How discourses on overtourism have changed the appearance of Giethoorn over time

Giethoorn
Smit's Paviljoen
Groeten uit Giethoorn
Giethoorn
Giethoorn

Groeten uit Giethoorn

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Giethoorn / Doetinchem, August 2020

1st image cover page*: Giethoorn 1900-1960 (Catawiki, 2019)*

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‘t Liekt mi’j al zo lang’ eleen …
’t Is al weer zo lange veurbi’j;
Toch komt ’t vaeke in mien gedaacht’n;
’t Waas de tied van joe en mi’j.

Deur de graachte en over ’t Wiede,
Overal zaag iej ze gaon;
Booties, punters en de vlott’n;
Overal kwaam’n ze vandaon.

’s Morns vrôg kwaam veerman Geert:
,,”Ei’j nog pakkies veur de stad?”;
Ondertuss’n toette Luuks
Met zien stinkbok over ’t pad.

Veule vrömd’n kwaam’m Deensedes
Mit de boot van Zwolle an.
Allemaole in ’t vlot bi’j ‘t “Wapen“,
En dan eboomd deur iene man!

Jao, de brôgg’n bin ebleev’m,
Ook de graachte langes ’t pad;
Moar verdween’n is ’t puntern;
En dat juust begreut mi’j wat.

Tom Vos
(1981)

Acknowledgements

Hereby I proudly present you my master thesis, that I have written in order to complete the MSc in Tourism, Society & Environment at Wageningen University.

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Doetinchem/Wageningen, August 2020,

Melanie van Schriek

Executive summary

The tourism industry is one of largest sectors worldwide and the numbers of tourist arrivals are still growing. With the rising numbers of tourists all over the world, more and more destinations worldwide are nowadays perceived as 'over-touristic'. Overtourism does not only have an impact on the life of residents and the experience of tourists, it also influences the appearance of destinations through discourse. The latter is still an unexplored topic in the field of overtourism. The appearance of destinations is not fixed, it changes continuously. Each individualistic decision that contributes to a changing appearance is part of a discourse. By 'reading' the landscape the discourses behind these physical changes are revealed and show how the landscape has changed over time.

This explorative case study aimed to identify the different discourses on overtourism in Giethoorn and to explore how these discourses have changed the appearance of the village over time. For this research project eight interviews were conducted with different stakeholders, a daily research diary was kept, four e-mail conversations and multiple newspaper articles were analysed and over 100 pictures were taken. The established discourses provided interesting and valuable insights on how overtourism is perceived from different viewpoint and how these different viewpoints have contributed to the changing appearance of Giethoorn over time.

Four different discourses on overtourism have been identified in Giethoorn: 1) "Enough is enough!", 2) "Municipality of Steenwijkerland, DO SOMETHING!", 3) "It is not too late YET!" and 4) Giethoorn = tourism. When looking at the role of each discourse in the changing appearance of Giethoorn over time it was interesting to see that physical changes were not exclusively caused by just one discourse, but were often the result of multiple discourses cooperating. Furthermore, it was interesting to see that the discourse 'Giethoorn = tourism' mainly influenced the physical appearance in the past, while the discourses 'It is not too late YET!' and 'Municipality of Steenwijkerland, DO SOMETHING!' are just at the beginning of their performative power and are expected to play a major role in the coming years.

Key words: overtourism, discourse, performativity, performative landscapes, Giethoorn

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EPCTT = European Parliament's Committee on Transport and Tourism
UNESCO = United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
TCLF = The Cultural Landscape Foundation

1. Introduction

The "I Amsterdam" letters have been removed from outside the Rijksmuseum in the Dutch capital, after they were accused of promoting mass tourism. One of the hottest selfie spots in Amsterdam, the popular red and white letters were taken down by city authorities on Monday 3 December, amid claims they are too individualistic. By removing them, the local government hopes to reduce tourist numbers in the square. (Hitti, 2018).

Iamsterdam

Image 2: Iamsterdam sign (Water, D., van de, 2014)

In 2004 the municipality of Amsterdam organized a competition to come up with a new city marketing campaign to put Amsterdam back on the touristic map, since the slogan from the '80s "Amsterdam has it", was not such a success after all. Because, Amsterdam has what? Drugs and dog shit? Amsterdam does not have a typical landmark like the Big Ben in London or the Eiffel Tower in Paris. Erik Kessels from KesselsKramer came up with the slogan 'I amsterdam' referring to the, at that time, 178 nationalities that together formed the city of Amsterdam. This resulted in a photo album, an exhibition and the slogan casted in huge letters at the Museum square (Spaans, 2018) as shown in image 2. The discourse to show the world that Amsterdam is a multicultural, inclusive and vibrant city was brought to life by the tangible "I amsterdam" sign. This slogan became a huge success. An average of 6000 selfies were taken every day at the museum square only (Spaans, 2018). However, the 'tourist takeover' of the city led to situations in which "*host or guests, locals or visitors, felt that there are too many visitors and that the quality of life in the area or the quality of the experience has deteriorated unacceptably"* (EPCTT, 2018, p. 25). As the municipality of Amsterdam explains; *"tourism is part of the international character of Amsterdam and we must continue to cherish that. But at the same time, the positive sides of tourism, such as employment and income for the city, are increasingly being eclipsed by negative consequences. Nuisance, crowds and waste means that the quality of life in some neighbourhoods is under serious pressure*" (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2018, p.5). The municipality of Amsterdam is looking for a new balance between liveability and hospitality by reducing nuisance, creating more space at the street and on the canals and by creating a diverse mix between touristic and non-touristic offerings (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2018). For this reason they are banning new tourist-oriented businesses in the centre of Amsterdam since "*so many businesses in the Dutch capital's heart are now catering the people who don't live there that the place risks turning into a theme park*" (O'Sullivan, 2017). The removal of the 'I amsterdam' sign is also part of this 'new balance', and with that, the discourse on overtourism management showed its performative power by re-changing the appearance of Amsterdam again. This paper will focus on the different discourses on overtourism and their performative power to change the physical appearance of destinations.

The example of the 'I amsterdam' sign shows that overtourism does not only have an impact on the life of residents and the experience of tourists, it also influences the appearance of a destination through discourse. The latter is still an unexplored topic in the field of overtourism. Conducted research on overtourism has mainly focussed on the challenges that over-touristic destinations are facing (Insch, 2019; Goodwin, 2017; Seraphin et all, 2018), the impact of overtourism on residents and the environment and possible policy responses (EPCTT, 2018; Koens et all, 2018; Erschbamer et all, 2018; Milano, 2017), the perceptions and attitudes of residents towards overtourism (Kuščer & Mihalič, 2019; Muler-Gonzalez et all, 2017; Martin Martin et all, 2018) and the history, implications and predicted future perspectives of overtourism (Capocchi et all, 2019). The topic is however, not completely unknown in other chair groups. In the field of geography and history, the contribution of discourses to the changing appearance of landscapes has already been investigated by several researchers (Conijn, 2014; Schein, 1997; Bellentani, 2016; Fairhead & Leach, 2000). Although the example in the introduction was about Amsterdam, this paper will specifically focus itself on another popular tourist destination within the Netherlands, namely: Giethoorn – a rural heritage site in the northern part of the Netherlands. The aim of this thesis project is to identify the different discourses on overtourism in Giethoorn and to explore the performative power of these discourses by analysis the changing appearance of the village over time. The next paragraph will provide some more information about Giethoorn.

- Giethoorn -

The village of Giethoorn is located in the northern tip of the province of Overijssel. Giethoorn is often called “Dutch Venice” due to the small canals with its 180 bridges (Giethoorn tourism, 2018). Tourism has played an important role in the history and development of Giethoorn. The name “Giethoorn” is descended from the many goat horns found in the excavated peat around 1230 (Koppers Giethoorn, 2020). From the early beginnings until 1880 the residents of Giethoorn were poor and mainly worked in the peat industry. In 1880, Willem Tholen and other painters arrived in Giethoorn to paint the landscape. These paintings were the first step towards international fame and the early beginnings of the tourism industry (Schra & Kort, 2008). In 1958, Bert Haanstra recorded the famous movie “Fanfare” in Giethoorn, which further stimulated the growth of the tourism industry (Verheij, 2018). A crucial moment for the rise of the tourism industry of Giethoorn was in 2005, when Gabriella Esselbrugge visited the International Hotel Congres in Beijng. Here she got the idea to promote Giethoorn among Chinese tourists to stimulate tourism outside high season. In 2012, the first large groups of Chinese tourists arrived in Giethoorn (Valkeman, 2017). In 2015, Giethoorn got a place on the world edition of the famous board game Monopoly (NOS, 2015). During 2018, 753.000 overnight stays (Kennisplatform Oost, 2020) were reported in Giethoorn, a town which only has a population of 2.740 inhabitants itself (CBS Statline, 2018). These numbers suggest that Giethoorn is statistically speaking, definitely over-touristic. Most tourists are from Germany and Belgium, but due to marketing investments in Arabic and Asian countries the numbers of non-European tourists are increasing as well (EPCTT, 2018). With the number of tourists increasing, the nuisance among residents increased as well. Currently, especially during high season, the following social and environmental issues are experienced: waste in public spaces, congestion on the canals and walking/cycling infrastructure, uncivilized behavior of tourists, a lack of parking spaces for inhabitants and disturbance from overnight visitors (Valkeman, 2017 & Boonstra, 2018). The media uses and enlarges incidents to stimulate the discussion about overtourism in Giethoorn, resulting in headings like “diapers in your mailbox: Giethoorn experiences nuisance due to mass tourism” (BNNVARA, 2019), “Nick chased tourists from his garden in Giethoorn: ‘they were having a picknick here’”(Peppels, 2019), “How many Chinese people can Giethoorn actually handle?” (Boonstra, 2018), and “Giethoorn struggles with tourism: ‘sometimes there is a car on every blade of the grass’”(Westerink, 2017). However, this is just one of the many ways to look at the tourism industry in Giethoorn.

1.1 Research questions

The following (sub)research questions are formulated for this thesis project:

Central research question: *what are the different discourses on overtourism in Giethoorn and how have these discourses changed the appearance of Giethoorn over time?*

Sub-research questions:

1) *What are the different discourses on overtourism in Giethoorn?*
2) *How have these discourses changed the appearance of Giethoorn over time?*

1.2 Thesis structure

This thesis report is divided into six chapters. The next chapter will define the theoretical framework in which the concepts of post structuralism, discourse, performativity and performative landscapes are discussed. The third chapter explains the methodological choices that have been made in this research project and also discusses the reliability, validity and limitations of this research project. The fourth chapter describes the discourses on overtourism that have been identified in the collected data. The fifth chapter shows how the different discourses that have been identified in chapter four, have changed the appearance of Giethoorn over time. In the first part of chapter six an answer is provided to the (sub)research questions. In the second part of chapter six a reflection is given upon the concepts from the theoretical framework in relation to the research findings. Furthermore, the practical ability and future research possibilities on this topic are discussed in the second part of chapter six as well. In the reference list an overview of all literature is displayed. The appendices contain the appendices referred to in the text.

2. Theoretical Framework

To answer the research question about how the different discourses on overtourism have changed the appearance of Giethoorn over time, a theoretical framework with useful concepts is necessary. In the following paragraphs the concepts: post structuralism, discourse, performativity and performing landscapes will be discussed.

2.1 Post structuralism & Discourse

This research project is ontologically grounded in the post structuralist approach. In this paragraph the post structuralist approach will be discussed with emphasis paid to the work of Michel Foucault regarding discourse and the power-knowledge relationship.

The post structuralist approach emerged as a critique towards the structuralist approach in the 1960's in France (Angermuller, 2015). There is no single definition for the post structuralist approach, since it consists of the ideas and work of several philosophers like Foucault, Derrida, Kristeva, Lacan and Barthes (Oxford Reference, 2020). Where structuralists believe that reality consists of social structures (Jeong-Hee, 2015), post structuralists believe that language is the key in the explanation of the social world (Darkins, 2017). Discourses are expressed through the use of language; written or spoken forms of communication (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019). Michel Foucault defines discourse as "systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, and courses of action, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak" (Lessa, 2006, p. 285). Through discourse, "meanings are produced, identities constituted, social relations established, and political and ethical outcomes made more or less possible" (Bialasiewicz et al, 2007, p. 406). Friedrich Nietzsche explains, "when we say something about the world we also inevitably say something about our conception of the world – something that is linked not to the facts and phenomena we try to comprehend but to the assumptions and conventions of knowing that we have acquired over time and that have become codified in language" (Bleiker & Chou, 2010, p. 9). Discourses create and transmit power, strengthen it, but can also subvert and uncover it, make it vulnerable or even thwart it (Michel Foucault in Howard, 2000). In this way ''power is everywhere', diffused and embodied in discourse, knowledge and 'regimes of truth' (Michel Foucault in Doyle et al, 2015, p. 35).

In this thesis project the post-structuralist approach will be used as a guidance with emphasis put on the power-knowledge relationship in the construction of the different discourses on overtourism in Giethoorn. Since not all discourses lead to (physical) change, the next paragraph will discuss the concept of performativity with special attention paid to the work of Judith Butler.

2.2 Performativity

John Austin (1962) distinguished two types of language: constative and performative. Where constative language only gives a true or false description of the world around us, performative language brings change in the world. This was already recognized many years before by Bronislav Malinowski (1923) who described the function of language as "a link with concerted human activity, as a piece of human behaviour. It is a mode of action and not an instrument of reflection" (p. 312). According to John Austin examples of performative language are speech acts, like; performing a marriage ceremony, swearing, performing, promising and betting (Cavanaugh, 2015).

Judith Butler (1993) describes performativity as “that reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains” (p.2). She argues that the division of roles between males and females are socially constructed and not biologically determined. She argues that gender “is an identity tenuously constituted in time, an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts” (Butler, 1988, p. 519). Through discourse, identity is brought to life and the socially established meanings of identity are passed on from generation to generation. In fact “the act that one does, the act that one performs is, in a sense, an act that’s been going on before one arrived on the scene” (Butler, 1988, p. 526). Examples of these acts are color dresscode (blue/pink), personal pronouns (he/she) and characterizations (sweet/cool) (Doorman & Pott, 2018). Another example that shows that discourses are performative is the discourse about the appearance of “Zwarte Piet”. The discourse between pro- and opponents of “Zwarte Piet” has created other versions like; rainbow-, soot wipe and cheese coloured “pieten” (NU.nl, 2019)

This thesis project will use the concept of performativity to explore the performative aspects of the different discourses on overtourism in Giethoorn. Since the changing appearance of Giethoorn as a result of different performative discourses on overtourism is the core aspect of this thesis, the next paragraph will discuss the concept of performing landscapes.

2.3 Performing landscapes

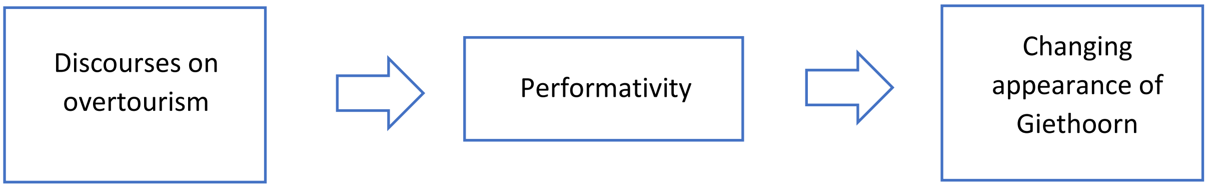
UNESCO World Heritage Centre (2007) describes cultural landscapes as “combined works of nature and of man” (p. 88) that are ‘expressions of regional identity, narratives of culture and works of art’ (TCLF, 2018). In this “culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape is the result” (Sauer, 1963, p. 343). Primarily there are four types of cultural landscapes: historic vernacular landscapes, historic designed landscapes, historic sites and ethnographic landscapes (National Park Service, 2020). Historic vernacular landscapes are landscapes that “*evolved through use by the people whose activities or occupancy shaped those landscapes. Through social or cultural attitudes of an individual family, or a community, the landscapes reflect the physical, biological, and character of those everyday lives*” (TCLF, 2020). Historic designed landscapes are landscapes designed by architects; historic sites are landscapes that relate to historic events, persons or activities and ethnographic landscapes have cultural and natural resources that are considered as heritage resources by affiliated people (National Park Service, 2020). Cultural landscapes are not fixed, they “are always in the process of ‘becoming’”(Schein, 1997, p. 662), they change over time due to different forces. Lewis (1979) states that cultural landscapes are like books; by reading the landscapes you get to know the people who co-created it. As he states “our human landscape is our unwitting autobiography, reflection our tastes, our values, our aspirations and even our fears, in tangible, visible form” (Meinig, 1979, p. 12). John Jackson adds that knowing the desires of the people occupying a cultural landscape provides valuable information about the evolution process of the cultural landscape in question (Davis, 2003).

Donald Meinig (1979) states that “any landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes but what lies within our heads” (p. 1), meaning that interpretation of landscape depends on the ideas that one brings to it. He distinguished ten discourses through which landscape can be interpreted: nature, habitat, artefact, system, problem, wealth, ideology, history, place and aesthetic (Meinig, 1979). These discourses do not stand alone, they coexist and might capture competing meanings (Schein, 1997). Richard Schein (1997) uses the example of the U.S. landscapes in his article to illustrate how different discourses have contributed to the current appearance. According to him, the American culture is highly individualistic, meaning that Americans believe that they can do whatever they want with their properties. Because of this, most of the U.S. landscape nowadays is the result of innumerable individualistic, self-regarding, independent decisions that create, change, and maintain landscapes, their symbolism and their meaning. In this, each individualistic decision is part of a discourse. When decisions lead to tangible landscape elements, the discourse becomes materialized (Schein, 1997). Schein (1997) concludes that “the cultural landscape thus is continually implicated in the ongoing reconstitution of a discourse, or set of discourses, about social life, and it is in this sense that it serves as both a disciplinary mechanism and a potentially liberating medium for social change” (p. 664).

This thesis project will use the concept of performative landscapes to explore how the physical appearance of Giethoorn has changed over time due to different performative discourses on overtourism. The next paragraph will visualise the relationship between the concepts in a conceptual model.

2.4 Conceptual Model

The last paragraph of the theoretical framework is meant to summarize the discussed concepts and organise them into a conceptual model. The first paragraph discussed the concepts of post structuralism and discourse, with emphasis put on the work of Michel Foucault. The second paragraph discussed the concept of performativity, with emphasis put on the work of Judith Butler. The third paragraph discussed the concept of performative landscape. A conceptualization of the theoretical framework has been visualized in figure 3. The reasoning behind the model is that the changing appearance of Giethoorn is the result of different performative discourses on overtourism.



Different discourses on overtourism in Giethoorn

The power of these discourses to actually change the appearance of Giethoorn.

The changing appearance of Giethoorn over time as a result of different performative discourses

Figure 1: Conceptual model

3. Methodology

The aim of this research project is to explore how different performative discourses on overtourism have changed the appearance of Giethoorn over time. This chapter will discuss the methodological choices that have been made during this research project. First, the qualitative research design will be discussed, followed by a description of the research methods that have been used and the sample methods. The last paragraph will discuss the data collection and data analysis process.

3.1 Research design: explorative case study

The topic for this thesis was quite unique, in that no scientific research in the field of tourism has been conducted on the changing appearance of destinations due to performative discourses. For this reason, the research design can be described as explorative (Boeije, 2010). Explorative research is often used to set the groundwork for further research (Research Methodology, 2019). The advantage of using exploratory research as a research design is that the data collection and data analysis methods are flexible and easy to adapt to the emerging outcomes ((Boeije, 2010). Quantitative research methods were less suitable, since these methods are aimed at generalizing research outcomes to the entire population (Verhoeven, 2014). As these methods are not suitable for investigating complex discourses, qualitative research methods have been used to explore the topic in-depth.

Since this research project only focuses on the destination of Giethoorn, a case study is also part of the research design. A case study is an intensive type of research in which relationships are investigated within one specific case (Verhoeven, 2014). The advantage of using a case study as a research design is that different qualitative research methods can be combined within the case. According to Verhoeven (2014) (open)interviews, literature studies, observations, document analysis and focus groups are often used in case studies. By using a mixture of methods, the internal validity of the research project is enhanced.

3.2 Research methods

Triangulation – a mixture of research methods to analyse a case from different angles (Verhoeven, 2014) – is very suitable for discourse analysis. In the former paragraph, several research methods have already been mentioned which are commonly used in a case study. For this research project three different research methods have been selected because they best matched the context of this study. The chosen methods are interviews, document analysis and observations and are explained in further detail below.

Interviews

Interviews are useful to gain in-depth information about someone's experiences or perspectives (Boeije, 2010). In this research project, semi-structured interviews were conducted with residents, representatives of Giethoorn Onderneemt, Gieters Belang and the municipality of Steenwijkerland to gain insights into the different discourses on overtourism in Giethoorn and how it has changed the appearance of the village over time. The decision was made to use semi-structured interviews so that the researcher could make use of a topic-list. The advantage of a topic-list is that the researcher can ensure that they cover all topics in each interview, whilst on the other hand they can also leave enough space for interviewees to share their stories and experiences about the topic (Boeije, 2010).

Document analysis

Glenn Bowen (2009) defines document analysis as "*a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents – both printed and electronic material*" (p.27). According to O'Leary (2014) there are three types of documents: 1) Physical Evidence (training materials, agendas, flyers, handbooks and posters), 2) Public Records (syllabi, student handbooks, student transcripts, policy manuals, strategic plans, annual reports and mission statements) and 3) Personal Documents (newspapers, e-mails, Facebook posts, reflections/journals, calendars, scrapbooks, duty logs and blogs). This research project only used personal documents, like e-mails and newspaper articles, since these documents mainly contain the personal opinions of authors.

Participant observations

Crossman (2019) defines participant observations as the situation in which "*a sociologist actually becomes part of the group they are studying in order to collect data and understand a social phenomenon or problem*". Participant observations might be challenging sometimes, since the researcher has to be an objective observer and a subjective participant at the same time (Crossman, 2019). By doing participant observation, the researcher often lives for a certain amount of time within the community. By doing so, the researcher gains access to inside information about what is going on in the community (Crossman, 2019). For this research project the researcher stayed for 11 days and 9 nights in Giethoorn during which she spoke with multiple residents, business owners and representatives of different interest groups. During her stay she kept a research diary in which she made notes of her observations and she also took many photographs of objects that she found interesting for this thesis project. The observations and photographs were mainly used for the visual representation of how different discourses on overtourism have changed the appearance of Giethoorn over time.

3.3 Data collection

The data collection took place between the 7th of October and the 16th of December 2019.

Interviews

During the data collection period, a total of eight interviews were conducted in the touristic area of Giethoorn as shown in image 3. The average duration was 70 minutes per interview. Because of privacy reasons, the interviewees will only be mentioned with their first name in this research report. Their entire names are mentioned in the interview transcripts in appendix III. The selection of the interviewees took place, in both a selective and a-selective manner. In terms of the residents, the researcher simply approached people at random while they were walking through Giethoorn, when they were gardening or at work in the supermarket and museum. The representatives of Gieters Belang, Giethoorn Onderneemt and Belangen Bewoners Binnenpad were selected based upon their names which were mentioned on websites, in newspapers and on social media. The interview with Linda was both, selective and a-selective. The Municipality of Steenwijkerland did not reply to the e-mails sent by t

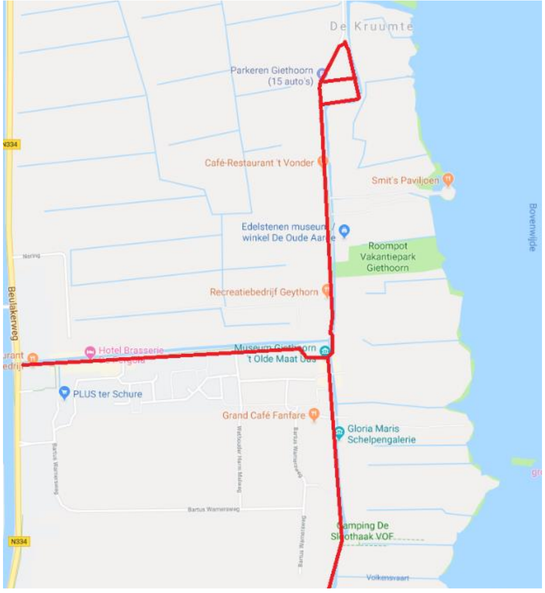

De Kruumte
Parkeren Giethoorn (15 auto's)
N334
Café-Restaurant 't Vonder
Smit's Paviljoen
Bovenwijde
Edelstenen museum / winkel De Oude Aar
Roompot Vakantiepark Giethoorn
Recreatiebedrijf Geythorn
Beulakerweg
Hotel Brasserie
Museum Giethoorn 't Olde Maat
PLUS ter Schure
Grand Café Fanfare
Gloria Maris Schelpengalerie
Bartus Warnersweg
N334
Camping De Slothaak VOF
Volkensvaart

Image 3: Research location (Google Maps, 2020) the researcher made a scheduled visit to the meeting in Blokzijl about the touristic vision of the municipality of Steenwijkerland, that took plake on the 16th of December 2019. Since there were multiple representatives of the municipality present at that meeting, the researcher chose some at random who was immediately available when she arrived. During the interview with Bert, the name of Gerrit came up and so there was also a snowball effect. The owner of the 'Black Sheep Hostel' was selected purposefully because one of them grew up in the surrounding area and the researcher stayed at their hostel as well.

The location of the interviews varied. The interviews with Cees and Gerrit took place at the house of the interviewee and the interviews with Angela, the volunteers at the museum and the owner of the Black Sheep Hostel took place at the supermarket, the museum and the hostel itself. The interview with Evert was conducted by phone and the interview with Linda took place at the meeting in Blokzijl. During the interviews the same topic list was used to make sure that all the topics were covered in each interview. The topic list is published in appendix II.

Document analysis

To get better insights into the different discourses on overtourism, different documents were analysed for this thesis project. Cees provided the researcher with multiple documents full of e-mail correspondence between BBB and the Municipality of Steenwijkerland. Gerrit provided the researcher with some news articles regarding his viewpoint on the tourism industry. Furthermore, different documents from the database of the Municipality of Steenwijkerland were used to gain more insights into their (future) plans regarding tourism.

Participant observations

To identify the different discourses on overtourism in Giethoorn, the researcher stayed for 11 days and 9 nights in Giethoorn. During that time the researcher addresses as many people as possible to gain insights in their opinions about the tourism industry in Giethoorn. Furthermore, the researcher took as many pictures as possible to show how the different discourses have changed the appearance of Giethoorn over time. During the participant observations a research diary was kept for 11 days in order to write down all the notes and experiences of the researcher. The research diary is published in appendix I.

3.4 Data analysis

During the data collection, eight interview transcripts, a 12 day research diary, four e-mail conversations, multiple newspaper articles and over 100 pictures were collected. Four interviews were recorded on the phone of the researcher after permission was granted. The other four interviews were only summarized. The recorded interviews were typed out into transcripts (appendix III), which made them easier to transcribe and analyse. For those interviews which were not recorded, notes taken by the researcher during the interviews were summarized (appendix III). The interview transcripts, interview summaries, e-mail conversations (appendix IV) and the newspaper article (appendix V) were analysed with regards to two aspects: information about discourses and information about the changing appearance of Giethoorn over time. Those parts of the transcripts selected for their relevance to one of the discourses, were then analysed for related themes as shown in appendix VIII. The various coherent themes formed the basis for the different discourses on overtourism in Giethoorn. The discourses were composed and written by the researcher and therefore it is important to mention that they can be understood as an interpretation of someone else's interpretation. The selected parts of the interview transcripts which touched upon the changing appearance of Giethoorn over time were analysed together with the diary that the researcher kept and the constructed discourses. Then a collage was made per discourse of how the discourse has contributed to the changing appearance of Giethoorn over time. It is important to mention that physical changes in the appearance of Giethoorn are not exclusively caused by just one discourse, but are often intertwined in other discourses as well.

3.5 Validity and reliability

According to Verhoeven (2014), validity determines to what extent the research is free from systematic errors. Authenticity and truthfulness are therefore important aspects. There are three types of validity: internal validity, external validity and content validity. Internal validity refers to the correctness of the conclusions (Verhoeven, 2014). The internal validity of this research project increased by applying multiple research methods. The research questions were answered with information that arose from the interviews, observations and the document analysis. It was important that the researcher left her own view on the topic behind to not influence the results of the research project. Furthermore, the use of a topic list increased the internal validity because the same topics were covered in each interview. External validity refers to the comparability of the research results in similar situations (Verhoeven, 2014). The external validity of this research project is not that high, since the conclusions are based on just eight interviews, the researchers own observations and the document analysis. Furthermore, the use of merely a topic-list as a prompt during interviews leaves a lot of space for the interviewee to share his/her own stories. It could be that if other residents/business owners/representatives/other parties were interviewed that these stories would be different. However, on the other hand the selection of representatives of associations that are involved in the creation of the touristic vision for Giethoorn increases the external validity since they are all involved in the same project and have their own -shared- viewpoint on it. Content validity refers to what extent the research actually measures what the researcher wanted to measure. The content validity of this research project is covered by a theoretical framework of the core concepts discourse, performativity and performing landscapes. Furthermore, the researcher only used a topic list to leave enough space for the opinion of the interviewee. Extra questions were asked for unclear, incomplete or non-question related answers.

Reliability examines to what extent repeating the same research yields the same results (Verhoeven, 2014). On the one hand, the reliability of this research project is limited because it is a qualitative research project about experiences, opinions and the researchers own interpretations of observations and documents. If other residents/business owners/representatives/other parties were interviewed, the outcome could be different due to the personal aspect. It could also be that other research would interpret observations and/or documents differently. Furthermore, since it was an explorative research project, there were no previous sources available to consult about this topic. Because of this the researcher made her own decisions regarding the execution of the research project which she kept by in her notes. The researcher also did not perform a pilot interview and some transcripts were summarized by the researcher herself instead of transcribed. The disadvantage of this is that the researcher had to take notes herself during the interviews, whereby some information might have been missed out and not written down. It could also have been interpreted differently afterwards. Nevertheless, there is some reliability due to the standardization of the topic-list, which was used in all interviews and the use of multiple research methods. The recording of the interviews for which permission was given, also increases the reliability a little.

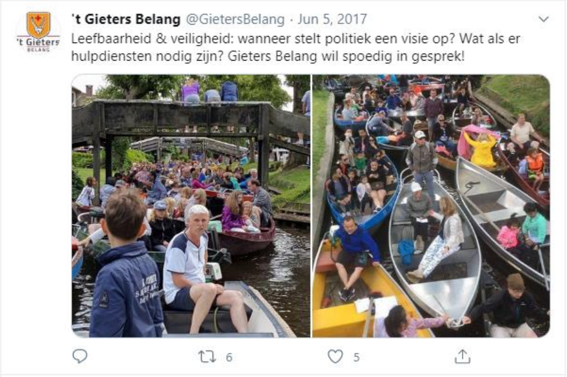
3.6 Limitations

While the researcher's intention is to conduct the research as best as possible, there are always a few limitations. In this research, the season in which the research was conducted was one of the limitations. The months October till December are low-season in Giethoorn which means that there are less tourists visiting Giethoorn. Since the weather was also precarious, less residents were on the street or working in the garden to ask for their experiences. If the data collection was conducted during high season, more residents would probably have been outside and the researcher would have had a better impression of what it is like to live in Giethoorn during high season. Another limitation was the lack of time due to the time frame that comes with a master thesis. If the researcher would have had more time, more business owners/residents/representatives/other parties could have been interviewed, which would have made the outcomes more reliable and representable. The relatively high price per night was another limitation of the research project, since the budget of the researcher was limited. The researcher stayed at the same hostel during the data collection. If the researcher would have had a bigger budget or the price per night would have been cheaper, it would have been possible to stay in other parts of Giethoorn as well and to collect stories from different business owners and different types of tourists visiting Giethoorn as well.

4. The different discourses on overtourism

“Quality of life and safety: when does politics draw up a vision? What if emergency services are needed? Gieters Belang wants to have a conversation soon!” (Gieters Belang, 2017).

This post of Gieters Belang on Twitter with accompanying images, as shown in image 4, was the initial post to awaken the discussion about overtourism in Giethoorn. Residents and Gieters Belang stated that this image showed how one of the many crowded days in Giethoorn looks like. Giethoorn Onderneemt and other entrepreneurs argued on the other hand, that the traffic jam in the canal was caused by the orchestral boat blocking everything and that the pictures were taken with a telephoto lens. Different interpretations from different viewpoints. This chapter will discuss the four different discourses on overtourism that have been identified in this research project, namely: 1) “Enough is enough!”, 2) “Municipality of Steenwijkerland, DO SOMETHING!”, 3) “It is not too late YET!” and 4) Giethoorn = tourism.



't Gieters Belang @GietersBelang · Jun 5, 2017

Leefbaarheid & veiligheid: wanneer stelt politiek een visie op? Wat als er hulpdiensten nodig zijn? Gieters Belang wil spoedig in gesprek!

Image 4: tourism in Giethoorn (Gieters Belang, 2017)

4.1 “Enough is enough!”

“*Why does it always have to be more?*”, “*why not making the prices more expensive instead of increasing the number of tourists?*”, “*Enough is enough, right*”? “*The number of people who actually benefit from tourism is just a small group*”. These are just a few quotations of residents living in the touristic area of Giethoorn. “*It is getting too much*” states Cees, “*20 years ago it was still doable, but at that time the numbers were only 25% of what they are today and they will only further increase*”. According to one of the volunteers at the museum, business owners often only think in terms of profit and do not think about the (longterm) effects. Cees tells that business owners also say that by themselves as they state “*we used to milk cows, but now we are milking tourist*”. Linda agrees that “*business owners must become aware that it is not just about their profits but that it’s about the future of Giethoorn’s image*”. Cees argues that residents are sometimes questioning if ‘*this is still their village’*, since tourists sometimes act like Giethoorn is their domain for the time that they visit. So do they often refuse to step aside if Cees, or other residents, use their cycling bells to pass. This also counts for Dutch tourists. This feels annoying since in the end it is *their* village and *their* social context. For the sake of Giethoorn and their residents, the number of tourists should not further increase. It would be even better if the numbers decrease! The current situation is already affecting the lives of residents in multiple ways. So explains the wife of Cees, that on busy days they do not sail through the canals themselves, because “*tourists cannot control their boat*” which will only leads to damaging their own boats. Angela says that many people living at het Binnenpad do their groceries early in the morning, or, like the wife of Cees, in places outside of Giethoorn. Cees installed a bicycle bell on his wheelbarrow to notify tourists that he wants to pass. Another resident lets her dog do his defecation in the garden on busy days. Some wealthier residents flee to their holiday homes elsewhere or they isolate themselves on their own properties. Furthermore, many residents mark their properties with fences, signs, chains and bushes to keep tourists out. The current situation has also led to (former) residents publishing videos on YouTube and reaching out to the media to draw attention to the current situation.

According to Belangen Bewoners Binnenpad, the association that represents the interests of residents living at het Binnenpad, it would be good for the liveability in Giethoorn if: 1) drones are banned, 2) big tour boats are prohibited before 09:00 and after 18:00 o'clock, 3) the (inter)national promotion of Giethoorn stops, 4) the maximum speed limits for boats is set a 6 km/h and that BOA's supervise this (speed camera's, high fines), 5) paid parking is introduced at parking lots in Giethoorn, 6) all rental/tour boats get sensors and/or license plate recognition to count the numbers and to check permits, 7) entertaining taxes are introduced, 8) the rental prices increase, 9) the minimum rental time is set at at least 2 hours, 10) music boats are prohibited, 11) sound reinforcement and/or broadcasting systems are prohibited, 12) strong lightning at tour boats is prohibited, 13) there are enough real BOA's to supervise, instead of interns!, 14) multiple language flyers are handed out about 'how to sail a boat', 15) other canal routes are promoted, 16) illegal boats from surrounding places are banned, 17) motor boats are also banned for residents, 18) it is prohibited to sail by multiple days of freezing temperatures, 19) current elements that do not fit the vision are eliminated, 20) tourists are spread from Giethoorn to other destinations in the Netherlands instead of the other way around, 21) the authentic 'Gieterse punter' will be introduced, 22) extra poles are placed in the canals to deny access to boats that are too big.

4.2 "Municipality of Steenwijkerland, DO SOMETHING!"

There is no central governance regarding tourism in the Netherlands. Provinces and municipalities can decide for themselves what they want to do, which leads to big differences between different areas in the Netherlands and makes it hard to steer general problems. Also the Municipality of Steenwijkerland lacks a touristic vision regarding the municipality in its entirety and Giethoorn in particular. However, Gieters Belang, Giethoorn Onderneemt and the municipality of Steenwijkerland are working on a clear framework together. Because, as Evert states "*at the end everybody wants the same. They all want a nice village with a healthy tourism industry, where it's nice to live and business owners can earn their money as well*". They are working in different working groups on themes regarding sailing policies, parking issues and liveability. Nevertheless, the process is difficult because the Municipality of Steenwijkerland lacks leadership. Although they say that "*the interests of residents are more important than the interests of the business owners*" the residents do not experience it that way. According to them, it's completely normal that a business owner wants to maximize his/her profit. However, it is up to the municipality to supervise that this occurs in an appropriate way and if not, they have to take measures to regulate it. Until now, the municipality has not supervised the sailing- and parking policies. Furthermore, they do not keep their promises and there is a lack of surveillance in the touristic part of Giethoorn. As Gerrit says "*they do not show any initiative, they are acting risk averse, reservedly and playing catch up*". For example, they promised more supervision in the touristic area of Giethoorn. Well, the municipality arranged interns instead of real BOA's, which is also not enough compared to the number of tourists visiting Giethoorn on a busy day. Furthermore, they appointed one community police officer, Bert Kleen, who is almost never around. This lack of leadership is causing residents to take measures themselves. Some examples include the creation of many signages in gardens and chains to mark private properties. It's not that the residents want to do this, it affects the authentic appearance of the village, but it's necessary. Linda agrees that the Municipality probably does not dare to say much about this, since it’s a consequence of nuisance caused by tourism. As she explains *“it is weird if we will ban it*”, and furthermore, first there will have to be complaints before the municipality look at it. Another example that shows the Municipality of Steenwijkerland lacks leadership is given by Linda, referring to the crowds in the canals. She says “*there definitely needs to be done something*” but also “*not too much”,* since “*people (business owners) should not have the feeling that they are imposed to too many rules. They do not want to lose their current rights”.* While according to the residents this is the chance to “*establish the rules*”.

Instead of taking the lead and actually doing something to change the current situation, the municipality takes less important measures like adding trash cans, prune branches and applying collision protection. Why not compensate the residents for damages caused by tourists? The municipality could introduce paid parking or entertaining taxes to establish a fund to compensate this. The reason tourists visit Giethoorn is the authentic appearance of the village, the business owners and/or the Municipality of Steenwijkerland do not have to do contribute to that. It’s the residents who maintain the appearance of their houses and gardens. So in fact, as Cees explains, “*the residents are the chickens that lay the goldens eggs*” and for that, they need some appreciation. The Municipality of Steenwijkerland also does not understand the long-term consequences of measures they take. A few years ago, Cees tells that the municipality had a pilot to allow a few business owners to sail with bigger boats, so that they could take tourists further into the surrounding area. However, the business owners did not do that, they sailed the exact same route as other boats, increasing the crowds instead of decreasing them. The Municipality ended the pilot and wanted to ban these bigger boats again, but the business owners took it to court because they paid approximately €10.000 per boat. The judge agreed with them, and since then the boats have been allowed in the canals. The lack of governance and not overseeing the longterm consequences of measures leads to “*but not like Giethoorn*” marketing in different branches. So do estate agents who sell houses in Giethoorn-north explicitly mention in their ads that the houses are not located in “*the overly touristy*” part of Giethoorn. Furthermore, other areas/places in the Netherlands want to attract more tourists, but highlight that “*it should not become like Giethoorn*”.

Current plans of the Municipality to respond to the expected growth of NBTC and to improve the liveability in Giethoorn are mainly aimed at spreading tourists across the municipality so that “*the entire area benefits from tourism instead of just one place*”. However, business owners are sceptic. Bert also believes that the surrounding villages are simply jealous of Giethoorn and the owner of the Black Sheep hostel is against the idea of ‘spreading tourists across the region ’since *“tourists want to see the highlights*”. Furthermore, the idea of spreading is mainly aimed at German, Belgium and Dutch tourists, while nuisance among residents is mainly caused by non-European tourists. Residents are questioning the ultimate intentions of the Municipality of Steenwijkerland since they can be interpreted in multiple ways. The Municipality of Steenwijkerland wants to build cycle paths to get tourists out of Giethoorn to other places in the municipality. However, as Cees states, you can also interpret this the other way around, “*so that tourists staying in other places in the municipality can easier reach Giethoorn while paying half of the price for their stay compared to what they would have paid over here*”. Another example is the introduction of the “Giethoorn express” – a direct bus connection between Steenwijk station and Giethoorn. The Municipality of Steenwijkerland explained it to the residents as “*very important for children in high school*” while the name ‘Giethoorn express’ already explains that it’s meant for a faster connection between the train station and Giethoorn for tourists.

Other plans besides the idea of ‘spreading’, includes the introduction of smart mobility for parking issues and the crowds on the canals. The Municipality of Steenwijkerland is working with Marketing-Oost on an app in which all boats will be registered. The idea is that tourists can only book a boat during certain timeslots beforehand by making a reservation through the app. If the limited boats per timeslot/day are reached, tourists can then make a reservation for another day or they can go to similar places in the surrounding area. Furthermore, if parking lots are full, matrix boards will lead tourists to other parking lots in Giethoorn, or when everything is full, to other places in the municipality. Furthermore, they want to introduce a vignette system in which business owners have to buy a vignette for each boat they own. The vignette will allow boats to sail between pole 1 and 5 at certain times during the day. The number of vignettes are set at the number of boats that the business owners poses at this moment and are indefinitely valid. This means that they do not have to reduce their current number of boats but they can also not expand anymore. Residents do not need a vignette and can still sail through the canals at any time of the day. Furthermore, the tourists tax will be increased from €1,- per person per night to €1,10 and the number of BOA’s will increase from 1 to 2 on a daily base. Another plan includes the development of other routes on the canals and the limitation of the number of Airbnbs and B&Bs in Giethoorn-south. Airbnbs and B&B’ will be stimulated elsewhere in Giethoorn and the surrounding area. At this moment a B&B permit is still free, leading to multiple requests per week. Residents believe that a B&B permit might be of added value if they ever sell their house. In all these plans, the Municipality of Steenwijkerland sees itself more as a ‘facilitating’, and where necessary, as a ‘stimulating’ body and not as a promoting one. Until the touristic vision for Giethoorn on which the Municipality of Steenwijkerland is working together with Gieters Belang and Giethoorn Onderneemt is finished, requests for permits outside the destination plan are frozen.

4.3 “It is not too late YET!”

Yes, Giethoorn has always been touristic and tourism is part of the identity of Giethoorn, but 20 years ago the numbers were just 25% of what they are today and tourism experts expect that these numbers will further increase in coming years. In the past, high season was a few weeks during the summer and with Eastern, Pentecost and Ascension day. Nowadays, high season starts in April and ends in October. At this moment the pressure on the infrastructure and privacy, especially at het Binnenpad, is so high that residents start to wonder if this is still their village. A few months ago there was a meeting in which two pictures (image 5 & 6) of Giethoorn were presented about how Giethoorn should look in 5 years. Everyone, also the business owners, agreed that Giethoorn must still be authentic instead of commercialized in 2025.

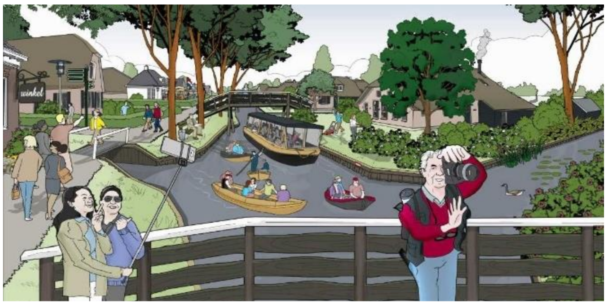


Image 5: Giethoorn Authentiek (Gemeente Steenwijkerland, 2019)

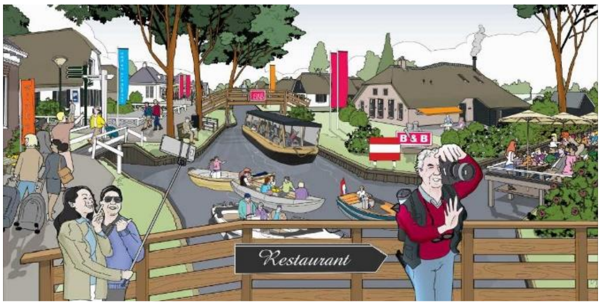


Image 6: Giethoorn commercieel (Gemeente Steenwijkerland, 2019).

As Cees explains “*the joke is that the thing that is ruining Giethoorn are the tourists, but when you take all tourists away, Giethoorn is also the village again”*. Evert continues “*we are not ruined yet, but we have to keep our finger on the pulse*” In order to still be ‘authentic’ in 2025, tourism needs to be regulated. Visitors need to know how to behave in Giethoorn, so that signs in gardens become redundant. This means that there are information boards needed to explain to tourists the rules of the village, to tell them where to go for sights, toilets, bus stop, restaurants, the supermarket, ATMs, parking places, boat rentals et cetera. Furthermore, there are sufficient trash cans needed to keep Giethoorn clean and the advertising policy must be adhered by the Municipality of Steenwijkerland. Another idea to restore the village authenticity is to replace the aluminium punter with the original ‘Gieterse’ punter. Nevertheless, the boat rental owners are against this idea, since the aluminium punters have lower maintenance costs compared to the Gieterse punter, so they make more profit out of it. The Municipality of Steenwijkerland is working with Marking-Oost on an app to implement the above mentioned aspects and to also regulate the boat rentals. The idea is that all boats are displayed in an app and that tourists can only rent a boat by booking one beforehand on the app. By doing so, the number of boats in the canal are regulated per day/hour and if there are no boats available, tourists have to book another day or they can go to similar places in the surrounding of Giethoorn. Nevertheless, it will still take a few years before the app is launched.

Furthermore, the aim has to switch from qualitative tourism to quantitative tourism. The focus should change from hit & run tourists – tourists who book a daytrip package to Giethoorn from elsewhere in the Netherlands *or* tourists who only spend a few hours in Giethoorn by themselves - to tourists willing to spend a few days in Giethoorn and the surrounding areas, spending their money there as well and considering coming back again. The brand ‘Giethoorn’ must be held high. By doing so, the offerings should match the village as well, it must add something to Giethoorn. Massive does not suit the village, since the infrastructure is not built on it. This means that theme shops and holiday parks should be prohibited and illegal boats must be kept out of Giethoorn. Furthermore, tour guides with flags should be prohibited as well, since you cannot lose each other on a one-way road. At the same time, holiday parks and Airbnbs also affect the social cohesion in Giethoorn, since there is no ‘steady social context’ anymore due to the many different tourists checking in on a daily/weekly basis, and the fact that these houses are often empty during the winter. Houses are withdrawn from a residential destination and tourists do not participate in village activities; they are just here to have a good time. Furthermore, there is no supervision available. This leads to situations in which tourists ask neighbours for help and also leads to dangerous situations. For example, some tourists want to light a fireplace under a chimney which has not been swept for 30 years, light a barbeque under a thatched roof. The difference with a bed & breakfast is that B&B owners supervise tourists, explain to them how to behave, explain how to sail and keep them at the back of their house when they are at home. This prevents the image of Giethoorn from being affected in a negative way.

4.4 Giethoorn = tourism

“*Tourists belong to Giethoorn*” states Cees. Most businesses in Giethoorn are family businesses, passed on from generation to generation and everyone knows each other. According to Gerrit, residents born and raised in Giethoorn-south grew up with tourists and it is in their genes to handle large groups of people with different cultural backgrounds, nationalities and colours. For them, it is an “*enriching experience*”. Tourism is an important job generating industry in the area; there are few other options. Other industries either have projects further away or generate less money. Tourism brings conviviality, jobs, money, facilities and a diverse mix of cultures. Liveability in this sense is interpreted as ”being able to live in Giethoorn”. More specifically, this means that people have jobs and earn enough money to live there, whilst it also means that there are facilities which wouldn’t have been there otherwise, as opposed to surrounding villages. Due to tourism, Giethoorn has a large supermarket, an ATM, a general practitioner with a pharmacy, a cultural house and many restaurants. So why does tourism in Giethoorn suddenly have to be less and spread across the municipality? According to Bert, in the '80's European money was invested into the construction of parking places to develop the tourism industry, 10-15 years ago the T.O. Hylkemaweg was restored and 10 years ago promotion videos were still made to attract more tourists to Giethoorn!

With the rise of digital developments, working (a few days) from home is becoming normal for more and more companies nowadays. This changed society in Giethoorn. People who used to live and work in the West, often moved to Giethoorn-north, and with that different views towards the tourism industry arose. As Bert states "*people living in Giethoorn-north did not grow up with tourism, they are all from outside Giethoorn and do not want to know anything about it*". They say that "*the identity of Giethoorn is lost due to tourism*" while the family business owners, say that "*the identity of Giethoorn is lost because they have moved to the village*". These 'new' residents knew it in advance right, that Giethoorn is touristic? So why do they complain? And by the way, many Airbnbs and B&Bs are nowadays located in Giethoorn-north, so they do earn money from tourism as well. These "new" residents took over the board of Gieters Belang, the association that represents the interests of all residents in Giethoorn. They are well educated, have enough spare time and loved by the municipality of Steenwijkerland. Local family business owners blame them for reaching out to the media with 'fake stories' which are then enlarged by the media. Yes, there are some busy days in Giethoorn, but it is not like that every day. This is just one viewpoint on the situation and it just so happens that positive news, like the clean canals, gets less attention than negative news. Pictures are manipulated and incidents are enlarged, like the example in which a reporter asked Cees how many times a year it happens that tourists are standing in his garden. He answered '20-30 times a year' and the new paper heading was 'Gardens in Giethoorn are over spilled by tourists'. Or the example in which the newspaper header was 'The Chinese people are taking over Giethoorn', while the main person in the article was Dutch, of Chinese decent. Relatively speaking, Giethoorn is eight kilometres long and only 700 meters of it is crowded. Het Binnenpad is narrow, which makes it seem busier and the fact that het Binnenpad has a dead end at one point makes that tourists pass houses twice. It is exaggerated to speak of 'overtourism'. There are some bottlenecks, but they can be solved. The dead end at one point of het Binnenpad can be fixed by continuing the current path to make a ring road out of it. Another bottleneck is the shortage of parking places at the T.O. Hylkemaweg. North of it there is still an empty piece of land where you can realise more parking places. Furthermore, you can put matrix boards near the road to manage the parking issues at busy days. If a parking place is full you can navigate tourists to other options, and, when all parking places are full, you can lead them to other places in the surrounding area. To reduce the crowds in the canal, the municipality should ban illegal boats from surrounding places and boats that are too wide or too long. Furthermore, alternative routes should be created. These are bottlenecks that can be solved if the municipality takes leadership! Another side effect of negative publicity by the media is that it actually leads to more crowded canals instead of less, because Dutch people think 'Giethoorn, you should not go there'. Normally, German, Dutch and Belgium tourists rent a boat for half a day / a full day. These boats are now available for non-European tourists, who spend a maximum of 2-3 hours in Giethoorn. So instead of a boat being rent for two times a day, the boat will be rented for six times a day, so there will be more crowds in the canal. Furthermore, headings like 'Giethoorn is overruled by tourism' also attracts 'goudzoekers' – people who believe that they can make money in Giethoorn. So they arrange private (bus)tours for tourists to Giethoorn. The best solution would be if these 'new' residents adapt to the local norms and values instead of clicking together and seeking a battle with local residents, who have lived here their whole lives. Adjustance leads to acceptance, people used to do that in the past as well. Nevertheless, a recent survey among the residents in Giethoorn showed that 80% of the people are still happy to live there.

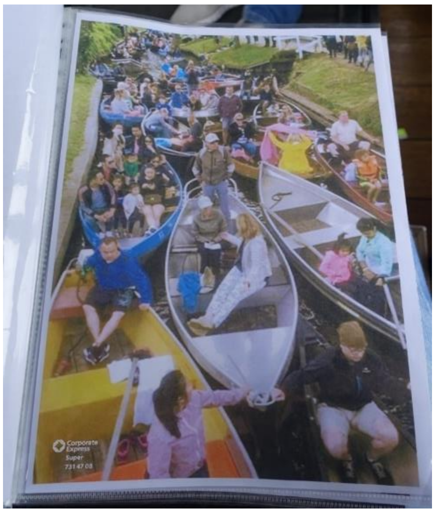
5. The changing appearance of Giethoorn over time

In the former chapter the four different discourses that were identified in the data were explained in detail. This chapter will discuss the performative power of these discourses by showing how they have changed the appearance of Giethoorn over time. It is important to mention that the physical changes in the appearance of Giethoorn are not exclusively caused by just one discourse, but are often intertwined in other discourses as well.

5.1 “Enough is enough!”

The growing numbers of non-European tourists has changed the physical appearance of Giethoorn enormously. Incidents whereby tourists entered private properties, picnicked in people’s gardens and put diapers and other trash in mailboxes, resulted in Giethoorn being full of signs, multilingual texts, ribbons, chains, stickers and covered windows. Irritations among residents are rising and many of them agree that ‘*enough is enough’*. It is no longer funny to pass het Binnenpad on a busy day. A few years ago Gieters Belang started to post pictures of crowded canals on social media and that’s where the discussion between residents, the municipality and Giethoorn Onderneemt about the touristic future of Giethoorn started. Peter, working as a guide on one of the big tour boats, explained that in low season a tour takes 45-60 minutes while in the summer, when the canals are crowded, the same tour takes 2-2,5 hour. IloveGiethoorn started an initiative to bring residents and business owners closer to each other. They organized the ‘Bokkenparade’, where business owners can decorate a goat and residents can walk different tours to decide which goat is most beautiful. Although the owner claimed that the initiative has nothing to do with the tourism industry, it would not have been necessary to bring residents and business owners closer to each other if there were no nuisance right? The goats are equipped with an ‘I love Giethoorn’ QR-code.

Although the municipality of Steenwijkerland is currently reluctant in addressing residents about the measures that they took by themselves, I expect that this will change in the near future. There are policies to protect the authentic appearance of the village. For example, the houses at het Binnenpad may not have solar panels on their roof et cetera. Since there are so many signs, of which some are also somewhat unwelcoming, affecting the authentic appearance of Giethoorn, I believe that one day the municipality of Steenwijkerland will no longer be able to ignore it.

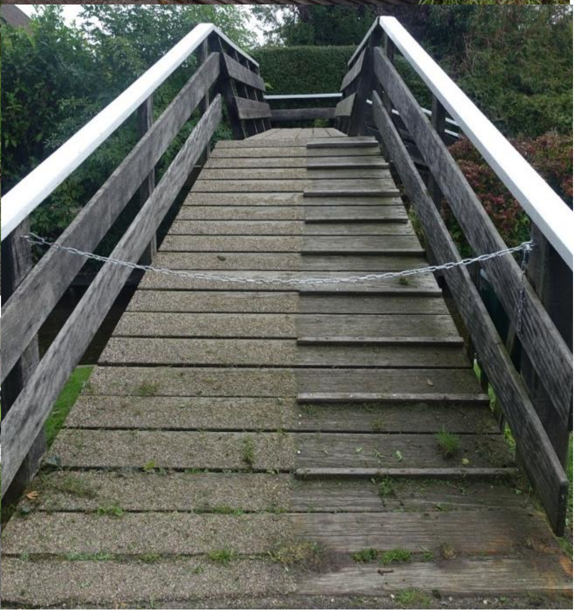


The photocollage on the following pages is a visual representation of how the discourse “Enough is enough” has changed the appearance of Giethoorn so far.

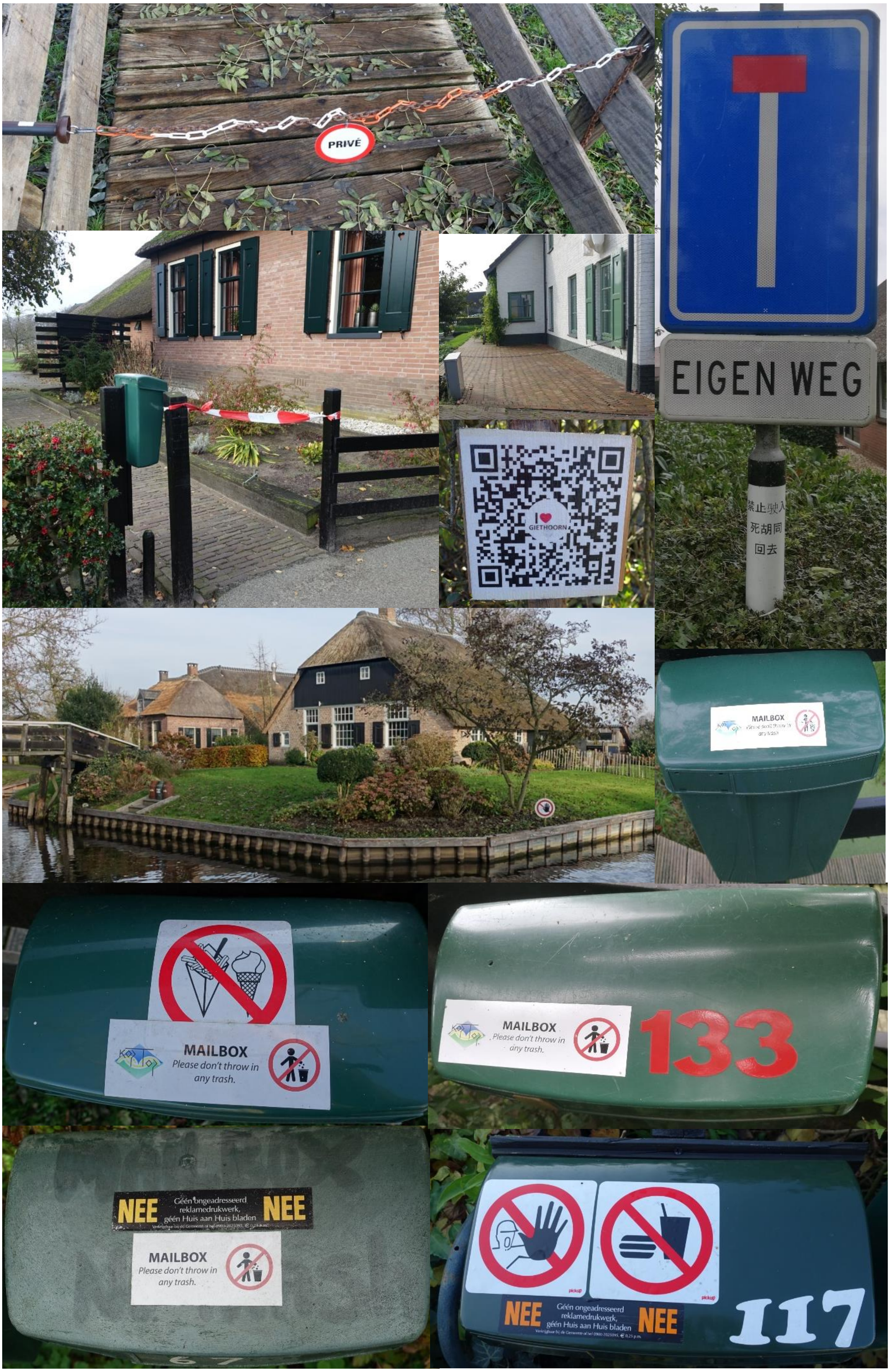
PRIVÉ

VERBODEN TOEGANG
ART. 461. WETB. v. STRAFR.

PRIVE



PRIVATE
!NO!
PASSAGE
EIGEN WEG
PRIVÉ!
Geen fietsen en
karren tegen de heg
PRIVE
EIGEN TERREIN
Privé
alleen bezoekers
t.b.v. kerkgebouw
VERBODEN TOEGANG
Wacht u voor
de hond
私人住宅,
請勿進入
PRIVÉ
SMITS PAVILJOEN
GESLOTEN
PARTICULIER
TERREIN
GEEN TOEGANG


PRIVÉ
EIGEN WEG
禁止驶入
死胡同
回去
I ♥ GIETHOORN
MAILBOX
Please don't throw in any trash.
133
NEE
Géén ongeadresseerd reklamedrukwerk, géén Huis aan Huis bladen
NEE
117

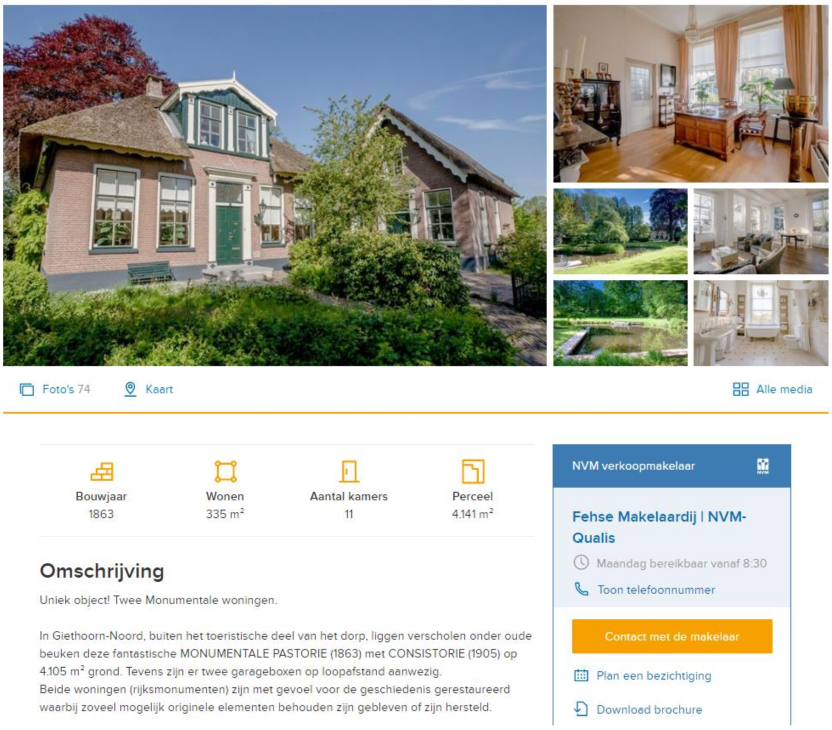
I ♥
GIETHOORN
De Bokkenparade
ilovegiethoorn.nl

Image 7: Bokkenparade Giethoorn (I love giethoorn, 2019).

5.2 “Municipality of Steenwijkerland, DO SOMETHING!”

The lack of leadership and not being able to oversee the long-term consequences of measures by the municipality of Steenwijkerland, has resulted in crowds in the canals increasing instead of decreasing. Many boat rental owners bought a few bigger tour boats, which they can continue to use after judgement of the judge. Furthermore, the municipality has put several trash cans at het Binnenpad and installed collision protections to protect the bridge piles against colliding boats. However, some collision protections are not more than just two poles because Giethoorn Onderneemt complained about it. According to Cees, Giethoorn Onderneemt said “*but that’s not beautiful at all, that’s not Gieters at all, it has never been like that*”. For that reason the municipality of Steenwijkerland wanted to stop the project but after repeated writing, the residents have now received two poles before their bridge. However, Gerrit states that the municipality could have better used the money to create a fund to compensate damaged caused by colliding boats. The lack of leadership is causing residents to take measures themselves by putting signage in their garden, on their bridges and using chains and hedges to mark private properties. The ‘not like Giethoorn-south’ marketing by estate agents, the expensive prices and the fact that most of the residents living at het Binnenpad are retired and that their houses are not age resistant, might be responsible for the fact that there are relatively high numbers of houses for sale, some of them up for sale for quite a long time already

However, I expect that the measures that the municipality of Steenwijkerland is planning to take will have further impact on the appearance of Giethoorn. For example the vignettes that will be visible on the boats, the matrix boards with live information about the number of available parking places that will be constructed, alternative routes made to reduce the crowds in the canals, the limitation of Airbnbs and B&Bs in Giethoorn-south and the mobile app as the only option to rent a boat will make street vendors superfluous.



Bouwjaar 1863
Wonen 335 m²
Aantal kamers 11
Perceel 4.141 m²

Fehse Makelaardij | NVM-Qualis

Maandag bereikbaar vanaf 8:30

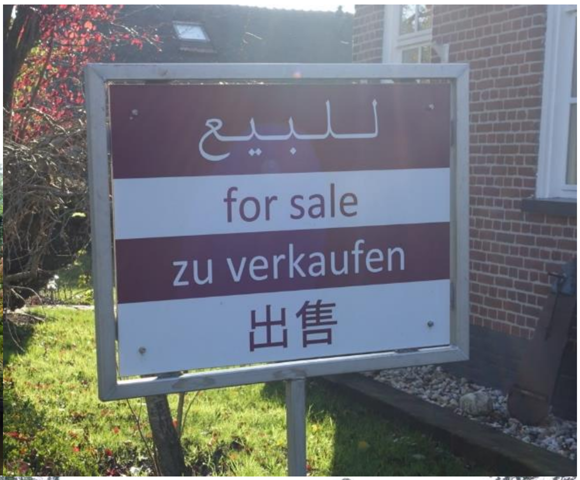
Omschrijving

Uniek object! Twee Monumentale woningen.

In Giethoorn-Noord, buiten het toeristische deel van het dorp, liggen verscholen onder oude beuken deze fantastische MONUMENTALE PASTORIE (1863) met CONSISTORIE (1905) op 4.105 m² grond. Tevens zijn er twee garageboxen op loopafstand aanwezig.
Beide woningen (rijksmonumenten) zijn met gevoel voor de geschiedenis gerestaureerd waarbij zoveel mogelijk originele elementen behouden zijn gebleven of zijn hersteld.

Image 8: *House for sale advertisement Giethoorn-North* (Funda, 2020).

The photocollage on the following pages is a visual representation of how the discourse “Municipality of Steenwijkerland, DO SOMETHING” has changed the appearance of Giethoorn so far.


للبيع
for sale
zu verkaufen
出售

TE KOOP
Greveling
ADVIESGROEP
NVM
tel.0521-523505
www.greveling-adviesgroep.nl

TE KOOP

TE KOOP

TE KOOP

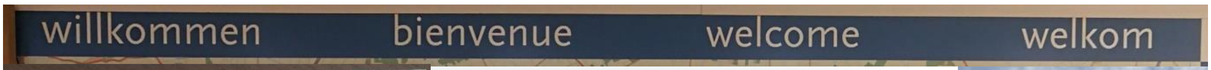
TEKOOP

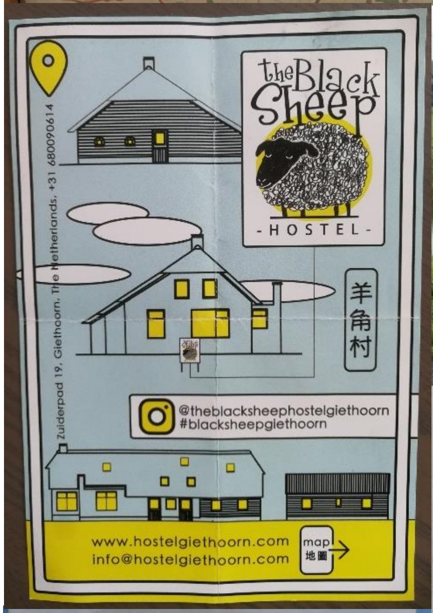
5.3 “It is not too late YET!”

The discussion about the future of Giethoorn led to the overall conclusion that Giethoorn must still be authentic instead of commercialized in 2025. Although most measures have yet to be determined in the touristic vision of Giethoorn, former measures to inform and regulate tourists have already left their traces in the physical appearance of Giethoorn. So do information boards and signage, tell tourists in Dutch and in English in which direction they have to go towards the touristic centre, campsites, ‘t Olde Maat Uus, Museum De Oude Aarde, Pottery Rhoda, the church, accommodation facilities, tourist information point, supermarket, restaurants et cetera. Furthermore, stands with folders in multiple languages are located at the tourist information point and by the side of the road to tell tourists what they can do in Giethoorn and provide information about the village. Residents have placed multilingual signs, chains and hedges et cetera, to show tourists which areas are private and which are not. The Municipality of Steenwijkerland placed multiple trash cans in Giethoorn to keep Giethoorn clean and translated bus time schedules in the Chinese language. Furthermore, the municipality and the residents stopped a Chinese man of Dutch origin who bought multiple houses in Giethoorn to make Airbnb’s out of them. These houses are now for sale again.

However, I expect that the measures in the new vision will have a greater impact on the appearance of Giethoorn since it will make some of the current measures superfluous. For example, this includes the plans to have one entrance to the village with an information board explaining to tourists the rules of the village, the app that only allows tourists to pre-book a boat trip, the advertising policy that will be observed more strictly and the plans to re-introduce the ‘Gieterse Punter’ in the canals instead of the aluminium version.

The photocollage on the following pages is a visual representation of how the discourse “It is not too late YET” has changed the appearance of Giethoorn so far.


willkommen
bienvenue
welcome
welkom



theBlackSheep

-HOSTEL-

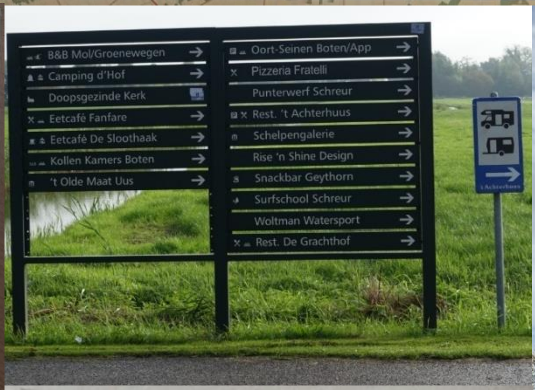
羊角村

Zuiderpad 19, Giethoorn, The Netherlands. +31 680090614

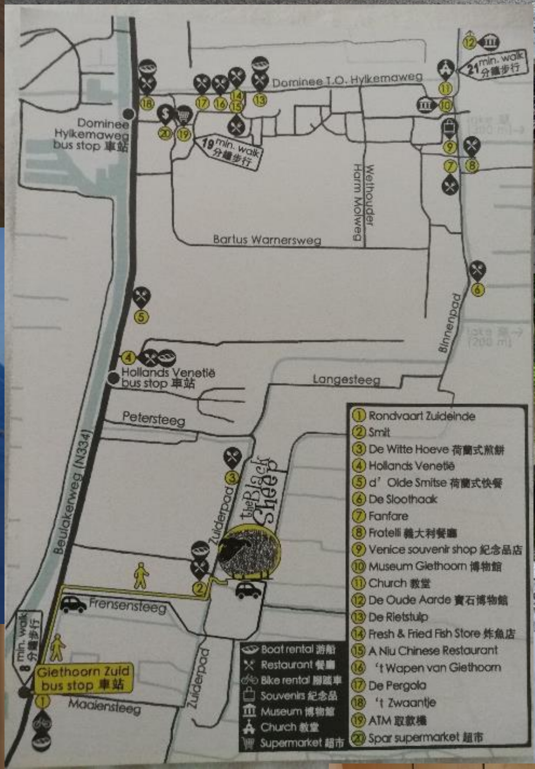
@theblacksheephostelgiethoorn
#blacksheepgiethoorn

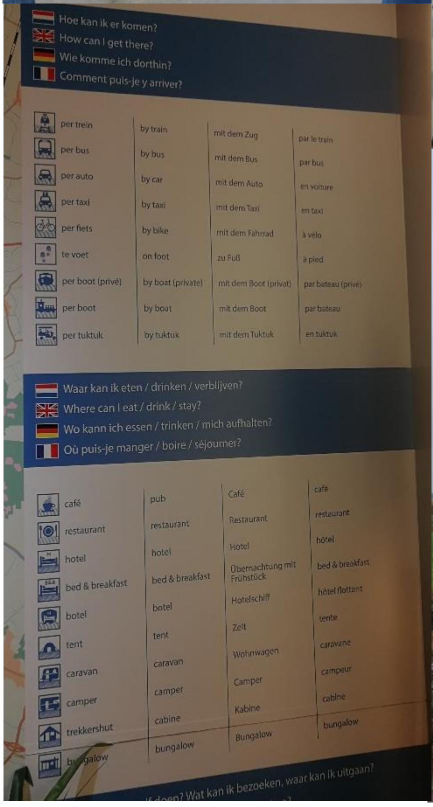
www.hostelgiethoorn.com
info@hostelgiethoorn.com

map
地圖


B&B Mol/Groenewegen
Camping d'Hof
Doopsgezinde Kerk
Eetcafé Fanfare
Eetcafé De Sloothaak
Kollen Kamers Boten
't Olde Maat Uus
Oort-Seinen Boten/App
Pizzeria Fratelli
Punterwerf Schreur
Rest. 't Achterhuus
Schelpengalerie
Rise 'n Shine Design
Snackbar Geythorn
Surfschool Schreur
Woltman Watersport
Rest. De Grachthof

Station
70
270


Dominee T.O. Hylkemaweg
21 min. walk 分鐘步行
Dominee Hylkemaweg bus stop 車站
19 min. walk 分鐘步行
Wethouder Harm Molweg
Bartus Warnersweg
Binnenpad
Langesteeg
Hollands Venetië bus stop 車站
Petersteeg
Beulakerweg (N334)
Zuiderpad
theBlackSheep
Frensensteeg
8 min. walk 分鐘步行
Giethoorn Zuid bus stop 車站
Maalensteeg
Zuiderpad
Boat rental 游船
Restaurant 餐廳
Bike rental 腳踏車
Souvenirs 紀念品
Museum 博物館
Church 教堂
Supermarket 超市
1 Rondvaart Zuideinde
2 Smit
3 De Witte Hoeve 荷蘭式煎餅
4 Hollands Venetië
5 d' Olde Smitse 荷蘭式快餐
6 De Sloothaak
7 Fanfare
8 Fratelli 義大利餐廳
9 Venice souvenir shop 紀念品店
10 Museum Giethoorn 博物館
11 Church 教堂
12 De Oude Aarde 寶石博物館
13 De Rietstulp
14 Fresh & Fried Fish Store 炸魚店
15 A Niu Chinese Restaurant
16 't Wapen van Giethoorn
17 De Pergola
18 't Zwaantje
19 ATM 取款機
20 Spar supermarket 超市



Hoe kan ik er komen?
How can I get there?
Wie komme ich dorthin?
Comment puis-je y arriver?

per trein	by train	mit dem Zug	par le train
per bus	by bus	mit dem Bus	par bus
per auto	by car	mit dem Auto	en voiture
per taxi	by taxi	mit dem Taxi	en taxi
per fiets	by bike	mit dem Fahrrad	à vélo
te voet	on foot	zu Fuß	à pied
per boot (privé)	by boat (private)	mit dem Boot (privat)	par bateau (privé)
per boot	by boat	mit dem Boot	par bateau
per tuktuk	by tuktuk	mit dem Tuktuk	en tuktuk

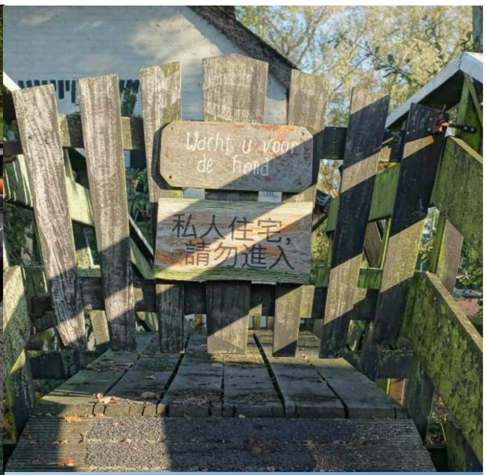
Waar kan ik eten / drinken / verblijven?
Where can I eat / drink / stay?
Wo kann ich essen / trinken / mich aufhalten?
Où puis-je manger / boire / séjourner?

café	pub	Café	café
restaurant	restaurant	Restaurant	restaurant
hotel	hotel	Hotel	hôtel
bed & breakfast	bed & breakfast	Übernachtung mit Frühstück	bed & breakfast
botel	botel	Hotelschiff	hôtel flottant
tent	tent	Zelt	tente
caravan	caravan	Wohnwagen	caravane
camper	camper	Camper	campeur
trekkershut	cabine	Kabine	cabine
bungalow	bungalow	Bungalow	bungalow

doen? Wat kan ik bezoeken, waar kan ik uitgaan?

Brasserie De Pergola
Postagentschap
Rest. De Rietstulp
Supermarkt Ter Schure
't Zwaantje
Vish. Gerrits/De Boer
Tourist Information
B&B Mol Groenewegen
Doopsgezinde kerk
Museum De Oude Aarde
't Olde Maat Uus
Pottery/Gallery Rhoda
Rest. 't Achterhuus
Snackbar Geythorn

Giethoorn
centrum


Wacht u voor de hond
私人住宅,
請勿進入

PRIVE
EIGEN TERREIN

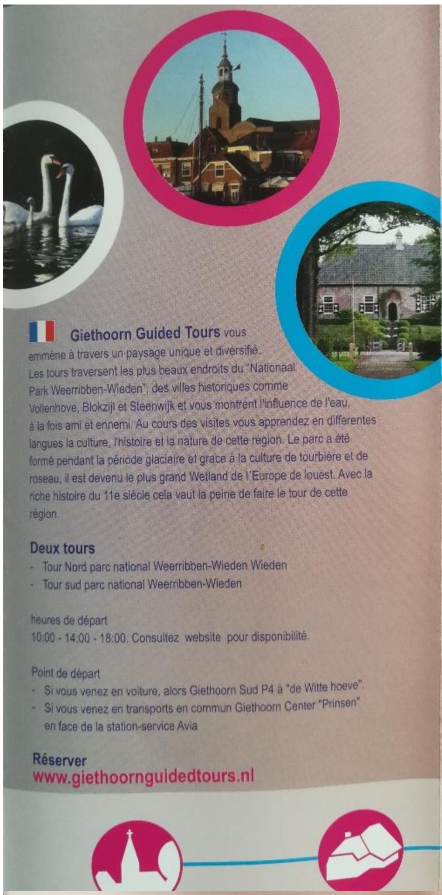
P route
P 2 Parkeerplaatsen 40
P 1 Parkeerplaatsen 260
P 2

PRIVATE
!NO!
PASSAGE
EIGEN WEG

PRIVE

P route
P 1 250
P 2-3 360
P

Motor uit!
Engine off!
P



Giethoorn Guided Tours vous emmène à travers un paysage unique et diversifié. Les tours traversent les plus beaux endroits du "Nationaal Park Weerribben-Wieden", des villes historiques comme Vollenhove, Blokzijl et Steenwijk et vous montrent l'influence de l'eau, à la fois ami et ennemi. Au cours des visites vous apprendez en differentes langues la culture, l'histoire et la nature de cette région. Le parc a été formé pendant la période glaciaire et grace à la culture de tourbière et de roseau, il est devenu le plus grand Wetland de l´Europe de louest. Avec la riche histoire du 11e siècle cela vaut la peine de faire le tour de cette région.

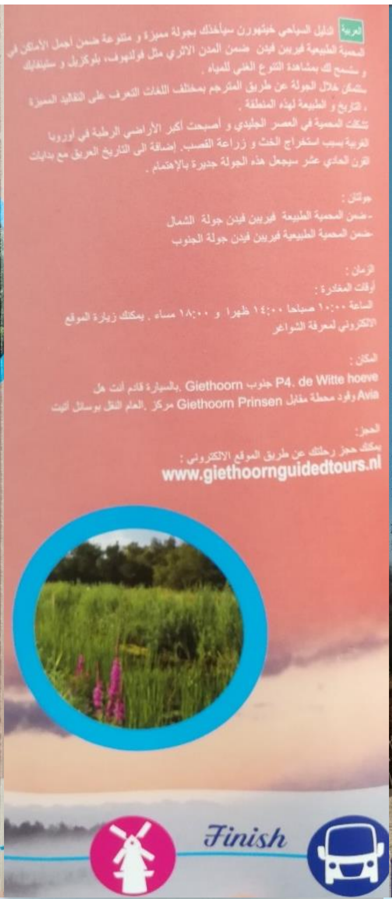
Deux tours

- Tour Nord parc national Weerribben-Wieden Wieden
- Tour sud parc national Weerribben-Wieden

heures de départ
10:00 - 14:00 - 18:00. Consultez website pour disponibilité.

Point de départ
- Si vous venez en voiture, alors Giethoorn Sud P4 à "de Witte hoeve".
- Si vous venez en transports en commun Giethoorn Center "Prinsen" en face de la station-service Avia

Réserver
www.giethoornguidedtours.nl



العربية الدليل السياحي خيتهورن سيأخذك بجولة مميزة و متنوعة ضمن أجمل الأماكن في المحمية الطبيعية فيربين فيدن ضمن المدن الاثري مثل فولنهوف، بلوكزيل و ستينفايك و ستسمح لك بمشاهدة التنوع الغني للمياه .
ستتمكن خلال الجولة عن طريق المترجم بمختلف اللغات التعرف على التقاليد المميزة , التاريخ و الطبيعة لهذه المنطقة .
تشكلت المحمية في العصر الجليدي و أصبحت أكبر الأراضي الرطبة في أوروبا الغربية بسبب استخراج الخث و زراعة القصب. إضافة الى التاريخ العريق مع بدايات القرن الحادي عشر سيجعل هذه الجولة جديرة بالإهتمام .

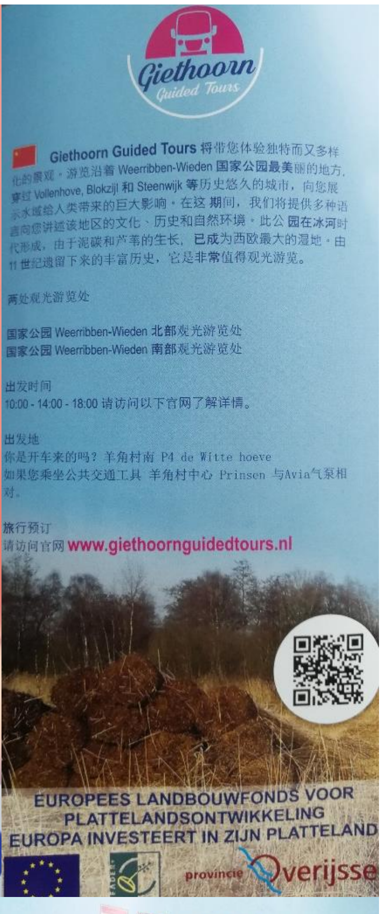
جولتان :

- ضمن المحمية الطبيعة فيربين فيدن جولة الشمال
- ضمن المحمية الطبيعية فيربين فيدن جولة الجنوب

الزمان :
أوقات المغادرة :
الساعة ١٠:٠٠ صباحا ١٤:٠٠ ظهرا و ١٨:٠٠ مساء . يمكنك زيارة الموقع الالكتروني لمعرفة الشواغر

المكان :
هل أنت قادم بالسيارة، Giethoorn جنوب P4. de Witte hoeve
أتيت بوسائل النقل العام، مركز Giethoorn Prinsen مقابل محطة وقود Avia

الحجز:
يمكنك حجز رحلتك عن طريق الموقع الالكتروني :
www.giethoornguidedtours.nl



Giethoorn Guided Tours 将带您体验独特而又多样化的景观。游览沿着 Weerribben-Wieden 国家公园最美丽的地方，穿过 Vollenhove, Blokzijl 和 Steenwijk 等历史悠久的城市，向您展示水域给人类带来的巨大影响。在这期间，我们将提供多种语言向您讲述该地区的文化、历史和自然环境。此公园在冰河时代形成，由于泥碳和芦苇的生长，已成为西欧最大的湿地。由11 世纪遗留下来的丰富历史，它是非常值得观光游览。

两处观光游览处

国家公园 Weerribben-Wieden 北部观光游览处
国家公园 Weerribben-Wieden 南部观光游览处

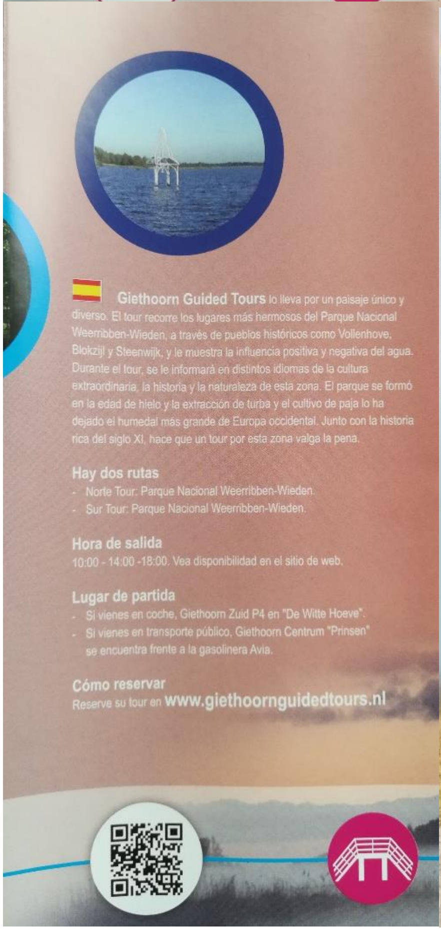
出发时间
10:00 - 14:00 - 18:00 请访问以下官网了解详情。

出发地
你是开车来的吗？羊角村南 P4 de Witte hoeve
如果您乘坐公共交通工具 羊角村中心 Prinsen 与Avia气泵相对。

旅行预订
请访问官网 www.giethoornguidedtours.nl

EUROPEES LANDBOUWFONDS VOOR PLATTELANDSONTWIKKELING
EUROPA INVESTEERT IN ZIJN PLATTELAND

provincie Overijssel



Giethoorn Guided Tours lo lleva por un paisaje único y diverso. El tour recorre los lugares más hermosos del Parque Nacional Weerribben-Wieden, a través de pueblos históricos como Vollenhove, Blokzijl y Steenwijk, y le muestra la influencia positiva y negativa del agua. Durante el tour, se le informará en distintos idiomas de la cultura extraordinaria, la historia y la naturaleza de esta zona. El parque se formó en la edad de hielo y la extracción de turba y el cultivo de paja lo ha dejado el humedal más grande de Europa occidental. Junto con la historia rica del siglo XI, hace que un tour por esta zona valga la pena.

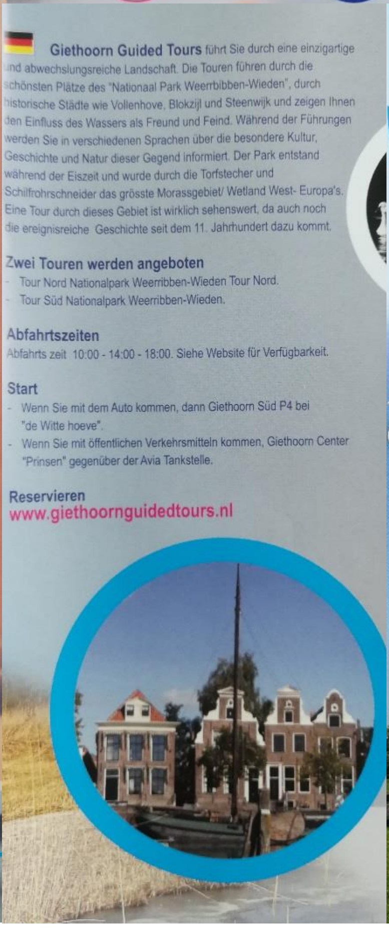
Hay dos rutas

- Norte Tour: Parque Nacional Weerribben-Wieden.
- Sur Tour: Parque Nacional Weerribben-Wieden.

Hora de salida
10:00 - 14:00 -18:00. Vea disponibilidad en el sitio de web.

Lugar de partida
- Si vienes en coche, Giethoorn Zuid P4 en "De Witte Hoeve".
- Si vienes en transporte público, Giethoorn Centrum "Prinsen" se encuentra frente a la gasolinera Avia.

Cómo reservar
Reserve su tour en www.giethoornguidedtours.nl



Giethoorn Guided Tours führt Sie durch eine einzigartige und abwechslungsreiche Landschaft. Die Touren führen durch die schönsten Plätze des "Nationaal Park Weerrbibben-Wieden", durch historische Städte wie Vollenhove, Blokzijl und Steenwijk und zeigen Ihnen den Einfluss des Wassers als Freund und Feind. Während der Führungen werden Sie in verschiedenen Sprachen über die besondere Kultur, Geschichte und Natur dieser Gegend informiert. Der Park entstand während der Eiszeit und wurde durch die Torfstecher und Schilfrohrschneider das grösste Morassgebiet/ Wetland West- Europa's. Eine Tour durch dieses Gebiet ist wirklich sehenswert, da auch noch die ereignisreiche Geschichte seit dem 11. Jahrhundert dazu kommt.

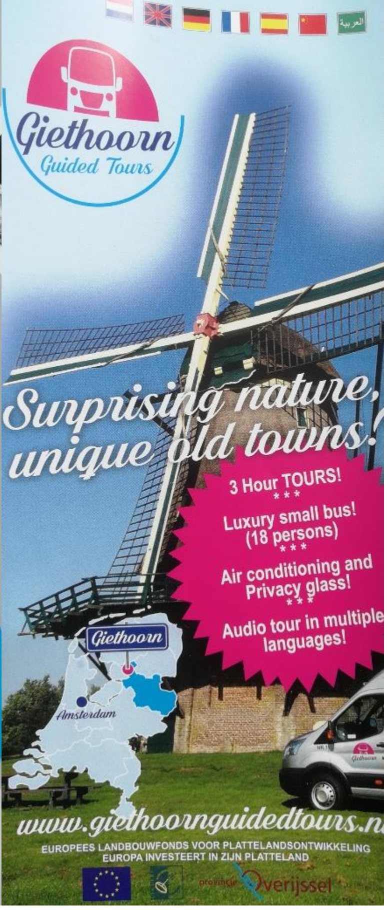
Zwei Touren werden angeboten

- Tour Nord Nationalpark Weerribben-Wieden Tour Nord.
- Tour Süd Nationalpark Weerribben-Wieden.

Abfahrtszeiten
Abfahrts zeit 10:00 - 14:00 - 18:00. Siehe Website für Verfügbarkeit.

Start
- Wenn Sie mit dem Auto kommen, dann Giethoorn Süd P4 bei "de Witte hoeve".
- Wenn Sie mit öffentlichen Verkehrsmitteln kommen, Giethoorn Center "Prinsen" gegenüber der Avia Tankstelle.

Reservieren
www.giethoornguidedtours.nl

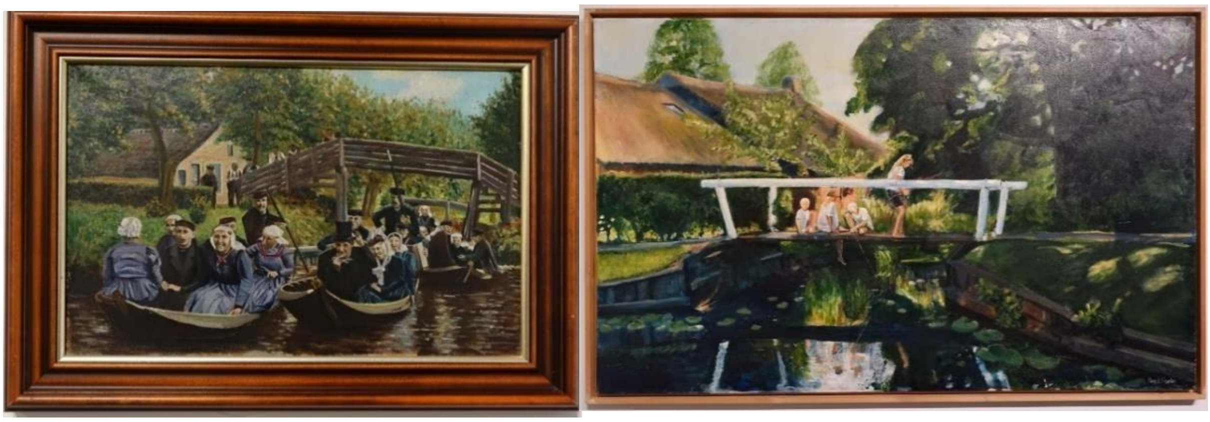


العربية
Giethoorn Guided Tours
Surprising nature, unique old towns!
3 Hour TOURS!
* * *
Luxury small bus! (18 persons)
* * *
Air conditioning and Privacy glass!
* * *
Audio tour in multiple languages!
Giethoorn
Amsterdam
www.giethoornguidedtours.nl
provincie Overijssel

EUROPEES LANDBOUWFONDS VOOR PLATTELANDSONTWIKKELING
EUROPA INVESTEERT IN ZIJN PLATTELAND

5.4 Giethoorn = tourism

The growth of international tourism has changed the physical appearance of Giethoorn in many ways. In the 80's, motor boats used to sail through the canals, resulting in lots of noise and a blue haze above the canals at the end of the day. These boats are replaced by silent electric boats and with that, the target group using the boats changed as well. The silent electric boats were no longer attractive for partying young religious people from surrounding villages. With the growing number of tourists bigger tour boats entered the canals and touristic-oriented facilities like restaurants, ice-cream stores, boat rentals, souvenir shops, cheese shops, wooden shoes photo spots and a traditional Dutch customs photos store, settled in Giethoorn as well. With that, multilingual flags, billboards, banners, texts and signage to explain to tourists where the facility is located arose in gardens, on bridges and along het Binnenpad as well. 'T Olde Maat uus' has been restored with money from the residents and the 'Prins Bernhard' fund and functions as a museum nowadays. In the basement a timeline is presented with the history of Giethoorn from its origin. On the ground floor the rooms are decorated in such a way that they represent how life used to be in Giethoorn. The Giethoorn express was introduced by the Municipality of Steenwijkerland to provide a more regular connection between Steenwijk station and Giethoorn and bus time schedules at bus stops are translated in the Chinese language too. According to Angela, tour buses used to be small in the past. Nowadays they are large and come from several international countries, each coming with a private guide on board speaking the language of the respective tourist group. The building that used to be the city hall in the past is now used as a wedding venue. The small Spar supermarket has been converted into a large Plus supermarket, one of the biggest in the surrounding area. Furthermore, important facilities like an ATM, general practitioner with a pharmacy and the cultural house are present in Giethoorn as well. One of the residents placed an "I am Giethoorn" bench in his garden, another resident constructed a pole that shows how far Giethoorn is from several international destinations. Furthermore, many residents have a small side business at home and are offering (a part of) their house as a B&B and/or Airbnb. According to Gerrit "*Airbnbs are shooting out of the ground like mushrooms*". With that, signage to navigate tourists towards each B&B/Airbnb have also been established.



The photocollage on the following pages is a visual representation of how the discourse "Giethoorn = tourism" has changed the appearance of Giethoorn over time.

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-Station
-Isala hoofdingang
-Busstation
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Steenwijk:
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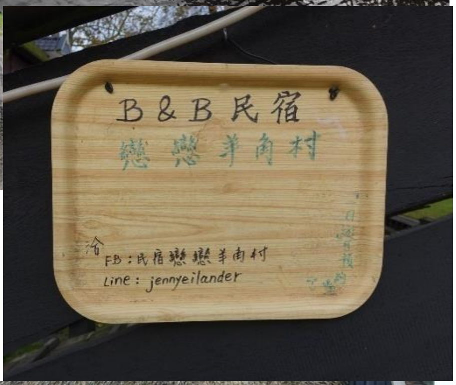
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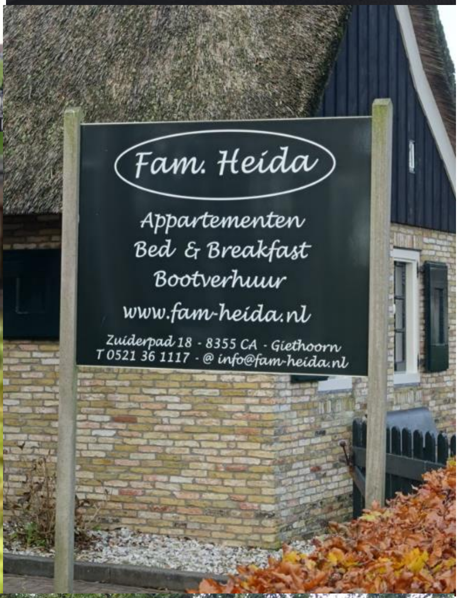
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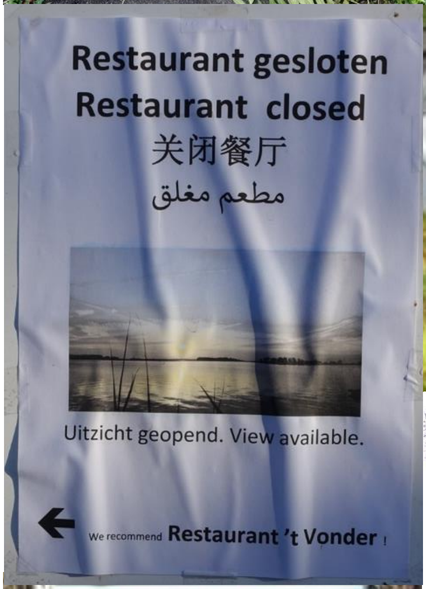

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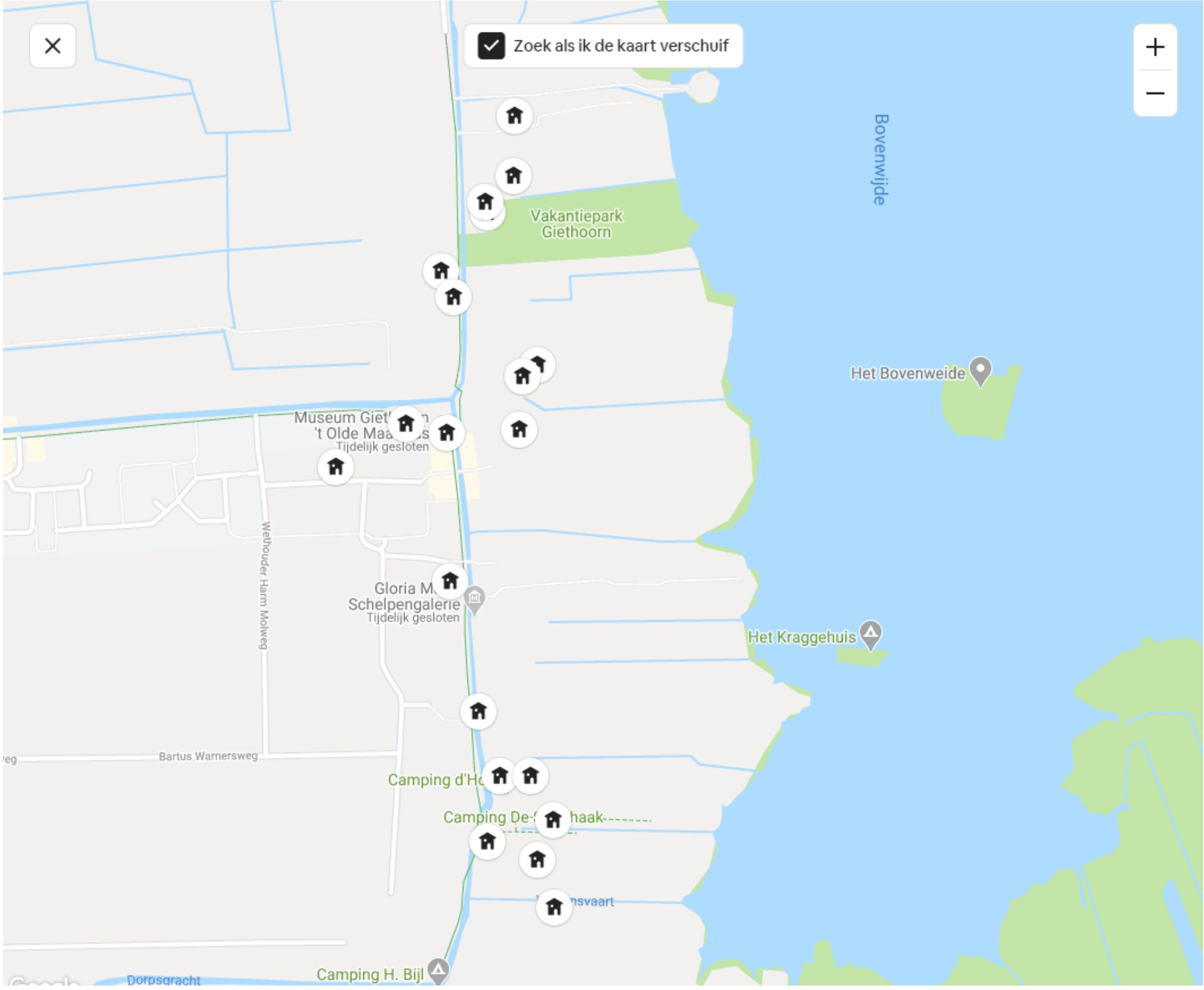
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Het Bovenweide
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Camping d'Ho
Camping De
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nsvaart
Camping H. Bijl
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Image 9: Airbnb accommodations Giethoorn (Airbnb, 2020)

6. Conclusion and Discussion

The aim of this thesis project was to explore how different discourses on overtourism in Giethoorn have changed the physical appearance of the village over time. Therefore one central research question was formulated, which was divided into two sub-research questions . In the next paragraph these (sub)-research questions will be answered. The last paragraph will reflect upon the concepts post structuralism, performativity and performative landscapes in relation to the research findings. Furthermore, it will discuss the practical applications of this research project and further research possibilities.

6.1 Research questions

This paragraph will first answer the two sub-research questions and thereafter an answer will be provided to the central research question.

6.1.1 Sub-research questions

1) What are the different discourses on overtourism in Giethoorn?

Based on the viewpoints of the interviewees in this research, the documents that were analysed and the researchers own observations, the following discourses were identified:

- *"Enough is enough!"*
- *"Municipality of Steenwijkerland, DO SOMETHING!"*
- *"It is not too late YET!"*
- *Giethoorn = tourism*

The discourse 'Giethoorn=tourism' was established because several interviews showed that Giethoorn and tourism are originally intertwined with each other. Because of tourism, many families are able to live in Giethoorn and are there more facilities than in surrounding villages. The term 'overtourism' arose when 'new, highly educated' residents – those who did not grow up with the tourism industry in Giethoorn - moved from elsewhere in the Netherlands to Giethoorn. In this discourse the term 'overtourism' is seen as a media hype, since the 'problems' arising from tourism are bottlenecks that can be remedied. Furthermore, negative publicity actually leads to more crowds and the rise of 'goudzoekers'. The discourse 'It is not too late YET' is identified in several interviews and documents about how Giethoorn should look in 2025. It is unanimously agreed that Giethoorn must still be authentic in 2025 instead of being commercialized. In this discourse Giethoorn is currently over-touristic, but the current situation is not yet irreversible so one looks at possibilities to regulate the tourism industry and enhance Giethoorn's authenticity. This implies that the aim needs to switch from quantitative towards qualitative tourism. Different ideas have been invented, like 1) the development of a reservation app that will regulate the crowds at parking lots and in the canals, 2) stricter adherence to the advertising policy, 3) the reintroduction of the 'Gieterse Punter' and 4) forbidding theme shops and holiday parks. Furthermore, tourists must become aware of how to behave in Giethoorn and where to go for certain sights / use certain facilities. The discourse 'Municipality of Steenwijkerland, DO SOMETHING' is a result of the many interviews in which it is stated that the municipality of Steenwijkerland lacks leadership and is acting risk averse and reservedly. The current 'over touristic' situation in Giethoorn is a result of poor governance by the municipality of Steenwijkerland and their incapability to oversee the long-term consequences of measures they take. For this reason, residents are taking measures themselves, resulting in an affected appearance due to signs, texts, symbols, stickers, chains et cetera. Furthermore, other destinations in the Netherlands and other branches use the image of 'overtouristic' Giethoorn as a worst case scenario for their own development plans, resulting in 'not like Giethoorn' marketing. However, the Municipality of Steenwijkerland intends to regulate 'overtourism' in Giethoorn the coming years. This includes implementing a number of new initiatives such as: spreading tourists throughout the municipality, introducing smart mobility for parking issues and crowds on the canals, introducing a vignette system for rental boats, increasing the tourist tax per night, increasing the number of BOA's, developing alternative sailing routes and limiting the number of Airbnbs and B&Bs in the touristic area of Giethoorn. The discourse 'Enough is enough" is identified in several interviews, documents and observations with mainly the residents and the representative of BBB. The current tourist numbers are exceeding the number of residents gigantically, leading towards irritations among residents and residents questioning whether Giethoorn is still their village. Residents are adapting themselves to the current situation in many different ways. Some of these include: not sailing through the canals themselves on busy days, doing their groceries earlier or elsewhere, installing a bicycle bell on wheelbarrows to notify tourists that they want to pass, letting their dog do his defecation in the garden on busy days or, the ones that can afford themselves, even flee elsewhere on busy days. Furthermore, residents have marked their properties with signs, fences, chains and bushes to keep tourists out. BBB did send a list with measures to the municipality of Steenwijkerland with measures that would improve the liveability for residents. It is especially important that business owners become aware that the image of Giethoorn is - for the long-term - very important for their business model as well, instead of only caring about the profit they currently make.

2) How have these discourses change the physical appearance of Giethoorn over time?
The established discourses, the researcher's observations and photographs showed that the physical appearance of Giethoorn has changed over time in multiple ways. It must be noted that not all physical changes are related to just one discourse, some changes are the result of overlapping discourses.

The discourse 'Giethoorn = tourism' has mainly played a major role in the past and forms the basis of what Giethoorn looks like today. It has changed the appearance of Giethoorn from a poor farmers village in the past, to an internationally known village which mainly houses households with an above average income. With the growth of international tourism, touristic-oriented facilities such as restaurants, boat rentals, ice-cream stores, souvenir shops, wooden shoes photo spots, cheese shops and a traditional Dutch customs photo store, have settled in Giethoorn. Tour boats and tour busses became bigger and multilingual flags, billboards, texts and signage arose in gardens, along het Binnenpad and on bridges as well. 'T Olde Maat Uus' is restored and today functions as a museum. Bus time schedules are translated into the Chinese language and the Giethoorn Express functions as a direct bus line between Steenwijk station and Giethoorn. The old city hall currently functions as a wedding venue and the converted Plus supermarket is one the biggest in the surrounding area. The number of Airbnbs and B&Bs grew explosively, especially at het Binnenpad, and so did the signage to navigate tourists in the right direction. Decorations such as an 'I am Giethoorn' bench and a pole to show distances from Giethoorn to several international destinations were also placed. Furthermore, important facilities like an ATM, general practitioner with a pharmacy and a cultural house are also present in Giethoorn nowadays. However, with the planned measures to enhance the authenticity of Giethoorn, it could be that the current advertising will be curtailed in the near future. The discourse 'It is not too late YET' changed the appearance of Giethoorn by the placement of signage and information boards to explain to tourists - in Dutch and English - in which direction they have to go for certain sights and facilities. Stands with multilingual folders at the tourist information point and by the side of the road arose to tell tourists what they can do in (and around) Giethoorn. Trash cans are placed by the municipality of Steenwijkerland to keep Giethoorn clean and bus time schedules are translated in the Chinese language to improve the ease of use. Residents have placed multilingual signs, texts, hedges and chains et cetera to mark private properties. The houses that a Chinese man of Dutch origin bought, to make Airbnbs out of it, are for sale again. However, with the planned measures to enhance the authenticity of Giethoorn and to regulate tourism in a more efficient way, it is expected that the appearance of Giethoorn will further change in the coming years. The discourse "Municipality of Steenwijkerland, DO SOMETHING' has changed the appearance of Giethoorn by applying colliding protection at bridges to protect them against colliding boats. Furthermore, bigger tour boats have entered the canals because the municipality of Steenwijkerland did not oversee the long-term effects of an experiment they carried out. Furthermore, the 'not like Giethoorn-south' marketing by estate agents, the expensive prices and the fact that most of the residents living at het Binnenpad are retired and their houses are not age resistant might be responsible for the fact that there are relatively many houses for sale, some of them for quite a long time already. The discourse "Enough is enough and preferably even less" has changed the appearance of Giethoorn by the many signs, symbols, texts, ribbons, stickers chains, hedges and covered windows that mark the private properties of residents. Furthermore, the initiative from 'I love Giethoorn' to bring residents and business closer to one another with 'de Bokkenparade' temporarily ensured that there are goats and signs with an 'I love Giethoorn' QR-code all over Giethoorn.

6.1.2 Central research question

What are the different discourses on overtourism in Giethoorn and how have these discourses changed the appearance of Giethoorn over time?

The different discourses on overtourism that have been identified in interviews, documents and observations are 'Giethoorn = tourism', 'It is not too late YET', 'Municipality of Steenwijkerland, DO SOMETHING' and 'Enough is enough and preferably even less'. The discourses that have been established are strongly dependent on the different stakeholders that have been interviewed and their viewpoints on the tourism industry. The discourses have changed the appearance of Giethoorn in many ways over time. The following was identified: 1) the number and diversity of touristic oriented facilities has increased, 2) tour boats and tour buses have become bigger, 3) the amount and diversity of advertisement has increased, 4) the Giethoorn express has been introduced along with translated bus time schedules in the Chinese language, 5) the old city hall has now become a wedding venue, 6) the converted Plus supermarket has become one of the biggest in the surrounding area, 7) the number of Airbnbs, B&Bs and their signage has grown explosively, 8) there is an 'I am Giethoorn' bench and a pole to show the distance from Giethoorn to several international destinations, 9) there are important facilities nowadays like an ATM, general practitioner with a pharmacy and a cultural house, 10) signage and information boards have been placed to navigate tourists to certain sights/facilities, 11) multiple trash cans have been placed, 12) many residents have placed multilingual signs, symbols, texts, ribbons, stickers, chains, hedges or have covered their windows to mark private properties, 13) there are relatively many houses for sale, 14) colliding protection at bridges has been installed, 15) stands with multilingual folders by the side of the road and at the tourist information point have arisen and 16) goats with an 'I love Giethoorn' QR code have temporarily been placed throughout Giethoorn. It is interesting to see that the performative power of the established discourses differ in time frame as well. The discourse 'Giethoorn = tourism' had the biggest impact of the appearance of Giethoorn in the past, while other discourses are still at the beginning of their performative power because of planned future measures. Furthermore, it is important to mention that some changes in the appearance of Giethoorn are not caused by just one discourse, but are a result of multiple discourses. Anyway, until the municipality of Steenwijkerland takes the lead to develop policies regarding the regulation of the tourism industry in Giethoorn, and also strictly observe these policies, it is a lot more realistic to assume that Giethoorn will look ‘commercialized’ instead of ‘authentic’ in 2025.

6.2 Discussion

This paragraph will reflect upon the concepts post structuralism, discourse, performativity and performative landscapes in relation to the research findings. Furthermore, it will discuss the practical application of this research project and further research possibilities

6.2.1 Reflection on concepts

When the findings of this research projects are compared to the theoretical framework that was developed in chapter 2, it confirms that the construction of the different discourses depends on someone’s conception of the world. As described by Friedrich Nietzsche “when we say something about the world we also inevitably say something about our conception of the world – something that is linked not to the facts and phenomena we try to comprehend but to the assumptions and conventions of knowing that we have acquired over time and that have become codified in language” (Bleiker & Chou, 2010, p. 9). This study showed that someone’s conception of overtourism in Giethoorn is influenced by the extent to which someone benefits from the tourism industry. The discourses that mainly comprise the opinions of entrepreneurs are generally more positive and put the current situation more into perspective than that the residents do. Furthermore, this study shows that someone’s origin also plays an important role in the discursive construction of overtourism in Giethoorn. People who are born and raised in Giethoorn-south are generally more positive about the tourism industry than those who have recently moved from elsewhere in the Netherlands to Giethoorn.

Schein (1997) argued that cultural landscapes are not fixed but that they are always in the state of “becoming” (p.662). This has also been confirmed by this study. The results show that the discourse “Giethoorn = tourism” played an important role in the past, when tourism was seen as a positive contributor to the development of Giethoorn. The discourse “enough is enough” is currently playing an important role in the changing appearance of Giethoorn, while the discourses “Municipality of Steenwijkerland, DO SOMETHING” and “It is not too late YET” are just at the beginning of their performative power and are expected to play a major role in the changing appearance for the coming years. Furthermore, the research findings shows that the lack of leadership, lack of touristic vision and the lack of monitoring current policies by the municipality of Steenwijkerland, ensures that entrepreneurs and residents have free rein at this moment to change the physical appearance as they like.

Donald Meinig (1979) stated that discourses do not stand alone, but that they coexist and might capture competing meanings. This point of view is supported by the findings of this research project. The discourses “Giethoorn = tourism” and “Enough is Enough” are the opposite of each other and also the other discourses differ sufficiently from each other. The coexistence of the discourses is visible in the changing appearance of Giethoorn over time. The physical changes in the appearance of Giethoorn are not exclusively caused by just one discourse, they are often intertwined in other discourses as well.

The concepts used in this thesis are originally from other chair groups, but they have been applied to the tourism industry. In the field of geography and history, the contribution of discourses to the changing appearance of landscapes has already been proven. The research findings of this thesis project showed that despite the social and environmental impact of overtourism on a destination, overtourism also indirectly contributes to the changing appearance of destinations through discourse. Although it is commonly known that the appearance of destinations change when tourism starts to grow (i.e. facilities), the resistance of the residents towards these changes added an extra dimension in this. The residents wants the village to remain authentic in 2025, but at the same time they contribute to the changing appearance of the village by placing multilingual signs, symbols, texts, ribbons, stickers, chains and hedges throughout the village.

6.2.2 Practical applicability

Although an explorative research project is often used as a groundwork for further research, there are definitely some practical abilities. First of all, since most changes happen unnoticed, the insights of this research project serves as a ‘wakeup call’ to all stakeholders to show how much Giethoorn has already changed (unnoticed) in the last couple of years. For this reason the insights are useful for the municipality of Steenwijkerland in their policy making to protect the authentic characteristics of Giethoorn. Furthermore, the insights could serve as a means to show the municipality of Steenwijkerland that they really have to take the lead and act hard and firm in the policy making process and the creation of the vision for the future of the touristic industry in Giethoorn. The results also provide insights into the relationships between different stakeholders. This information is useful because difficult relationships complicate the cooperation and hinders/delays the policy making process and the development of a touristic vision, which can further decrease the authentic characteristics of Giethoorn.

6.2.3 Future research possibilities

To get a complete overview of the different discourses on overtourism in Giethoorn and how these have affected the appearance of the village over time, it is important that as many residents, business owners, representatives and other stakeholders as possible are asked for their perspectives and that observations are executed in high season as well. This overview will give a representative overview of the discourses on overtourism in Giethoorn and are therefore useful for policy making. Furthermore it will provide a more detailed overview of how Giethoorn has changed over the years, which is useful to protect the authentic characteristics of the village. It would be interesting to do the same research project in other over-touristic destinations in the Netherlands as well, like de Zaanse Schans and Kinderdijk, to create national awareness that it is important to protect the places and objects that tourists come to see and that are valuable for our residents and culture.

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