originality of toured objects or also the observed/untouched nature of authenticity, defined by me as the materiality dimension (Frisvoll, 2013) In Bert’s opinion, the existence of the shop with his own goat cheese and other hand-made products on the farm makes the farm authentic. Tourists can come to the shop, buy cheese or order bread, meat or quark. As Bert assumes, if people want to find something authentic, they should search on the Internet deeper, because all the routine information is always on the first page, which is much more paid. His wife and he also hand out the booklets of the farm and placed the information about the farm in two uncommercial newspapers.

This representation of authenticity reproduced by the farmer through the shop and spreading the farm information reflects the idea of constructed or symbolic authenticity. According to Wang (1999), things are seen to be authentic because they are constructed in the appropriate way of beliefs, views and power. Hence, while analyzing the words of Bert, it can be witnessed that the owner constructs an authenticity of his farm and represents his vision to tourists. In other words, this performed authenticity is staged (MacCannell, 1999) or the element of pseudo-backstage concept in accordance with Daugstad and Kirchengast (2013), when tourists and hosts are tied invisibly and constructed due to translating authenticity in particular farm tourism settings.

Bert guesses that the majority of tourists either had a connection with agriculture in the past or have one nowadays. In his opinion, people from cities think badly about big farmers because TV always promotes negative information about this sector, and only here people may realize a ‘real situation’ in farm business. “People search for a nice place and an experience ... they want new things, they want to see new things. That is the reason why a lot of people, when you talk to them, live in the countryside, connected a little with agriculture.” According to Bert, goats are for another kind of people, and people who hate flies never choose a goat farm. “Some people think goat farms are smelling, ugly and have a lot of flies. It could be” (Bert, the owner).

During a tourism season, from the beginning of April until the end of October, such activities as harvesting straw, picking fruits, helping with milking and feeding goats are available for tourists. “In spring, people can buy a bottle of milk and you can feed animals by paying for feeding my animals, and pay for the food. So, I can make money out of it” (Bert, the owner). Thus, following the owner, all the activities are considered to be real and natural. Walking with goats is another popular entertainment. Tourists have two goats and a map showing a particular route. Describing this activity, Bert said that time is money and tourists have to pay for this

activity in advance by the reason that after walking there is a risk not to get money from tourists. I would like to remark here these agricultural activities as an additional activity to farming are directly referred to agricultural farm's activities and rural culture; they display traditional methods of processes, using own products. In other words, these activities reflect on agricultural knowledge and a historical and cultural aspect.

What is more, one of the most popular activities is an excursion: "When I am telling something about a goat farm to 10-30 persons. And I make it short goat covered. For example on Sunday. Now we have less, but during autumn and spring, we have a lot of groups, 10, 12 or 15 people. Sometimes you have a bus of 50 people. It means that the first group is going to taste. Another group is with me, I am telling something. After 20 minutes, we change" (Bert). The owner is persuaded that the excursion brings positive emotions to people and establishing a connection between them: "Excursions are more for telling people positive things about the goat farm. It is also about jokes. It is not easy to make jokes in English. You can make them in German. We have a fairy tale about a wolf and the seven goats. It is a famous Dutch fairy tale. Every Dutch adult tells it to his children. If you do not know a fairy tale, you will not understand a joke. There is also a book about them."

In this way, participating in farm activities mentioned above, tourists cognize existential (subjective) authenticity because it is directly related to actual touristic experience (Heitmann, 2011). Especially the opportunity to understand personally a place in time and space makes the experience authentic. As Wang (2000) emphasized, in such liminal experiences, people feel themselves more authentic not primarily because of the original objects, but rather owing to engagement in non-everyday activities. Both intra-personal and inter-personal parts of existential authenticity take place here by forming the experienced dimension.

In my question about tourist's emotions and feelings, Bert was doubting what to reply. From his point of view, everybody has his/her own expectations. The German people told him that this is an idyll. "People stop with bikes here and say: What a place!... They are feeling nature. That is fun. Everyone can say that it is beautiful, while somebody can say that it is ugly. It is feelings. One person feels very well, while another person is walking around and running away. This is not a good feeling" (Bert, the owner). Keeping on talking about feelings, the farmer marked that except tents and caravans, it is feasible to rent a luxury house (see picture 3).



*Figure 3. A luxury house*

Here Bert commented: “What kind of feelings do you want? The feeling of luxury or simplicity in a goat farm. You can choose. What we have learnt it is that people in Holland... You saw that dishwasher in the house. Our luxury house does not have a dishwasher. So, 50% of people will not come because there is no dishwasher. When you have all the luxury at home, you want all the luxury on holiday... How luxurious do you want it?” Additionally, Bert is confident that people on holiday do not think deeply about life because just this place gives a good and safe feeling.

From my point of view, the owner’s opinion opposes the part of existential authenticity bound up with feelings. Following Wang (2000), existential authenticity integrates personal or intersubjective feelings that are aroused by the process of tourist behavior. Certainly, the farmer can mainly suppose what kind of feelings tourists experience, and it is hard to apprehend and summarize how deeply they think about their lives. However, I adhere to the view that achieving emotional or spiritual fulfillment can be not intentional, but rather subconscious and very personal focusing on individual purposes and values in life (Fisher, Francis, and Johnson, 2000).

Following Bert, pictures taken by a helicopter without visiting a place will never provide an authentic touristic experience. “I always look when I see pictures from Brazil, but you always want to be there” (Bert, the owner). However, in the meanwhile, he highlighted that tourists should pay for their experience, depending on what kind of experience and feelings they want to get. People in Holland are very wealthy and they want to have more and more, cleaner and cleaner. In a huge camping, every fifth year everything is renewed, while in this camping everything is simple, but authentic.



#### 4.1.2. Touristic experience

I started my conversation with asking tourists' comprehension of the word "authenticity". Many times I have heard that authentic is the equivalent of real. What about the authenticity of the location of the farm and touristic experience respectively? Here, tourists have described the place as very pure, quiet, beautiful nature, nice people, including the farmer's family and guests in camping.

With regard to the farm place, tourist Dose (female) has noticed: "It is so pure, as life has to be. That is good, not very busy. Everybody works hard, but without stress. Farmers these days want more cows and it is only for money. But it is not the most important thing. You may earn your money, of course, but you should like what you do. I feel that these people are good in what they do, like what they do. They work not only for money. It is very pure here. That is how I see it." Another short, but very precise definition of authenticity of the place appealed to me: "Back to the nature...Nature, animals and people (farmers)" (Shouldy, female). Some people suppose that it is obvious to consider the place authentic because they stay here and see how the farm works. It seems to me that the perception of tourists pertains to the concept of existential authenticity intertwined with the approach of constructed authenticity. Definitely, adhering to Wang (1999) and Belhassen, Caton and Stewart (2008: p. 671), "authenticity is an existential state in which one is true to one's real self in a given moment"; however, to some extent, this moment is constructed by the farm performances of the farmer in my case study.

According to tourists, people in the Netherlands tend to want more luxury and not go back to nature. However, there is a big group of people, preferring big places with a swimming pool, and a small one, who come here to behold a farmer. Probably, if there was a swimming pool, more people would come, but in this case, the farm would not be authentic anymore. At the same time, it is a good place for teaching children about nature and the way of getting milk from goats. People consider the farm authentic because the farm uses its own products and it is good for the environment.

Tourists who visited other farms confidently have claimed that other farms are artificial because there you cannot walk with goats. Besides, in this farm you may not only walk with goats, but also observe traditional buildings, look at a cheese making process and feel yourself part of a farm life. "I know what authenticity means. For farmers, it is showing people all the different assets or facets, for example, goats. Just seeing a milking process, having them around you. All the information, which you can get here" (Rob, male). Again, in my opinion, for this tourist, the digestion of authenticity is tied with the performance of a farm life by the farmer, and it appears to be one of the principles of constructed authenticity. Tourists bank on the meanings ascribed to objects by actors in a social process (Cohen, 1988; Bruner, 1994), who is the farmer in my research.

Nevertheless, while defining farm tourism as authentic, tourists do not constantly associate the farm with a Dutch traditional farm. From their point of view, a typical Dutch farm must have cows instead of goats and not a big number of them: "With cows. Traditional farms in the Netherlands used to be smaller..." (Rene, male). "De Brömmels" farm consists of 65 goats, which complies only with the second requirement, namely a small number of animals.



Simultaneously, other tourists associate a real Dutch farm with the present, with big stables of animals: pigs, goats or cows. “I don’t like it. It is industry, they call it. I think the owner of this farm is doing his best to keep the small amount of animals and integrate the farm with a local community. Not that big” (Jang, male).

This point of view is followed by the opinion of Poul (male), who stresses that it is very quiet at the farm: “The old traditional farm of Bert is very authentic because we do not have cars or traffic at all. Upstairs, there are old things from our past”. According to Jealta (female): “This is more traditional than a lot of farms because this is more the way of farming. But in the past farms did not have camping and cheese making. It is not traditional. Mostly, it is done in a factory, a farmer sells milk and delivers milk to a factory, and the factory makes cheese from it. Not a lot of farms make their own cheese”. Consequently, the opinions of people regarding the extent to which the farm is authentic and traditional vary and are sometimes contradictory. In general, tourists are inclined to characterize Bert’s farm as a traditional Dutch farm because it is old and small, while goats do not demonstrate a farm’s originality. To me, this shows the combination of both constructed and experiential authenticity, when people comprehend that their vision does not correspond to social perspectives about a traditional farm, yet their own experience is in favor of defining it authentic.

The importance of interaction between tourists and the farmer differs among tourists. Some tourists are not intentionally oriented to communication with the farmer and socializing with the farmer is not for them. In the meantime, they deem that the communication with the farmer makes the place real and they would like to know how to grow and feed animals, to make cheese, or where everything comes from. “Everybody feels as in a family. The farmer is a happy, nice and warm person. And you feel welcomed. It is very important” (Irma, female). The speech of Jang (male) confirms this point of view: “...it is very important because I like the way he organizes his farm. I think he does a very good job. For me, that is important. But the most important is an area here, a lot of things which make you come back. It is a camp site. But the way he does it is very important, I like it.”

Questions related to feelings have turned out to be very delicate and people were not always ready to express what they were feeling. My attention was drawn by the thoughts of a tourist, Dose: “Respect for nature, animals, people, everything. Not only thinking about money, big houses, big cars. Whatever it is. It is important to live pure, real, to be satisfied with what you have. It is the most important. We feel the same way of living as Bert has. Money cannot buy everything. You need money, but it is not the most important thing. The world should be happy when people have got this sense of life.” A few times, I have heard that people feel quietness, happiness, relaxation and merely simple life. In case tourists did not know what to answer, they were quite attentive towards other people: “I looked through eyes of people and see that they have fun with goats. I like animals” (Luke, male). Another expression about a tourist’s own state: “Resting. I feel pleasant, forgetting things that you normally have every day” (Jelta, female). Many tourists deeply feel that they are at a natural farm and they try to live as naturally as possible, consequently, the feeling of nature and a basic life.

Only two people mentioned spirituality to describe their experience of rural authenticity. “Spiritual, this is for me. Everything comes together: earth, energy, the moon. This is an ideal combination for opening something new for your soul and mind” (Schouldy, female). Ilana, a young worker there, also shared the experience of her father: “My father does it. On vacation, he wakes up at 6 AM in the morning and just sits, closes his eyes, just being relaxed. Some people need it to be away from the city. This is the best place.” As such, spiritual satisfaction can be achieved not only by religious people in special places, but also among humans closely connected with their physical nature and the nature around them (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005). From a modern perspectives, spirituality is determined as an individual pursuit of meaning and harmony and a belief in an invisible power (Kale, 2004) via the connection with the world and nature. Hence, in my opinion, farm tourism possesses ideal calm sceneries for attaining these goals.



*Figure 4. The scenery on “De Brömmels” farm*

Eventually, people come to the farm guided by different standards of life, which matter to people. In general, nature is the main driver for tourists: “People come here for nature, not for luxury, for going back to a basic life, to be connected with nature (Irma, female)”.

Authenticity comprising experience and emotions is a very debatable issue in philosophy and ethics. For example, Heidegger (1996) regards such authenticity as intrinsically related to experiencing the natural world, while others link it with the pressure of modernity and a growing distance between nature and the routine urban life of people. Comparing the opinion of the farmer with tourists, I would accentuate that his point of view concerning emotional and spiritual satisfaction of tourists is more instrumental and simple: “Do you think that people

when they are going on holiday are so deeply thinking about that? There are more place. Look around, it gives a good feeling, a safe feeling... people search for a nice place and an experience ... they want new things, they want to see new things... I do not think that people are searching for feelings.” With respect to people’s perception about the place, Bert says that tourists chiefly describe it as idyll due to nature and special atmosphere.

#### 4.1.3. Personal observation

Having spent the whole week on the farm as a participant, I have been a witness of situations how approachable Bert is for tourists: “People can ask me questions and they always get a real answer. I answer that they can choose what they want. Some people want to be vegetarian. Goats are walking outside, I give tourists an honest answer. Some people say I don’t buy cheese from you. You cannot always have 100% of customers on your side. There are always people to say: “I don’t like goats, I think it is bad for my stomach”. There are always people who don’t like it” (Bert). During my stay at the farm, I have very often seen people talking to Bert and observing a cheese making process. During milking time, most of them were coming from a tent and asked Bert what he was doing, how many liters the farm produced, etcetera. Undoubtedly, people from camping are more curious about farm life compared to the average shop customers at the farm.

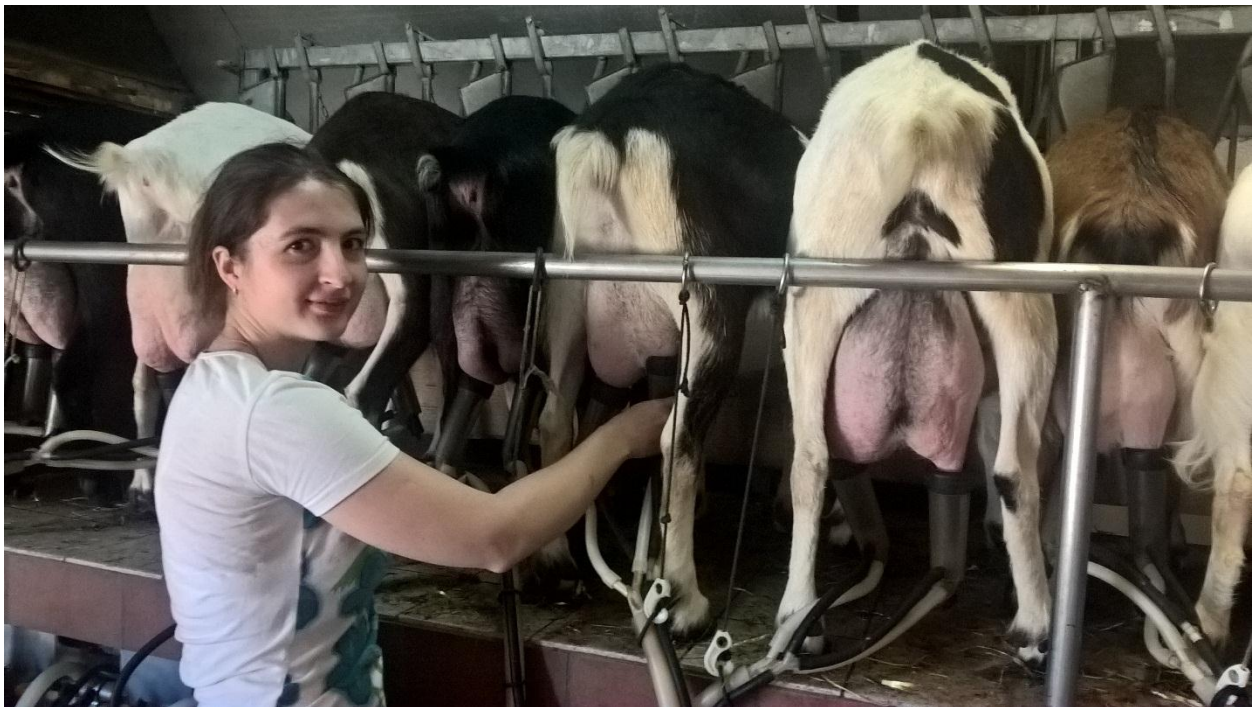
The factor of easy communication with the owner influences the concept of existential authenticity. There is no doubt that “farmers are the guardians of the rural landscape” (Lane, 1994: 105) because through the interaction with the farmer, tourists may find out more profoundly about farm family business, tourism practices and identities. Based on the assumption of Streifeneder about “authentic farm tourism”, I would state that the indicator of tourists’ contact with agriculture and a host is articulated in Bert’s farm as well, either through direct communication with him or passive observation of rural surroundings and a daily farm life.

My observations of involvement of tourists in farm activities have shown that tourists and the customers of the shop mainly gaze at making cheese and milking goats. Even though people are welcome to participate in a cheese making process, which takes place almost every day, and milking goats, happening twice a day, they are not very tempted to participate in these activities. I, as a real participant, helped with cheese making and goat milking for a week, which contributed to a real discovery of a farmer’s life.





*Figure 5. Making cheese on “De Brömmels” farm*



*Figure 6. Milking goats on “De Brömmels” farm*

Unfortunately, all my interviewees intended to just relax, walk around, feel nature, buy some products in the shop, in other words, not to be very active. This fact has been proved by the words of tourist Rob: “If you want to attain real farm experience, it is not necessary to participate. You can also just observe and to be beside a whole process... I think you can always learn from watching what other people do. There is something to be said for people who step in it and do it. I think both can get benefits.”



***Figure 7. Tourists' observation of milking goats on "De Brömmels" farm***

However, one tourist, Maria, told me about her plan regarding activities: "Milking. I have not seen it, but cheese making. And a little shop, you can buy products, which are made here. Cutting the grass and hay balls. For me, it is traditional in a farm. Feeding animals, milking, and the birth of a little goat."

Compared to the position of normal tourists, I was a more privileged participant owing to free access to a farm life. I cannot state that other tourists are forbidden to be engaged in all the activities, yet their interests are more passive and primarily related to observation and gaining information from the farmer through communication.

#### **4.1.4. Sub-conclusion**

In the perception of the farmer, the authenticity of a farm consists of old-style things, such as stone buildings, wood, few animals, and the provision of traditional materials. The existing of goats, a goat cheese made at the farm, and the simplicity of the farm camping identifies the farm as authentic. His position is that tourists are not mainly driven by the necessity to achieve new feelings here, but rather their previous or real current background referred to agriculture motivates them to prioritize this kind of tourism.

From the perspectives of tourists, the farm appears to be authentic because of its purity, beautiful nature, animals, quietness and the hospitality of the farmer. While being on the farm in the absence of luxury, tourists imagine that they are back to nature. Moreover, walking with goats and the performance of a cheese making process add uniqueness to the place, transforming tourists into part of a farm life. Despite the fact that mostly the farm does not come up to people's expectations about a traditional Dutch farm with cows, tourists are convinced



that the farmer is doing his best and, hence, the farm is authentic. In relation to farm activities, tourists prefer to remain passive actors relying on their curiosity, but not a direct involvement.

Searching for feelings and especially spirituality has stayed blurred in people's consciousness and seems to be not analyzed profoundly by them. According to Bert, feelings and emotional and spiritual satisfaction are not the priority for tourists; however, existential authenticity includes personal or intersubjective feelings that are evoked in tourists' mind through their practices and experiences. Mostly, it also pertains to the notion of the conscious self, the distinguishing of the self from others, the finding of something real and desirable and reaching emotional or spiritual fulfillments (Garrety, 2008; Sharpley & Jepson, 2011; Liedtka, 2008). Undoubtedly, the farmer can only guess at the depth of tourists' feelings, and people may be directed by the desire to reach a certain level of satisfaction unconsciously.

## **4.2. "De Blökke" Farm**

### **4.2.1. Performance of authenticity**

My acquaintance with "De Blökke" farm began on the 13th of July at the station Anholt. The farmer's wife, Ingrid, picked me up and we went to the farm. While driving, she told me that at this moment her husband, her daughter and she are living on the farm. She added that they were looking forward to seeing me, and a small cozy room was prepared for me in the house.

The owners of the cow farm "De Blökke", Hans and Ingrid, married in 1989 and afterwards decided to launch farm tourism in 1994. According to Hans, in 1994 they started with camping, which firstly consisted of 5 touristic places: "We are the third farm generation. Then we started camping. Ingrid could stay at home. Camping was getting bigger and bigger. Firstly, we had one toilet and one shower for tourists. Later we built a new building." Nowadays, the number of camping places has reached 40. As the owners think, the location of their place is very positive and most of people choose the farm and camping. Moreover, their house founded in 1926 demonstrates the example of a natural farm life. However, the farmers are doubting how attractive their farm would be for tourists if they rebuilt the house and transformed it into a modern one.

The farmers are persuaded that their farm is real, in other words, "authentic", and they are authentic too. "We do our normal things in a normal life, we do not do abnormal things. People see the normal life that we live here, no special things" (Hans). Each new tourist in their farm is treated with a bottle of milk and some homemade snacks. This simple sign is the evidence of kindness and hospitality. Coming back to one of my research questions about performed authenticity in Dutch farm tourism, here I presume that the showing of a normal life by the farmers is the natural performance of farm authenticity. Undoubtedly, milk and some snacks are given by the farmers in order to sincerely welcome tourists in their life, and it is just a slight complementary component of constructed authenticity.

These farmers do not invite somebody to show how they live, and did not build a house as a performance for tourists. Another notion is that their shop is always open and tourists are

surprised because this is based on trust. For the Netherlands, it is not common, because after 8 PM everybody tries to close their doors. Here, you may choose whatever you want and put money in the till. There is no control. It surprises tourists a lot, and also makes this place more memorable, attractive, and real to them. I asked the farmer's wife about trust and Ingrid explained: "When you give trust to the people..." at the same time, Hans added: "They give it back. I hope (laughing)." Trust here reveals the indicator of existential authenticity whereby tourists believe in the reality of their experience and feel to be real members of the farm family. Additionally, the degree to which tourists are welcomed by the farmers is very high (Di Domenico and Miller; 2012).

At first glance, the majority of tourist activities offered by the farmers are not unique, but especially their simplicity gives the feeling of the authentic experience of a farm life. "We have two ponies and a horse. Every evening or morning tourists can ride a horse" (Hans). I have seen how a small boy was driving a tractor together with Hans, and to be honest, although it seems primitive, the eyes of the boy were sparkling with excitement. At the farm, tourists may help with milking cows, feeding animals, gathering cows from the field. All the activities are alive and, as Ingrid said, "It is a normal life". Once a week, she makes dough for bread and then she bakes it with children on a fire, while a lady accompanies with a guitar.



*Figure 8. Children's entertainment on "De Blökke" farm*

Furthermore, the farmers organize a trip to a clog (wooden shoes) factory, another farm with pigs and a windmill. It should be noticed that the farmers participate in these activities themselves as well.

A tourist's desire in interaction with the farmers and curiosity about farmer's life is very high. It has been proved by my observations as well as by Ingrid's comment: "Sometimes they are waiting until I come to talk to them... Most people are talking so much. They ask about the



farm, the rules. We have many rules towards farmers from government. People are surprised that it is so difficult. We try to tell them how the real life of farmers is. They watched it on TV, but not in reality. On TV, it is mostly negative. That is why coming here, they see that our business is not so bad”. Consequently, in order to obtain authentic experience tourists are keen on communication with the farmers and become quite intimate. In the literature, Philip et al. (2010) advocate that due to interaction between farmers and tourists, the latter obtain authentic experience and an insight into farm practices.

While interviewing the farmers, they said that some people have been going there for ten years and they have made friends. Many of them come at the same time each year. “We also have some friends from camping. We have people from South Holland. When they have a vacation, they can use our house, while we may use theirs... Our daughter has two girlfriends from camping” (Ingrid). However, the farmers adhere to the opinion that primarily the middle class people choose farm tourism: “The director of a bank will go to a hotel or a big camping. The middle class will come here. A high class will go to another country or to a hotel” (Ingrid).

#### **4.2.2. The touristic experience of authenticity**

While looking into the touristic experience of authenticity, I was quite astonished that the majority of people are familiar with the word “authenticity” on this farm. Tourists, preferably with children, have indicated that the camping place at the farm is not big, but there are a lot of things for children there. The opportunity to let children see a real (farm) life, observe a milking process and other daily farm activities makes this place authentic. “I think the most important thing is that children can join a farmer’s job, help with animals...this is the most authentic thing here, children can do what they want. A direct contact with animals is the sign of authenticity” (Jessica, female).

Other tourists have highlighted that authenticity means real and Hans and Ingrid’s farm is very authentic because they have managed to combine the concept of farming and tourism. With due attention, the hosts explain to new people how to milk cows, brush horses and feed cows. This fact unites country life and tourism together. Even though there is no swimming pool, bars, tennis courts, showering and washing up are outside, more and more people try to come back.

Tourists consider the place authentic because farming is the first priority, while camping is extra. “That is what Hans, the owner, does. He is taking care of cows, he has to milk them every morning and evening. He takes care of his property, besides he has some time for tourists and guests and involve them. If you want to learn, you can learn, you can help. It is what authentic means” (Bring, male). Some people have been curious about the difference between camping on not a functioning farm “for show” and an actual farm; based on their experience, the last one has appeared more authentic to them. The question regarding whether authentic tourist experience may be attained in a non-functioning farm has remained debatable. However, the opinion of people from this farm are aligned with the position of Streifeneder (2016), who states that authentic farm tourism should be arranged at an active farm, “a farm where agriculture is currently being practiced” (Phillip et al., 2010: 755).

While talking to people about the authenticity of their experience, a very simple and genuine answer of one of the tourists called my attention. For him, authenticity is how people and a normal life are. In my opinion, it is a very elementary, but simultaneously a profound explanation. I kept on asking about how authentic this farm is and tourist Rene (male) elucidated: “It is gentle. The farmers are real as they are, they do everything and they like it. We saw the birth of a calf, you live in a life, not in a factory. The things, which the farmer does, and his interest for the camping and people are authentic. We chill with him, help him, see what he is doing.” In short, tourists temporarily live the life of a traditional farmer, thereby proving the view of Reisinger and Steiner (2006: 74) about constructed authenticity: “For village life to be authentic, it must accord with how one thinks village life is”. Moreover, by helping the farmer, tourists feel this experience by means of existential authenticity and not only see separate toured objects, which is characterized for objective authenticity.

Thus, all my interviewees have defined the farm as authentic and, consequently, their experience as well. However, the imagination of a traditional Dutch farm did not always comply with the description of farm “De Blökke”. For some tourists, this farm being small and not highly computerized resembles an original Dutch farm. In contrast, it has been underlined that a traditional Dutch farm has 200-300 cows, rather than 65, and also grows various crops. Nevertheless, this remark does not oppose the opinion that “De Blökke” farm is authentic, since the farm is functioning and farm dairy business is the main income for the farmers. To a certain extent, I agree with Streifeneder (2016) on the point that for tourists it is more reachable to experience authentic agritourism on a dairy farm or farms with livestock than on a farm specialized only in a plant growing, when agricultural activities are available for a short period (Busby & Rendle, 2000).

Furthermore, the location of the farm has been regarded as a special lovely place with the farmers’ house as a very authentic building.



*Figure 9. “De Blökke” farm*

Tourists are aware that the house was built in 1926 and directly inherited from the farmer's grandfather. They associate the house with a traditional Dutch farm, connection with reality, and coming back to their roots. "They are the third generation who are living here. It is great from father to son...But in the neighborhood, there are not so many authentic farms anymore...They start losing their authenticity. They have a small camping and only 10 cows, but then I say whether it is business or it is a farm with cows for tourists" (Bring, male). Hence, the familiarity with the original history of the farm and the witnessing of the farm life are supposed to be the sign of authenticity for tourists.

The next feature of the experience of authenticity, analyzed by me, is the role of interaction between farmers and tourists. Tourists presume that on the farm the communication between them and the farmers is very close, which is very significant for tourists because the farmers can always help and tell them how they have organized their business. "They are super friendly. The step is not too high to come to them and ask them. It is a good thing. Between 10 and 12 they are busy; they are always approachable at any other time" (Cherchia, female). My observation has also proved that tourists want to get closely acquainted with the farmers and, as a result, the farmers respect and love their guests and many things are based on trust. For instance, I was very surprised, having seen a farmer's shop, which is always open. At any time, people can take milk, eggs, meat, and yogurt and leave money in a small pot. Nobody controls this process, which causes more respect and kindness towards the farmers. "We like it, just for free to communicate. It is easy and also authentic" (Rene, male).

Participating in farm activities makes tourists' experience much brighter and more memorable. A traditional trip to a clog factory is organized by the farm once a week. The farmers go to the factory with children and adults, where tourists are told about the history of the wooden shoes and allowed to buy some souvenirs. "Hans and Ingrid do it by themselves. They think of what they can do for entertainment. That is great" (Bring, male). Another tourist, Jessica, shares her impressions about being involved in farm activities very enthusiastically: "Last night Ingrid made bread on a stick for children on a fire and they have a lot of nice things for children: painting, making something by hands with paper. The farmer's wife arranges everything for children. She does it very well". Participating in milking is also possible, even though it does not occur automatically. Tourists are eager to join, becoming part of the farm life. In the opinion of Phillip et al. (2010), a physical participation of tourist in farm tasks is the most significant indicator of tourist authentic experience.

Moving on to feelings and emotions, tourists have emphasized that in this camping compared to big ones they feel piece and quietness in their mind and body. "Again, because they are so kind, you feel welcome. It is a good place to stay at this moment" (Bring, male). While another tourist, John (male), believes that his family is the part of the family of Hans and Ingrid. "It is a bit of a reunion every year. That is why we know each other well. We like it here. It is a little bit coming home. Everybody is relaxed here." Thus, relaxation and happiness are the main feelings this place evokes to the tourists. Their first aim is to get relaxed and escape city life. What is more, people's education and social status do not influence their decision to choose this place. It is for people who do not want to be in a large area.



### 4.2.3. Personal observation

Based on my experience, I should mention that I as a researcher have striven to attain the experience of authenticity in a farm life too during my weekend with the farm family. For example, milking 65 cows in the evening was a real farm activity, where I not only gained new skills, but also appreciated how heavy this labor is. I would dare to guess that other tourists are afraid of working hard on vacation, and it could be a reason why they are not passionate about direct participation in farm life.



*Figure 10. The participating in a milking process on “De Blökke” farm*

On the farm, as I have mentioned before, tourists may help with milking cows, feeding animals, gathering cows from the field. However, especially collecting cows from the field induces a lot of interests among tourists and make them enthusiastic about this activity regardless of their age.



*Figure 11. The scenery on “De Blökke” farm*

Additionally, I have had the same experience as the children, driving a tractor together with the farmer, and it cannot be literally described how much happiness it brought to me.



*Figure 12. Driving a tractor on “De Blökke” farm*



What is more, only in this farm I have lived in a farmhouse and, hence, I have attained a very intimate observation of the farm family life. During the whole stay, every day I ate with them and had access to whatever I needed. On Sunday, when religious people rest, I got an unforgettable experience, while cycling together with the farmers for 4 hours and then eating an ice cream in Germany, which is located 1 kilometer from the farm. I am absolutely certain that I have managed to feel deeply authentic farm life from “backstage” by positioning myself. This engagement partially depends on the extent to which farmers and their families are hospitable and open. The more dynamic this interaction is, the more authentic the experience tourists are likely to attain. In this farm, I was welcome to explore the farmland and get a genuine insight into farming practices (Phillip et al., 2010: 756) due to a special permission of the farmers.

#### **4.2.4. Sub-conclusion**

Thus, at “De Blökke” farm, the farmers perform to tourists their normal daily life without any special arrangements, whereby tourists may get authentic farm experience. The distinctive feature of the farm is a trustful attitude to tourists and in consequence, people distinguish the place and appreciate the successful combination of farm and tourism business. The farmers’ traditional old building, the cows and a small shop with farmers’ milk products are the main attributes of objective rural authenticity for tourists. Farm activities, which at first glance seem primitive, contribute to an educational experience of both children and adults about daily farm life through direct involvement. It is noticeable that each farm activity is led by the farmers, which brings the farmers and tourists together and facilitates a memorable authentic experience. This is the bright example of existential authenticity, when through direct engagement in agricultural activities, guests become acquainted with the owners and make new friends. The research has shown that the minimal period of stay at the farm is one week, which favours the communication between different families and their children. Many times, I was a witness how actively kids from different caravans and tents were playing with one another or accompanying the farmer on a tractor. This notion exemplifies the existential authentic experience in the rural area. Following tourists’ opinions, this experience definitely can be reached only in a functioning farm, “a farm where agriculture is currently being practiced” (Phillip et al., 2010: 755), which corresponds to one of the requirements towards authentic tourism elaborated by Streifeneder (2016).

### **4.3. “Overleekerhoeve” Farm**

#### **4.3.1. Performance of authenticity**

Having collected information for my research in two previous farms, where all the interviewees were Dutch, I was curious about the opinions of foreign tourists. As a result, “Overleekerhoeve” farm located not far from Monnikendam has been selected by me. However, my expectations have not been justified. The owners of this farm, Jannie and her husband, only reserved limited

time for an interview. According to Jannie, a building for tourists was constructed in 2006. “My husband is from Amsterdam, I am from a place which is 1 km from here. We did not have the farm at the beginning. We got cows in 1984” (Jannie). She narrated me that before she worked in the restaurant, she liked people and the idea to organize farm tourism could bring an income. Yet, at this moment, farm and tourism business bring in the same amount of money. In Jannie’s opinion, the place is real: “Sometimes they want not only to live in a farm, but also have information about the place. I have a lot of people come back and they see farm life. They have a big room here and a lot of place outside. I give more compared to a hotel in the city. And it is clean here, what makes it different.” Interestingly, the owner compares her place with a hotel in the city, which shows primarily a business attitude to farm tourism, and the farm appears to be a wished toured object, “frontstage” demonstrating a place (MacCannell; 1999). Additionally, since Jannie tells people about the farm and there is a big place outside for walking, she assumes that her farm place has more advantages than a hotel, which again reflects a pretty commercial vision of farm business.



*Figure 13. “Overleekerhoeve” farm*

Farm activities are very simple and consist of walking with chickens for children, looking at a horse and familiarise with the 50 cows. However, the owner presumes that these are the main attributes of a special place. Another feature of the farm is that each room in the building has the attribute of birds or sheep. In relation to interaction with tourists, Jannie thinks that she does her best: “When you rent a room, you go to a reception, collect key and nothing more. I have a lot of talking, but before checking in I cannot do more. I am always working. Besides, I work on the Internet, answering the questions of people. Sometimes I have 30 people for one room.”



Interestingly, the role of the owner is only to show what she has without initiation of people into a daily farm life. The material dimension here through which object authenticity is expressed (Frisvoll, 2013) seems paramount, enabling people to observe the uniqueness of the place.

Jannie is convinced that tourists feel a real life: “Many people have never had animals in their hands. They see a cow being milked for the first time. They are surprised that milk comes from a cow. Children learn a lot of about the farm. One boy was very afraid of animals, but not anymore after visiting the farm. Many people come back. I have a place for 26 people. But for me it is enough.” These comments help to trace indirect interaction implying the secondary connection with agricultural activity during tourist experience. Flanigan et al. (2014: 399) define indirect accommodation as “farm-based accommodation (farmhouse bed and breakfast, self-catering cottages, camping sites); farm shops, cafes; outdoor activities (horse riding); leisure facilities (fishing ponds, bike tracks); and visitor attractions (children’s play parks, nature attractions) based on farm land”.

#### 4.3.2. Touristic experience

Tourists who had chosen the farm were especially families with children. The reaction to the word “authenticity” varies. For instance, a woman from Hong Kong, Tembra (female), remarked: “I think cows are real, but in general animals are for business, for people from the city.” Here, I would like to continue to quote the expression of this woman, who perceived this farm as a business: “I think they are not farmers anymore, it is like a performance. Tourism here is the first income. We were searching for a farm house and the first place was this farm. All the good comments were about cleanliness. That is all. I am disappointed by this place, because I expected to be more familiar with the farm life. We do here nothing.” Thus, cleanliness is the only good advantage of this farm, which does not display farm authenticity at all. Building on the assumptions of Bruner (1994), I would claim that the place is an illustrative example when farm things, visually assessed as authentic, are just constructed as a farm performance. In practice, they do not carry any meaningful value for people in a more interactive process.

In opposite, Tina from Denmark depicted: “It should be as real as possible. When I arrived here, I have seen that there are cows and chickens are running around. For me, that means so authentic. They live here and take care of the animals. This is what authentic means to me.” In the same vein, Frank (male) from Spain stated: “I think it is very real, not artificial. I see animals and for me it is original. You can live here as the member of a family. The nature, animals, calmness is important for us...farmers are normally working with animals. They adapted their work for this tourism business. In Catalonia, farms have started the same experience.” Hence, the perception of foreign people regarding the authenticity of the Dutch farm differs, and for tourists from Denmark and Spain, created farm atmosphere already conforms to their imaginations about authenticity. Their personal views of authenticity are hence socially constructed by their personal expectations, culture and education (Cohen; 1988; Bruner; 1994).

For many tourists, the interaction with the farmer is meaningful: “We just stay here and have no idea. We want to know some information about this farm or this area. But the farmer did not give any information. He is busy. And his wife is busy: “Do not disturb me, coffee is here, press here, cups here, you can drink water.” That is all. “I am only one person, who is taking care here”. I would like to have more information about this place: how they do farming and this kind of business for tourists. Unfortunately, there is no so much information for tourists” (Tembra, female, Hong Kong). On the other hand, communication with the farmer is not the first priority for people: “Not exactly, but I like this type of connection here. It is more friendly. I like that” (Tina, Denmark). A tourist from Germany, Daniel (male), supposes: “We also would like to know not about the history, but what activities we can make here. But the most important is to be here in nature.” Therefore, one tourists names communication as the main element, while for others this is secondary. As such, constructed authenticity based on interaction between tourists and farmers does not comply with the requirements of the tourist from Hong Kong, but it gets on ideally with the life purposes of tourists from Denmark (Pearce and Moscado, 1986).

With respect to farm activities, tourists complain that they have no idea where they can go. “A farmer sent us to “Tea Garden” to drink tea and eat something, rent a bicycle. And no any information. I imagine that they have many horses” (Tembra, female, Hong Kong). In the meanwhile, some tourists do not want to know how to milk a cow and have chosen this because it looks nice and it is not far from Amsterdam. Moreover, families with small children are happy just to see cows and be close to nature. “A contact for children with nature because we live in a city. They love animals and really want to see them. And for us too. I have never tried milk from the cow. This is the first time for me too” (Daniel, male, Germany).

As I understood, analyzing interviews, people living in cities come here to see a farm, communicate with animals and be relaxed. Frank (male, Spain) claimed: “Urban people need more of this kind of places. If you live in the countryside, perhaps, you would like to visit Amsterdam and other big cities.” Along with this statement, Tina (female, Denmark) added: “Maybe many families choose this because it would be nice for children to be with animals. We picked it because we have thought that it would be a bit romantic, more quiet than a fancy hotel in the city centre. Not because of animals. It is much nicer surroundings and buildings. While planning our trip, we looked at a farm in Italy because it looks cozy, you get closer to people.” However, Tina did not add that in spite of becoming closer to people, there is still a distance.

Feelings of tourists are expressed as the next impressions: “I was about to feel excited. My feelings are so far, so good. And we are quite happy about cows, because it is very clean there. Cleanliness is out of my expectation. And nothing special. I expected to have more information, too many activities. We came here to get more information about this place and this farm. They should give a schedule. For example, what I can see in the morning. But we have no idea what to do” (Tembra, female, Hong Kong). The comments have proved that the tourist was eager to acquire existential authenticity through a real immersion in this place. While Tina (Denmark) feels calm, romantic, nice, healthy, no stress. “It is cool, special... The location is very rural... It is beautiful. I love the scenery. And the city in which you drove before is so romantic. It is

much better than I expected...This place is unique and authentic. We definitely wanted that” (Tina, female, Denmark). For this tourist, her expectations have even been surpassed. As I have stated before, emotional fulfillment is related to intra-personal or inter-personal experience of existential authenticity. The tourist from Hong Kong is displeased because her expectations have not been met. However, for Tina, the environmental dimension was reached by means of feelings of connection with nature (Fisher, Francis, and Johnson, 2000).

To sum up, almost all the international tourists were satisfied with the place, but they are convinced that it is a more modern farm, not as 50 years ago. It is hard to conclude that this is farm tourism, where people can be closer to a real life. As many tourists guess, only when you are involved in a process, you can be brought back to “a real life”. In my opinion, there is almost nothing to do on the farm, except walking and seeing. Furthermore, one of the complains is the absence of food at the farm: “we are a family and they have to remind that there is no food for buying and we have to take cash. A supermarket nearby is one hour from here. We had an idea to take food from the city to here, but we have no idea how. If we had known that there is no transportation, we should have rented a car. Now we can only walk. Even bicycles are not available here” (Tembra, female, Hong Kong).

#### **4.3.3. Personal observation**

In relation to this case study, I would say that the owner of the farm is primarily passionate about cleanliness and modernity, not paying considerable attention to tourists. In my opinion, except walking and seeing, there is almost nothing to do on the farm if you are eager to be amused. Besides, this was the only farm where I was asked to pay for one night in a room, consisting of six beds, where five of them were empty. Moreover, despite the fact that the owner asserts that farm and tourism business have the same priority, I am sure that farm tourism there is prioritized and brings the majority of the money. This business is successfully flourishing, which is why there is no need to develop this trajectory further and provide tourists with new farm attractions and information. However, I adhere to the point of Ollenburg & Buckley (2007: 445) claiming that authentic agritourism is not a “commercial tourism enterprise on working farms”.

#### **4.3.4. Sub-conclusion**

Thus, the main distinctive feature of the farm is its cleanliness, which does not have any attention to farm authenticity from the perspectives of tourists, but determined by the owners as the principal feature of their ideal farm life. Additionally, most international tourists are satisfied with constructed authenticity of the farm performed by means of beautiful nature, animals, a functioning farm, and rooms decorated in farm style. However, there is no direct interaction between the farmers and hosts, except for introduction information during people’s arrivals, and tourists chiefly stay here just for a few days as in a hotel, using farmland as a location. “Overleekerhoeve” farm presents agricultural enterprises with a significant supplementary commercial tourism component (Weaver & Fennell, 1997). With respect to

existential rural authenticity, I would emphasize that there was no farm activity in this farm, allowing tourists to be involved and gain personal experience or at least rejoice at talking with the owner. Remote surroundings from the city could have induced different feelings and emotions, however, guests preferred to spend the whole day out of the farm stay. What is more, in interviews, tourists more indicated the existence of objects of an authentic farm in this place than of their desire to experience farm life personally. I guess that the short period of staying at the farm, which takes in average 3 days, explains the absence of this desire.

## 5. DISCUSSION

### Authentic Dutch farms and their experience

The three case studies show that being in an authentic Dutch farm does not always guarantee an authentic farm experiences for tourists. For instance, “Overleekerhoeve” farm has all the features of an authentic farm: it is a functioning farm with cows in a typical idyllic location in the countryside. Yet, the position of tourists conveys that they do not get an authentic farm experience because of the absence of the information about farm life, of communication with the owners, of engagement in farm activities, and of the opportunity to buy food at the farm. Tourists, so to say, are not included in farm life in comparison with the other cases in this thesis.

Discussing this issue from the position of Streifeneder (2016), I would stress that there are no precise criteria concerning the extent to which a farm can be considered authentic, since it is a more personal feeling and assessment. As I comprehend, the majority of active farms will be authentic if we do not equal this term with the word “traditional farm”. As such, I assume that all three farms in my case studies are still authentic in one way or another. However, Streifeneder (2016) states that merely working farms with direct and indirect interaction may provide an authentic rural experience. The nature of tourist contact with agriculture is vigorously discussed in literature. There are questions concerning whether passive appreciation of agricultural landscapes can be defined as authentic (Clarke, 1999) or if there must be a direct connection between tourists and agricultural settings with involvement in farming life and the production of farm activities (Sharpley & Sharpley, 1997).

Theoretically, I would argue that such experience is likely to include direct connection with farmers in a working farm. It is perceived as a material feature of tourist experience such as milking cows or goats, helping to harvest crops or participating in other processes (Phillip et al., 2010). Especially, the learning and self- experience of tourists can be obtained by means of direct communication with farmers and their families. Consequences and desires of this communication definitely depend on personal expectations, and as the analysis of results has shown, people apprehend that their experience is authentic when they receive information (e.g. about the history of a farm) or acquire new farm skills. The basis here is that this process occurs through interaction between tourists and farmers, not only owing to indirect connection such as observation, living and outdoor activities on a farmland without any interaction (Phillip et al., 2010). In my opinion, indirect connection gives a very constricted picture of farm life.

The importance of immersion in activities that I have found in my study is also highlighted in previous research. Streifeneder (2016) advocates that this is not merely a physical participation, but rather motivations are induced by reasons of searching for self-discovery, mental refreshment and emotional fulfillment, reunification with basics and originality. Whereas place, space and aesthetics are important elements of perceptions concerning the experience of authenticity, in order to comprehend the distinction between a space and a place, Tuan (1977) has asserted that a space transformed into a meaningful place when we endow the place with valuable meanings (Tuan, 1977). Clearly, the sense of a place or, “topophilia” (Tuan, 1974) appears to be the strong connection that people have with places caused by the associations of

places and the manner in which they perceive and interpret places. Aesthetics is distinguished in the literature by its positive impact on visitor's satisfaction, developing more imaginative thoughts, and a higher immersion in activities and emotions (Carneiro, Lima, & Silva, 2015). In my research, admiring landscape beauty generates a strong emotional connection between tourists and nature and arouses the impression of the idyll (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Theoretically, this admiration is supposed to become stronger as soon as tourists immerse in farm activities, yet, in practice, the majority of tourists on the farms prefer passive observation and consuming of an authentic past to engagement with tourism practices. I cannot claim that, while observing, they attain less authentic experience compared to participating, for the reason that in both cases tourists encounter existential authenticity. However, such element of authentic experience as involvement in farm activities through direct interaction (Phillip et al., 2010) is lacking on the farms.

My position on the farms, except for the third one, may be determined as privileged, since I was allowed to do almost everything that the farmers do daily. Certainly, in the first farm, where I lived in a tent, tourists could have participated in the same farm processes as I. However, eating together with the farmer, and close communication with the farm family out of work atmosphere is not available to tourists, which makes my experience more authentic and unique. In general, farm tourism comprises the diversity of activities such as accommodation, traditional home-made local food, cultural, recreational and educational activities (for example, milking and farm education) (Rong-Da Liang, 2017; Forbord et al., 2012).

### **Borrowed authenticity**

It is worth mentioning that even though I have examined the authenticity of Dutch farm tourism, the interviews have revealed that Dutch farm authenticity is not just a Dutch thing. It also can be related to a wider genesis, including what one encountered abroad as authentic farms. My first case study represents a kind of borrowed authenticity that possibly leads to French experiences of making goat cheese: "Yes, it is a very popular product. In the earlier days only a few people who went to France bought it, nowadays everyone is buying goat cheese" (Bert, the owner). As a result, nowadays making goat cheese is recognized as a too normal element in contemporary Dutch farms experiences, while it is not a traditionally Dutch farming activity, but is "borrowed" from France.

It is interesting that the term authenticity in tourism studies has been also borrowed and formed from various usages and contexts, which explains its ambiguity (Golomb, 1995). According to Trilling (1972), the term "authenticity" was originally used in museums: "where persons expert in such matters test whether objects of art are what they appear to be or are claimed to be, and therefore worth the price that is asked for them or, if this has already been paid, worth the admiration they are being given" (Trilling, 1972:93). This museum-linked usage of the authenticity of the originals has been borrowed and become the core criterion in *objective authenticity* in tourism, when toured objects are admitted by tourists as authentic or not in time. However, objective authenticity can be always judged, if indeed perceived authentic toured objects are false.

Thus, some discussions in tourism studies regard a historicist perspective of authenticity, where authenticity is equal to an origin in time (Wang, 1999). Yet, the difficulty here is that all attributes of authenticity are constantly changing and borrowed and there can hence never be any form of static authenticity (Bruner, 1994), which *constructed authenticity* exemplifies. *The constructed authenticity* of toured objects is socially constructed, not an objectively measurable and does not have a static quality, which complicates its judgment.

As such, in my case, goat cheese was once identified as a foreign farm product but has currently become accepted in Dutch farm practices. For instance, a few years ago, from the perspectives of *objective authenticity*, goat cheese would have been admitted as not the authentic element of a traditional Dutch farm. However, time has passed, and goat cheese currently appears to be an authentic part of Dutch farms not because it is intrinsically authentic but because it is constructed in a particular way of views, beliefs and perspectives. In other words, young tourists in Dutch (holiday) farm who lack knowledge about the history of traditional Dutch farms with cows highly appreciate the existence of goats and goat cheese in farms. Besides, the acknowledgement of authentic toured products may also be rooted in one's dreams about a Dutch farm life, people's own stereotypes towards farm images, and personal expectations (Bruner 1991; Silver 1993).

As it follows, the acceptance of authenticity is relative and negotiable (Cohen 1988), contextually established (Salamone 1997), and ideological (Silver 1993). The extent to which authenticity is partly borrowed from other origins in time remains to be seen here, and would require further research.

### **Authenticity as a commercial product or instrumental versus Romantic farming landscapes**

First of all, in all the three explored case studies, authenticity is used to attract tourists and make profits. On the one hand, authenticity on the farms helps to sustain rural traditions, and on the other hand, certain experiences are constructed in consistence with tourist gazes. For instance, the existence of horses in “De Blökke” farm is the bright example of the animal's performance for tourists, because the farmers do not use the horses for their own needs. This fact strongly demonstrates the elements of a staged agriculture and questions the perception of authenticity in farms. As Streifeneder (2016) explains, farm tours are the illustrative example of specifically staged authenticity with adapted commercial touristic services and requests. In this case, usually during a short period, tourists are acquainted with the lifestyle of rural life. Visiting a clog factory, which produces traditional Dutch shoes, is also a farm activity constructed for tourists. What is more, at “De Brömmels”, walking with goats is offered to tourists as an authentic activity; however, this amusement does not seem to be appropriate to a routine farm life. Yet, I would remark that even though some agricultural activities are either staged primarily for getting a benefit from the tourism business, or organized for tourists in a natural way, tourism is still not the core business for these farms.



Moreover, nevertheless farm landscapes appear to be ideal and romantic, they are successfully used in farm tourism to appeal to tourists as the main part of the business. For example, in “De Blökke” farm, Bert (the owner) admits that his farm is located in a beautiful landscape and treats it respectfully: “...we live on a small cultural landscape. When you destroy it, this landscape will never come back”. Tourists of this farm appreciate nature and memorable sceneries, while the farmer, comprehending people’s preferences, has realized that camping is an ideal variant facilitating a supplementary income and allowing to save the purity of the surroundings. Consequently, the farm is the ideal place for rural tourism, thereby creating unforgettable tourist experience and transforming romantic landscapes into an instrument for tourism business.

Besides, the farmers mostly do not draw attention to the emotional and spiritual experience of rural authenticity among tourists. Yet, in a few interviews, it has been noticed that farm landscapes is the area for achieving this type of experience. There is no doubt that not all tourists are willing to find authentic “rurality” and become emotionally fulfilled to the same extent (Kastenholz, 2002). However, it is important to notice that the existing rurality of farm tourism experiences potentially encourages tourists to be integrated with nature at a physical level as well as a spiritual one.

The literature review of the spiritual dimension of rural tourism experience has exemplified that spirituality can be met in various rural landscapes. In turn, the spiritual satisfaction of environments strongly depends on people’s individual experiences and aims. Some scholars are interested in unity between nature and the feeling of harmony (Heintzman, 2000), and in this respect, I suppose that nature is the best retreat for this goal, taking into account that the wish to achieve the fulfillment may be not intentional, but rather subconscious. As such, I would highlight that an emotional aspect as the integral part of the intra-personal or inter-personal experience of existential authenticity (Wang, 2000) is a potential concern for future quantitative research. Little has been known about how an authentic perception is being transformed into emotional experience and how tourists begin to feel emotional or spiritual fulfillment through the perception of rural authenticity being guided by personal feelings and beliefs.

Therefore, farm tourism as the small-scale of rural tourism in the countryside (Nilsson, 2002) demonstrates agricultural life with an additional commercial tourism component (Weaver & Fennell, 1997). Authentic agritourism is not necessarily a “commercial tourism enterprise on working farms” (Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007: 445), which contradicts with the example of “Overleekerhoeve” farm. The commercial nature of “Overleekerhoeve” farm is especially discovered in the deadly hygienic nature of the farm that corresponds to a kind of efficient economies of scale found in commercial farming. Thus, although in all three case studies, farm tourism is organized in the active, functioning farms (Phillip et al., 2010), the extent to which this tourism is commercial differs, and the more commercial the farm appears, the less authentic it becomes from the perspective of its visitors.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The central research question defined at the beginning of the thesis was expanded into the following sub-questions:

- 1. What aspects of objective rural authenticity are performed by farmers for tourist's experience in Dutch farms?*
- 2. How does the socially constructed authenticity of Dutch farms become performed by farmers and tourists?*
- 3. What is the role of the relationship between the locals and the self-reflection of tourists and the researcher themselves in attaining rural authenticity?*

Before answering the sub-research questions, I would like to indicate that tourists at the farms during interviews defined an authentic Dutch farm in different ways. Authentic farms became associated with simplicity, a plain farm life, an ideal picture, breakstone, wood, green paints, not a huge number of animals, hand-made products, purity, quietness, beautiful nature, nice people, including the farmer's family and guests at the camping, back to nature and animals; farming as the first priority; cows and chickens running around. In the meanwhile, the farmers determine authentic touristic farm experience as the visiting of a concrete place by tourists, seeing all its facets, for example, goats, a milking process, the work of a farm; connection with a basic life, nature; an educational attraction; trust to tourists; familiarity with the original history of a farm. The latter determination of rural authenticity by farmers what I observed as well represents staged authenticity of Dutch farm stays.

### **Staging rural authenticity by farmers through the main aspects of rural authenticity**

On the three farms visited, authenticity of a Dutch farm (experience) has been negotiated in different ways.

On “De Brömmels” farm, the authenticity of the farm consists of non-modern things, such as the use of breakstone, wood, a few animals, and the provision of traditional food products and different types of wool. Furthermore, the discovery of pottery and antiques is another opportunity for tourists. The goats, the goat cheese made on site, and the simplicity of farm camping seem to construe the farm as authentic. Based on tourist expectations of rural authenticity, Bert assumes that the location of his farm is ideal, as it is surrounded by magnificent nature. He does not attempt to put efforts into the performance of authenticity following the opinion that simplicity is the first requirement of a real farm and luxury, as the offered luxury house, is the desire of few certain people. We may conclude in this case that the objective authenticity of a rural Dutch farm is closely mixed with constructed authenticity. From the point of view of the farmer, tourists are not primarily driven by the necessity to experience new feelings here, but rather by their previous or real background in link with agriculture, which motivates them to choose farm tourism, an area familiar for them.

On “De Blökke” farm, farmers perform their normal daily life to tourists without any special arrangements. There seems to be no border between a frontstage and backstage authenticity, even if tourists are not usually allowed to stay in the farmers’ house itself. It is noticeable that each farm activity for tourists is led by the farmers, which brings the farmers and tourists together and facilitates memorable authentic experience. At this farm, the close coupling between objective and constructed authenticity contributes to the experience of an existential authenticity by tourists, since each small tourist entertainment is accompanied by the farmers, and, hence, there is direct interaction opportunity for both hosts and guests. Agricultural activities, which are based on daily agricultural practices for tourists living on a farm land, conform more to tourists’ expectations about farm lives. The experience of the farmers has revealed that tourists are fond of talking to the owners, which is why the farmers strive to be attentive to guests and start every day with communication with them.

On the relatively high-end “Overleekerhoeve” farm, the main distinction of the farm in relation to the other farms is its cleanliness. Yet, this characteristic does not have any relation to rural authenticity from the perspectives of tourists, but according to the owner, it is the instrumental feature of farm business and the indicator of farm authenticity. Animals and a fascinating scenery are complementary characteristics of the farm. However, this is a good example for examining farm authenticity in a place where authenticity is constructed and farm tourism is mainly a side business. In this sense, tourists predominantly use only farm-based accommodation, which represents indirect interaction (Phillip et al., 2010). However, even though the interaction is short, the structure and environment of the farm is very meaningful for the appreciation of originality of agricultural atmosphere by a few tourists. In the meantime, tourism on farms presents agricultural enterprises with a significant supplementary commercial tourism component (Weaver & Fennell, 1997).

To conclude here, we can argue that the staged authenticity of Dutch farms is subject to personal choices of farmers, but also related to distinct discourses of what a farm should look like according to them or in reference to perceived expectations that tourists may bring to these farms.

### **Experiencing rural authenticity by tourists**

Rural authenticity may be staged in particular ways by Dutch farmers, but the experience of this authenticity can differ. The experience of authenticity may for a large part be explained by active or passive involvement in day to day farm life. As such, tourists may experience a kind of closeness with their hosts, which is made available in different ways across the different farms.

From the perspectives of tourists, “De Brömmels” farm appears to be authentic because of its purity, beautiful nature, animals, quietness and the hospitality of the farmer. While being at the farm in the absence of luxury, tourists imagine that they are somewhat back to nature. Moreover, walking with goats making cheese add uniqueness of the place, transforming tourists into the particle of farm life for a time. Despite the fact that mostly the farm does not come up to people’s expectations about a traditional Dutch farm with cows, tourists are convinced that the farmer is doing his best and, hence, the farm is experienced as authentic. In relation to farm

activities, tourists nevertheless prefer to remain passive actors that rely on their curiosity as observers of this authentic farm life. Searching for feelings and especially spirituality has stayed blurred in people's consciousness and seems to be not analyzed profoundly by them. Undoubtedly, it can be assumed that, while experiencing and recognizing rural authenticity, tourists are getting emotionally attached to a place and they are likely to experience emotional or spiritual satisfaction. However, no practical evidence was found to support this view.

The distinctive feature of "De Blökke" farm is a trustful attitude to tourists making people distinguish the place and appreciate the successful combination of farm and tourism business. Authentic communication between the farmers and guests is one of the most significant features of this farm, whereby tourists temporarily feel themselves as the part of the farm family. This fact proves the success of the farmers' effort to make tourists' stay at the farm more authentic. Farm activities, which at first glance seem primitive, contribute to the mostly educational experience of both children and adults. Following tourists' opinions, this experience definitely can be reached only in a real active farm, currently practicing agriculture (Phillip et al., 2010: 755).

Additionally, on "Overleekerhoeve" farm, mainly, international tourists are satisfied with constructed authenticity of the farm performed by means of beautiful nature, animals, a functioning farm, and rooms for staying at the farm style, while direct interaction between the farmers and hosts is absent, which causes a lack of satisfaction among some tourists when it comes to authentic experiences of Dutch farms. Tourists notice how clean the farm is, but this way has no relation to rural authenticity, which does not meet the expectations of the farmer. What is more, tourists would be happy to be acquainted with the history of the farm, but this information is not offered.

Thus, I deem that the authentic lifestyle of farms is vital, symbolized by strong "agricultural connection, local culture and rural lifestyles" (Ciervo, 2013: 334). This persuasion is built on the characteristics of a regular authentic farm, which is a normal local farm with practicing agricultural farm activities, traditional agricultural architecture and the organization of touristic farm entertainments. In addition, Williams (2004: p. 4) positions agritourism "as travel that combines rural settings with products of agricultural operations—all within a tourism experience" and has enormous potential to facilitate the harmony in human nature. In this sense, emotional significance of a place enacts a significant role, thereby evoking various emotions and unforgettable memories in people's minds.

### **Existential rural authenticity by the author**

Rural authenticity is represented not only by rural actors permanently living or/and working in the countryside, but also by the conscious tourist's perception and appreciation of rural performances, as it has been indicated by Edensor (2006). In this research, all the types of experiences of rural authenticity have been examined for both actors. I as a researcher would like to reflect on my own experience of existential rural authenticity.

According to Wang (2000), attaining the experience of an existential authenticity, people feel that they are themselves much more authentic and more freely self-expressed than they are in

routine life. For instance, in “De Brömmels” farm, the fascinating surroundings, purity and ideal calmness sent me back to my childhood, reminded me of the countryside where I grew up and brought the feelings of soul satisfaction, sincere joy and hope. I cannot generalize that all the tourists are expected to feel the same, but I presume that previous experience related to living in the countryside causes such warm intra-personal feelings. The paradisiac bird song including the wake up scream of roosters, the gentle rustle of leaves, the purest sky and the vast expanse of fields cannot leave anyone apathetic.

*The inter-personal dimension* of the experience of existential authenticity is the result of joint experience with friends, a family or other groups of tourists owing to the sense of closeness and *engaging in non-everyday activities* (Wang, 2000). In “De Blökke” farm, by participating in everyday agricultural activities, I have experienced the existence of rural reality by myself. Undoubtedly, my previous knowledge and imaginations about an authentic Dutch farm were in my mind, the key role of the appreciation of an existential rural authenticity belongs to my direct involvement in the milking process, driving a tractor, regular meals with the farmers, sleeping in their house, and cycling together. Consequently, despite the fact that whether those moments were authentic or not, I have obtained the experience of rural authenticity, since it is bound up with the real state of my being in those processes.

With regard to the opportunity to get emotional or spiritual satisfaction through the experience of rural authenticity, which represents *the intra-personal dimension* of the experience of existential authenticity, I would remark that our understanding of place is not only an illustrative process, but indeed, it is the natural process of our life (Carolan, 2008). The construction of our mental perception is shaped by the physical presence of, for example, natural landscapes, which simultaneously evoke sensations and feelings. I cannot state that I was intentionally searching for emotional or spiritual satisfaction at those farms, yet, all my feelings described above have led to this satisfaction of my soul. At “De Brömmels” farm and “Overleekerhoeve” farm, healing nature surroundings have impacted greatly on my soul state, while at “De Blökke” farm, I have reached emotional or spiritual satisfaction after working hours on the farm with cows, which has almost mended my mind. Obviously, landscape, livestock and farming community can have an emotional influence on people (Convery *et al.*, 2005). Hence, in farm tourism different social characteristics and physical aspects of landscapes may satisfy people’s soul state and construct memories of a place. Both being as a passive observer in balance with nature and active participation have benefits for the inner nature of humans (Carneiro, Lima & Silva; 2015).

Perhaps, this research has not provided profoundly the information on the experience of existential authenticity from the side of tourists. However, while interviewing people, it was problematic to trace the steps of the experience of existential authenticity, since this question deals with feelings, memories and emotions by which people are not easily ready to share.

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## APPENDIX 1. The Interview Guide for Farmers

### Introduction about research:

- gain informed consent by introducing the aim of the research;
- assure privacy, anonymity and confidentiality;
- ask a permission to record and take notes.

### Open general questions:

1. What is your name, *age*? Where do you come from? How long have you run this farm?
2. How do you understand the term “authenticity” in general and the rural authenticity of a farm (farm tourism) in particular?

### Questions

#### **1. Objective authenticity (locality)**

1. What is your personal opinion about the location of this farm in terms of promotion of rural tourist experience here?

##### *Key words:*

- The presence of real functioning farm;
- Authentic rural buildings;
- Traditional small rustic farm buildings;
- Countryside/agriculture’s heritage (farm museums);
- Visual apprehension of the village;
- Aesthetics;
- Wonderful nature;
- Spectacular views;
- Grazing farm animals.

2. In your opinion, how does the natural environment help you to appeal to and impress more people?

##### *Key words:*

- Outside activities;
- The tourist’s attention to environment;
- The personal connection between tourists and nature.

3. What makes this farm authentic?

#### **2. Constructed/symbolic authenticity (ideas/social representation/notion of rurality) - staged authenticity (front and back)**

1. In general, based on your experience, what do tourists desire to discover in the countryside consistent with their cultural and social persuasions and imaginations?

##### *Key words:*

- Social and cultural prejudices;

- Crafts (pottery and antiques);
- Food making;
- Food (cheese) tasting;
- Farm shops;
- Walking with goats.

2. How do education, upbringing and culture of tourists define their interest in farm tourism?

- Dependence on the age, nationality, occupation, social status.

3. What should an authentic (traditional) Dutch farm look like?

4. In your opinion, how does represented rural authenticity on the farm conform to the real rural life?

*Key words:*

- Front authenticity (activities mainly organized for tourists);
- Back authenticity (daily farm activities, allowed and not allowed for tourists).

5. What kinds of rural activities are tourists involved in here? (direct interaction)

*Key words:*

- Food making;
- Milking cows or goats;
- Driving a tractor;
- Feeding animals;
- Working in a farm;
- Helping to harvest crops.

6. Which of them is the most favorite activity for tourists?

*Key words:*

- The level of tourist's satisfaction.

7. What kinds of farm activities are offered to tourists for leisure? (indirect interaction)

*Key words:*

- Farm-based accommodation (farmhouse bed and breakfast, self-catering cottages, camping sites);
- Farm shops;
- Outdoor activities (riding a horse and others);
- Leisure activities (fishing ponds, bike tracks);
- Visitor attractions (children's play parks, nature attractions).

### ***3. Existential authenticity (human practice, own experience, individual small scale tourism)***

1. How does previous touristic personal experience encourage tourists to choose this countryside/the farm? (intra-personal experience)

*Key words:*

- Searching for identity;



- Autonomy;
- Individuality;
- Self-development;
- Self-realization.

2. In your opinion, how does the involvement of tourists in group farm activities influence their perception of rural life? (inter-personal experience)

*Key words:*

- Joint experience with friends;
- Joint experience with a family;
- Joint experience with other tourists.

3. What do tourists feel while being in this place?

*Key words:*

- Tourist impressions;
- Emotionally attached to the place, nature;
- Kinds of emotions: peace, calmness, spiritual satisfaction, delightfulness, the sense of being home.

4. What elements of actual rural performances evoke emotional or spiritual fulfillment?

*Key words:*

- Conscious awareness (engagement in activities);
- Subconscious awareness (integration with nature).

5. How does searching for emotional or spiritual fulfillment motivate tourists to choose farm tourism settled in the nature?

*Key words:*

- The opportunity to cognize the conscious self;
- The opportunity to distinguish of the self from others;
- The finding of something real and desirable.

6. From your point of view, how memorable is this place for tourists?

*Key words:*

- The probability of recurring.

## APPENDIX 2. The Interview Guide for Tourists

### Introduction about research:

- gain informed consent by introducing the aim of the research;
- assure privacy, anonymity and confidentiality;
- ask a permission to record and take notes.

### Open general questions:

1. What is your name, *age*? Where do you come from? How long have you stayed in this farm?
2. How do you understand the term “authenticity” in general and the rural authenticity of holiday farms in particular?

### Questions

#### **1. Objective authenticity (locality)**

1. How would you describe the rural locality of this farm?

##### *Key words:*

- The presence of real functioning farm;
- Authentic rural buildings;
- Traditional small rustic farm buildings;
- Countryside/agriculture’s heritage (farm museums);
- Visual apprehension of the village;
- Aesthetics;
- Wonderful nature;
- Spectacular views;
- Grazing farm animals.

2. In your opinion, how does the natural environment help you to gain new impressions, while being in nature/landscapes here?

##### *Key words:*

- Outside activities;
- The tourist’s attention to environment;
- The personal connection between tourists and nature.

3. What makes this farm authentic?

#### **2. Constructed/symbolic authenticity (ideas/social representation/notion of rurality) - staged authenticity (front and back)**

1. How do you imagine the real rural Dutch rural life?

2. What symbols and activities of a farm (the countryside) enable you to acquire the experience of genuine rural life, consistent with your cultural and social persuasions and imaginations?

##### *Key words:*

- Social and cultural prejudices;
- Crafts (pottery and antiques);
- Food making;
- Food (cheese) tasting;
- Farm shops;
- Walking with goats.

3. How do your education, upbringing and culture define your interest in farm tourism?

- Dependence on the age, nationality, occupation, social status.

4. In your opinion, how does represented rural life on the farm conform to the real rural life?

*Key words:*

- Front authenticity (activities mainly organized for tourists);
- Back authenticity (daily farm activities, allowed and not allowed for tourists).

5. What kinds of rural activities do you participate in here? (direct interaction)

*Key words:*

- Food making;
- Milking cows or goats;
- Driving a tractor;
- Feeding animals;
- Working in a farm;
- Helping to harvest crops.

6. Which of them are the most favorite activities, allowing to feel deeply (experience) real rural life?

*Key words:*

- The level of tourist's satisfaction;
- Anticipations;
- Beliefs regarding real rural life.

7. How do these activities contribute to the discovering and experience of original rural life?

8. What kinds of farm activities are offered to you for leisure? (indirect interaction)

*Key words:*

- Farm-based accommodation (farmhouse bed and breakfast, self-catering cottages, camping sites);
- Farm shops;
- Outdoor activities (riding a horse and others);
- Leisure activities (fishing ponds, bike tracks);
- Visitor attractions (children's play parks, nature attractions).

**3. Existential authenticity (human practice, own experience, individual small scale tourism)**

1. How does previous touristic personal experience encourage you to choose this countryside/the farm? (intra-personal experience)

*Key words:*

- Searching for identity;
- Autonomy;
- Individuality;
- Self-development;
- Self-realization.

2. In your opinion, how does the involvement in group farm activities influence your perception of rural life? (inter-personal experience)

*Key words:*

- Joint experience with friends;
- Joint experience with a family;
- Joint experience with other tourists.

3. What do you feel while being in this place?

*Key words:*

- Tourist impressions;
- Emotionally attached to the place, nature;
- A simple rural life, rural idyll (uncorrupted modernity);
- Nostalgia;
- Memories from the childhood.

4. What kinds of emotions are being generated while being in this place?

*Key words:*

- Peace;
- Calmness;
- Spiritual satisfaction;
- Delightfulness;
- The sense of being home.

5. What elements of actual rural performances evoke emotional or spiritual fulfillment?

*Key words:*

- Conscious awareness (engagement in activities);
- Subconscious awareness (integration with nature).

6. How does searching for emotional or spiritual fulfillment motivate you to choose farm tourism settled in the nature?

*Key words:*

- The opportunity to cognize the conscious self;
- The opportunity to distinguish of the self from others;
- The finding of something real and desirable.

7. From your point of view, how memorable is this place for you?

*Key words:*

- The probability of recurring.

### APPENDIX 3. The List of Interviewees

All the participants agreed to include their real names in this thesis based on an oral consent before an interview.

N	Name of a participant	Gender	Occupation	Country	The name of a farm	The date of an interview
1	Jang	male	not known	The Netherlands	De Brömmels	30.06.2018
2	Rob	male	sign-maker	The Netherlands	De Brömmels	30.06.2018
3	Irma	female	financial administrator	The Netherlands	De Brömmels	30.06.2018
4	Maria	female	worker in a call center	The Netherlands	De Brömmels	01.07.2018
5	Bert	male	farm's owner	The Netherlands	De Brömmels	02.07.2018
6	Jealta	female	worker for a magazine	The Netherlands	De Brömmels	02.07.2018
7	Luke	male	not known	The Netherlands	De Brömmels	02.07.2018
8	Shouldy	female	worker in the Post office	The Netherlands	De Brömmels	02.07.2018
9	Ilana	female	student	The Netherlands	De Brömmels	02.07.2018
10	Poul	male	not known	The Netherlands	De Brömmels	03.07.2018
11	Dose	female	office worker	The Netherlands	De Brömmels	03.07.2018
12	Sana	female	psychologist	The Netherlands	De Brömmels	05.07.2018
13	Alan	male	not known	The Netherlands	De Brömmels	05.07.2018
14	Rene	male	service manager	The Netherlands	De Blökke	13.07.2018
15	Jessica	female	family helper	The Netherlands	De Blökke	13.07.2018
16	John	male	retired	The Netherlands	De Blökke	13.07.2018
17	Astrid	female	manager-assistant	The Netherlands	De Blökke	13.07.2018
18	Cherchia	female	driver	The Netherlands	De Blökke	13.07.2018
19	Bring	male	office worker	The Netherlands	De Blökke	14.07.2018
20	Hans and Ingrid	male and female	farm's owners	The Netherlands	De Blökke	14.07.2018



21	Jannie	female	farm's owner	The Netherlands	Overleekerhoeve	16.07.2018
22	Frank	male	teacher	Spain	Overleekerhoeve	16.07.2018
23	Tembra	female	not known	Hong Kong	Overleekerhoeve	16.07.2018
24	Tina	female	manager	Denmark	Overleekerhoeve	16.07.2018
25	Daniel	male	teacher	Germany	Overleekerhoeve	17.07.2018

## APPENDIX 4. Coding Scheme

Conceptual framework	The main codes	Sub-codes
	Authenticity	Something real; back to the nature; nature, animals and people; biological; showing goats and other different assets; helping with animals; freedom for children; real farmers; not a fabricated farm; a small farm
Object authenticity	Location	Quiet, big, free, open, loose, nice people, pure, no stress; hearing birds; a lovely place; different sides to place a caravan make you come back; rural environment; comfortable; not too fancy
	Nature	Beautiful, green, wonderful, friendly; freedom; trees; a nice view; meadows; peaceful; weather
	Animals	Admiring animals; natural sounds of animals; animals are the most important
	Farm buildings	Traditional house; goat stables; depends on a Dutch region
	Traditional Dutch farm	Farming is the first income, not tourism; not many animals; preferably cows, not goats; no cheese making and camping; walking everywhere; natural products; work by hand or old equipment; no robot
Constructed/symbolic authenticity	Farm activities	Looking at making cheese; milking; feeding goats; going to a restaurant; painting for children; making bread; driving a tractor
	Interaction with farmers	As an excursion; knowledge about growing and feeding animals for kids and adults; kind farmers; real farmers; trust
	Indirect interaction	Buying farm made cheese, natural products; looking at making cheese, milking goats; a farm museum; camping
Existential authenticity	Tourist feelings	Brings to the pure past with where people were close with animals; respect for nature, animals, people, everything; happiness because of animals; resting; fun with goats; getting stress out; freshness
	Emotional or spiritual satisfaction	Relax feeling, quietness; calmness; satisfying with the natural place; simple life; earth, energy and the moon come together here; ideal combination for opening something new for your soul and mind; nature gives emptiness in a head and peace; watching the feelings of animals

	Inter personal experience	Farm related background; wide feelings; living their own life; everything is natural; walking as a meditation; coming for nature, back to basic life
	Intra-personal (joint) experience	Talking with new people; making new friends, a nice neighborhood; easy contact with people; being free; the part of real life; equality between tourists
	Memorable place	Beautiful nature, peaceful; learning from your farm experience