

BIANKA PLÜSCHKE-ALTOF

Images of the Periphery Impeding  
Rural Development?  
Discursive Peripheralization  
of Rural Areas in Post-Socialist Estonia



DISSERTATIONES RERUM OECONOMICARUM  
UNIVERSITATIS TARTUENSIS

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UNIVERSITY OF TARTU  
Press

Faculty of Social Sciences, School of Economics and Business Administration, University of Tartu, Estonia.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CS	Comparative County Statistics
EALL	Estonian Newspaper Union
EPL	Daily Newspaper Eesti Päevaleht
ERR	Estonian Public Broadcasting
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDR	Human Development Report
IFM	Institut für Medien- und Kommunikationspolitik
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
ML	Weekly Newspaper Maaleht
MS	Comparative Municipality Statistics
NRP	National Reform Program 2020
NSP	National Spatial Plan 2030+
EU	European Union
PM	Daily Newspaper Postimees
RDP	Rural Development Plan
SE	Statistics Estonia
SVL	Seto Union of Rural Municipalities
SYB	Statistical Yearbook
UNESCO	United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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*~ For my family,  
who made my childhood “on the periphery”  
so memorable ~*



## LIST OF AUTHOR'S PUBLICATIONS AND CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

### JOURNAL ARTICLES

1. **Plüschke-Altob, B. forthcoming in 2018.** Re-inventing Setomaa. The Challenges of Fighting Stigmatization in Peripheral Rural Areas in Estonia. *Geographische Zeitschrift*.
2. **Plüschke-Altob, B. 2017.** The Question of Responsibility. (De-)Peripheralizing Rural Spaces in Post-Socialist Estonia. *European Spatial Research and Policy*, 24 (2): (forthcoming)
3. **Plüschke-Altob, B. 2016.** Rural as Periphery per se? Unravelling the Discursive Node. *Sociální studia / Social Studies* 13 (2): 11-28.
4. **Noorkõiv, R., Plüschke-Altob, B. 2015.** Suburbanisation and identity. Macro- and Micro-level Factors on the Case of Viimsi Rural Municipality. *Quarterly Bulletin of Statistics Estonia*, 15 (4), 182–211.
5. **Brüggemann, M., Plüschke, B. 2013.** Deutsche/r werden? Das Für und Wider einer Einbürgerung. Eine Befragung türkischer Migrant/inn/en in Berlin. *Gesellschaft-Wirtschaft-Politik*, 2013 (2), 217–230.
6. **Plüschke, B. 2013.** Zwei laute Monologe. Der estnisch-russische Denkmalstreit um dem Bronzenen Soldaten. *360°*, 2013 (1), 91–97.
7. **Graeser, S., Luong, T.T., Mania, A., Piterek, C., Plüschke, B., Urban, M. 2008.** Berlin bei Nacht. Forschungsbericht über Berliner Spätkäufe. *Feldnotizen*, 2008 (3), 39–54.

### BOOK CHAPTERS

1. **Plüschke-Altob, B. 2015.** Kolonisatoren von gestern, MitbürgerInnen von heute? Wandelnde Grenzziehungen gegenüber der Russischen Minderheit in Estland. In: Scholz, S.; Dütsch, J. (Eds.): *Krisen, Prozesse, Potenziale. Beiträge zum 4. Studentischen Soziologiekongress*, 347–381, Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press.

### CONFERENCE PUBLICATIONS

1. **Plüschke-Altob, B. 2016.** Rescaling Postcolonial Approaches. The Making of Rural Peripheries in Estonian Media Discourse. *Re-inventing Eastern Europe (The Fifth Edition)*. Riga: Euroacademia, 1–10.
2. **Plüschke-Altob, B. 2015.** Visions of the Rural impeding Development? Discourses on a 'problematic' region in Estonia. *XXVI European Society for Rural Sociology Congress*. Aberdeen: The James Hutton Institute, 134–135.
3. **Plüschke-Altob, B. 2015.** Sieh, welches Estlands mächtigste und schwächste Gemeinden sind. Eine Analyse nationaler und lokaler Raumdiskurse. 59. *Deutscher Kongress für Geographie*. Berlin: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Geographie, 80.
4. **Plüschke-Altob, B. 2014.** Von den Grenzen her denken. Die Darstellung der Anderen im Diskurs der estnischen Mehrheit“. 22. *Tagung Junge Osteuropa Experten*. Berlin: University of Munich, 25.

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

### 2017

Final RegPol<sup>2</sup> Conference “Coping with Uneven Development in Europe”, Leipzig

### 2016

2<sup>nd</sup> Tartu Planeerimiskonverents “Spatial Inequality and Planning”, Tartu

5<sup>th</sup> Euroacademia International Conference “Re-Inventing Eastern Europe”, Riga

3<sup>rd</sup> RegPol<sup>2</sup> School “Beyond Disparities: Towards Balanced Spatial Development”,  
Velka Lomnica

### 2015

59<sup>th</sup> German Geography Congress “Urban landscapes-Landscaping (the) Urban”,  
Berlin

26<sup>th</sup> ESRS Congress “Places of Possibility? Rural Societies in a Neoliberal World”,  
Aberdeen

2<sup>nd</sup> RegPol<sup>2</sup> School “Empirical Perspectives on CEE Polarisation Processes”, Leipzig

1<sup>st</sup> RegPol<sup>2</sup> School “Scientific and Policy Approaches to Polarisation Processes in  
CEE”, Tartu

### 2014

22<sup>nd</sup> JOE Convention “Grenzen in Osteuropa: Neudefinierung, Öffnung, Auflösung?“,  
Berlin

### 2013

4<sup>th</sup> Student Sociology Congress “Krisen, Prozesse, Potenziale”, Bamberg

## WORKSHOP PRESENTATIONS

### 2017

RegPol<sup>2</sup> Work Package Meeting, Cluj-Napoca

### 2016

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin Research Colloquium, Berlin

Mulgimaa Arenduskoda General Meeting, Valma

Rural Life Network’s Leader Information Day, Jäneda

RegPol<sup>2</sup> Workshop on Regional Polarization, Békéscsaba

Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography on Spatial Discourses and Local Practices,  
Leipzig

### 2015

14<sup>th</sup> Supilinn Days Workshop on Communities Changing Urban Space, Tartu

RegPol<sup>2</sup> Workshop on Training in Quantitative and Qualitative Methods, Leipzig

### 2014

RegPol<sup>2</sup> Workshop on Basic Understanding on Core-Periphery Relations in CEE,  
Bratislava

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. List of Papers

The cumulative dissertation is based on the following four original papers. While the first three are displayed in this publication, only a summary of the latter will be provided due to the ongoing review process.

- (1) Plüschke-Altöf, B. 2016. Rural as Periphery per se? Unravelling the Discursive Node. *Sociální studia / Social Studies* 13 (2): 11-28.
- (2) Plüschke-Altöf, B. 2017. The Question of Responsibility. (De) Peripheralizing Rural Spaces in Post-Socialist Estonia. *European Spatial Research and Policy* 24 (2): (forthcoming)
- (3) Plüschke-Altöf, B. 2018a. Re-inventing Setomaa. The Challenges of Fighting Stigmatization in Peripheral Rural Areas. *Geographische Zeitschrift* (forthcoming)
- (4) Plüschke-Altöf, B. 2018b. Fighting against or Hiding Behind an Image of Peripherality. Response Strategies to Discursive Peripheralization in Rural Estonia. *Journal of Baltic Studies* (under review)

## 1.2. Why Images Matter: Research Aims and Relevance

Like other countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), Estonia also struggles with the question of how to maintain life in areas outside the urban hinterlands in a socially and economically sustainable way. While CEE as a macro-region has experienced tangible economic growth since the initial crisis period of the post-socialist transformation, this development has not affected all regions equally. Rather, it has led to an increase of “socio-economic disparities between regions, places and populations” (PoSCoPP 2015, 3) that has affected rural areas in particular. As a consequence, rural areas in post-socialist space today often struggle with two interrelated, yet distinct challenges, these being material deprivation and territorial stigmatization (Kay et al. 2012). This is also true for rural areas in Estonia that are subjected to tangible peripheralization processes due to the ongoing trend of (sub-)urbanization, which has led to sizeable structural disadvantages such as socio-economic decline, selective out-migration and institutional thinness. Yet this has also resulted in an image of rural areas as peripheries *per se* that prevails despite

positive ascriptions to rurality as a traditional and wholesome way of life, which figure prominently in Estonian national identity discourses (Annist 2011, Leetmaa et al. 2013, Nugin and Trell 2015, Plüschke-Altöf 2016). In a post-socialist context – which alongside the process of economic globalization (Gdaniec 2009) and the widespread neoliberalization of regional policy (Bristow 2005) is still seen as relevant for understanding the current socio-spatial disparities despite the ongoing debate on the finite nature of this concept (Czepczynski 2008, Section 4 and 5.2.) – this peripheralization at a normative development scale is in fact multi-scalar, affecting the national, regional and local levels alike (Annist 2011, Kay et al. 2012, Koobak and Marling 2014, and Timár and Velkey 2016).

Despite these challenges, as a result of the continuous neoliberalization of regional policy along the lines of competitiveness and economic growth, rural areas are increasingly encouraged to act as resilient places that proactively fight against these precise disadvantages (Bristow 2005 and 2010, Fischer-Tahir and Naumann 2013, Kay et al. 2012, and Woods 2013). In the course of this neoliberal turn in policy, the focus on regional development strategies has lately shifted to “creative competition” (Peck 2010, 217). Based on the notions of consumption-oriented place promotion and post-productivist entrepreneurialism, as expounded by the works of Florida (2002) and others, images are thereby treated as endogenous resources that can be commodified in order to achieve a competitive advantage for the region by attracting tourists, residents and investors (Kašková and Chromý 2014, Paasi 2013, Peck 2010, Semian and Chromý 2014, and Shearmur 2012).

However, against the backdrop of the ongoing socio-spatial polarization that predominantly affects rural areas, such image-based solution strategies for dealing with peripheralization and fostering regional development require critical scrutiny. However, if the resource that is promised to guarantee success in a neoliberal world – a marketable image – is exactly the thing that they are missing, how can post-socialist rural areas fulfill the role of “proactive localities” (Leetmaa et al. 2013, 17) ascribed to them in these policy debates? This applies particularly when they are often faced with particularly negative images displaying them on the downside of the center-periphery, urban-rural and east-west divide (Kay et al. 2012). It is this relationship between images and development that is the focus of this thesis. By analyzing the meaning of space to different actors, as well as the ways how this meaning is shared or contested, this dissertation shows that the peripheral image of post-socialist rural areas, which subordinates them to urban centers (Bristow 2010, Shearmur 2012), is neither inevitable nor self-evident but actively *made*.

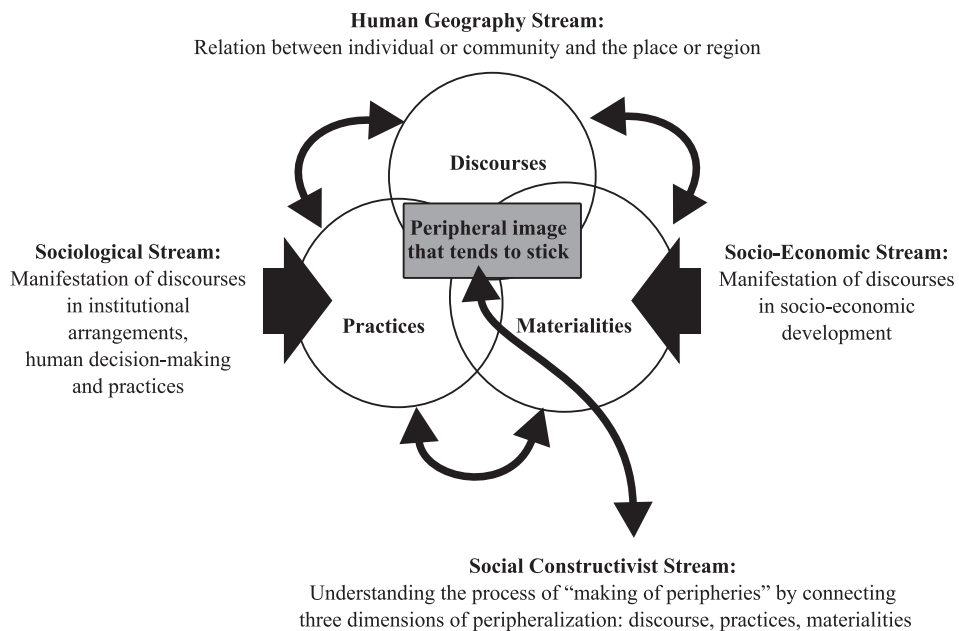
The research on rural representations, including the critical debates on the social construction of peripheral ruralities and peripheralities (Cloke 2003, Cloke

et al. 2006, Copus 2001, Halfacree 2007, Paasi 1995), which was followed by a series of empirical studies (Balogh 2015, Burdack et al. 2015, Timár and Velkey 2016, Pospěch 2014, Steinführer 2015, and others), already calls into question this predominant association of the rural with the peripheral. As such, a discursive hierarchy does not simply exist; this dissertation seeks to add to this strand of research by further exploring the dynamics that (re-)produce it in practice. Following a social constructivist approach, the thesis **aims to understand the making of rural peripheries**. Hence, it moves beyond dominant formalist views that describe space as a passive locus (Lefebvre 1974) and the center-periphery divide as fixed spatial category. Instead it follows the growing body of literature recognizing peripheries as the “result of societal processes of peripheralization” (Lang 2013, 225) that unfold in relation to centralization (Keim 2006, Kühn 2015, Fischer-Tahir and Naumann 2013, PoSCoPP 2015, and others).

Building on Lefebvre’s (1974) notion of the production of space and Laclau’s (1996) definition of the social as essentially discursive, these processes are understood as being equally structured by practices, materialities and discourses. Peripheralization discourses towards rural areas are thus performative. By creating a peripheral image of the rural that tends to “stick” (Wacquant et al. 2014, 1272), such representations are neither neutral nor innocent (Foucault 1999, Lefebvre 1974). Quite the opposite – by influencing our thinking and acting in space, they manifest a socio-spatial order that naturalizes the ascription of development (non-)potential, and thus actively co-constitute socio-spatial polarization (Beetz 2008, Graham 1997, and Miggelbrink and Meyer 2015).

Research in the field of behavioral economics, most prominently represented by Thaler (2015), has already pointed to the limits of a *homo economicus* figure whose decisions are solely based on rational cost-benefit analyses. Instead, it has shown that decision-making processes do not occur in a vacuum, but are often grounded in social norms and beliefs that might at times supersede economically rational considerations. This dissertation will argue that practices in space – whether they might concern residential decision-making, the choice of tourist destinations or investment decisions – are also to a tangible extent influenced by the image that we have of a place, regardless of whether this mirrors the socio-economic “truth” or not. What is more, the socio-spatial practices that are set into motion by images proliferated in discourses also influence spatial materialities. These include, for example, the tax base of municipalities often being dependent on the number of people who choose to live in them. Further examples are represented by the income opportunities in the tourist sector or the flow of investments into a region.

Hence, *images matter*. Due to their interrelation with practices and materialities, they do not merely have the potential to influence peripheralization processes, but also the ways in which to overcome them. In the literature, this link between images and development has been discussed in two different ways. On the one hand, the research on place-marketing and place-branding has treated the image of a place as a beacon of hope for regional development, which could therefore also help to overcome and reverse negative ascriptions to rural areas by focusing, for example, on their depiction as rural idyll or the rural as the home of heritage culture (see for example: Kauppinen 2014, Kašková and Chromý 2014, Kotler 1999, Semian and Chromý 2014, Skjeggedal and Overvåg 2017, and Woods 2013). On the other, the literature on territorial stigmatization has warned of the danger that negative images such as those post-socialist rural areas face can turn into a stigmatizing label that initiates a downward spiral of development (e.g. Bürk et al. 2012, Bürk 2013, Wacquant et al. 2014).



**Figure 1.** Conceptualization of Peripheralization Process

Source: Illustration by the author based on Miggelbrink and Maeyer (2015)

As shown in Figure 1, building on these debates in the fields of human geography, sociology and economics, this dissertation emphasizes the importance of the so-called “communicative dimension” (Kühn 2015, 8). Spatial inequalities (the human geography stream) in the form of socio-spatial discourses do not



only influence individual and institutional practices, e.g. of marginalization and coping (the sociological stream), but thereby also socio-economic developments, e.g. the uneven distribution of costs, benefits and resources in space (the socio-economic stream). In the case of periphery-constructions in Estonia, this thesis connects these three dimensions of peripheralization by analyzing how rural areas are subjected to peripheral images and in which ways they deal with these ascriptions. If Estonian rural areas are (re-)produced as peripheries in socio-spatial discourses, the **questions** arise as to how, by whom and with what consequences they are constituted as such. Following Foucault's (1999) notion of the performativity of discourses, these questions result in the **three main research objectives** of this thesis, which are (1) to deconstruct how rural peripheries are discursively made and subordinated to urban centers, (2) to analyze who has the power to speak and be heard in these peripheralization discourses, as well as (3) to explore their consequences for the places labelled as peripheries and those people responding to them.

### 1.3. Research Methodology and Structure

Treating the term periphery as an empty signifier (Laclau 1996) that is predominantly attached to rural areas (Fischer-Tahir and Naumann 2013), the analysis of these three research objectives essentially builds on the critical discourse analysis approach that Jäger (1999) developed on the basis of Foucault (1999) and Link (1982) as well as on the discursive field analysis proposed by Bourdieu (1991) and Schwab-Trapp (2006).

The questions as to how and by whom peripheries are discursively (re-) produced are answered with the help of the notion of "discursive peripheralization" (Bürk 2013, 169), which accounts for the relational, multi-dimensional and multi-scalar nature of peripheralization while simultaneously accentuating the inherent and constitutive role that discourses play within it (Plüschke-Altöf 2016). Based on Foucault (1999), it conceptualizes peripheralization discourses as performative and embedded in power relations. On the one hand, discourses institutionalize power structures. Functioning as means of knowledge production, they universalize particular interpretations of social reality and thereby define what can legitimately be expressed about peripheries (Foucault 1999, Jäger 1999). Beyond that, they constitute subjectivities in space, which those who are subjected to moments of peripheralization have to relate to (Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013). On the other, it is the access to resources and positions of power that determines who has the right to speak and be heard in discourses (Schwab-Trapp 2006). As peripheralization discourses do not exist in a vacuum,

societal power relations influence whose constructions become temporarily fixed through hegemony and thus manifested in symbols, categories and institutional practices (Bourdieu 1991, Jäger 2008, Paasi 2010, Spivak 1988).

The question with what consequences rural areas are constituted as peripheries refers to the structure-agency debate as articulated by Giddens (1984) and Pred (1984). While hegemonic discourses structure what is thinkable and expressible about peripheries, they are also structured by different societal agents who shape them (Foucault 1999, Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013). In this dissertation, peripheralization discourses will therefore be treated as structuration processes that are always in becoming and never complete (Pred 1984). By disabling certain forms of agency while at the same time enabling others, they offer room for maneuver that can be negotiated by competing discourse participants embedded in power structures.

To account for the reciprocal relations between discourse and power as well as structure and agency, the research was divided into two separate but interrelated phases. The first phase was devoted to a twofold analysis of the discursive formation and the discursive field. While the former examined repetitive discursive patterns and (de-)legitimization strategies in the opinion columns of principal newspaper publications, the latter explored the socio-historic and institutional context as well as the “interpreting coalition” (Bürk et al. 2012, 339) on the basis of in-depth interviews with opinion leaders and newspaper editors. Together, these revealed how and by whom the universalization of particular knowledge on peripheries is fostered in Estonian public discourse. In the second phase, the subjective relevance of, and responses to, such hegemonic ascriptions were explored within two case studies in Estonian rural areas labelled as peripheral. These employed individual and group interviews as well as participant observation as the principal methods. Finally, both case studies focused on the question of consequence, thus convey how those who are facing similar moments of discursive peripheralization attribute different degrees of relevance to it and employ distinct coping strategies.

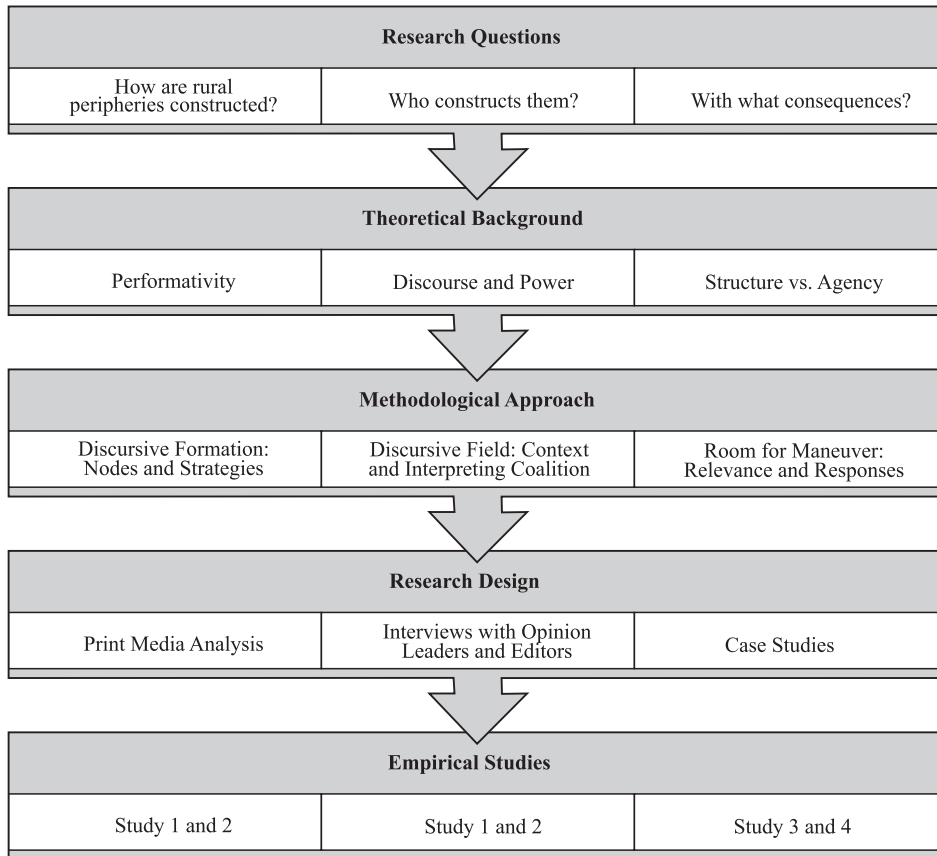
As Table 1 shows, these diverse levels of analysis were accounted for in the four studies on which the dissertation is based. While the first and the second studies concentrate mainly on the questions as to how and by whom rural areas are constituted as peripheries, the third and fourth studies focus on the consequences in peripheralized rural areas. As the analysis involved the national, regional and local scale or – put differently, the macro-, meso- and micro-level –and also employed different qualitative methods united under the discourse analytical framework, the figure also illustrates the multi-level and multi-method approach in this dissertation.

**Table 1.** Methodological Approach in Empirical Studies

<b>Study</b>	<b>Research Focus</b>	<b>Data Base</b>	<b>Scale</b>
(1)	<b>How?</b> Constitution of Rural Areas as Peripheries	Opinion Articles in Estonian National Print Media	Macro
(2)	<b>Who?</b> The Interpreting Coalition	Interviews with National Opinion Leaders and Newspaper Editors	Macro
	<b>How?</b> Peripheralization Discourse as Struggle over the Question of Responsibility for Regional Development	Opinion Articles in Estonian National Print Media	
(3)	<b>With what consequences?</b> Relevance and Responses	Interviews with Local Decision-Makers and Locals	Meso-Micro
		Participant Observation during Case Study I	
(4)	<b>With what consequences?</b> Relevance and Responses	Interviews with Local Decision-Makers and Locals	Meso-Micro
		Participant Observation during Case Study II	

Source: Illustration by the author

This way of proceeding is also mirrored in the structure of the dissertation illustrated in Figure 2. By focusing on the theoretical background and methodological approach, the following two chapters explain the conceptual framework in greater detail. Chapter 2 first situates the thesis within a wider epistemological framework and goes on to develop discursive peripheralization as the main theoretical concept via the questions as to how, by whom and with what consequences rural areas are (re-)produced as peripheries. After this, the third chapter outlines the research design, which builds on a critical discourse analysis approach focusing on the discursive formation, the discursive field and the discursive room for maneuver. This is followed by a detailed overview of the research context in post-socialist rural Estonia in Chapter 4. At the heart of the cumulative dissertation are the four empirical studies presented in the fifth chapter, which cover the discursive formations and struggles evolving around rural peripheries in Estonia, nationally as well as locally. In Chapter 6, the thesis concludes with a summary of the results and a discussion on their practical implications and limitations.



**Figure 2.** Overview: Structure of the Dissertation

Source: Illustration by the author

## 1.4. Research Novelty and Practical Implications

As the thesis is interdisciplinary, situated on the borders between sociology, human geography and economics, it offers novelty in several aspects and is therefore not only relevant for academic debate but also for practitioners (see Section 6.4.). Taking a critical theory approach, the main aim is to question objectified spatial truths. Conceptualizing the term periphery as an empty signifier that can absorb different meanings projected on it (Laclau 1996) raises awareness of the processes of objectification and the role played by actors engaging in it. It is through the discursive hegemony of an established “interpreting coalition” (Bürk et al. 2012, 339) that particular interpretations of society and space become universalized. As such standard-settings show consequences in practices and materialities, it is important to reflect upon their contested and therefore alterable nature. If images are made, they can also be *unmade*.

In order to deconstruct these objectified truths, this thesis re-emphasizes the discursive level of peripheralization and thereby complements dominant structuralist approaches. Until now, spatial disparities have mainly been conceptualized in terms of economic polarization, social marginalization and political power imbalances (Gyuris 2014, Kühn 2015). While the notion of peripheralization introduced by Keim (2006) already emphasizes the processual, relational, multi-scalar and multi-dimensional nature of spatial hierarchies (PoSCoPP 2015), the important role of the communicative dimension has long been underestimated (Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013, Lang 2015). It was only in the course of the cultural turn in the social sciences that socio-spatial images received more attention. By applying the concept of discursive peripheralization to the construction of rural areas in Estonian media, this thesis adds to the empirical literature on socio-spatial images and to the meaning of space in general and in Estonia in particular (see for example: Alumäe 2006, Annist 2011, Kährik et al. 2012, Nugin 2014, Nugin and Trell 2015, Pfoser 2014, Sooväli 2004, Sooväli et al. 2005, Trell et al. 2012, Virkkunen 2002).

However, socio-spatial discourses were often treated as mere representations of an existing spatial order, which led to a substantial critique on the “dematerializing effect of the cultural turn” (Timár and Velkey 2016, 321; Woods 2010). As socio-spatial ascriptions do not simply represent but also constitute spatial orders, this dissertation therefore focuses on the link between discourses, practices and materialities in (re-)producing core-periphery relations, which has been identified as one major lacuna in the research (Kühn and Bernt 2013, Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013). It seeks to tackle this “problem of effect” between images and development opportunities or challenges by treating discourses as performative for the production of knowledge on subjects in space and their constitution (Foucault 1999). This also adds to the research on behavioral economics, spearheaded by Thaler (2015) that has questioned the logic of rational decision-making and emphasized the role of factors such as social norms and beliefs, and – as this thesis argues – also of socio-spatial images that we believe to be true.

Finally, by analyzing the relevance of, and responses to, socio-spatial discourses within two case studies in rural Estonia, this dissertation further explores their consequences. Discourses are thereby scrutinized as structuration processes offering a certain room for maneuver for local actors who have to relate to and deal with such ascriptions (Pred 1984, Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013). This dissertation thus also examines the potential benefits and drawbacks of different responses to discursive peripheralization and thereby critically scrutinizes place marketing and branding processes based on image making that have come to

play an increasingly important role in regional development strategies (see for example: Kauppinen 2014, Kašková and Chromý 2014, Kavatzis and Ashworth 2015, Paasi 2013, Semian and Chromý 2014, Skjeggedal and Overvåg 2017, and Woods 2013).

In sum, in the case of peripheralization discourses in Estonia, this dissertation addresses the shortcomings in the existing literature by:

- (1) re-emphasizing the discursive dimension of peripheralization,
- (2) analyzing the performativity of peripheral images proliferated in media discourses,
- (3) exploring the discursive room for maneuver in places labelled as peripheries.

## **1.5. Acknowledgements**

While the preparation of a PhD thesis in a multicultural and transdisciplinary context is certainly an interesting and rewarding undertaking, it also poses many academic, institutional, practical and emotional challenges. I would like to use this opportunity to thank everyone who helped me face these challenges.

For the valuable academic advice throughout the preparation of this dissertation, I would like to thank my local supervisors Dr. Andres Kuusik and Dr. Aet Annist as well as the Marie Curie International Training Network RegPol<sup>2</sup>, in particular the coordinators of the Work Package on “Evolution, Reproduction and Persistence of Centrality and Peripherality,” Dr. Judit Timár and Dr. Erika Nagy and the project coordinator Dr. Thilo Lang. I am furthermore very grateful for the constructive feedback from, and fruitful discussions with, the (pre-) defense commission (especially Dr. Eneli Kindsiko), my opponents Dr. Helen Sooväli-Sepping and Dr. Judit Timár, the Head of the School of Economics and Business Administration, Dr. Maaja Vadi, my fellow students at the University of Tartu, the researchers of the RegPol<sup>2</sup> project as well as the journal editors and anonymous reviewers, who commented on earlier drafts of my PhD papers. For its institutional support, I owe thanks to my host institution Geomedia OÜ and its head Rivo Noorkõiv who provided me with the opportunity to get insights into the practicalities of regional development and policy in Estonia. Overcoming the practical linguistic challenges that I faced as a German native speaker, who conducted research in Estonian that was published in English, would not have been possible without the native speakers Ly Reinik, Kristiina Kuslapuu, Keaty Siivelt and Dr. Gareth Hamilton who kindly assisted me in transcription, proof-reading and translation where necessary. My sincere thanks also go to my close

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## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This thesis builds on a conceptual framework, which evolves around the notion of discursive peripheralization. The philosophical origins, as well as the theoretical and methodological basis, of this concept are developed during this chapter alongside the central questions of the dissertation: How are rural areas constituted as peripheries, by whom and with which type of consequences?

### 2.1. (Re-)Production of Space: Processes of Spatialization and Peripheralization

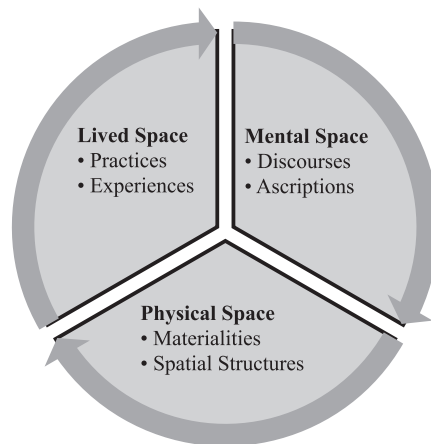
With its emphasis on the discursive dimension of peripheralization, this research concentrates on what Cloke et al. (2004, 307) call “understanding”. By trying to uncover the meaning that spaces and places have for different actors and how this is shared and/or contested, it shifts the focus from explanatory or positivist approaches to the perceptual level. Following Berger and Luckmann (1966), it assumes that meaning does not exist objectively but is subjectively produced and manifested as a social fact through interaction. The thesis, therefore, critically questions the predefined knowledge on, as well as fixed categories in, space. Rather, it aims to unfold the processes of knowledge production underlying it.

Taking such a social constructivist approach, however, does not mean ignoring materialities. On the contrary, this thesis focuses on discourses as a form of meaning-making that is deeply intertwined with practices and materialities (Miggelbrink and Meyer 2015). According to Foucault (1999), discourses are not only seen as a representation of, but also co-constitutive of, socio-spatial processes. The meaning that is ascribed to places and their inhabitants via discourses is thus understood as real in the sense of consequential for human action and socio-spatial structure (Graham 1997, Lefebvre 1974, Laclau 1996, and Paasi 2010). It is this crucial role that ascriptions and images play in the construction of socio-spatial reality that the thesis aims to uncover through discourse analytical means.

To follow through this discourse analytical approach also means critically questioning the (re-)production of space. In order to scrutinize the making of space, Lefebvre (1974) developed a tripartite theoretical framework, which was later reworked and rephrased by Soja (1999) and Halfacree (2006). As shown in Figure 3, according to this framework, space consists of three interrelated levels: the “physical” and the “mental” space, as well as the space of “social practice”. Whereas the physical space describes structural aspects such as patterns and



processes, the conceived mental space consists of the images, discourses and representations that surround places. Finally, the space of social practice involves the lived experiences that people encounter (Lefebvre 1974, Soja 1999, Halfacree 2006). Consequently, space is neither neutral nor innocent but constantly shaped, formed and (re-)produced in processes of spatialization, which consist of spatial structures, imaginaries and everyday practices. It is also never complete or fixed, but always in becoming and mutually intertwined with society; while being constitutive for social processes, it is simultaneously a social product in itself (Lefebvre 1974, Pred 1984).



**Figure 3.** Tripartite Spatial Framework

Source: Illustration by the author based on Lefebvre (1974), Soja (1999), Halfacree (2006)

This dissertation subscribes to this tripartite framework by conceptualizing the mental space, (i.e. discourses and ascriptions) as being mutually intertwined with physical and lived spaces. It concentrates on the making of peripheries as one central spatial category that is understood as the “result of societal processes of peripheralization” (Lang 2013, 225). Similar to the notion of spatialization (Lefebvre 1974), peripheralization draws attention to the socially (re-)produced and temporal character of spatial relations, which – despite their durability – are always in becoming and therefore subject to change.

The term peripheralization was introduced into the debate by Keim (2006) convinced that we should stop looking for peripheral spaces and start focusing on the processes through which they emerge. It has meanwhile been developed into a relational, multi-level and multi-scalar term that describes the (re-)production of spatial disparities (Gyuris 2014, Kühn 2015, Fischer-Tahir and Naumann 2013, PoSCoPP 2015, and others). Conceptually, it first reflects the

relational character of core-periphery hierarchies in space by emphasizing that the notion of peripheries as being “situated at the fringes” or “at distance to the center” (Kühn 2015, 2) can be understood only in relation to its counterpart. In other words, the processes of peripheralization and centralization are contingent (Keim 2006, Leibert 2013).

Moreover, peripheralization is applicable at different scales, from the neighborhood level to entire countries or global macro-regions (Kühn and Bernt 2013). On one hand, it can therefore grasp the multi-scalar dependencies of spaces that have been highlighted in postcolonial theory (Hechter 1975, Jansson 2003, Nolte 1996, PoSCoPP 2015, and Walls 1978), especially in recent studies that intersect postcolonial and post-socialist approaches (Koobak and Marling 2014, Suchland 2011, Stenning and Hörschelmann 2008a, and Tlostanova 2012). On the other, it urges us to question why peripheries are associated with certain types of spaces and therefore also facilitates an analysis of the widespread link between peripheries and rural areas and the dynamics producing it in practice (Fischer-Tahir and Naumann 2013, Keim 2006, Leibert 2013, Kay et al. 2012, Naumann and Reichert-Schick 2013). By focusing on common mechanisms of marginalization and deprivation, this perspective also renders urban concepts such as territorial stigmatization fruitful for rural studies (Benedek and Moldovan 2015).

Drawing on theories of economic polarization, social inequality and political power imbalances, the term also underlines peripheralization as a multi-level process. It therefore takes the extensive research on the materialities and practices of peripheralization into account. The materialities of the “physical” space are investigated in greater detail in the research on spatial disparities (see for example Copus 2001, Harvey 1996, Hirschman 1958, Krugman 1991, Myrdal 1957, and Rokkan et al. 1987) that concentrates on examining the economic and structural causes of uneven developments (e.g. Hanell 2015, Leibert 2013, Loewen 2015, Marksoo et al. 2010, and Naumann and Reichert-Schick 2013), as well as on its regional distribution (see indexes such as Annoni and Dijkstra 2013, Assembly of European Regions 2009, Hollanders and Es-Sadki 2014, and Schürmann and Talaat 2000). The “lived” space is at the focus of the research on socio-spatial injustices and marginalization with emphasis on practices of (re-)production and coping (e.g. Annist 2011, Beetz 2008, Bardone et al. 2013, Burdack et al. 2015, Hadjimichalis and Hudson 2007, Kühn and Bernt 2013, Kukovec 2015, Nagy et al. 2015, Smith and Stenning 2006, and Stenning and Hörschelmann 2008b), especially in rural spaces (Halfacree 2006/2007, Trell et al. 2012, and Woods 2010).

However, polarization processes between centers and peripheries are not only structured by hard materialities but also (re-)produced in hegemonic discourses (Lang 2011, Kühn and Weck 2013). Due to the long-lasting quantitative and positivist orientation in human geography, the role of discourses or the “communicative processes” (Kühn 2015, 2) only received more attention during the course of the cultural turn. Since then, the theoretical framework on “mental” space has been advanced in the research on socio-spatial ascriptions, territorial stigmatization and discursive peripheralization (see for example Bürk 2013, Cloke 2003/2006, Gregory 1994, Lang 2013, Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013, Miggelbrink and Meyer 2015, Paasi 1995, Valentine 2007, and Wacquant et al. 2014) as well as place-marketing (Jasso 2005, Kauppinen 2014, Kašková and Chromý 2014, Kotler 1999, Semian and Chromý 2014, Skjeggedal and Overvåg 2017, and others) that is accompanied by a series of empirical studies on image-making and reception (Balogh 2015, Bürk et al. 2012, Juska 2007, Nugin 2014, Pospěch 2014, Steinführer 2015, Timár and Velkey 2016, and others). This focus on “regions as social constructs” (Paasi 2010, 2296) has also led to a critical analysis of the underlying hegemonic, yet contestable, concepts and methodologies producing ascriptions of (rural) peripherality (Blondel 2015, Bristow 2005/ 2010, Shearmur 2012, and Pike et al. 2007). Building on and adding to this third body of literature, this dissertation aims to (re-)emphasize the crucial role that discourses play for socio-spatial processes in general and for the making of rural peripheries in Estonia in particular.

While Table 2 outlines the multi-level strands of research on peripheralization, as well as exemplary case studies in the CEE and Estonian context, a comprehensive overview is provided by Fischer-Tahir and Naumann (2013), Gyuris (2014), Kühn (2015), Lang (2015), Nagy (2015) and PoSCoPP (2015), as well as (with special focus on rural areas in post-socialist areas) by Kay et al. (2012) and Pospěch and Kulcsár (2016).

**Table 2.** Multi-Level Research on Peripheralization

Notion of Space	Focus of Research	Conceptual Framework	Case Studies in CEE	Case Studies in Estonia
Physical	<p><i>Materialities and Structures</i></p> <p>Uneven Economic and Structural Developments</p>	<p>Annoni and Dijkstra 2013, Assembly of European Regions 2009, Copus 2001, Hanell 2015, Harvey 1996, Hirschman 1958, Hollanders and Es-Sadki 2014, Krugman 1991, Myrdal 1957, Rokkan et al. 1987, Schürmann and Talaat 2000</p>	<p>Leibert 2013, Marksoo et al. 2010, Naumann and Reichert-Schick 2013</p>	<p>Eesti Koostöö Kogu 2010, Kivilaid and Servinski 2013, Noorkõiv and Ristmäe 2014, Raagmaa and Noorkõiv 2013, Servinski et al. 2016</p>
Lived	<p><i>Practices and Experiences</i></p> <p>Practices of Reproduction and Coping</p>	<p>Betz 2008, Hadjimichalis and Hudson 2007, Halfacree 2006/2007, Kühn and Bemt 2013, Smith and Stenning 2006, Stenning and Hirschelmann 2008b, Woods 2010</p>	<p>Bernard et al. 2016, Burdaek et al. 2015, Dopitová 2016, Kukovec 2015, Nagy et al. 2015</p>	<p>Annist 2011, Bardone et al. 2013, Kindel and Raagmaa 2015, Leetmaa et al. 2013, Trell et al. 2012</p>
Mental	<p><i>Discourses and Ascriptions</i></p> <p>Image-Making and Reception</p>	<p>Blondel 2015, Bristow 2005/2010, Bürk 2013, Cloke 2003/2006, Gregory 1994, Lang 2013, Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013, Miggelbrink and Meyer 2015, Paasi 1995, Pike et al. 2007, Shearmur 2012, Valentine 2007, Wacquant et al. 2014</p>	<p>Balogh 2015, Bürk et al. 2012, Juska 2007, Kauppinen 2014, Pospěch 2014, Steinführer 2015, Timár and Velkey 2016</p>	<p>Annist 2013, Kährrik et al. 2012, Nugin 2014, Nugin and Trell 2015, Pfoser 2014, Sooväli 2004, Sooväli et al. 2005, Virkkunen 2002</p>

Source: Illustration by the author based on literature review

## **2.2. (Re-)Production of Knowledge in Space: Discursive Peripheralization**

When analyzing the association of rural areas with peripheries, a constructivist approach focusing on representations of rurality seems promising at first, as it goes beyond dominant structuralist approaches which take the urban-rural dichotomy for granted. However, it also quickly reveals its limits by being embedded in an urban-rural divide prevailing in sociological and geographical research, which reinforces the same binary that is under investigation. Bourdieu (1991) and Gregory (1994) have pointed out the crucial influence such categorizations have on our imagination of society and space. Moreover, based on postcolonial and feminist studies, as well as recent debates on positionality (Koobak and Marling 2014, Suchland 2011, Stenning and Hörschelmann 2008b, and Tlostanova 2012), Blondel (2015) calls for a critical analysis of theoretical frameworks and methods of inquiry in order to avoid the reproduction of hegemonic divisions in space. Following this line of argumentation all the way through also means crossing the established boundaries of the disciplines.

To bridge this prevalent divide, this thesis builds on the notion of discursive peripheralization developed in greater detail in the first article (Plüschke-Altöf 2016). While based on the processual approach of peripheralization (Keim 2006, Kühn 2015, and PoSCoPP 2015), the notion of discursive peripheralization shifts the focus to the emergence of hierarchical categorizations embodied in space. Hence, it stresses the social constructivist nature of socio-spatial divisions. Moreover, by taking the discursive dimension seriously, it goes beyond the analysis of representations that has been so prominent in rurality studies and instead focuses on the way that discourses are embedded in, and constitutive of, social reality. Discursive peripheralization therefore follows a relational, multi-dimensional and multi-scalar conception of socio-spatial polarization while simultaneously accentuating the performativity of discourses as an integral part.

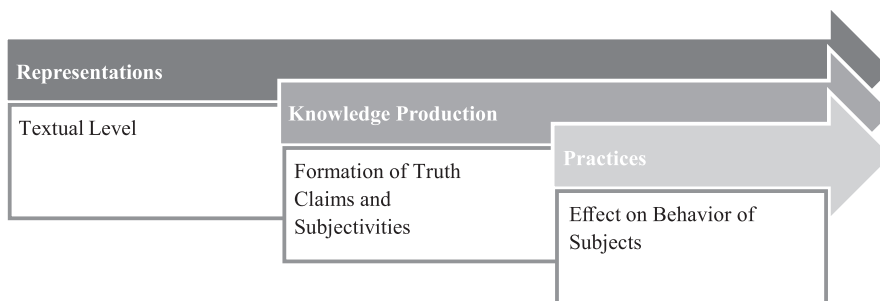
In line with Lefebvre's (1974) concept of the production of space and Laclau's (1996) definition of the social as essentially discursive, the notion of discursive peripheralization conceptualizes space and society as being structured by discourses. Their mutual relation to practices and materialities has been vividly illustrated by the research on residential decision-making (Beetz 2008, Kährlik et al. 2012, and Ley in Cloke 2003), territorial stigmatization (Bürk et al. 2012, Bürk 2013, and Wacquant et al. 2014) and place-marketing (Kotler 1999, Kauppinen 2014, Skjeggedal and Overvåg 2017). Whereas regional development or decline can be put into motion by either positive or negative images, these materialities can also reinforce such socio-spatial discourses. The studies by Wacquant et al.

(2014, 1272) especially demonstrate that images ascribed to places and their inhabitants tend “to stick”, influencing individual as well as political decisions and actions. As rural areas in the post-socialist countries often face a particularly negative image that portrays them as being on the negative side of the center-periphery, urban-rural and east-west divides (Kay et al. 2012), their discursive construction has consequences in practice. Thus, the common link between the rural and the peripheral can be interpreted as a “discursive act of peripheralization” (Bürk 2013, 169) further strengthening already existing structural disadvantages. Discourses, therefore, form an inherent part of peripheralization and the politics involved within it (Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013). Following this Foucauldian (1999) understanding, they are not only seen as representative for, but rather constitutive of, socio-spatial processes. As a unity of sequences and signs that manifests itself in the articulations and texts of subjects in society, they define and limit the thinkable, expressible and, hence, doable.

### 2.2.1. The Question of Effect: Discursive Performativity

Due to the mutual relations of discourses, practices and materialities, a consequent discourse analytical approach needs to go beyond the representational level and focus on the performativity of discourses (Jäger 1999). However, the question of discursive performativity or the ‘problem of effect’ has been one of the most difficult to tackle within the literature. Figure 4 shows that the existing studies on socio-spatial discourses and ascriptions tend to cover three different levels of effect: representations, knowledge production, and practices.

The majority focus rather on the textual level (e.g. Balogh 2015, Juska 2007, Petersoo 2007, Pospěch 2014, Sooväli 2004, Steinführer 2015, Virkkunen



**Figure 4.** Performativity of Discourses. The Question of Effect

Source: Illustration by the author based on literature review

2002) by deconstructing, for example, boundary-drawing processes between the Self and the Other (cf. Mills 1997). While providing vivid case study material on discursive representations, this focus also contributes to what Timár and Velkey (2016, 321), relying on Woods (2010), term the “dematerializing effect of the cultural turn”. Following an understanding of discourses as a struggle over the construction of truth (Foucault 1999, Jäger 1999, and Laclau 1996), another strand of empirical studies subsequently puts greater emphasis on the socio-historical conditions of this textual production. Researching questions of discursive agency, room for maneuver, as well as the relevance of (and responses to) hegemonic discourses, these studies concentrate on strategies of knowledge production and the formation of subjectivities in space (Bürk et al. 2012, Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013, Timár and Velkey 2016, Valentine 2007, and Spivak 1988) with special emphasis on the question of who can speak and be heard in the discourse (Annist 2013, Kukovec 2015, and Nugin 2014). Due to its difficult operationalization, the question of discursive consequences in practices and materialities has, however, received less attention. The main examples for the influence of discourses and images on the concrete behavior of subjects in space can be found in the research on residential decision-making (Kährlik et al. 2012), place- or destination marketing (for an overview see: Kuusik 2011), and territorial stigmatization (Bürk 2013, Wacquant et al. 2014).

This thesis relies on studies at all discursive levels, but sets its focus on the production of knowledge on subjects, and their formation, in places labelled as peripheries. Discursive performativity is accounted for in a threefold way. First, the dissertation follows a sociological discourse analytical approach as it analyzes the discursive formation as well as the discursive field. Hence, as outlined in greater detail within the first and second articles (Plüschke-Altöf 2016/2017), it deconstructs the strategies of knowledge universalization and legitimization as well as the conditions leading to its acceptance or rejection. Therefore, the thesis follows Foucault’s (1999) understanding of discourses as co-constitutive for social reality rather than that of Habermas (1991). With the help of the critical discourse analysis approach developed by Jäger (1999), based on Foucault (1999) and Link (1982), and the discursive field analysis approach propagated by Schwab-Trapp (2006) on the basis of Bourdieu (1991), it seeks to uncover the power-embedded system of knowledge production. This also applies to the “interpreting coalitions” (Bürk et al. 2012, 339) that constitute objectified truth claims on places denoted as peripheries. Thereby, it departs from more linguistically oriented discourse analytical approaches (Fairclough 2003, Teubert 2005, Wodak 2015, and others).

Second, the dissertation draws on a postcolonial conceptual framework. While a reliance on postcolonial research based on (internal) othering already permits an analysis of potential strategies of distinction by the center towards the periphery (Hall 1992, Hechter 1975, Jacobs 1996, Johnson and Coleman 2012, Petersoo 2007, Said 1995, and Spivak 1988), the latest work on the intersection between postcolonial and post-socialist studies (Annus 2012, Račevskis 2002, Koobak and Marling 2014, Moore 2006, Suchland 2011, and Tlostanova 2012) seeks to advance postcolonial theory as an epistemological tool for the study of knowledge production. As outlined in greater detail in the second article (Plüschke-Altöf 2017), by drawing on the concept of global coloniality, this strand of research proves useful for an analysis of the way in which peripheralization discourses become performative. Based on the notion of coloniality, the approach helps to dismantle the universal truth claim that equates peripheries with places lagging behind as a particular interpretation of socio-spatial reality, which stems from a normative, yet discursively hegemonized concept of development (Annist 2011, Koobak and Marling 2014, and Suchland 2011). Moreover, it allows the researcher to conceptualize how the truth that is established in such hegemonic discourses influences the formation of subjects who relate to such ascriptions by either rejecting or (re)producing them in processes of self-colonization.

Third, this thesis accentuates discourses as means for the formation of subjects, which has not only been explored in postcolonial research (*ibid.*) but also in the latest studies on peripheralization discourses (Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013, Miggelbrink and Meyer 2015, and Valentine 2007) and territorial stigmatization (Bürk et al. 2012, Bürk 2013, and Wacquant et al. 2014). As outlined in greater detail in the third and fourth articles (Plüschke-Altöf 2018a/b), the central focus here lies on the question as to how those facing moments of peripheralization relate to them. Hence, discourses are seen as consequential for individual and collective agency by determining the room for maneuver and local responses. Alongside the central questions as to how rural peripheries are discursively constituted, by whom and with which consequences, the conceptual background for the analysis of the discursive formation and field, the relationship between discourse and power as well as that between structure and agency will be further explicated in the following sub-chapters. Beyond that, extensive overviews of the different strands of discourse theory and analysis as well as of the epistemological debates on (post)colonial discourses and discursive agency are provided by Diaz-Bone (2010), Jäger (1999), Keller (2011), Miggelbrink and Meyer (2015), Mills (1997), as well as Stenning and Hörschelmann (2008a).



### **2.2.2. How and by Whom? Discursive Formation and Discursive Field**

If the knowledge on peripheries is (re-)produced discursively, it is important to understand how and by whom. The critical discourse and discursive field analyses developed by Jäger (1999) and Schwab-Trapp (2006) help to uncover the socially-constructed and contingent character of discourses, which become temporarily fixed through hegemony. According to Laclau (1996), hegemony describes the superiority of one naturalized discourse over competing others. Hence, discourses do not exist in a vacuum. The discourse analytical approaches based on postcolonial studies in particular emphasize that discourses are embedded in societal power relations, at the same time as representing and reproducing them (Mills 1997). Acting as means that institutionalize particular interpretations of social reality as widely recognized knowledge, they exercise power by those who “know” over those “who are known in a particular way” (Hall 1992, 295; Jäger 1999, and Schwab-Trapp 2006). Yet the access to resources and positions of power also determines who has the right to speak and be heard in discourses, hence whose particular constructions of reality become manifested in textual artefacts, symbols, categories and institutional practices (Bourdieu 1991, Jäger 2008, Paasi 2010, and Spivak 1988). Due to its discursive character, this form of power is difficult to tackle, as it has no specific location (Foucault 1999). Despite being actively reproduced by actors in power positions, the agency behind discourses thus often seems ungraspable and unchallengeable. It is therefore crucial to not only scrutinize the discursive structure but to also ask who are the “interpreting coalitions” (Bürk et al. 2012, 339) that have the power to name, show, create and therefore bring into existence (Bourdieu 1991).

Empirically, peripheralization discourses appear in the form of a discursive formation defined as a group of statements governed by fixed distribution principles (Jäger 1999), which evolves around the term ‘periphery’. In the analysis, “periphery” is treated as an empty signifier (cf. Barthes 1985, Laclau 1996, and Lévi-Strauss 1987). Signifiers are mental constructs of the signified or object that are related to one another in processes of signification. This relation is not always clear-cut and can be arbitrary. Whereas, for example, red refers to a color, it can also denote a political position. Empty signifiers exemplify cases where the signifier does not point to any particular object. Instead it is floating in the sense that its meaning changes over time. Consequently, empty signifiers bear traces of the past and potential for the future within them. Being emptied of shared meaning, they absorb whatever meaning is projected on them and are therefore susceptible to political use.

The analysis of the discursive formation will focus on the question as to how this empty signifier is filled with meaning within discourses that determine what can legitimately be expressed about peripheries in Estonia. The analytical framework in Table 3 shows that, according to Jäger (1999), particular interpretations of social reality or truth claims on peripheries and their inhabitants are constituted as universalized knowledge by two primary means: discursive strategies and the discursive effect. Discursive strategies can be separated into those regulating the participation in the discourse and those drawing limits to its content and legitimate ways of expression (Foucault 1999, Schwab-Trapp 2006). The regulation of authorized language and speakers guarded by discourse societies is a central strategy of exclusion from discourses as it determines who has the right to speak, when, where and how (Bourdieu 1991, Foucault 1999). Within discourses, legitimization strategies play a crucial role for hegemonizing truth claims. Common tactics are to depict particular interpretations of social reality as the only alternative or to relativize the risks involved (Jäger 1999, Schwab-Trapp 2006). Legitimization strategies usually go hand in hand with strategies to silence or delegitimize alternative voices by either neutralizing their objections, denying the relevance of their claims or excluding them from the discourse altogether (Jäger 1999, Schwab-Trapp 2006). This knowledge production is stabilized by the so-called repetition effect that also plays an important role in the analysis (Foucault 1999). The basic units here are statements (“discursive fragments”), which are scrutinized for common patterns with special focus on the depiction of peripheries and the topics and stories associated with them. Thereby, fragments referring to the same subject are identified and bundled into main discursive threads. The entanglements between these threads resemble discursive nodes that link different discourses with one another (Jäger 1999).

With its specific spatiality and temporality, the discursive field sets the conditions for the acceptance or rejection of the discursive knowledge formation. Schwab-Trapp (2006), relying on Bourdieu (1991), characterizes discursive fields as public arenas for competing truth claims. On one hand, they describe the socio-historic context and power relations in which central debates and the resultant actions take place as well as the field-specific institutional framework, or so-called discourse societies (Foucault 1999) who control the access to and distribution of discourses. On the other, they are constituted of “interpreting coalitions” (Bürk et al. 2012, 339) who steer debates by disseminating different discourse positions or ideological standpoints (Jäger 1999). These opinion leaders regulate discourses internally by developing widely-accepted discursive strategies and nodes that discourse participants have to follow to make their claims successfully heard.

**Table 3.** Discursive Formation and Discursive Field

<b>Discursive Effect: Repetition</b>	<b>Discursive Strategies: Regulation and Legitimization</b>	
Discursive Fragments: Statements	Regulation of Participation: Discourse societies, Socio-historic context	
Discursive Threads: Repeated statements	Regulation of Content and Expression: Interpreting coalitions, Discourse positions	
Discursive Nodes: Links between discursive threads	Legitimization: 1. Presentation as only alternative 2. Relativizing risks involved	Delegitimization: 1. Neutralizing objections 2. Denying relevance

Source: Illustration by the author based on Jäger (1999) and Schwab-Trapp (2006)

### **2.2.3. With what Consequences? Discursive Room for Maneuver**

The hegemonic knowledge production on places denoted as peripheries is consequential in the sense that it ascribes fixed subject positions to individuals embedded in power relations (Laclau 1996). However, due to their spatiality and temporality, discourses are also always in becoming and never complete or all-encompassing. Defined as a process of structuration (Giddens 1984, Pred 1984), the consequences of hegemonic discourses are thus twofold, simultaneously both limiting and enabling different forms of agency (see for example Arora-Jonsson 2009, Nugin and Trelle 2015). Keeping in mind the question as to whether the subaltern can speak (Spivak 1988), this means that all subjects – those forming discourses and those being subjected to them – possess discursive agency (Laclau 1996, Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013). Having to relate to the subject positions ascribed to them, they possess a certain room for maneuver by either accepting and reproducing or rejecting and counteracting them – a fact that is often overlooked in particular in post-socialist countries (Nugin and Trelle 2015). Consequently, not only central but also peripheral actors potentially have the agency to participate in the discourses evolving around peripheries, although to a different extent.

The central question is therefore how subjects who are facing moments of peripheralization can react to them and make use of their room for maneuver (Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013)? How do they relate to, co-construct or counteract

value-laden ascriptions? According to Meyer and Miggelbrink (2013), reacting first of all requires recognition of the existence of hegemonic discourses and their effects on places labelled as peripheries by those who are being subjected to them. Only if they are perceived as relevant “on the ground” can they induce and require a local response. The possible responses following this recognition can then be divided into those confirming hegemonic discourses by internalizing them or relying on them when trying to prove the opposite and/or generate pity, and those rejecting and actively resisting their basic assumptions (Bürk 2013 relying on Goffman 1967)

The internalization of discourses that naturalize the dominance of centers over peripheries is what Bürk (2013) and Lang (2013) call “peripheralization in mind” or “mental lock-ins”. This goes back to the notion of voluntary subjection and can be seen as a local (re-)production of one’s own image as peripheral. The situation is consequently perceived as hopeless, impeding the residents’ engagement for the region. However, this self-stigmatization (Bürk 2013) can also be used strategically in order to generate pity or attract development support.

When trying to prove the opposite, local actors tend to opt for a reversal strategy by attaching positive or idyllic images to places described as rural peripheries. The strategic mobilization of positive ascriptions has been intensively discussed in the research on regional image-making and identity-building. These are said to offer new possibilities for place-marketing initiatives<sup>1</sup> to attract tourists, residents, and investors, or for community initiatives to foster social capital<sup>2</sup> and attachment to the region<sup>3</sup> (Bristow 2005, Florida 2002, Kašková and Chromý 2014, Paasi 2013, and Semian and Chromý 2014). Alternatively, local actors in places denoted as peripheries can turn to “strategic essentialism” (Jacobs 1996, 148) and thereby use the notions of otherness and peripherality ascribed to them in hegemonic discourses to achieve their own objectives. This is a strategy that has also been employed in rural areas that foster the image of the so-called rural idyll (Halfacree 2006, Kay et al. 2012). These responses do not escape, however, the center-periphery hierarchy.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the concept of place-marketing, see: Jasso 2005, Kotler 1999

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the social capital concept, see: Coleman 1988, Putnam 1993

<sup>3</sup> For more information on the concept of place attachment, see: Lewicka 2010, Tuan 1974

Internalization	Rejection
<p><b>Reproduction</b> Peripheralization in Mind Strategic Self-Peripheralization</p> <p><b>Reversal</b> Proving the Opposite Strategic Essentialism</p>	<p><b>Resistance</b> Thirdspace Radical Rural</p>

**Figure 5.** Discursive Room for Maneuver

Source: Illustration by the author based on Bürk (2013) and Goffman (1967)

As expressed in Figure 5, actors only actively reject the center-periphery hierarchy constituted by it when contesting the discursive framework itself and creating alternative visions of socio-spatial justice. This is the potential for resistance to dominant structures and discourses, described by Soja (1999) and Halfacree (2007) as “thirdspace” or the “radical rural”. It is enabled not in spite of – but due to – the disadvantages that peripheral places face (Soja 1999).

## RESEARCH DESIGN

Following a discourse analytical approach, this thesis mainly builds on the concept of discursive peripheralization elaborated in detail in the preceding chapter. It thus assumes that meaning is ascribed to places within hegemonic discourses that form an integral part of spatialization and peripheralization processes (Lefebvre 1974, Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013, and PoSCoPP 2015). Tracing the formation of agency behind, and responses to, such socio-spatial discourses, this thesis seeks to uncover how peripheries are discursively produced, by whom and with what consequences. This conceptual framework is applied using a qualitative research design. Hence, following the conceptual framework by Cloke et al. (2004), it focuses on developing a deeper “understanding” of social reality rather than taking an explanatory or positivist approach. In opposition to quantitative research, which seeks to minimize the influence of the researcher in the field, the dissertation takes an interpretive stance utilizing the communicative relations between researcher and field to gain deeper insights into social reality (Lamnek 1993, Flick 1996). To reflect on the influence of the researcher on the field, it builds on the principle of “intersubjective comprehensibility” that, above all, requires a high degree of transparency concerning the research process (Diekmann 2009). Therefore, the ensuing subchapters explain the research design in greater detail.

### 3.1. A Twofold Discourse Analysis

This example of qualitative research operates on two separate, yet interrelated, analytical levels. On the basis of the conceptual framework (as shown in Section 2), it is assumed that hegemonic discourses play a crucial role in the production of knowledge on space and related subjectivities because they do not only constitute peripheral places but also the peripheralities of subjects. In order to better understand which images and categorizations subjects have to relate to or position themselves against, the first level of analysis focuses on the knowledge production that evolves around places labelled as peripheries in Estonian hegemonic discourses. The second level focuses on the formation of subjects, hence on the subjective relevance of, and local responses to, such hegemonic discourses. Both analytical levels are scrutinized for the discursive formation and discursive field. The analysis of the former is based on media articles and in-depth interviews. Altogether, 296 online print media articles were examined at the national level, and 236 at the regional (for an overview of media corpus see: Annex 1). Beyond that, 43 interviews with national opinion leaders

and editors – as well as local decision-makers and inhabitants – were conducted. Of these, 39 represent individual interviews, and four represent group interviews (for list of interview partners see: Annex 2.1, 2.3, 2.5). The reconstruction of the discursive field builds on an extensive context analysis, which referred to secondary or “grey” literature and statistical data (for an overview see: Annex 2.11). Notably, this also included participant observation, during which at least 28 events as well as “behind the scenes” meetings took place and were included in the analysis (for list of events see: Annex 2.2, 2.4, 2.6).

Following Bürk (2013), Meyer and Miggelbrink (2013), and Valentine (2007), peripheralization discourses are assumed to vary locally, and even individually, over time and through space. To account for this spatiality and temporality, the main idea of the thesis is to trace them through space and time. As peripheries are reproduced relationally (Keim 2006), this dissertation follows a relational approach to space by investigating three case studies at different scales. While the case study at the national scale covers the first analytical level, the two regional case studies represent the second level of analysis. The latter two were conducted in regions denoted as peripheries in national discourse. A certain boundedness in case study selection was, however, set by language. As the discourse analytical approach concentrates on Estonian media space it required a certain command of Estonian as a shared language. Even though the analytical focus lies on current peripheralization discourses, temporality was also considered in multiple ways. First, the media articles were analyzed longitudinally, covering a five-year time frame. Second, the case studies were executed in several phases over the course of three years as to observe the discourses referred to by people at different points in time. Third, to take the historical origins of discourses into consideration, secondary literature was also consulted.

As indicated in Table 4, this dissertation thus considers discursive fragments in two different forms and scales: first, as social artefacts (media articles) and, second, as individual narratives (interviews) on the national as well as regional level. Both are interpreted within the same discourse analytical framework, focusing on the discursive formation as well as the discursive field. These are then compared. While the national and regional discourses are compared in terms of the different meaning attached to the term “periphery,” the regional case studies also help to analyze how those facing similar moments of discursive peripheralization attribute different degrees of relevance to these discourses and employ diverse strategies for coping with them.

**Table 4.** Overview: Research Design

<b>Level of Analysis</b>	<b>Discursive Formation</b>	<b>Discursive Field</b>
<b>Knowledge Production:</b> National Case Study	<i>Print Media Analysis</i> <i>In-depth Interviews</i>	<i>Context Analysis</i> <i>Participant Observation</i>
<b>Subject Formation:</b> Regional Case Studies		

Source: Illustration by the author

## 3.2. Knowledge Production

The discursive knowledge production on peripheries in Estonia was subject of the national case study, which took place from March 2015 to November 2016. Following the twofold discourse analytical approach outlined in sections 2.2. and 3.1 the empirical study consisted of two consecutive phases: a print media analysis and in-depth interviews with representatives of the interpreting coalitions in Estonia. In parallel, participant observation at different events of national relevance was conducted.

### 3.2.1. Discursive Formation

To scrutinize how the term periphery is filled with meaning, an analysis of online opinion-based articles in the main Estonian daily newspapers *Postimees* (PM) and *Eesti Päevaleht* (EPL), as well as the weekly *Maaleht* (ML), was conducted. Discourses form in many different fields, from politics via academia and the media to everyday discourses (Jäger 1999, Keller 2011). As this research focuses on discourses as a means of knowledge production and subject formation, national online print media was chosen as a field that reaches a wide audience at different scales. As newspaper articles are “intentionally aimed at reaching the widest possible audience and readership,” they are treated as a mirror of social structures and discourses (Holy 1994, 816).

The selected publications represent the two main media groups, *Ekspress Grupp* (ML, EPL) and *Eesti Meedia* (PM). These are among the newspapers with the widest circulation and the most frequently visited websites (Balčytienė and Harro-Loit 2009, EALL 2016, Eurotopics 2016). Along with the tabloid *Õhtuleht*, *Postimees* and *Eesti Päevaleht* represent the highest circulating



dailies in Estonia. *Maaleht* and *Eesti Ekspress* constitute the most important weekly newspapers. Besides the 85 Estonian language papers (SYB 2016), one of the main Russian-speaking newspapers is *Molodezh' Estonii*, while several Estonian dailies also offer Russian language versions. The media landscape is complemented by numerous regional and local newspapers<sup>4</sup> (ibid.). As result of the continuous expansion of Internet access since the 1990s, the online rather than the printed versions have become more important.<sup>5</sup> Due to their widespread readership, high degree of interactivity and the considerable overlap with the printed version, Balčytienė and Harro-Loit (2009) identify them as national discussion forums or, following the conceptual framework of this thesis, as public arenas for competing truth claims. Moreover, the newspapers were chosen due to their specific discourse positions. Whereas *Maaleht* focuses specifically on rural issues, *Eesti Päevaleht* concentrates on an urban readership. *Postimees* takes the middle ground as it possesses a considerable regional journalist network, but does not set its focus explicitly on rural issues (Plüschke-Altöf 2017).

The articles for analysis were retrieved from the opinion columns of the three newspapers using the keywords “*äärema\**” or “*perifeer\**” (roots of the term “periphery” in Estonian) that were treated as an empty signifier (Laclau 1996). After the exclusion of items that are not freely available, duplex or referring to the surname “Ääremaa,” the final data corpus consisted of 296 online articles from the time frame between January 2011 and December 2015. While the main bulk were published in *Postimees* (175), *Eesti Päevaleht* and *Maaleht* had 75 and 51 articles containing the keyword “periphery” respectively (for an overview of the data corpus see: Annex 1.1, 1.2, 1.3). The time interval was chosen on the one hand to analyze recent peripheralization discourses. Due to its length, on the other, it permitted an analysis of changing discourses over time, covering national events such as the 2013 municipal and 2015 parliamentary elections, as well as international events such as the offsets of the global financial and European debt crisis or the military conflict in Crimea.

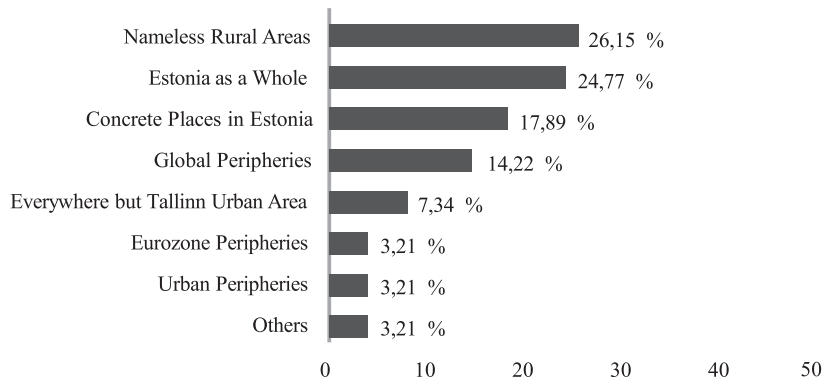
Initially, the data corpus was subjected to a quantitative analysis that focused on two central aspects: (1) the distribution of articles over time and space, (2) the main topics, places and content-based associations with the term periphery. Illustrative figures can be found in the first article (Plüschke-Altöf 2016). While the descriptive statistics helped to gain an overview of the data corpus, they also fulfilled an important function in the case study selection. Due to the qualitative research design, these were not selected on the basis of statistical

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<sup>4</sup> For more information on the development of the Estonian print media market, see: SYB 2016

<sup>5</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of the role of online media in Estonia, see: Vihalemm and Kõuts 2017

representativeness as is common for large-n corpuses. Instead the research subscribed to the notion of purposive sampling common to small-n studies (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Building on a most-similar comparative research design, the regional case studies were thus chosen according to the analysis of places associated with peripheries in the national print media discourse. Figure 6 conveys that next to “nameless” rural areas and the country as a whole, concrete



**Figure 6.** Discursive Localization of Peripheries

Source: Illustration by the author based on calculations of places associated with peripheries in EPL, ML, PM 2011-2015, n= 296 online print media articles

places in Estonia figured most prominently.<sup>6</sup> These include above all villages, municipalities and regions in southern Estonia. Thus, the two southern Estonian regions of Setomaa and Northern Valgamaa were chosen for the analysis of the local relevance of and responses to hegemonic discourses (Section 3.3). While such a selection criterion considers for study areas that are subjected to discursive peripheralization or territorial stigmatization, it, however, cannot account for those places or “blank spaces on the map” that are peripheralized by not being part of the discourse at all.

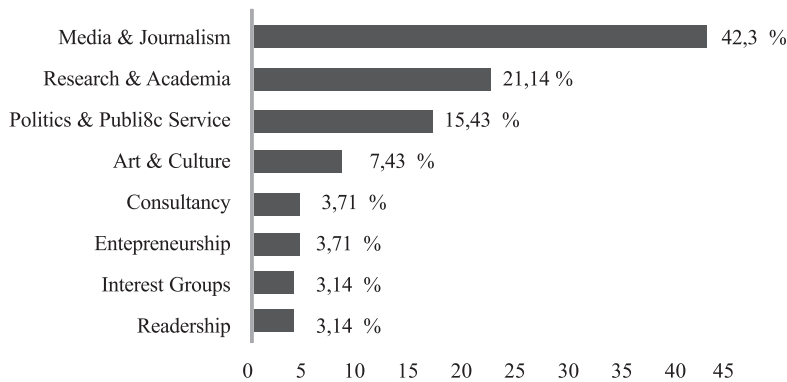
The initial descriptive statistics were followed by content analysis of the media corpus following the discourse analytical approach outlined above (Section 2.2.). For Berg (2009, 338) content analysis represents “a careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, biases and meanings.” On a practical level, the media articles were first segmented into meaningful text

<sup>6</sup> Please note that the percentages differ from the percentages depicted in Figure 2 of Article 1 (Rural as Periphery Per Se?) due to inclusion of the data corpus from *Postimees*. The primary localization of peripheries in rural areas, which incl. the categories “Nameless Rural Areas”, “Concrete Places in Estonia” and “Everywhere but Tallinn Urban Area”, however did not change

passages or discursive fragments to which codes were assigned that summarized their main statements. Codes referring to the same subject were then subsumed into common categories following the logic of discursive threads and strategies. The coding process occurred inductively using the means of a “conventional content analysis” (Berg 2009, 340). As the main aim of the analysis was to deconstruct the knowledge production on places denoted as peripheries, codes and categories were “not forced on the data, but emerge[d] from it” (Kelle 2007, 193). However, the existing research on socio-spatial ascriptions (e.g. Bristow 2005/2010, Bürk et al. 2012, Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013, and Wacquant et al. 2014) and postcolonial studies (e.g. Hall 1992, Said 1995, and Petersoo 2007) guided the abstraction into discursive threads. As a result, discursive nodes and strategies were elaborated that are outlined in greater detail in the first and second articles (Plüschke-Altöf 2016/2017).

### **3.2.2. Discursive Field**

The question of by whom peripheries are discursively constructed was answered with the help of a discursive field analysis that concentrated on the socio-historic context in which discourses emerge, and the interpreting coalitions (Bourdieu 1991, Schwab-Trapp 2006). The latter were analyzed on the basis of the media corpus and in-depth interviews. First, the media articles were scrutinized for their main authors in terms of the number of published articles in the respective time frame and the institutions and occupational fields represented. Although the freedom of press in Estonia is considered particularly high (Freedom House 2016, Reporter ohne Grenzen 2016), indicating rather non-discriminatory access for potential authors, the analysis revealed that the opinion columns are dominated by a small elite of opinion leaders as outlined in greater detail in the first and second articles (Plüschke-Altöf 2016/2017). On the basis of this inquiry, nine main representatives of the interpreting elite were selected for in-depth interviews. Beyond that, interviews with opinion-piece editors of the three newspapers were conducted. Acting as gatekeepers, they play a pivotal role in regulating the access to the media debate and setting the rules of engagement. As a result of this selection process, the list of interview partners (see Annex 2.1) greatly resembles the structure of the discursive field as portrayed in Figure 7. It has to be noted here that to ensure their anonymity, the names of all interviewees have been changed and only their general field of occupation, and not the institutions or newspapers they represent in particular, are indicated in the thesis. For the same reason the interview transcripts will not be made public (only upon request in anonymized form).



**Figure 7.** Interpreting Coalitions

Source: Illustration by the author based on calculation of opinion leaders' institutional affiliation in EPL, ML, PM 2011-2015, n= 296 online print media articles (opinion leaders incl. main authors, co-authors, responsible journalist and editors)

The opinion leaders and editors were interviewed using semi-structured interview guidelines. Despite being based on a predefined set of interview topics and questions, semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to react flexibly to the interview situation, taking into account the answers already given by the interviewee and the atmosphere of the interview (Berg 2009, Diekmann 2009). Following the literature on conducting interviews, the guidelines were created by “beginning with questions that will be fairly easy for the subject to answer, and which are largely questions that are not sensitive or threatening” (Berg 2009, 112f.). After an introduction to the research context, the so-called “ice-breaker questions” (Diekmann 2009, 483) focused on the motivation of the interviewee to engage in the media debate and on the preferred mode of engagement. This was followed by the main part of the interview that focused on (1) the constitution of the discursive field, i.e. the main actors and distinctions between the newspapers in question, (2) the discursive formation, i.e. the major points of controversy, and (3) a reflection of the discursive nodes and strategies employed by the opinion leaders themselves. The interviews with the opinion editors were prepared in a similar mode, but discussed discursive nodes and strategies in a more general way and included additional topics of discussion such as the editing and editorial-writing process (Kald 2006) as well as the criteria for selecting or rejecting articles. The interviews concluded with an open question on topics the interviewee wished to add, a note of thanks and the signing of a confirmation sheet indicating the interviewee's consent to be included in the study and quoted anonymously in publications (Annex 2.10). Although the interviews were highly

individualized due to their reflexive nature, exemplary guidelines for interviews with opinion leaders and editors are provided in Annexes 2.7 and 2.8.

The interviews were conducted after the media analysis. They were held in Estonian at a time and place convenient for the interviewee, and took between 45 minutes and one hour and 45 minutes. When permitted to do so, they were recorded and later transcribed with the help of Estonian native speakers. Finally, they were subjected to a content analysis. While the thematic section, focusing on discursive nodes and strategies mobilized by the opinion leaders, served to reflect upon the interpretations developed in the discourse analysis, the remaining sections were used to reconstruct the discursive field.

This was added to by a context analysis based on a broad corpus of secondary and grey literature, as well as statistical data (for an overview see: Annex 2.11) outlined in greater detail in Chapter 4. Moreover, it included fieldnotes from participant observation conducted at nation-wide events organized by central organizations and institutions in the field of rural development. A register of these is available in Annex 2.2. With the help of this data, the historic context and current socio-economic conditions, as well as the main stakeholders in the field of rural development, were identified. Taken together, these describe the discursive field at the national level. Moreover, this helped to identify the (inter) national meta-discourses contextualizing the discursive formation on places labelled as peripheries in Estonia.

### **3.3. Subject Formation**

The national case study was followed by two regional case studies, which focused on the local relevance of subject positions, and responses to these, ascribed to peripheries and their inhabitants in hegemonic discourses. These took place in the time frame between July 2015 and December 2016 in the southern Estonian regions of Setomaa and Northern Valgamaa. The case studies are based on three main methods: context analysis, in-depth interviews with local decision-makers and inhabitants, as well as participant observation.

#### **3.3.1. Discursive Formation**

The consequences of peripheralization discourses in Estonia were scrutinized at the level of subject formation. With the help of two regional case studies, the analysis focused on the relevance of the socio-spatial ascriptions proliferated in hegemonic discourses and local responses to these. As described in section 3.2.1, the case study selection was based on the earlier media analysis. By localizing

which concrete regions in Estonia were most commonly associated with the term “periphery,” the regions of Setomaa and Valgamaa were chosen for further investigation. As the type of space was not pre-defined by a selection method based on discursive localizations in Estonian print media articles, the relevant areas could have covered either urban or rural peripheries. However, the media analysis revealed that peripheries in Estonia are primarily associated with rural areas (Plüschke-Altöf 2016). The idea behind this selection process was to view how those areas and inhabitants facing similar moments of peripheralization and stigmatization react differently to them on a scale from peripheralization in mind to active resistance (Bürk et al. 2012, Lang 2013, Soja 1999, Section 2.2.3.). This most-similar research design also has its drawbacks. While the “nameless” rural areas in the relevant articles accounted for a considerable number of localizations, these could not be taken into consideration for case study selection as the areas were not clearly identified. Beyond that, the selection method *a priori* excludes counter-cases as, for example, rural centers such as Viimsi or Rae that function as suburbs of the Tallinn urban area (Kährik et al. 2012, Noorkõiv and Plüschke-Altöf 2015) or ‘grey spots on the map’ or areas that are peripheralized by not being part of the discourse at all.

Figure 8 shows that, administratively speaking, the case studies were conducted in the four Estonian municipalities of Setomaa: Värskä and Mikitamäe in Põlva county, plus Meremäe and Misso in Võru county. Due to the focus on the Estonian-speaking media landscape, the Russian municipalities of Setomaa were not included for closer investigation. As Valgamaa County is geographically extensive, the research here focused on the northern part, where the field could be accessed more easily due to prior contacts having been made. This so-called South-Mulgimaa region consists of the municipalities of Helme, Hummuli, Põdrala and the small town of Tõrva, which were merged into the joint rural municipality of Tõrva during the municipal amalgamation reform that took place in 2017. However, throughout the fieldwork, the broader contexts of Valgamaa, and Põlva and Võrumaa were also considered.

The local discursive formation was mainly investigated using in-depth interviews with decision-makers and locals. Based on their ethnographic research in post-socialist areas, Stenning and Horschelmann (2008b) describe the difficulties researchers from outside face when trying to identify the key social actors in case study areas and the roles other community members take. To provide an overview of local power structures and regional specifics, local decision-makers were chosen as the first interviewees. After an extensive context analysis based on desk research and media analysis (Section 3.3.2.),



**Figure 8.** Case Study Areas

Source: Illustration by Grete Kindel on the basis of the author's case study areas

they were selected using the following criteria. First, according to Bürk (2013) the interpreting coalition usually consists of actors from academia, politics, administration, the media, business and local interest groups. These might be, for example, from the fields of culture and marketing. Hence, interviewees were supposed to represent the central local organizations in these respective fields. Second, based on the context analysis (for an overview of the corpus see Annex 2.11) and a progressive snowball sampling strategy (Wolff 2009), the case study considered interview partners who were externally and internally accepted as decision-makers. The sampling took place up until a point of theoretical saturation in terms of where repeating discourses was reached (Strauss and Corbin 1998).

The research also aimed to include different groups of local inhabitants whose attitudes and opinions have often been overlooked in elite-based research (Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013, Stenning and Hörschelmann 2008b) – an objective that was much more difficult to achieve. On one hand, the interviews with local decision-makers proved to be very useful for entering the field. As researchers are extremely visible in places in the countryside where people know each other, contact with local decision-makers provided a certain legitimacy and possibilities in which to blend in. On the other, local decision-makers are also

embedded in power relations and even play a crucial role in reproducing them. As Annist (2011, 2013) illustrates in greater detail, relying only on snowball sampling from there onwards runs the risk of selection bias by excluding the groups that are already locally marginalized. Moreover, in this research context the definition of “local” is not so straightforward as living patterns in Estonia are highly seasonal (Kindel and Raagmaa 2015). Locals can therefore include those who are only registered in this specific municipality, summer house owners, or permanent residents. Due to these difficulties, locals were approached in multiple ways. The first was through community initiatives, social workers, cultural clubs, local decision-makers and personal contacts identified during the context analysis (Annex 2.11) and the initial interview phase. The second was during participant observation, which allowed the researcher to make initial contact less dependent on prior interviewees. Finally, in order to include a variety of perspectives, four interviews were conducted as group or family interviews and the observations of discourses encountered during fieldwork were also included in the analysis. While certainly not exhaustive, the inclusion of the perspective of local inhabitants allowed the researcher to shed light on alternative local discourses, thus on the variety of local responses to discursive peripheralization.

Altogether, 31 interviews were conducted in the time frame between July 2015 and December 2016, either individually or within groups (got list of interviewees see Annexes 2.3, 2.5). While the interviews were performed in Estonian at a time and place convenient for the interviewee, some interview partners chose to use local dialects. They lasted between 45 and 120 minutes. Similar to the national opinion leaders (Section 3.2.2), the interviews started with “ice-breaker questions” (Diekmann 2009, 483) on the role of the interviewees within the region, their connection to it and, if applicable, their motivation to actively engage in the region. For the analysis of the discourse reception, which formed the main part of the interview, two major strategies can be distinguished. Researching Estonian boundary-drawing towards Russia, Aalto (2003) suggests using the Q-method. This means to first identify common images and ascriptions from hegemonic discourses with which the respondents are then confronted in a survey study. As this approach risks not being able to study if the retrieved images are *meaningful* to the people concerned, the research followed the approach applied by Meyer and Miggelbrink (2013/2015) in their research on so-called “shrinking” regions in Germany.<sup>7</sup> Hence, based on an interview technique that often crosses the boundaries between a semi-structured

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<sup>7</sup> For more information see: “Diskurse und Praktiken in schrumpfenden Räumen” URL: [https://www.ifl-leipzig.de/de/forschung/projekt/detail/diskurse\\_und\\_praktiken\\_in\\_schrumpfenden\\_regionen.html](https://www.ifl-leipzig.de/de/forschung/projekt/detail/diskurse_und_praktiken_in_schrumpfenden_regionen.html)



and narrative interview (Berg 2009, Schütze 1982), the researcher asked rather open questions as to explore which discourses local actors (re-)produce when talking about the area and which categories and images they, themselves, refer to. Instead of “testing” categories and ascriptions elaborated in the discourse analysis at the national level, the researcher therefore moved through topics during the interviews including the life experiences of the interviewee within the region, its history and prospective future, everyday life and recent news or touristic sights and events. These rather open questions were followed by more specific discussion on the image of the region and the local institutional framework. The interviews concluded with an open question asking for topics that the interviewee would like to add, a note of thanks and the signing of a confirmation sheet that confirmed the interviewee’s consent to be included in the study and quoted in publications (Annex 2.10). Making use of the flexibility of qualitative interviewing (Berg 2009), the interviews were highly individualized. However, an illustrative interview guideline is provided in Annex 2.9.

Applying this rather open interview strategy as a researcher in a foreign context has its benefits and challenges (Stenning and Hörschelmann 2008b). On one hand, the positionality as an outsider allowed me to ask a wide range of main and follow-up questions as this curiosity was ascribed to a lack of local knowledge that the interviewee tried to compensate for by providing extensive explanatory narratives – a dynamic that Schütze (1982) calls the “compulsions of narration”. On the other, the ascription of not being “one of us” also led to situations where the questions about local actors and practices arose suspicion or the feeling that the foreign researcher would not understand “our” problems and lives anyway. In cases where such ascriptions were made explicit through questions referring to the origin of the researcher – the western or eastern part of Germany, a rural or urban area – and the “real” reasons for staying in Estonia, it was possible to overcome the initial reluctance. If this was not the case, it potentially affected the motivation to participate in the study. Moreover, the improvisation that is required when using such an interview approach is linguistically rather challenging. While the researcher is able to conduct interviews in Estonian, the local Seto and Mulgi dialects require specific knowledge. To face this linguistic challenge, the interviewees were informed of the language background of the researcher beforehand and the interview transcription was supported by native speakers, who reflected upon linguistic specifics of the interviewee to the researcher.

After the transcription or preparation of field notes (the latter in cases where recording was not possible), the interviews were analyzed with the same discourse analytical concepts and content analysis methods as outlined in section

3.2. This time the focus lay on the discursive nodes and strategies applied by the locals, which were scrutinized for resemblances to, and deviations from, the national discourse in order to identify these as one of the response strategies outlined by Bürk et al. (2012) based on Goffman (1967). As discourses are not unitary, i.e. vary from person to person and situation to situation (Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013, Valentine 2007), the responses were also compared with one another, revealing the intensity of local struggles. A detailed analysis of the variety of local responses within and between the two case studies can be found in the third and fourth articles (Plüschke-Alt of 2018 a/b).

### 3.3.2. Discursive Field

The local responses to national peripheralization discourses occur against the backdrop of a regional discursive field, which was analyzed on the basis of context and media analyses as well as participant observation that complemented the in-depth interviews.

The context analysis occurred prior to entering the field, with the help of desk research and media analyses. Based on the theoretical assumption that the discursive field is constituted of the socio-historic context and interpreting coalitions embedded in power structures (Bourdieu 1991, Schwab-Trapp 2006), it consisted of a stakeholder analysis of local decision-makers in relevant fields and an investigation of the historic and current socio-economic conditions of the regions. These were processed on the basis of secondary and grey literature such as research articles, policy and strategy documents, development plans, marketing material as well as statistical data (for an overview of the corpus see: Annex 2.11), which were scrutinized for the central organizations and actors and self-representations as to identify the institutional and support framework as well as the images portrayed of the regions towards the outside. The findings of this context analysis were reviewed with the help of the in-depth interviews that also included a small section on the local institutional framework and marketing strategies.

The context analysis was supplemented by regional media analyses. On the one hand, the media analysis at the national level served as reference point for the images and ascriptions that rural areas in general and the regions in particular are surrounded by. On the other, the specific depictions of the case study regions were retrieved via an overview of *Eesti Päevaleht* and *Maaleht* (Setomaa) newspapers, as well as *Valgamaalane* (Valgamaa). While the media analysis in the first case study region focused on the ascriptions to the term “Setomaa”

between January 2009 and June 2015, in the second case study the focus lay on the local use of the word “periphery” from January 2011 to December 2015. In sum, 155 and 81 articles were examined respectively for the major discursive threads associated with the respective terms. Other locally relevant publications such as the Setomaa column in *Postimees*, and *Setomaa* or *Üitsainus Mulgimaa* newspapers were also explored, but not systematically reviewed.

While giving an initial overview of the regional image and development in a wider national context, these analyses, however, cannot shed light on the local dynamics of the discursive field. Thus, they were supplemented by participant observation during fieldwork. Annist and Kaaristo (2013) distinguish anthropological and ethnological modes of field work in post-socialist space. While the former works on the basis of longer field work visits, the latter rather relies on a huge variety of “archive sources” and “concentrated observations and interviewing” (Annist and Kaaristo 2013, 134). With its focus on life in the countryside, the reliance on a wide range of data and a fieldwork approach that consisted of several short visits, this dissertation locates itself in the ethnological research tradition as outlined by Annist and Kaaristo (2013). The episodes of participant observation occurred at major cultural, political and touristic events such as song festivals, village fairs or policy conferences that took place in the studied areas during the case study periods. Moreover, they included meetings “behind the scenes” the researcher gained access to through contact with interviewees. These included policy meetings on issues of local development or the amalgamation reform, visits to or participation in events of local institutions such as enterprises, youth, pensioners’ or cultural clubs. They were documented with the help of fieldnotes. A detailed list can be found in Annexes 2.4. and 2.6.

To avoid a substitution of an analytical by a rather “compilative” approach, for which ethnological field work has often been criticized (Annist and Kaaristo 2013), the methodological challenges of this approach are reflected upon in greater detail here. On the one hand, complementing the interviews with repeated field visits and extensive context analysis allowed the researcher to somehow compensate for the somewhat artificial interview situation. As subjects are unstable in terms of the discursive fragments they refer to, the latter highly depend on the situation (in terms of time and space) and the role the interviewees find themselves in (Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013, Valentine 2007). Decision-makers could, for instance, employ positive images of the rural in place-marketing initiatives – and also negative images of the rural as peripheral – when applying for development funds. But the discourses that locals draw

on could also vary according to the latest media news, political developments or the seasonality of life in Estonia. Through the discursive field analysis, the contextuality of discourses that (the same) people refer to in different situations could to some extent be accounted for.

On the other hand, this partly ethnological research approach also posed several challenges. As described by Stenning and Hörschelmann (2008b), in a context where scientific knowledge is broadly linked with the objectivity apparently provided by quantitative survey studies, this open-ended approach caused some interviewees to question the legitimacy of the research altogether. Moreover, it confronted the researcher with problems of essentialization that have occupied social scientists since the crisis of representation (Annist and Kaaristo 2013, Stenning and Hörschelmann 2008b). In particular, the role of a researcher from abroad raises questions concerning the authenticity of the gained interpretations. In order to avoid contributing to a “controlling and exoticizing discourse” (Annist and Kaaristo 2013, 131) and likewise re-stigmatization of the areas under study (Blondel 2015), special attention has been paid to the issue of framing. First, following Meyer and Miggelbrink (2013) the research took a wait-and-see approach by paying special attention to the categorizations and concepts referred to by the researcher in the field (Section 3.3.1). Second, following Stenning and Hörschelmann (2008b), the notion of objectivist representations was put under scrutiny. Instead of reproducing case study representations based on hierarchical timelines, statistical definitions of development and Cold-War narratives, the study areas are therefore contextualized based on a multiple-source data base including literature reviews, media representations, socio-economic statistical data, participant observations and others. This enables the researcher to show varied discourses surrounding the case study area without neglecting the issue of materialities. The results of the discursive field analysis are presented in greater detail within the third and fourth articles (Plüschke-Altöf 2018a/b) and in the following chapter.

## RESEARCH CONTEXT

The dissertation attempts to unravel the discursive node that links peripheries to rural areas. As discourses do not exist in a vacuum, the discursive knowledge production on places labelled as peripheries takes place against a certain socio-historical backdrop. Although complexity in developments and experiences that characterize the situation of rural areas in Estonia exists, there are three major processes to be considered: (1) the deepening urban-rural polarization, (2) the specific path of post-socialist transformation, as well as (3) continuous neoliberalization. This context and the way it has come about does not only influence the discursive level, but also the structural aspects and practices of rural peripheralization (PosCoPP 2015, Nugin and Trell 2015). Therefore, this chapter aims to provide deeper insights into the discursive field and the meta-discourses in which peripheralization discourses in Estonia are generally embedded. It, moreover, provides an introduction into the specific local conditions and institutional frameworks in the case study areas. However, more information on the case studies and the different local coping strategies are discussed in the third and fourth articles (Plüschke-Altöf 2018a/b).

### 4.1. Post-Socialist Neoliberalization: Discursive Field

Since Estonia regained its independence in 1991, its state policy has been influenced by two major trends: the post-socialist transformation, and rapid neoliberalization. Similar to other post-socialist countries,<sup>8</sup> Estonia thus followed a political path that quickly renounced the socialist regime and replaced it with a capitalist system in a radically neoliberal form (Lauristin and Vihalemm 2009, Nugin and Trell 2015, and PoSCoPP 2015).

This “neoliberal success story” (Madariaga 2010, 1) was fostered by Estonia’s specific path of post-socialist transformation that took the form of an “immediate break with the hated regime” (Lauristin and Vihalemm 2009, 7). In particular, the colonial history associated with the past as a former part of the Soviet Union and the fierce suppression of the Baltic independence movements by the Soviet military led to a wide acceptance of the so-called restoration doctrine.<sup>9</sup> Through

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<sup>8</sup> The notion of post-socialist space is used to denote CEE countries in the former Soviet sphere of influence. It is preferred to alternative terms such as Second World or post-communist space as to question the underlying Cold War modernization narrative and to emphasize that “communism was never fully achieved” (Koobak and Marling 2014, 340)

<sup>9</sup> For more information on the history of Estonia and its re-independence movements, see: Tannberg et al. 2002

this, independence was declared on the grounds of legal continuity of the first Estonian Republic (1918–40) (Annus 2012, Lauristin and Vihalemm 2009). While this decision clearly relates to the question of citizenship rights for the Russian minority who migrated to Estonia during the Soviet era<sup>10</sup> (approximately 25% of the population, SE 2016), it also reflects a desire to fundamentally break with the former system and its institutional structures and social norms (Lauristin and Vihalemm 2009, Madariaga 2010). Since then, state policy has promoted a path of market liberalism based on fiscal discipline, less state intervention, and openness to foreign direct investment heavily supported by international organizations such as the IMF and World Bank following the principles of the Washington Consensus and EU actors enforcing the Maastricht criteria in the pre-accession period (ibid.). These “radical reforms” (Lauristin and Vihalemm 2009, 5) subsequently resulted in a European and international integration process resulting in Estonia’s accession to the EU and NATO, as well as to the Schengen area and Eurozone in 2004, 2007 and 2011 respectively.

In the countryside, this transformation path developed in a so-called “structural disrapture” (Taim 2015, 31), which took shape due to the quick dissolution of the state and collective farm system (the *sovkhoses* and *kolkhozes*) while small-scale single farming in the style of the first Estonian Republic was simultaneously reintroduced. However, the “rejuvenation of family farming” (Annist 2005, 151) was short-lived. Despite the rapid privatization,<sup>11</sup> this did not prove to be competitive under the conditions of the market economy and a post-productivist shift towards consumption-oriented spatial practices (Nugin and Trell 2015). Therefore, it was eventually replaced by large-scale farming (Nugin 2014). This restructuring process was accompanied by the Russian financial crisis of 1998 that further accelerated the loss of the agricultural market in Russia for Estonian goods, which could only gradually be compensated for by its European equivalent (Taim 2015). Even though the pre-accession negotiations and final accession to the EU offered new possibilities for rural development support, the transition period caused a rapid drop in the share of agricultural production and the population involved in it, from 20.4% in 1991 to 4.6% in 2012 (HDR 2010, RDP 2014, Taim 2015). This triggered a downward spiral of rural unemployment and impoverishment resulting in out-migration to urban areas throughout the 1990s that continues today in the form of (sub-)urbanization while the peripheralization of small towns and the countryside increases (Annist 2005, Leetmaa et al. 2013, Nugin and Trell 2015, and Servinski et al. 2016).

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<sup>10</sup> For more information on the situation of the Russian minority, see: Feldman 2008, Laitin 2003, Linz and Stepan 1996

<sup>11</sup> For more information on the privatization and land reform in Estonia, see: Jürgenson and Maasikamäe 2009

Peripheralization processes at this scale were a rather new experience for the rural areas and their agricultural centers, since they enjoyed a relatively high quality of life during the Soviet era, from the late 1960s onwards (Annist 2005, NSP 2012). The second half of the 1980s even saw rural population growth brought about by the “deurbanizing native-born population” (Katus et al. 1998, 52) after having experienced an intense wave of post-war immigration and urbanization<sup>12</sup> that focused on the north-eastern Harju and Ida-Viru counties (NSP 2012). Therefore, the population in rural areas and small towns remained stable at the beginning of the transition and only gradually started to decline as the young generation moved from the countryside to the major cities in search of education and employment (HDR 2010, Leetmaa et al. 2013). However, today, up to 50% of Estonian municipalities, with about 140,000 inhabitants, are rural areas suffering severely from the selective outward-migration of “young and active inhabitants” (RDP 2014, 22). By mapping them as “peripheral” or as “municipalities at risk of peripheralization,”<sup>13</sup> the Human Development Report 2010 reveals a deep urban-rural divide that mostly favors the counties surrounding Estonia’s main cities of Tallinn and Tartu (Figure 9). Yet it also conveys tangible peripheralization processes in the industrial northeastern and predominantly rural southern, western and central parts of Estonia, in which the population declined most steeply in Valga and Põlva counties (Kivilaid and Servinski 2013, SYB 2016). The “exodus of the young” (NSP 2012, 11) often did not stop at the borders of Estonia. Since accession to the EU, the main migration destinations have been Finland and the United Kingdom. Combined with a low fertility rate (1.52 in 2014), which is fueled by the so-called “bride problem” (Raagmaa and Noorkõiv 2013, 39) in the countryside, this led to a decline in Estonian inhabitants from more than 1.5 million in 1989 to approximately 1.3 million in 2016 (Katus et al. 1998, SYB 2016). Altogether, approximately 12% of Estonian citizens live abroad (HDR 2010). This development results in considerable ageing processes in Estonia in general and rural areas in particular with related problems for the social system as the size of the labor force declines while the dependency ratio rises (Servinski et al. 2016, NSP 2012).

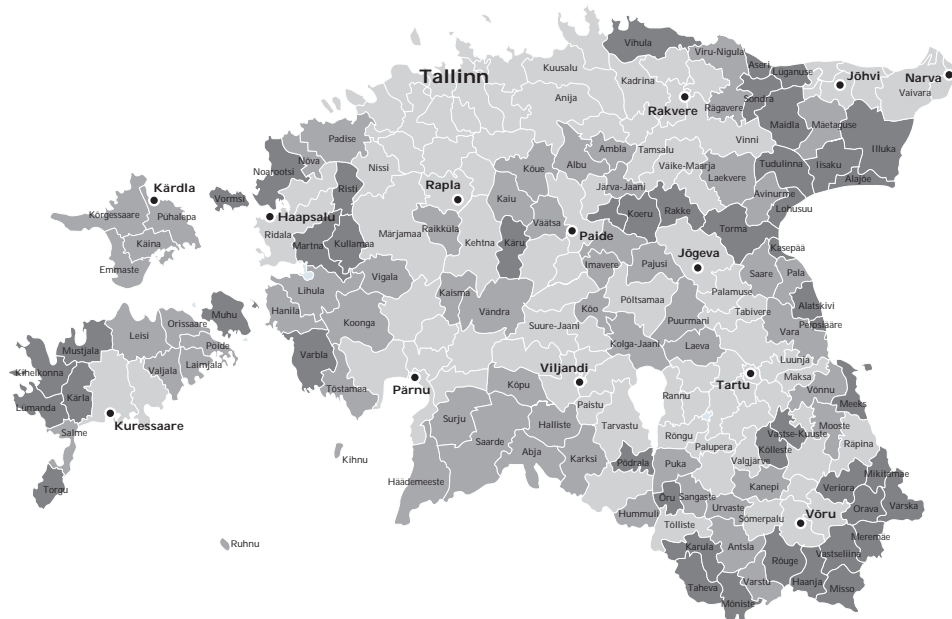
The current rural depopulation is mainly due to limited employment possibilities. Although the national labor market<sup>14</sup> recovered from the consequences of the global financial crisis in 2008, resulting in a steady increase

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<sup>12</sup> For more information on demographic developments during Soviet occupation, see: Katus et al. 1998

<sup>13</sup> Defined as remote rural areas that lost half of their population in the last 50 years, these show an annual shrinkage of at least 1% since 2000 or a population density of less than 8 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> (compared to the Estonian average of 31/km<sup>2</sup>, see: HDR 2010, 22)

<sup>14</sup> For more information on different labor market indicators, see: Marksoo et al. 2010, SYB 2016



**Figure 9.** Peripheralized Areas in Estonia

Source: Estonian Human Development Report 2010

in the employment rate (65.2% in 2015) and decline of the unemployment rate (6.2%), work opportunities are still very unevenly distributed (SYB 2016). Finding a job is difficult in particular for females, the young and for non-Estonian citizens. However, significant disparities can also be found at the regional level. Whereas the employment rate is highest in Harju county (inclusive of the capital Tallinn) at 71% in 2015, it has always remained lowest in rural areas and in those areas bordering Russia and Latvia, i.e. in Ida-Viru, Põlva, Valga and Võru counties (RDP 2014, Servinski et al. 2016, and SYB 2016). These regions are subject to high unemployment for several reasons. On the one hand, they were most closely bound to the Soviet/Russian market that is now sealed off by the EU external border and market protection mechanisms (Annist 2005, Marksoo et al. 2010). On the other, their regional economies are less versatile. Unlike the counties surrounding the main cities of Tallinn and Tartu that generate more than 70% of Estonia's GDP, they rely primarily on industry (in northeastern areas) and agriculture (in southern areas). These two sectors suffer most from recession and high-unemployment in post-productivist times (HDR 2010, Kivilaid and Servinski 2013, Marksoo et al. 2010, and Servinski et al. 2016).

As unemployment is the main factor for living below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold (38.5%, 2014), these regional disparities translate into unequally-



distributed risks of poverty and social exclusion<sup>15</sup> (HDR 2010, SYB 2016). In 2014, around one-fifth of the Estonian population lived in relative (21.6 %) or absolute poverty (6.3 %), including a relatively high proportion of people living in persistent poverty (SYB 2016, Viilmann and Rummo 2016). While the risk groups are also demographic (including women, elderly people, single parents, families with many children and Russian speakers), the poverty risk shows a regional component, being noticeably higher in low-populated than in densely-populated areas (RDP 2014, SYB 2016, Viilmann and Rummo 2016). Among the employed population, 7.5% lived in relative poverty in 2014 and 1.9% lived in absolute poverty, which is mainly caused by low income rates or by being a self-employed entrepreneur (ibid.). There are huge regional disparities. While the average national income<sup>16</sup> has increased since 2011, it is still highest in Harju county and lowest in the three southern counties as well as in Ida-Virumaa (Servinski et al. 2016, SYB 2016). The southeastern counties and the islands are also those where self-employment, in the form of small enterprises, has become an important compensation for the lack of other employment opportunities (RDP 2014). While this certainly offers individual ways of coping, Kivilaid and Servinski (2013, 88), however, point out that it is “difficult to build a successful [regional] economy with only small enterprises”.

The difficult socio-economic situation of rural and industrial regions, particularly in the eastern and southern parts of Estonia, has also led to considerable inequalities in terms of tax revenues for local municipalities. The smallest per capita receipts of personal income tax per year have most frequently been received in Ida-Viru, Jõgeva, Valga and Võru counties (Servinski et al. 2016). This means that the budget of the local governments in peripheral regions has been continuously decreasing, which causes a steady decline in vital services, especially in the fields of education and health (RDP 2014, SYB 2016, and Taim 2015). This lack of service provision has not only resulted from peripheralization processes but has also fostered the continuous flow of out-migration (Annist 2005). To accommodate for this situation, increasing numbers of municipalities have been merged in the course of reform based on amalgamation. As of 1 January 2016, the fifteen counties contained 30 self-governing cities and 183 rural municipalities (Servinski et al. 2016).

Despite the ongoing rural peripheralization that has deepened throughout several crisis situations since the regaining of independence, including the

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<sup>15</sup> For more information on different definitions and dimensions of poverty and exclusion, see: Viilmann and Rummo 2016, SYB 2016

<sup>16</sup> For more information on different income indicators, see: SYB 2016

Russian financial crisis in 1998 and the recent global financial crisis, the neoliberal trajectory has remained largely uncontested. On the contrary, regional policy is increasingly based on the premises of competitiveness and economic growth (Bristow 2005, Peck 2010). It is primarily coordinated by the Ministries of Interior, Finance and Rural Affairs, including their government agencies such as the Agricultural Registers and Information Board (*PRIA*), the Rural Development Foundation (*MES*) and the Rural Economy Research Center (*Maamajanduse Keskus*). In the central Estonian planning documents, including the Regional Development Strategies, Rural Development and National Spatial Plans as well as the National Reform Plan 2020, these policies appear in the form of a focus on entrepreneurship and human capital, the promotion of economic competitiveness or research and development, and an emphasis on innovation, productivity and connectivity that have become central keywords of a neoliberal spatial agenda (NSP 2012, NRP 2015, RDP 2014, and Servinski et al. 2016). Estonian regional policy has thus followed a global trend that also dominates European Union spatial policies (Bristow 2005, Loewen 2015, and PoSCoPP 2015). However, even though all these strategies aim to “ensure that any settled location in Estonia is livable” (NSP 2012, 13), regional disparities steadily increase due to the centralizing and depoliticizing tendencies of neoliberal policies (Hadjimichalis and Hudson 2007, Marksoo et al. 2010, PoSCoPP 2015, and Smith and Timár 2010).

A principal reason for the prevalence of neoliberal politics lies in the socialist past that is largely perceived as “Soviet colonialism” (Annus 2012, 21). This association of the socialist with the colonial effectively eradicates policies focusing on socio-spatial justice and welfare as viable options. Instead, voices supporting egalitarian policies on the left end of the political spectrum, including pensioners, farmers, and the Russian-speaking minority as the main opponents of the shock therapy, are dismissed as “too socialist” (Lauristin and Vihalemm 2009, 20) or as “overly compliant towards Russian-speaking settlers” (Madariaga 2010, 27). This effectively skews non-liberal policy options and brought about wide support for the radical reforms (Madariaga 2010). It also led to the replacement of solidarity norms by a success-oriented transition culture based on individualism and consumerism that is fostered by a political class constituting mainly of the “winners of transition” (Juska 2007, Lauristin and Vihalemm 2009). According to Lauristin and Vihalemm (2009, 20), this combination of “liberal market orientations with a populist nationalist appeal” successfully ensured the implementation of a neoliberal agenda and silenced possible alternatives. Moreover, the intense preparations for NATO and EU

accession, which were perceived as “return to the West,” unified the electorate thereby hiding underlying social conflicts (Lauristin and Vihalemm 2009).

Due to the lack of alternative policy options, regional disparities are largely addressed with the help of neoliberal solutions, setting a strong focus on “proactive localities” (Leetmaa et al. 2013, 17) that use their endogenous resources to achieve a local competitive advantage. Such soft development factors are seen in the entrepreneurial use of natural and cultural resources for niche production and the promotion of these places as heritage culture destinations or recreational peripheries. This also applies to the mobilization of the human resources of permanent inhabitants and second-home owners (HDR 2010, Leetmaa et al. 2013, Raagmaa and Noorkõiv 2013, RDP 2014, and Woods 2013). An important role in this debate is played by the identity and image of a region. These are seen as new beacons of hope in ensuring regional competitiveness, as they can function either as an external marketing tool or to internally strengthen the social capital in a region, and attachment thereto (Paasi 2013, Kotler 1999; for empirical studies see for example: Kauppinen 2014, Kašková and Chromý 2014, Semian and Chromý 2014, Skjeggedal and Overvåg 2017)

While the enhancement of social capital is supposed to foster community engagement, the aim of place-marketing lies in the commodification of the region and in selling its regional products in order to attract new (or mobilize the current) tourists, inhabitants, investors and entrepreneurs (Kašková and Chromý 2014, Kotler 1999, Kuusik et al. 2011, Semian and Chromý 2014). Although the focus on consumption-oriented place promotion and post-productivist entrepreneurialism inherently privileges urban areas (Bristow 2005, Florida 2002, and Peck 2010), it also inspires entrepreneurs and policy-makers in rural Estonia, who hope that it might provide new chances for a diversification in income sources (Agan and Kask 2009, Bardone et al. 2013, Kalle et al. 2005, Kindel and Raagmaa 2015, Leetmaa et al. 2013, RDP 2014).

Community engagement is also supposed to play an ever-growing role for Estonia’s regional development. Its foundations lie in the rural communities that already focused on cultural activities such as singing and dancing during Soviet times. Facing the challenges of rural peripheralization, they gradually incorporated coping activities into their objectives. Today, they are accompanied by a wide variety of initiatives ranging from interest-based heritage culture or ecological communities to place-based rural or urban communities (Vihma and Lippus 2014). Their activities are coordinated by the Estonian Village Movement (*Kodukant*), the Folk Culture Center (*Rahvakultuuri Keskus*) and the Urban Lab (*Linnalabor*). A study on community initiatives commissioned by Kodukant

confirmed that there are up to 3,500 organized groups including village elders and village or district initiatives (Vihma and Lippus 2014, Noorkõiv 2016). Their activities are supported and encouraged by state institutions such as the Ministries for Interior, Social Affairs and Rural Affairs as well as by the EU, especially within the framework of its LEADER program<sup>17</sup> (Vihma and Lippus 2014, RDP 2014). Alongside the SAPARD and INTERREG Programs, LEADER has been one of the most influential programs in rural Estonia. Established in 2000 – initially within the framework of the Baltic Rural Partnerships Program in the southern counties – it currently covers up to 99% of Estonia’s rural population within 26 Local Action Groups (Liping 2015, Raagmaa and Noorkõiv 2013). Beside the National Heritage Culture Program (*Riiklik Kultuuri Programm*) and the Dispersed Settlement Program (*Hajaasustuse Program*), it is also one of the most important funding bodies, accounting for up to 9.1% of the rural development budget (RDP 2014).

While these neoliberal solutions offered new opportunities for a diversification of rural income opportunities, they could, however, not ensure equal living standards throughout the country (Nugin 2014, PoSCoPP 2015). One reason is their strong focus on self-responsibility and local coping, whereas redistributive policies have been placed in the background. This means that the potential to deal with peripheralization solely depends on limited local resources, which renders peripheral regions more vulnerable to structural imbalances and thereby hampers their ability to respond to external events (Hadjimichalis and Hudson in Loewen 2015). While, for instance, the importance of local leaders and community initiatives is often treated as genuinely positive for regional development, their role needs to be critically scrutinized (Annist 2005). As Vihma and Lippus (2014) point out, there is the risk of overstraining local leaders or losing them in the course of selective outward-migration. Moreover, it needs to be questioned to what extent initiatives are truly representative of the community and whose perspectives are excluded. As has been well demonstrated in the case of LEADER action groups, the potential influence of local activists is further subject to national and regional power relations, which frequently result in limited autonomy and access to project funding (Annist 2005, Liping 2015). Instead, their intended functions are often reduced to acting as a service provider substituting for the socio-cultural activities from which the state has retreated (Vihma and Lippus 2014). Further, the prospects for place-marketing and tourism in rural development require careful examination. Remaining deeply

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<sup>17</sup> For more information on the LEADER program and action groups in Estonia, see: Liping 2015, RDP 2014

ensconced in the logic of competitiveness and entrepreneurship, these initiatives often focus on fulfilling urban demands for a rural lifestyle (Fischer-Tahir and Naumann 2013, Kašková and Chromý 2014, Kobayashi and Westlund 2013). Hence, there is the danger of sacrificing the authenticity of local culture to its commodification (Kavaratzis and Ashworth 2015). Finally, the material benefits of such regional development strategies are doubtful, as “it is difficult to believe that a region specializing in folk culture-based entrepreneurship or ecotourism could compete with a region specializing in the provision of IT services” (Servinski et al. 2016, 55).

## **4.2. Rural and Responsible? Discursive Formation**

The main trends in regional policy also influence the discourses evolving around places labelled as peripheries in Estonia. As shown in the first and second articles, Estonian peripheralization discourses are deeply embedded in meta-discourses of rurality and responsibility for the causes of peripheralization and means of dealing with it (Plüschke-Altöf 2016/2017). These are mutually intertwined with the post-socialist transformation and neoliberalization described in detail above. While being influenced by these processes, the constructions of rurality and responsibility also shape the choices, practices, materialities – and thereby the “actual lives of rural people” (Nugin and Trell 2015, 264; Trell et al. 2012, and Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013). Both meta-discourses are constructed in a twofold way: While rurality discourses refer to the opposing modernist and pastoral narratives of rural decline and rural idyll (Shucksmith et al. 2009, Halfacree 2006), discourses on responsibility follow the dominant debates on spatial disparities oscillating between the poles of self and state responsibility (Bristow 2010, Gyuris 2014, Peck 2010, and Massey 2004). They function as resources that discourse participants can relate to and thereby mirror the ambiguity of seemingly fixed spatial categories as urban-rural or center-periphery. The ambivalence of such spatial typologies has been acknowledged for rural areas in post-socialist areas in general (Balogh 2015, Juska 2007, and Pospěch 2014) and for the Estonian case in particular (Raagmaa and Noorkõiv 2013, Taim 2015). Whereas population-based criteria of “urban” and “rural” are of limited use in a sparsely-populated country such as Estonia (which would qualify in total as a rural area), functional typologies also have their shortcomings. This is because they are usually based either on an urban standard from which rural areas are defined as deviations, or on agricultural production, which has lost its importance in a post-productivist world (ibid.).

These meta-discourses are fostered by media debates, including those in the opinion columns of the newspapers *Postimees*, *Eesti Päevaleht* and *Maaleht* (Section 3.2) investigated in this dissertation. Yet there are also public events that have bringing rural issues to the foreground as their objective. The most popular of these are Kodukant's Rural Parliament (*Maapäev*), the Open Farms Day (*Avatud Talude Päev*), or the Urban and Rural Municipalities' Day (*Linnade ja Valdade Päevad*). However, the Opinion Festival (*Arvamusfestival*), organized since 2012 and supplemented by the Narva and southern Estonian opinion festivals in recent years, also provides an acknowledged public platform for discussion of rural affairs.

In these debates, discourse participants that refer to the modernist narrative construct rural areas as marginalized and underdeveloped spaces (Shucksmith et al. 2009). As shown in former studies (Kay et al. 2012, Trell et al. 2012, and Nugin 2014), in a post-socialist and neoliberal context, this othering on a normative development scale is often completed by a discursive formation that positions rural areas on the negative side of the active-passive and east-west divide. Moreover, in CEE countries it is a multi-scalar process, affecting the national, regional and local levels alike (Annist 2011, Koobak and Marling 2014, Suchland 2011, Timár and Velkey 2016, and Tlostanova 2012). The equation of rural areas with deficits and decline is deeply embedded in neoliberal views that reduce development to a notion of economic growth and competitiveness (Bristow 2005, Pike et al. 2007, and Shearmur 2012). Using the threat of being left behind, this particular understanding of regional development urges regions to either “be competitive or die” (Bristow 2010, 161). Regional competitiveness is thereby portrayed as the only option in times of increasing globalization. While promising prosperity and a high standard of living for those regions that accept the rules of the game, this focus on growth and competitiveness inherently suffers from a “success bias” (Bristow 2005, 297) that downplays the unevenly-distributed benefits as not everyone can be a winner. If the ultimate objective is to create competitive advantage over others, the success of one region, by default, causes the apparent failure of another. “Who is winning” (Bristow 2005, 286) is often explained using statistical data compiled into indexes, rankings and league tables measuring the productivity, capacity, innovation or potential of a region to attract investment, labor and residents (Annoni and Dijkstra 2013, Assembly of European Regions 2009, Hollanders and Es-Sadki 2014, and Schürmann and Talaat 2000). These have also been rather popular in Estonia (Kivilaid and Servinski 2013, Noorkõiv and Ristimäe 2014). As these measurements are often related to geographic indicators of population density or accessibility, the results usually show an opposition of

“progressive”, “innovative” and structurally “strong” urban centers to “backward,” “weak” and “remote” rural peripheries (Kühn and Bernt 2013, Leibert 2013, and Shearmur 2012). These kinds of generalizations, as proliferated, among others, by Statistics Estonia (*Eesti Statistika*), risk objectifying an urban-rural divide in terms of success and failure that inherently privileges the urban while constituting the rural as periphery *per se*. They are manifested opposing “strong” with “weak municipalities” (Kaukvere 2014, PM) or the “successful” Tallinn, Tartu and Pärnu urban areas vs. the “problematic” area in proximity to Lake Peipus and the South-East (SE 2009). Beyond that, they universalize a specific understanding of regional development, so that the question of “what kind of local development and for whom” (Pike et al. 2007, 1253) is rarely asked and alternative measures such as subjective well-being, quality of life or happiness are often neglected in such rankings (for alternative rankings, see: Annoni et al. 2016, Hayo 2007, Peiro 2006, Shucksmith et al. 2009, Sørensen 2013).

As this objectification of an urban-rural hierarchy is often related to the question of the responsibility for the causes of peripheralization and dealing with it, it also tends to stigmatize rural areas as failing due to their own deficiencies (Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013). As Bürk et al. (2012) and Wacquant et al. (2014) confirm in their studies on territorial stigmatization, the objectified development deficits of places labelled as peripheries are often attributed to the apparent social pathologies of their inhabitants. By labelling them as “losers” of transformation, “backward”, “inefficient” or interpreting the physical decay visible in the “abandoned ruins” of “once lively centers for rural communities” as manifestations of the inhabitants neglecting their region, this stigmatization not only legitimize the status quo, but also influences the future perspectives of people living in the region (Nugin and Trelle 2015, 262ff.; Nugin 2014, and Trelle et al. 2012). Thereby, the peripheralization processes are ascribed to “intrinsic sociocultural traits” (Wacquant et al. 2014, 1274) of the residents rather than to structural disadvantages. In Estonia, this kind of “responsibilization” figures most prominently in a normative divide between active and passive communities (Leetmaa et al. 2015, Liping 2015, and Raagmaa and Noorkõiv 2013). When discourse participants try to shift the responsibility back to the state (see for example Massey 2004), they thus risk being stigmatized as passive. Due to the official renunciation of the Soviet era and the prevalent image of “backward Easternness” (Marksoo et al. 2010, 55; Petersoo 2007), any emphasis on solidarity as alternative to self-responsibility or mourning of the loss since the end of the Soviet era could be discredited as inappropriate socialist nostalgia<sup>18</sup> or

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<sup>18</sup> For more information on memory discourses and nostalgia, see: Jõesalu and Kõresaar 2013, Kannike 2013, Münch 2008

even result in a “double othering” as both peripheral and eastern (Kay et al. 2012, 58; Annist 2005, Nugin and Trell 2015, and Plüschke-Altöf 2017). While the neoliberal equation of development with competitiveness strongly emphasizes non-intervention and self-responsibility for dealing with peripheralization, accentuating social pathologies shifts the blame for its causes to the inhabitants themselves. On the one hand, it is central actors who are able to institutionalize normative standards for regional development or innovation (Bristow 2005, Pike et al. 2007, and Shearmur 2012). On the other, it is peripheral actors who are most affected by socio-spatial marginalization processes and who are usually blamed for not fulfilling these standards (Bürk et al. 2012, Wacquant et al. 2014).

On the contrary, those discourse participants that refer to the pastoral narrative construct rural areas as “idyllic, close-knit communities living in harmony with nature” (Nugin and Trell 2015, 264; Shucksmith et al. 2009). By “trying to prove the opposite” (Bürk et al. 2012, 339) of the negative images, they take those proliferated with the help of the modernist narrative and turn them on their heads to create a rural idyll (Halfacree 2006) or use them for strategic essentialism (Jacobs 1996). In Estonia, they can build on notions of “romanticized folk culture” (Kay et al. 2012, 58) and the rural as “traditional way of life” (Berg 2002, 111) that figure prominently in Estonian identity discourses and were already used against Soviet attempts at industrialization and urbanization (Plüschke-Altöf 2015). The ideological ideal of Estonians as “country people” (*maarahvas*) stems from the pre-war period and is popular in media representations and narratives of rural inhabitants even today (Nugin and Trell 2015). Yet it is also used for place-marketing purposes such as by the rural tourism industry (*Eesti Maaturism*), the National Geographic Yellow Window initiative (*Visit South Estonia*) or the Rural Fair (*Maamess*) that depict rural areas as heritage culture or activity-based holiday destinations. Within the campaign “Come to the Countryside” (*Tule Maale*) that started 2012 in Misso municipality in Võru county, a rural idyll has been actively created to market rural areas as desirable places of residence. Under the umbrella organization *Maale elama (MTÜ Partnerlus)*, it has now been developed into a nationwide initiative, providing assistance for those interested in relocating to rural areas (Heering 2015, Taim 2015).

However, the instrumentalization or commodification of the pastoral narrative also has its drawbacks. First, due to its roots in national identity building, the link to nature and traditional folk culture has the potential to exclude certain groups, as has been demonstrated in the case of othering discourses towards Russian “urban



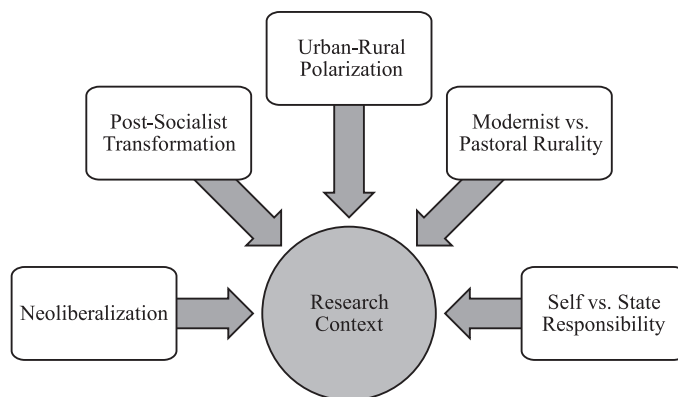
transients” (Berg 2002, 112) and their settlements in Ida-Virumaa.<sup>19</sup> Second, the portrayal of a “primitive innocence” of the rural (Nugin and Trell 2015, 265) can result in its exotification in order to satisfy an urban gaze, limiting possible (alternative) development paths. This is exemplified by Sooväli (2004) by the case of opposition to second-home ownership and mass tourism on the island of Saaremaa that was based on idyllic rural images. Finally, trying to reverse images of marginalization and hopelessness with romanticism also risks hiding real, existing material difficulties in the countryside. Comprehensive studies on the rural idyll (Arora-Jonsson 2009, Little and Austin 1996, Matthews et al. 2000, Valentine 1997, and Watkins and Jacoby 2007) confirm that the ideal of rural areas as a safe place to grow up, or as symbols of well-being and integrative communal life, often conceals hidden geographies of exclusion, marginalization and local stigmatization.

The romantic construction of rurality as cradle of the nation is accompanied by depictions of rural inhabitants as brave, hard-working and resilient women and men of action (*tegijad*) (Nugin and Trell 2015, Plüschke-Altöf 2016). Accordingly, the study commissioned by Kodukant classifies the majority (73%) of Estonian villages as awake (*ärغانud*) or awakening (*ärkavad*), while those without active community initiatives are labelled as asleep (*uinivad*) (Vihma and Lippus 2014). Whereas this portrayal as active coping agents has the potential to reverse the image of rural passivity and peripherality, thereby offering positive role models for locals (Nugin and Trell 2015), it essentially builds on the meta-discourse of self-responsibility (Plüschke-Altöf 2018b). This leads to a situation where best-practice examples such as Viimsi rural municipality in the Tallinn urban region (Noorköiv and Sepp 2005, Noorköiv and Plüschke-Altöf 2015) or the southern Estonian region of Setomaa (Heering 2015, Raagmaa et al. 2012, Plüschke-Altöf 2018a, and Valk and Särg 2015) are positively acknowledged, while those that do not adhere to the pre-formed activity norms are possibly stigmatized. Despite the relatively late start to (sub-)urban community initiatives such as the Tallinn and Tartu district initiatives in Uus Maailm (Tootsen 2011), Kalamaja (Leigh 2014) and Supilinn (Valk 2006), these have moreover received considerably greater media coverage. This re-establishes an urban-rural hierarchy in terms of activism that does not necessarily mirror the actual level of engagement (Raagmaa and Noorköiv 2013).

Altogether, as conveyed in Figure 10, the research context is set by a discursive field that is structured by the post-socialist transformation, a continuous

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<sup>19</sup> For information on discourses towards the Russian minority in Ida-Virumaa, see: Berg 1999, Kuutma et al. 2012, Pöföser 2014, Virkkunen 2002



**Figure 10.** Overview: Research Context

Source: Illustration by the author based on context analysis

neoliberalization and the resultant urban-rural polarization. This is accompanied by a discursive formation based on meta-discourse on rurality and responsibility. All of these processes form the backdrop for current peripheralization discourses in Estonia, influencing not only how these are formed but also by whom and with what consequences. Consequently, they also define the room for maneuver in which local actors in the case study regions have to negotiate their position in the spatial hierarchy.

### 4.3. Case Study Introductions

Except for the particular situation of Ida-Viru county (Berg 1999, Pfoser 2014, Kuutma et al. 2012, Virkkunen 2002), the discursive localization of peripheries in Estonian print media (Section 3.2.) largely mirrors the regional disparities described above (Section 4.1.). Based on the media analysis, Setomaa and Northern Valgamaa were chosen as case study regions. Both are part of South Estonia, which according to the European NUTS-3<sup>20</sup> classification includes Jõgeva, Põlva, Tartu, Valga, Viljandi, Võru counties (RDP 2014). Except for Tartu urban region, the southern part of Estonia can be described as a sparsely populated rural area with relatively low employment rates and income levels (Marksoo et al. 2010, CS 2016, MS 2016). However, it is also known for its historical heritage culture regions that can be found in Mulgimaa, Old Võrumaa, Setomaa and the Old Believers Villages around Lake Peipus (Annist 2013, Brown 2012, Ehala 2007, Eichenbaum and Koreinik 2008, Iva 2010, Jääts 2015, Kalle et al. 2015, Kuutma et al. 2012). Other important heritage culture regions are located on the islands

<sup>20</sup> On the advantages and disadvantages of working with the NUTs classification in Estonia, see: Marksoo et al. 2010

in Western Estonia (Kindel and Raagmaa 2015, Sooväli 2004, Sooväli et al. 2005). Often home to historical minorities such as Russians, Latvians, Germans, Swedes or Setos (Marksoo et al. 2010), these regions also play an important role as internal others of the Estonian self to whom boundaries are drawn on the basis of ethnicity, language, culture or religion (Eichenbaum and Koreinik 2008, Laineste 2008, Petersoo 2007). As they are commonly situated at natural “fringes,” such as borders or islands, these regions are also perceived as spatial peripheries.

Like other regions in Estonia, Setomaa and Northern Valgamaa are also subjected to the socio-spatial processes described above. Faced with material and discursive peripheralization, they have to cope and position themselves in a post-socialist and neoliberal context that encourages them to be “entrepreneurial place-sellers” (Bristow 2010, 160). Whereas their specific local conditions and institutional framework will be outlined in the following sub-chapters, the different coping strategies are discussed in the third and fourth articles (Plüschke-Altöf 2018a/b).

### **4.3.1. Setomaa**

The historical region of Setomaa denotes an area in southeastern Estonia that is situated at the border between Estonia and Russia. It was incorporated into the Estonian state in 1920 as Pechory county (*Petserimaa*). After the Soviet occupation of Estonia in the course of the Second World War, about three fourths of Pechory were united with the Pskov Oblast of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, leaving the remainder as territory of the current Republic of Estonia. After Estonia regained its independence in 1991 and joined the Schengen area in 2004, this resulted in a division of Setomaa demarcated by the external border of the EU. Currently, the Estonian part of the region is administratively divided into the municipalities of Mikitamäe and Värskä in Põlva county, as well as Meremäe and the Luhamaa area of Misso municipality in Võru county. Due to its geographical location at a frontier and historical status as one of the poorest areas in the country, marked by lower levels of education and economic status, Setomaa has long functioned as an embodiment of peripherality (Annist 2013, Petersoo 2007, Plüschke 2015, Valk and Särg 2015). Even today, its municipalities face considerable socio-economic deprivation resulting in high unemployment rates, low levels of income and a decreasing and ageing population caused by selective outward-migration (MS 2016, SVL 2006, SVL and Reidolf 2016). Moreover, the distinctiveness of the Seto people formed the basis for an internal othering discourse, starting during the nationalization processes in the First Estonian Republic (Kattai 2016, Petersoo 2007). Due to their specific dialect,

their cultural peculiarities – as well as the Orthodox religion that separates them from Lutheran or atheistic Estonians – Seto people were seen and portrayed as different from the majority (Iva 2010, Koreinik 2011, Laineste 2008, Valk and Särg 2015). They have also (still unsuccessfully) claimed acknowledgement as a minority (Kuutma et al. 2012, Jääts 2015). The last Estonian census in 2011 indicated that today between 12,000 and 13,000 people understand the Seto language. However, only a relatively small proportion still live in Setomaa (Jääts 2015, Külvik 2014). In a survey conducted in Setomaa (SVL 2006), about 1,500 of the roughly 3,500 inhabitants declared themselves as Seto.

Yet Setomaa is also known for its heritage culture development path (Annist 2013, Raagmaa et al. 2012) fostered by an institutional framework based on image-making and lobbying, which started with the initiation of the Seto Kingdom Day (*Seto Kuningriigipäev*) at the beginning of the 1990s. At a time of national and regional awakening, the annual event was founded as opportunity for Seto people from throughout the country to meet (Külvik 2014). Since then, it has gradually been developed into a touristic event displaying popular features of Seto heritage culture such as handicraft, folk costumes, local cuisine, and the traditional *Leelo* choral singing appearing on UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Every year, at the beginning of August, thousands of tourists and locals gather in Setomaa to celebrate the Kingdom and the election of its king (*ülemsootska*). This representative of the Seto people and their harvest god Peko increasingly fulfills the role of a spiritual leader and active image-maker. As the king's representational functions expand, from interviews with journalists to the reception by the Estonian President, he or she is supported by a council of predecessors (*Kroonikogo*). United by the slogan "yours authentically," the Kingdom Day is supplemented by several cultural and marketing events, such as the Leelo Day (*Leelopäev*), Pop-Up Café Day (*Kostipäev*), Finno-Ugric Capital of Culture (*Soome-Ugri kultuuripealinn*) or the cultural-touristic route (*Külavüü*). These all propagate an image of living history in Setomaa (Setomaa Turism 2012/2014, Soosaar 2012). Another central image campaign is represented by the initiative "Come to the Countryside" (*Tule Maale*) that started in Misso in 2012 as a response to the persistent population decline (Heering 2015, Taim 2015). Creating the image of a rural idyll, the initiative seeks to attract new residents and helps them to relocate (ibid.). It has subsequently been added to by the "*Tule Maale*" initiative in Värskä and the "*Noored Setomaale*" program supporting young families in starting a new life in the region.

Both of these major place-marketing campaigns were facilitated by an institutional framework that started with the (re-)foundation of two organizations

remaining of great importance today. These are the Seto Congress (*Seto Kongress*) and the Union of Rural Municipalities (*Setomaa Valdade Liit*). While the former seeks to represent Setomaa and Seto people, the latter coordinates the political and development-related activities of the region. Alongside the Development Agencies at the county level, this therefore has the potential to take the specific needs of Setomaa's four municipalities<sup>21</sup> into account. The Congress meets triennially to make decisions concerning the cultural, economic and political development of Setomaa, which are then implemented and coordinated by the Council of Elders (*Vanemate Kogu*) and the Union of Rural Municipalities. The latter consist of representatives from the municipality governments and an executive organ. An important role is played by the monthly roundtable (*tsõõriklaud*) initiated by the Union and coordinates the activities of the main actors, including the Seto Institute (*Seto Instituut*) and central umbrella organizations focusing on tourism, handicraft, the arts and theater, entrepreneurship and renewable energy. Moreover, the Union acts as major lobbying organization with close ties to the Setomaa region support group in the Estonian Parliament (*Setomaa Toetusrühm*).

As a consequence of the continuous lobbying efforts by these organizations, the region receives considerable state funding<sup>22</sup> via the Development Program (*Setomaa Arenguprogramm*) and Cultural Program (*Setomaa Riiklik Kultuuriprogramm*). Moreover, the municipalities and their inhabitants are entitled to apply for funds from the Borderlands Program of the EU LEADER Initiative (*Piiriveere Liider*) and other regional programs such as the Dispersed Settlement Program (*Hajaasustuse Program*). Whereas the funds from the latter two programs are also available to other regions, the Development and Cultural Program founded in 2006 is solely focused on Setomaa. In addition to that, the Seto Union of Rural Municipalities was able to ensure additional funds from a patron who hails from the region and agreed to support it financially and organizationally. On the one hand, he annually adds a considerable sum to the funds that leading Seto organizations are able to attract and thereby guarantees the salaries of central actors. On the other, as co-owner of a large Estonian media enterprise, he provides an exclusive communication channel, the Setomaa portal of the largest daily newspaper, *Postimees*, which operates alongside the pre-existing representations in the print and broadcast media (Iva 2010, Runnel 2002, Toe 2011, Annex 2.11).

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<sup>21</sup> For an overview of local and regional development plans, see: Annex 2.11.

<sup>22</sup> For more information on the Cultural and Leader Programs, see: Piirsalu and Kõivupuu 2013, Liping 2015

### 4.3.2. Northern Valgamaa

Located on the border to Latvia, Valgamaa comprises of three main regions: the Otepää area in the east, Valga area in the south and Tõrva area in the north. The fieldwork focused on the Tõrva region in northern Valgamaa, including the then-municipalities of Helme, Hummuli<sup>23</sup>, Põdrala and the small town of Tõrva. These were merged into the new, enlarged Tõrva municipality during an amalgamation reform in 2017 (Kond 2016: ERR). As outlined above, Valga county faces noticeable socio-economic challenges, especially in terms of outward-migration due its considerably lower employment rates and income levels than the Estonian average (CS 2016, MS 2016). It moreover suffers from a tangible invisibility. According to a study commissioned by Valga County Government, up to 36% of Estonians do not associate anything with – or even know much – about Valgamaa. If they do have a particular image in mind, then this is mainly as border region to Latvia (Annus 2011). However, the three county regions are subjected to different levels of peripheralization and have applied diverging coping strategies. While Otepää has established itself as a sport and active holiday destination known as “Estonia’s winter capital,” the Valga region focuses on cross-border cooperation that is first and foremost fostered by the Valga-Valka twin city initiative (Leetmaa et al. 2013, NSP 2012). Alongside ongoing active Estonian-Latvian INTERREG projects, it has lately received special attention due to the exploration of possibilities for cross-border trade (Liiva 2016, PM; Estlat.eu 2017). Tõrva in northern Valgamaa has chosen a path similar to Setomaa by building on the Mulgi heritage in the region, hence engaging in heritage culture. The region of Mulgimaa represents an area in southern Estonia that historically consisted of the parishes of Tarvastu, Paistu, Halliste, Karksi and Helme. Today, it is divided administratively between Viljandi county, and Valga county including Tõrva municipality.

Despite their later start along the heritage culture development path, decision-makers in Mulgimaa have established a comprehensive institutional framework, which above all includes the Mulgi County Development Chamber (*Mulgimaa Arenduskoda*) and the Mulgi Culture Institute (*Mulgi Kultuuri Instituut*). The former resembles the Local Action Group of the European Union LEADER initiative and concentrates on the socio-economic development<sup>24</sup> of Mulgimaa. It operates as an inter-county LEADER group next to the Partnership Council (*Valgamaa Partnerluskogu*) active in the eastern and southern parts of Valga county. The Mulgi Institute focuses its activities in the field of culture for example

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<sup>23</sup> For more information on the history and development of Hummuli municipality, see: Jaska 2013

<sup>24</sup> For an overview of local and regional development plans, see: Annex 2.11.

having organized the biennial Mulgi Festival (*Mulgi Pidu*) and Mulgi Conference (*Mulgi Konverents*) since the beginning of the 2000s. There are also as schools and events (re-)introducing locals and interested people to the language, culture and history of the region (Mulgimaa.ee 2017). The Institute annually appoints the Mulgi Elder (*Mulgi Vanem*) who represents Mulgimaa towards the outside. Another important representative is the previous President of Estonia, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who has actively supported the image-making events of his family's home county (ibid.). As in other sparsely-populated rural areas with acknowledged cultural heritage, the region, its organizations and inhabitants are eligible for development funds from the EU LEADER program, the Cultural Program (*Mulgimaa Kultuuriprogramm*) and the Dispersed Settlement Program (*Hajaasustuse Program*).

However, there are no political and touristic organizations focusing exclusively on Mulgimaa that are comparable to the Seto Congress, the Seto Union of Rural Municipalities, or Seto Tourism. In these fields, local decision-makers draw on the countywide organizations such as the relevant Municipality Unions (*Omavalitsuste Liit*), Viljandimaa (*Viljandimaa Arengukeskus*) or Valgamaa Development Agencies (*Valgamaa Arenguagentuur*) and Tourism Agencies (*Viljandimaa ja Valgamaa Turism*). Beyond that, both central organizations are involved in place-marketing activities, which have contributed to the consequent development of Mulgimaa as a brand employed by local enterprises, especially in regional product labelling. Popular communication channels include national and regional newspapers such as the Postimees newspapers *Valgamaalane* and *Sakala*.<sup>25</sup> Special attention is, however, given to the Mulgi-language *Üitsainus Mulgimaa* newspaper published by the Mulgi Culture Institute. Moreover, as both of the organizations actively involve political leaders, they also have close ties to the Mulgimaa Support Group in the Estonian Parliament (*Mulgimaa Toetusriühm*).

In northern Valgamaa, this focus on heritage culture does, however, not go unquestioned, as the intense debates over the name for the new united municipalities in Viljandi and Valga counties has shown (see for example: Allilender 2016, Lasting 2016a/b, Noorkõiv 2016, Rapp 2016). The reasons for that are manifold. On the one hand, as in Old Võrumaa, Setomaa and the islands in Western Estonia, Mulgi people have likewise been confronted with the image of an internal other (Laineste 2008, Rapp 2016, Mulgimaa.ee 2017). On the other, according to the latest population census in 2011, only about 2,000 people define

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<sup>25</sup> For an overview of the media landscape in Mulgi- and Valgamaa, see: Annex 2.11; Valgamaa.ee. URL: <http://www.valgamaa.ee/uldinfo/meedia/>

themselves as Mulgi (Jääts 2015). While the number of self-proclaimed speakers of the Mulgi language is considerably higher, about 10,000, they still represent only a small proportion of the current population on the territory of Mulgimaa, home to about 23,000 inhabitants (Jääts 2015, MS 2016). Moreover, in their comprehensive study on southern Estonian local languages, Eichenbaum and Korenik (2008) indicate that identification with the Mulgi heritage is particularly low in Valga county, where only 14–15% identify themselves as Mulgi.



## EMPIRICAL STUDIES

- (1) Plüschke-Altöf, B. 2016. Rural as Periphery per se? Unravelling the Discursive Node. *Sociální studia / Social Studies* 13 (2): 11-28.
- (2) Plüschke-Altöf, B. 2017. The Question of Responsibility: (De) Peripheralizing Rural Spaces in Post-Socialist Estonia. *European Spatial Research and Policy* 24 (2): (forthcoming)
- (3) Plüschke-Altöf, B. 2018a. Re-inventing Setomaa: The Challenges of Fighting Stigmatization in Peripheral Rural Areas. *Geographische Zeitschrift* (forthcoming)
- (4) Plüschke-Altöf, B. 2018b. Fighting against or Hiding Behind an Image of Peripherality. Response Strategies to Discursive Peripheralization in Rural Estonia. *Journal of Baltic Studies* (under review)

## 5.1. Rural as Periphery Per Se?



### **Rural as Periphery Per Se?<sup>1</sup> Unravelling the Discursive Node**

Bianka Plüschke-Altöf

**ABSTRACT** Despite often being used interchangeably, the dominant equation of the rural with the peripheral is not self-evident. In order to critically scrutinize the discursive node, the aim of this article is twofold. On one hand, it argues for overcoming the prevalent urban-rural divide and dominant structural approaches in sociological and geographical research by introducing discursive peripheralization as a conceptual framework, which allows the analysis of the discursive (re-)production of socio-spatial inequalities on and between different scales. On the other hand, this article explores how rural areas are constituted as peripheries within a hegemonic discourse naturalizing the ascription of development (non-)potentials. Following a critical discourse analysis approach, this will be illustrated in the case of periphery constructions in Estonian national print media.

**KEY WORDS** Discursive Peripheralization, Rural Peripheries, Critical Discourse Analysis, Estonia

The ongoing discussions on the development (non-)potentials of rural peripheries illustrate the continuous treatment of rural and peripheral as two sides of the same coin. Despite both terms often being used interchangeably or occurring together, this equation is not self-evident. Research on rural representations including the critical debates on the social construction of peripheral ruralities and peripheralities (Cloke 2003; Cloke et al. 2006; Copus 2001; Halfacree 2007; Paasi 1995), followed by a series of empirical studies (Balogh 2015; Burdack et al. 2015; Miggelbrink and Meyer 2015; Timár and Velkey 2016; Plüschke 2015; Pospěch 2014; Steinführer 2015, and others), have scrutinized the rural and called its predominant association with the peripheral into

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<sup>1</sup> Sociální studia / Social Studies 2/2016. Pp. 11–28. ISSN 1214-813X.

question. As the cultural turn in social sciences revealed, such ascriptions are neither innocent nor neutral (Lefebvre 1974; Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013). On the contrary, by manifesting a hierarchical dichotomy of urban centres and rural peripheries, the equation is consequential. Guiding our thinking of and acting in space, it can impede future development perspectives (Beetz 2008) – a dynamic that has been well illustrated in the case of residential decision-making (Kährrik et al. 2012; Ley in Cloke 2003).

By attempting to unravel the discursive node, the focus of this article is to deconstruct the underlying binary. Hence, the question of central concern is how these two discourses meet. In order to address this, I will first argue for overcoming the urban-rural divide inherent in geographical and sociological research by introducing discursive peripheralization as a conceptual framework, which allows for the analysis of socio-spatial inequalities and their emergence on and between different scales. With its focus on the discursive dimension, the concept also offers an alternative to dominant structuralist approaches (Lang 2013).

Subsequently, it will be explored how rural areas are not only represented, but also constituted as peripheries within a hegemonic discourse that naturalizes the ascription of development (non-)potentials. Following a critical discourse analysis approach and applying quantitative as well as qualitative content analysis, this will be illustrated on the example of periphery constructions in opinion columns in the Estonian national print media.

### **Overcoming the Urban-Rural Divide: The Concept of Discursive Peripheralization**

When analyzing how rural areas become associated with peripheries, a constructivist take focusing on representations of rurality seems promising at first, as it goes beyond dominant structuralist approaches which take the urban-rural dichotomy for granted. But it also quickly reveals its limitations by being embedded in an urban-rural divide prevailing in sociological and geographical research, which reinforces the same binary under study. Bourdieu (1991) and Gregory (1994) have pointed out the crucial influence such categorizations have on our imagination of society and space. Moreover, based on post-colonialist and feminist studies, as well as recent debates on positionality (Koobak and Marling 2014; Suchland 2011; Stenning and Hörschelmann 2008; Tlostanova 2012), Blondel (forthcoming) calls for critically scrutinizing our theoretical frameworks and methods of inquiry so as to avoid the reproduction of hegemonic divisions

in space. Following this line of argumentation all the way through also means crossing the established boundaries of the disciplines.

For bridging this prevalent divide, the concept of peripheralization introduced by Keim (2006) seems particularly promising. With its emphasis on socio-spatial polarization, it moves away from fixed categories and allows us to analyze the emergence of inequalities independent of scales and types of space (Fischer-Tahir and Naumann 2013; Lang et al. 2015). The geographical notion of peripheries as being “situated on the fringe” and “determined by their distance to a centre” (Kühn 2015: 2) already implies a relational and hierarchical understanding of spatial divisions that does not necessarily have to be confined to an urban-rural divide. Going beyond that, by combining theories of economic polarization, social inequality and political power, peripheralization shifts the focus to the multi-dimensional and multi-scalar processes by which this relational hierarchy evolves and the types of space it is applied to (Kühn 2015; Lang et al. 2015). Hence, it urges us to question the widespread linking of peripheries with rural areas and the dynamics producing this link in practice (Fischer-Tahir and Naumann 2013; Keim 2006; Lang et al. 2015; Leibert 2013; Kay et al. 2012; Naumann and Reichert-Schick 2013). Moreover, by focusing on common mechanisms of marginalization, this perspective also opens up room for making urban concepts as territorial stigmatization fruitful for rural sociology (Benedek and Moldovan 2015).

In opposition to Kühn (2015), who excluded the communicative dimension from his analysis, the article seeks to reemphasize the discursive level. What is more, it conceptualizes discourses as inherent parts of peripheralization due to their mutually reinforcing links with practices and materialities (Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013). Following a Foucauldian understanding, they are not seen as representative for, but rather as constitutive of socio-spatial processes. Discourses are at the same time embedded in and co-constitutive of societal power relations. On one hand, they institutionalize widely recognized interpretations of social reality, thereby defining and limiting what can legitimately be expressed about certain topics (Jäger 1999; Schwab-Trapp 2006). On the other hand, access to resources and positions of power determines who has the right to speak and be heard in the discourse, hence, whose constructions become temporarily fixed through hegemony and manifested in symbols, categories and institutional practices (Bourdieu 1991; Jäger 2008; Paasi 2010; Spivak 1988). Despite being enwrapped in power relations, discourses can be understood as structuration processes that are always in becoming and therefore never complete or all-encompassing (Pred 1984). This means that while disabling certain forms

of agency, they also enable others. Consequently, not only central but also peripheral actors potentially have the agency to speak in discourses, although to a different extent. This also implies the possibility of counteracting hegemonic with alternative discourses.

Due to the mutual relation of discourses and power, a consequent discourse analytical approach needs to go beyond the representational level and focus on the performativity of knowledge production (Jäger 1999), hence, in this case on the question how the peripheral is discursively linked to the rural and subordinated to the urban, by whom and with what consequences? The emphasis on the socio-historical conditions of textual production also assists in combating what Timár and Velkey (2016: 321), relying on Woods (2010), term the “dematerializing effect of the cultural turn”. By analyzing the discursive structure, as well as the discursive field and its interpreting coalition, this approach deconstructs strategies of knowledge universalization as well as the conditions leading to its acceptance or rejection (Bourdieu 1991; Schwab-Trapp 2006).

Through the reemphasis on the so-called communicative dimension, I have proposed discursive peripheralization as a concept for analyzing the widespread link between the rural and the peripheral. By shifting the focus to the emergence of hierarchical categorizations embodied in space, this concept helps to overcome the urban-rural divide prevalent in sociological and geographical research. As a processual approach, it stresses the social constructivist nature of socio-spatial divisions, which are not only materially but also discursively (un-)made. Moreover, taking the discursive dimension seriously, it goes beyond the representational aspects and focuses on the way discourses are embedded in and constitutive of social reality. Discursive peripheralization therefore follows a relational, multi-dimensional and multi-scalar conception of socio-spatial polarization and accentuates the performativity of discourses, which are seen as an inherent part of peripheralization processes.

### **More than Just Representations: A Critical Discourse Analysis Approach**

The making of rural peripheries is explored using the critical discourse analysis approach developed by Jäger (1999) who bases his work on Foucault (1999) and Link (1982). Concerning the discursive structure, the focus lies on scrutinizing discursive nodes and strategies in order to understand what can legitimately be expressed about peripheries. Whereas the basic units of analysis are statements (*discursive fragments*) derived from print media articles, the analysis itself points beyond these individual texts (Foucault 1999). These statements are scrutinized

for common patterns with special focus on the depiction of peripheries and the topics and stories associated with them. Thereby, fragments referring to the same subject are identified and bundled into main discursive threads. The entanglements between these threads resemble discursive nodes that link different discourses with one another creating a discursive effect by which particular interpretations of social reality (*truth claims*) are constituted as universalized knowledge (Jäger 1999).

The universalization of truth claims is further fostered by discursive strategies, which can be separated into those regulating participation in the discourse and those drawing limits to the content and ways of legitimate expression (Foucault 1999; Schwab-Trapp 2006). The regulation of authorized languages and speakers guarded by discourse societies is a central strategy of exclusion from the discourse as it determines who has the right to speak, when, where and how (Bourdieu 1999; Foucault 1999). Within the discourse, legitimization strategies play a crucial role for hegemonizing truth claims. Common tactics are to depict particular interpretations of social reality as the only alternative or to relativize the risks involved in it (Jäger 1999; Schwab-Trapp 2006). This strategy goes hand in hand with strategies to silence or delegitimize alternative voices by either neutralizing their objections, denying the relevance of their claims or excluding them from the discourse altogether (Jäger 1999; Schwab-Trapp 2006). However, the stabilization of knowledge through the so-called repetition effect figures most prominently (Foucault 1999). Therefore, a frequency analysis of repeated statements and discursive links takes a prominent place in the analytical framework.

Concerning the discursive field, the contextualization of the discourse and the identification of interpreting coalitions are central. Schwab-Trapp (2006), relying on Bourdieu (1991), characterizes discursive fields as public arenas for competing truth claims. Showing a specific spatiality and temporality, they define the prevalent instruments of and access to power, as well as the rules of engagement that discourse participants must follow to successfully make their claims heard. Hence, the regulation of participation in the discourse and the value of individual contributions are field-specific, including the field of journalism, which is of primary interest here (Jäger 1999; Schwab-Trapp 2006). In practice, the rules are enforced by so-called “discourse societies” (Foucault 1999). While institutionalized entities, for example publishers or editors, control the access to and distribution of discourses, communities supporting a specific truth claim regulate discourses internally by defining the rules for expression (Schwab-Trapp 2006). Bürk et al. (2012: 339) call the latter an “interpreting coalition”

that plays a key role in disseminating discourse positions, defined as ideological standpoints guiding the contribution to and evaluation of discourse formations (Jäger 1999). Coalitions develop discursive strategies and nodes, which become naturalized by other authors who regularly refer to them as authorities when either showing consensus or a deviating discourse position.

### **(Un-)Making Rural Peripheries: Deconstruction of a Public Discourse**

The conceptual and analytical framework is illustrated in the case of public discourses on the “periphery” in Estonia. Due to their ongoing material deprivation and territorial stigmatization, rural areas in post-Soviet space are generally confronted with an overlapping discursive peripheralization by being displayed on the downside of the centre-periphery, urban-rural and west-east divide (Kay et al. 2012). On one hand, rural areas and their inhabitants in Estonia similarly face a particularly negative image as peripheral, passive, marginalized and somehow different (Annist 2011; Nugin 2014; Trell et al. 2012). As shown in former studies, in the Central and Eastern European context this othering process on a normative development scale is a multi-scalar one, affecting the national, regional and local levels alike (Annist 2011; Koobak and Marling 2014; Suchland 2011; Timár and Velkey 2016; Tlostanova 2012). On the other hand, this negative discourse is met with romanticizing notions of the rural as a traditional and wholesome way of life that figure prominently in Estonian identity discourse (Nugin 2014; Plüschke-Altöf 2015). This concurrence of images of decline and rural idyll has also been ascertained in other cases (Juska 2007; Pospěch 2014; Shucksmith et al. 2009).

Until now, with few exceptions (Annist 2011; Kährrik et al. 2012; Nugin 2014; Pfoser 2014; Sooväli 2004; Trell et al. 2012; Virkkunen 2002), spatial discourses have rarely been researched in the Estonian case. As such discourses are co-constitutive of socio-spatial polarization and the politics involved in it, a closer look at how the discursive link between rural and peripheral is established, by whom and with what consequences, seems crucial. This is what this article aims to do through the exploration of freely available online articles in the Estonian daily *Eesti Päevaleht* and the weekly newspaper *Maaleht*, which were chosen due to their specific discourse positions. Whereas the focus of the latter is explicitly on rural issues, the former rather concentrates on the concerns and perspectives of urban readers. Both are among the newspapers with the widest circulation and the most frequently visited websites (Balčytienė and Harro-Loit 2009; EALL 2016; Eurotopics 2016). Since the continuous expansion of internet access, the

online versions have become ever more important. Due to their widespread readership, high degree of interactivity and considerable overlap with the printed version, Balčytienė and Harro-Loit (2009) identify them as national discussion forums or, following the conceptual framework above, as a public arena for competing truth claims. Using the keywords *äärema\** and *perifeer\** (roots of the word *periphery* in Estonian) in the time period between January 2011 and December 2015, altogether 126 online articles were retrieved from the opinion columns (*arvamus*) of both papers and subsequently subjected to analysis.

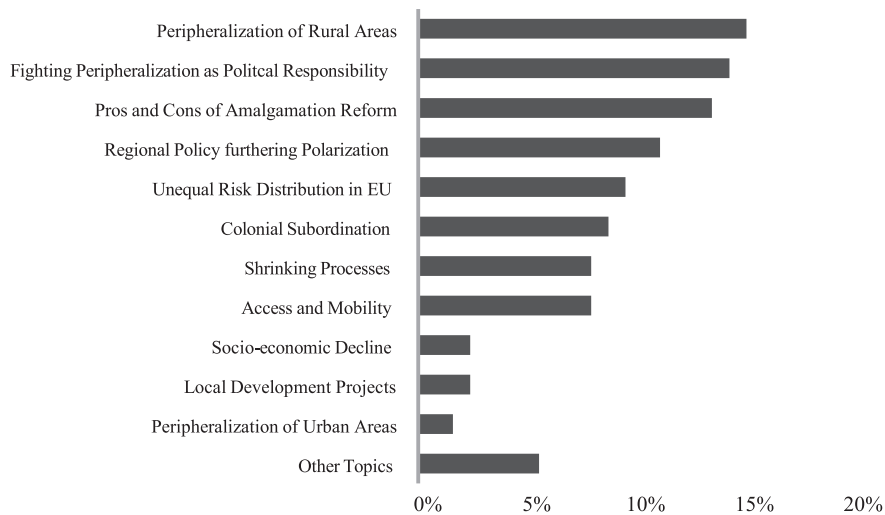
### **Reproducing Rural Peripheries: A Hegemonic Discourse**

On the basis of these articles, an initial frequency analysis of topics and places associated with the term “periphery” was conducted in order to understand how rural areas and peripheries are discursively linked. The exploration of discursive threads (Figure 1), hence fragments referring to the same subject, reveals core-periphery relations as a crosscutting theme that mirrors current political issues. Among them were the municipal (2013) and parliamentary elections (2015) as well as the global financial and European debt crisis, but also the military conflict in Crimea.

The threads also illustrate the multi-scalar, multi-dimensional and processual nature of peripheralization. On the European and international scale, peripheries were mainly discussed in the light of an unequal distribution of burdens and risks in the European Union as well as with regard to subordination or dependence (together 18.5 %), foremost in the case of Estonia as formerly colonized by Russia and currently dependent on the European Union. On a national and regional scale, the initiation of local development projects as a coping strategy was debated (2.5 %), but also different aspects of peripheralization, including limited access and mobility, demographic shrinkage and socio-economic decline (together 18 %). These translate into a spatial polarization that appears to be most pronounced between urban and rural areas, as the outstanding role of rural peripheralization illustrates, which resembles the main topic of around 15 % of the 126 articles. In contrast, peripheralization in the urban context was discussed to a much lesser extent (1.5 %).

These discussions occur against the backdrop of rising socio-spatial inequalities that take the form of rapid sub-/urbanization while, simultaneously, peripheralization processes in small towns and on the countryside deepen (Juska 2007; Lang et al. 2015; Leetmaa et al. 2015; Smith and Timár 2010; Statistics Estonia 2009/2015). The reasons for this development are often seen in the transformation process





**Figure 1:** Discursive threads

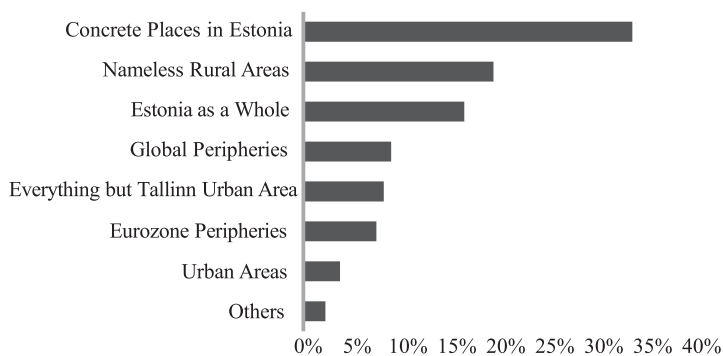
Source: Illustration based on the author’s calculations of topics associated with peripheries in Eesti Päevaleht and Maaleht (2011-2015), n=126 online print media articles

since regaining independence in 1991, which focused on rapid market-economy reforms and was accompanied by a deep “distrust in everything created by the old regime” (Nugin 2014: 59). Built on a neoliberal development paradigm and success-oriented transition culture, Estonian policy has ever since promoted market liberalism free of state intervention (Lauristin and Vihalemm 2009; Madariaga 2010). At the European Union level, this was supported by a general turn towards regional competitive-ness and economic growth (Bristow 2005).

In consequence, rural areas were subjected to multiple changes. The desire to break with existing institutional structures lead to the dissolution and privatization of collective farms (*kolkhozes*) in order to restore the single-farm production scheme of the interwar period, which soon proved to be uncompetitive and was therefore substituted by large-scale farming (Nugin 2014). But it also resulted in a devaluation of egalitarian norms dismissed as socialist in nature and replaced by individualism and consumerism (Juska 2007). Due to this restructuring and a general post-productivist trend, the population share involved in agriculture dropped rapidly. While this also offered new opportunities for a diversification of income opportunities in the countryside, it initially caused increasing poverty rates and a downward spiral of rural peripheralization. Therefore, the question to what extent the Estonian government(s) can and should be held responsible for causing peripheralization (11 %) and dealing with it (14 %) was a topic of intense discussion.

As rural inhabitants have consequently been compelled to relocate or commute to urban areas in order to alleviate poverty risks, there has been a continuous demographic shrinkage. As a result, rural municipalities and small towns have been under immense financial and political pressure (Leetmaa et al. 2015), leading to a debate on their capacity and the call for an administrative reform that redefines the municipal borders established at the beginning of Estonian re-independence. This debate is mirrored in 13.5 % of the articles, which focus on the pros and cons of an administrative reform.

An urban-rural divide in core-periphery relations is also supported when scrutinizing where peripheries are discursively located by the authors (Figure 2). Which concrete places do they mention or report about when discussing peripheries and peripheralization?



**Figure 2:** Discursive localization of peripheries

Source: Illustration based on the author’s calculations of places associated with peripheries in Eesti Päevaleht and Maaleht (2011-2015), n=126 online print media articles

Altogether, rural areas appear in three different ways. Firstly, via placing peripheries in concrete places in Estonia (34 %) that are to a large extent rural. Secondly, by locating them in “nameless” rural areas that are not further specified (19 %). In contrast, reports on urban peripheries only account for about 4 % of the cases, but these are clearly named. Thirdly, by declaring everything a periphery that is not part of the centre, which in most cases means the capital city Tallinn, its suburbs and the surrounding Harjumaa County (8 %). Even if the rest also includes other cities and small towns, this opposition mainly draws on an urban-rural hierarchy. Most of the cases placing peripheries in nameless rural areas and in opposition to the Tallinn urban area occur in *Eesti Päevaleht*, whereas the rural weekly *Maaleht* rather focuses on concrete places. The localization of peripheries in the European (specifically the Eurozone) and international contexts accounts

for 16.5 % of the articles. Estonia as a whole is most prominently discussed as a periphery of the European Union, in world politics or the global market (16 %), reflecting its multiple dependencies on the one hand and processes of self-colonization on the other hand (Tlostanova 2012).

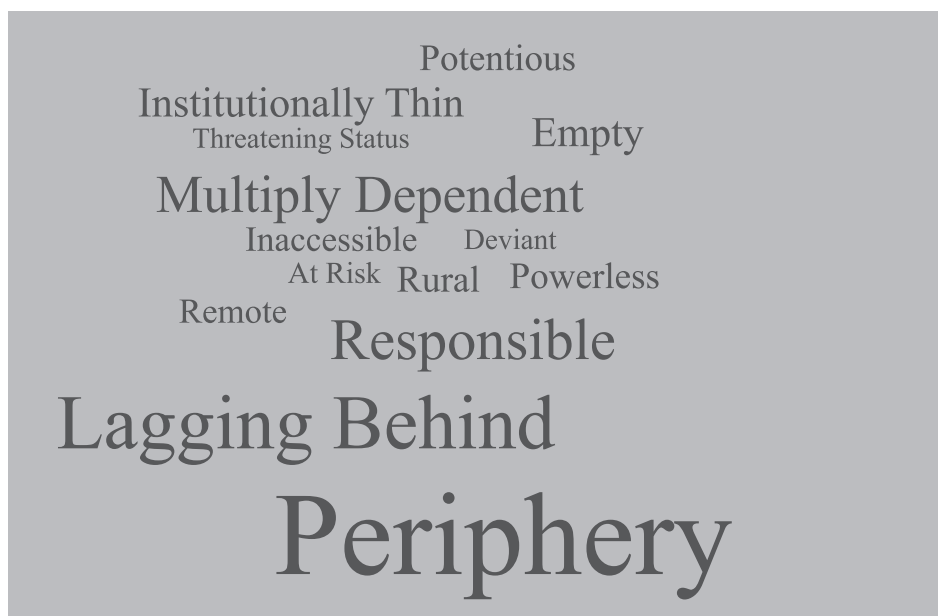
Due to this repetition effect, a strong association of the peripheral with the rural is manifested. While giving a first overview of the association of the peripheral with the rural, a solely quantitative approach also has its limits as it cannot show how the link is discursively produced and what the notion of periphery exactly entails. Therefore, a qualitative content analysis was added, focusing on discursive nodes evolving from these threads and on the strategies connecting both of them. In the discourse under scrutiny, the term “periphery” functions as a floating signifier that tends to absorb different meanings projected on it and is therefore susceptible to political use (Laclau 1996). Depending on the discourse position of the authors, representing either the hegemonic or counter-discourses, peripheries and their specific features are interpreted in a different light, which will be illustrated with the help of Figure 3.

As the word cloud demonstrates, the hegemonic discourse presents peripheries above all (25.5 %) as places that are lagging behind (*mahajäänud*). In a story of decline (*kahanemine*), the difficult socio-economic situation characterized by missing employment opportunities (*töökohtade puudumine*), decreasing wages (*langevad palgad*) of the working poor and increasing impoverishment (*rahva vaesumine*) is seen as the cause of massive losses (*suured kaotused*) of population, leaving peripheries empty (10 %) or deserted (*inimtühi*). Moreover, peripheries are depicted as institutionally thin (6 %) in a narrative of incapacity that first of all reduces the role of local governments to a question of the administrative capacity to provide public services as well as technical and social infrastructure. This is then accompanied by reports on incidents of incapacity, for example in financing specialists or providing adequate service quality.

Both notions of peripheries appear to favour the urban while constituting the rural as periphery per se. This shows up not only in the noticeable number of cases that directly equate peripheral with rural (4.5 %), but also in the discursive nodes tying the socio-economic and political understanding of peripheries to the geographical. Particularly, vanishing economic performance as well as demographic shrinkage are related to notions of peripheries as distant, remote (*kauge*, 4 %) and inaccessible (*kättesaamatu*, 3 %). This link between economic and geographical indicators of peripherality was also identified by Bristow (2005/2010) and Shearmur (2012) as a strategy of objectifying development and innovation deficits, thereby reinforcing an opposition of prosperous and

strong urban centres versus poor and weak rural peripheries. Compiled into indexes and rankings, these are also used to find out “who is winning” (Bristow 2005: 286) or which are Estonia’s “successful” (Statistics Estonia 2009) and “strong municipalities” (Kaukvere 2014). But also the narrative of incapacity is linked to geographical notions of smallness and low population density that are characteristic of rural areas. The missing revenue base (*tulubaas*) of municipalities resulting from the low population density is then used to explain this lack of capacity. Both of these nodes tend to culminate in the arguments of amalgamation reform proponents, in which economic effectiveness and political capacity are combined to legitimize further centralization as a way of fighting peripheralization. Tied by a discursive node, this interpretation of geographical peripheries as lagging behind and politically incapable creates a discursive effect by which the spatially biased understanding of development becomes universalized.

Another important discursive node revolves around the question of responsibility for the causes and ways of dealing with peripheralization (18 %).



**Figure 3:** Discursive nodes

Source: Illustration via *worditout.com* based on the author’s calculations of features associated with peripheries in Eesti Päevaleht and Maaleht (2011-2015): Lagging Behind (25.5 %), Responsible (18 %), Multiply Dependent (15.5 %), Empty (10 %), Institutionally Thin (6 %), Rural (4.5 %), Powerless (4 %), Remote (4 %), Potentious (4 %), Inaccessible (3 %), Deviant (2 %), Threatening Status (2 %), At Risk (1.5 %), n=126 online print media articles

Peripheralization is depicted as a process which can be deepened or reversed by those in charge. Who those in charge are or where they could be sought, at European Union, national or local levels, depends on the discourse position. Some authors shift the responsibility for the causes of peripheralization to the inhabitants themselves by portraying them as resistant to development, narrow-minded and socially pathological. Whereas the depiction of social pathologies, such as crime and alcoholism, occurs mainly in relation to urban peripheries, narrow-mindedness is attributed to Estonia as a whole. In contrast, resistance to development is presented as a rather rural issue. As indicated in studies on territorial stigmatization (Bürk et al. 2012; Wacquant et al. 2014), this depiction of peripheral inhabitants as deviant (2 %) is used to enforce one's own development path by presenting peripheralization as result of the continuation of such deviant behaviour. Authors, for example, warn of locked-in situations (*muidu keerame lukku*) or the neutralization of fast development opportunities (*kiire arengu võimalused neutraliseerima*). In comparison to the debate on the so-called second Estonia (*teine Eesti*) as “loser” of the transformation period, which emerged at the beginning of the 2000s (Lauristin and Vihalemm 2009), stigmatization strategies depicting residential pathologies account for only a minority of cases in the period of analysis (2011–2015). This focus shift from residential stigmatization to regional development capacities in the course of (post-) EU accession has also been confirmed in other cases (Juska 2007).

### **De-peripheralizing Ruralities: Alternative Discourses and Counter Strategies**

It is around this question of responsibility and the depiction of peripheries as lagging behind that the two different counter-discourses evolve. As the work of Meyer and Miggelbrink (2013) shows, peripheries are constructed not only by the centres, but also by people facing moments of peripheralization. By actively relating to hegemonic discourses and value-laden ascriptions, actors negotiate the meaning of and their own position in the centre-periphery hierarchy. Accordingly, discursive attempts to de-peripheralize rural areas draw on the discursive nodes established in the hegemonic discourse.

Based on the equation of the peripheral with the rural, the first counter-discourse or reversal strategy relies on the two contradictory constructions of rurality, which Shucksmith et al. (2009: 1277) term “modernist” and “pre-modernist” narratives. Whereas the former associates rural with “backwardness”, emphasizing the lag in progress and development in comparison to urban areas, the latter creates a rural idyll (Halfacree 2006) and builds on the notion

of strategic essentialism (Jacobs 1996). These dichotomous constructions of rurality are also present in the Estonian media discourse, but the latter tends to be strategically employed in order to flip the urban–rural hierarchy on its head. Therefore, on one hand, romanticized images of the rural are attached to places labelled as peripheries by referring to the national identity construction of Estonians as country people (*maarahvas*), emphasizing the role of rural areas for the authentic preservation of folk culture (*pärimuskultuur*) and highlighting their peace and quiet (*rahu ja vaikus*). This is then opposed to cities negatively stereotyped as hostile living environments, from which people flee as from a horrible accident (*nagu põgeneks hirmsa õnnetuse eest*). On the other hand, stories of active coping efforts are employed to avert the blame for ongoing peripheralization processes that has been shifted to peripheral inhabitants by portraying them as passive and development-resistant. Here, local residents are described as hard-working and courageous – a tendency that has already been observed in previous studies (Nugin 2014).

However, the reversal strategy is deeply embedded in the hegemonic discourse, hence enforces the norm rather than resists it (Bürk et al. 2012). Nugin (2014) and Kay et al. (2012: 58) point out that the construction of national identity through rural idyll and “romanticized folk cultures“ already played an important role in discursively resisting Soviet industrialization and urbanization attempts and continues to be employed against centralization policies today. But the resulting debate on peripheral potentials (4 %), which usually focuses on place-marketing and tourism as soft development factors, also builds on this established rural idyll in order to discuss its possible means of commodification. Fischer-Tahir and Naumann (2013) therefore argue that the latter is deeply embedded in the logic of competitiveness, separating winners from losers, whereby the winners are those who best adjust to neoliberal norms. It also tends to focus on satisfying an urban gaze on rural areas (Kobayashi and Westlund 2013). Moreover, coping efforts are commonly presented as neoliberal success stories (*edulugu*) that come into being by encouraging entrepreneurship and growth, and are then statistically objectified via rankings and league tables.

In contrast, the second counter-discourse critically scrutinizes the underlying norms that the centre-periphery hierarchy relies on. By describing them as threatening status (2 %), the authors shift the focus from peripheries as lagging behind (*mahajäänud*) to places being deliberately left behind (*mahajäetud*). Hence, they seek to replace the story of decline by a story of loss ever since the beginning of transformation, which saw the downgrading of collective farms and mono-functional settlements (*monoasulad*) as former centres to today’s peripheries. By asking “what kind of development and for whom” (Pike et al.

2007: 1253), this norm-rejection strategy questions the objectives of Estonian regional policy, which is presented as focusing solely on efficiency (*tõhusus*) and cost-savings (*kokkuhoid*). The project-based regional policy is furthermore criticized by equating its outcomes with unnecessary investments made during the era of Soviet regional planning. In the same vein, amalgamation reform opponents often compare municipality mergers to Soviet centralization policy that drew lines on a map with a ruler (*maakaardile joonlauaga jooni vedama*). Hence, reference to the domination by “the Soviet other” (Kay et al. 2012: 57) is strategically employed against current regional policy trends.

A critical stance towards Estonia’s regional policy also plays a pivotal role in discourses countering the depiction of peripheries as institutionally thin. Here, the story of incapacity is confronted with a story of political neglect and powerlessness (4 %), hence, the inability to be capable. The reduction of the role of local governments to a question of service provision is opposed by reemphasizing their democratic counterweight function in a centralized state. It is argued that they are more transparent (*läbipaistvam*) and actively fight the risk of a disenchantment with democracy on the part of peripheral inhabitants, whose powerlessness is vividly compared to being run over with a steamroller (*sõidetaks teerulliga üle*). Both the story of loss and the story of neglect resemble instances of trying to shift the responsibility for the causes and ways of dealing with peripheralization back to the centre. Whereas both newspapers offer room for counter-discourses, the demand that the national government assumes responsibility is especially pronounced in the rural weekly *Maaleht*.

In the same vein, the reference to the multilevel dependence (*sõltuvus*) of peripheries (15.5 %) takes the stories of loss and lack of capability to a European and international level by referring to the unequal risk distribution in the European Union and colonial subordination. The authors criticize various dimensions of political, economic, cultural and psychological dependence, pointing to a “global coloniality” (Tlostanova 2012: 130) that has also been discussed in prior studies (Annist 2011; Koobak and Marling 2014; Suchland 2011). Moreover, the reference to overarching global and regional dependence is also employed to counteract the political neglect of peripheries and initiate a change in regional policy. In one line of argument, demographic shrinkage is, for example, attributed to a failure of regional policy and then linked to issues of national defence. Creating a doom scenario, peripheries are thereby presented as being at military risk (1.5 %), which against the backdrop of Estonia’s colonial history could also pose a national security threat. By asking how national defence should be organized if the number of men capable of carrying a gun is declining in peripheral municipalities (*kui püssi*

*kanda jaksavate meeste hulk ääremaalistes valdades kahaneb*), the protection of peripheries is connected to the protection of the nation as a whole.

In summary, the equation of the peripheral with the rural holds true for the Estonian case. This becomes apparent in the main discursive thread “rural peripheralization” and the discursive placement of peripheries in rural areas. But there is also a remarkable resemblance in the structure of peripheralization and rurality discourses as exemplified by the analysis of discursive nodes. Filling the term “periphery” with a meaning of rural places that are lagging behind, institutionally thin, empty, remote, and inaccessible, turns the established equation into a rural subordination. As discourses are consequential, this means that the perceived features of peripheries in general get shifted to rural areas in particular. Through the portrayal of peripheral inhabitants as deviant, some authors link this subordination to the question of responsibility and shift the blame for socio-economic problems to the residents themselves. The counter-discourses revolve around these discursive nodes by reversing the established urban-rural hierarchy and by rejecting dominant neoliberal norms in order to shift the question of responsibility back to the centre.

### **Intellectual, Central, Male: The Interpreting Coalition**

When looking at the advocates of these different positions, it becomes clear that even if the freedom of press in Estonia is considered particularly high (Freedom House 2016), which implies a rather non-discriminatory access to the public arena, the discourse is dominated by an interpreting elite. This elite consists mainly of journalists (33 %), politicians (20 %), academics (18 %) and artists (10 %). Less often, the articles are authored by readers, representatives of interest groups, entrepreneurs or consultants (together 19 %). Moreover, there is a noteworthy gender gap as only about 10% of the contributions can be attributed to female authors – a trend that has been observed for the opinion columns in Estonian newspapers in general (Eurotopics 2015). While the authors were categorized according to the institutional affiliation ascribed to them in the articles, a common overlap of positions occupied by members of the Estonian elite should be mentioned. The authors often assume important roles in several fields, hence, are not only participating in public discourse but also actively engaging in the politics and economics revolving around it.

The majority of contributors represent newspaper publishers, state bodies, research and cultural institutions, as well as consultancies and for-profit organizations located in the capital city of Tallinn and the university city of Tartu.



Only a minority, mainly consisting of readers, rural interest group representatives and municipality leaders, is located in areas labelled as peripheries. They are the main proponents of the stories of economic loss and political incapacity as well as the rural idyll. In contrast, advocates of the hegemonic discourse can be found more among the central elite. Objectification of development (non-)potentials and discussions on commodification opportunities can be found at both ends of the spectrum, indicating a deep embeddedness in the neoliberal system.

In accordance with Bürk et al. (2012) it can be concluded that while the Estonian discourse on peripheries is distributed to a wide audience, it is regulated by a small elite that also has the potential to influence the practices and materialities of peripheralization. Despite the dominance of actors from the centre, local politicians and inhabitants also participate in the discourse, but to a lesser extent.

### **Tying and Unravelling the Discursive Node: Competing Truth Claims**

Building on the concept of discursive peripheralization and based on critical discourse analysis, this article has scrutinized the discursive link between the rural and the peripheral. By deconstructing current discourses on peripheries in the Estonian daily newspaper *Eesti Päevaleht* and the rural weekly *Maaleht*, it has shown how the peripheral is equated with the rural through the discourse on peripheralization in general and rural peripheralization in particular. This link is further strengthened by placing peripheries in concrete and nameless rural areas or by the opposition of the Tallinn urban region to the rest of Estonia. Through the repetition effect, the association of the peripheral with the rural creates a discursive effect by which the ascribed features of peripheries as lagging behind, institutionally thin, remote, inaccessible, multiply dependent and deviant are transferred to rural areas in general. Stories of peripheral decline and incapacity combined with objectification of development deficits and, to a lesser extent, stigmatization strategies universalize this particular interpretation of peripheries and are also employed to legitimize a certain development path as the only viable alternative.

Referring to these established discursive nodes, counter-discourses oppose stories of decline and incapacity with stories of loss since the beginning of transformation as well as political neglect and powerlessness. Also, reversal strategies rely on this established urban-rural hierarchy when they try to turn it on its head by attaching positive images to peripheries via the creation of a rural idyll and the reference to national identity constructions. Moreover, by

pointing out the parallels between Soviet regional planning as the policy of a former colonizer and current regional policy embedded in overarching global and regional dependencies, peripheries are presented as being at risk and their fate is connected to the fate of the Estonian state as a whole. This leaves the government with no alternative but to fight peripheralization. Altogether, the analysis of discursive nodes and strategies reveals a remarkable similarity between peripheralization and rurality discourses, hence indicating the deep-rootedness of the equation of the rural with the peripheral.

By deconstructing these different discourse positions, this article has shown opposing attempts to tie and unravel a discursive node that links peripheries with rural areas. As these discourses take place against the same backdrop, they can be interpreted as competing processes of knowledge production that do not only represent, but also constitute social reality and attempt to universalize particular truth claims. This reassures the importance of contextualizing the circumstances under which discourses become performative. By following Meyer and Miggelbrink (2013) in re-shifting the focus to discursive agency, the analysis has included an identification of the interpreting coalition of core-periphery relations in Estonian media discourse. In order to not only understand how this discursive node is tied, but also how it shows consequences in practice, an analysis of the power structures constituting discursive fields could be a fruitful attempt for future studies. Therefore discursive peripheralization has been introduced as a conceptual framework that allows us to analyze the (re-)production of centres and peripheries, or in this case, the urban and the rural.

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## 5.2. The Question of Responsibility

### **The Question of Responsibility: (De-)Peripheralizing Rural Spaces in Post-Socialist Estonia**

Bianka Plüschke-Altöf<sup>2</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** Recent studies on socio-spatial polarization and post-socialist spaces increasingly propose the use of postcolonial theory. Following this proposal, the paper attempts to make the decolonial approach fruitful for studying the crucial role that discourses play for rural peripheralization processes in post-socialist Estonia. It shows that the Estonian discourses on peripheries manifest in a struggle between neoliberalism and interventionism as two competing regional development models that promote either self- or state responsibility for dealing with peripheralization. Despite their differences, both models build on the same notion of modernity, as the colonial history associated with socialist modernity renders alternative models obsolete.

**KEY WORDS:** Rural Area, Peripheralisation, Spatial Discourses, Postcolonialism, Estonia

### **Introduction**

Due to their simultaneous material deprivation and territorial stigmatization, rural areas in post-socialist space are often treated as peripheries per se (Kay *et al.*, 2012). As such a spatial hierarchy does not simply exist, but is actively made, the question arises how, by whom and with what consequences? To better understand the making of peripheries, the research on socio-spatial polarization and post-socialist spaces increasingly proposes the use of postcolonial theory, which opens the scope of analysis to the formation of core-periphery relations on multiple scales (PoSCoPP 2015; Stenning and Hörschelmann, 2008). Following this proposal, the paper argues for a decolonial approach as useful heuristic

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tool to examine the crucial role of discourses in peripheralization processes. While the research on socio-spatial ascriptions (Bürk *et al.*, 2012; Meyer and Miggelbrink, 2013; Wacquant *et al.*, 2014) already establishes that peripheries are materially and discursively (re-)produced, the paper goes one step further by attempting to show that decolonial studies help to analyze *how* peripheralization discourses become performative. Based on a critical evaluation of knowledge production mechanisms, they convey that the depiction of peripheries as places lagging behind stems from normative development notions proliferated in hegemonic discourses (Koobak and Marling, 2014). Adopting this Foucauldian understanding of discourses as form of knowledge production, the paper therefore applies decolonial approaches to critically scrutinize the development models that underlie rural (de-)peripheralization discourses in post-socialist Estonia.

However, due to the long-lasting ‘mutual silence’ (Moore, 2006, p. 17) between postcolonial and post-socialist studies, this endeavor poses several challenges, which the first section tries to meet by developing a common conceptual framework. This is followed by a twofold analysis of the discursive formation (Jäger, 1999) and discursive field (Schwab-Trapp, 2006) that constitute the debates of opinion leaders on places denoted as peripheries in Estonian national print media. It shows that the discourses evolving around rural peripheries manifest in a struggle between neoliberalism and interventionism as competing regional development models. As result of the analysis, the paper concludes that despite their differences, both models build on the same notion of modernity as the colonial history associated with socialist modernity leaves discourse participants with no other option than to embrace capitalism, which is questioned but never fully rejected.

### **Overcoming the Mutual Silence: Decolonial Conceptual Framework**

By attempting to make post-colonialism fruitful for studying (de)peripheralization discourses in post-socialist Estonia, the paper follows conceptual debates that aim to intersect postcolonial and post-socialist approaches (Koobak and Marling, 2014; Suchland, 2011; Stenning and Hörschelmann, 2008; Tlostanova, 2012). Post-socialist space is used here to denote Central-Eastern European (CEE) countries in the former Soviet sphere of influence. Thereby, it is preferred to the Cold War term Second World that reflects a modernization narrative, which is essentially questioned in postcolonial approaches, and to the term post-

communist as to underline that ‘communism was never fully achieved’ (Koobak and Marling, 2014, p. 340).

Hitherto, the specific contextuality of both approaches acted as major obstacle for exploring potential intersections. Postcolonial theory is based on a Three-World modernization paradigm that was turned on its head to scrutinize the global dependencies evolving from it (Annist, 2011). As a result, it was deeply rooted in a standard North-South colonization theorized as embedded in orientalism of a superior colonizer towards an allegedly inferior colonized (Said, 1995). Due to this normative standard-setting, postcolonial theory essentially focused on the Global South. This did not only lead to an exclusion of more marginalized spaces within Europe, but also to a reluctance of post-socialist scholars to draw parallels with their experiences (Moore, 2006; Stenning and Hörschelmann, 2008). Moreover, due to their Marxist grounding, postcolonial studies framed Second World socialism as alternative to a Western notion of development as inevitable path towards a capitalist modernity that others will catch up to (Moore, 2006; Tlostanova, 2012). This made postcolonial theory blind for socialist coloniality or, put differently, in ‘Western critical canon it is not possible to be both – a victim of Marxism and colonialism’ (Račevskis, 2002, p. 42).

On the other end of the scale, post-socialist theory built on a dominant transition paradigm that proclaims the ‘defeat of communism and final triumph of capitalism’ (Stenning and Hörschelmann, 2008, p. 320). Reducing the spatial differences between the post-socialist and Western world to temporal differences, the changes since 1989 were commonly presented as linear catching-up process and labelled as ‘Return to the West’ (Stenning and Hörschelmann, 2008, p. 320). Thereby, the transition paradigm neglected the plurality, heterogeneity and asynchrony of post-socialist experiences and simultaneously portrayed differences as deviances from the West (Kay *et al.*, 2012; Stenning and Hörschelmann, 2008). This benchmarking of Western norms positioned post-socialist countries as lagging behind, hence ran counter to postcolonial theory that aims to brush normative standard-settings against the grain. Moreover, it resulted in an altered framing of post-socialist space within postcolonial studies: from alternative development model to an area perceived as generally uncritical of the West (Suchland, 2011). This prevented a treatment in postcolonial terms as well.

Despite these difficulties, there are strong arguments for overcoming the mutual silence and applying postcolonial theory to post-socialist space. On one hand, it enables an analysis of socio-spatial developments that considers socialist history without reducing it to simplified legacies of the past. Post-socialist studies can

draw on postcolonial theory to account for the historical experiences of territorial occupation and power coercion, the psychology of oppression and resistance or the overarching aim of implementing an own version of modernity (Račevskis, 2002; Tlostanova, 2012). Thereby, postcolonial theory helps to accommodate for the ‘twin dangers’ (Stenning and Hörschelmann, 2008, p. 323) of essentialism and determinism often encountered in post-socialist approaches. On the other hand, it can be used to understand the dependencies that post-socialist countries or regions face today. While the notion of peripheralization already deconstructs the emergence of cores and peripheries as result of multi-dimensional and relational processes (Kühn, 2015), postcolonial theory emphasizes the multi-level nature of this relation being actively (re-)produced on the local, regional, national and international scale (PoSCoPP, 2015).

However, when uncritically applying postcolonial frameworks to post-socialist space, it runs the risk of posing yet another example for the universalization of contextualized Western knowledge frames. This is why Tlostanova (2012) and others propose to apply the decolonial option to achieve ‘true intersectionality’ (Koobak and Marling, 2014, p. 336). Their approach shifts the focus from colonialism as historical system to global coloniality as ensemble of (post)colonial practices and legacies in contemporary societies. By intersecting the concept of coloniality that Quijano developed on the basis of European colonialism in Latin America with post-socialist theories, they redefine it as ‘indispensable underside’ (Tlostanova, 2012, p. 132) of capitalist *and* socialist modernity. This allows them to move away from transition-based understandings, which interpret the changes since 1989 as linear path towards market economy and democracy. Instead, the changes are conceptualized as simultaneous process of socialist decolonization and capitalist neo-colonialism affecting the post-socialist and non-socialist world alike (Stenning and Hörschelmann, 2008).

As analytical concept, global coloniality describes the persistence of socio-spatial hierarchies that are represented and constituted by discourses ascribing value to certain societies and spaces while denying it for others. In line with the research on socio-spatial ascriptions (Bürk *et al.*, 2012; Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013; Wacquant *et al.*, 2014), it establishes that discourses form an inherent part of polarization processes by influencing individual as well as political decisions and actions. Going beyond that, global coloniality determines that such discourses show consequences in practice by affecting the knowledge formation and subjectivities of colonizers and colonized alike.

The paper argues that a decolonial approach based on the notion of global coloniality helps to analyze *how* peripheralization discourses in post-socialist

space become in a Foucauldian sense performative. On one side, it allows to deconstruct how discourses co-constitute core-periphery relations by presenting normative standards and particular interpretations of reality as universal knowledge (Stenning and Hörschelmann, 2008). Accordingly, Koobak and Marling (2014) show that the truth claim depicting peripheries as lagging behind and in need to catch up stems from a discursively hegemonized normative development concept that translates spatial into temporal differences. This developmentalism is deeply rooted in both, capitalist and socialist modernity (Annist, 2011; Suchland, 2011). On the other side, global coloniality conceptualizes how the truths established in such discourses influence the formation of subjects who relate to the ascribed categories and norms. These can either be rejected or (re-)produced in processes of self-colonization. The concept thus accounts for two central tendencies structuring the discourses on peripheries in post-socialist space. The first is the frequent reference to the former modernization project by either heroizing or radically rejecting the socialist past (Stenning and Hörschelmann, 2008). The second is the tendency to (re-)produce normative development notions of the capitalist modernity that are taken as standard for self-evaluation, often resulting in acts of self-peripheralization (Koobak and Marling, 2014).

Due to its focus on global coloniality, the decolonial option has the potential to truly intersect postcolonial and post-socialist theories and thereby overcome the challenges usually met during this endeavor. As it critically scrutinizes the knowledge production in capitalist and socialist contexts, it seems a promising analytical approach to adopt when researching the performativity of (de-)peripheralization discourses in post-socialist Estonia.

### **Producing Knowledge on Peripheries: A Twofold Discourse Analysis**

To base the analysis of discourses evolving around Estonian peripheries on Foucault's (1999) notion of performativity means to recognize that such knowledge does not simply exist, but is actively (re-) produced via socio-spatial discourses embedded in power relations. Discourses exercise power by those who know over those 'who are known in a particular way' (Hall, 1992, p. 295) because they universalize particular interpretations of reality (*truth claims*). But they are also subject to power structures, as it is the access to resources and positions of power that determines who has the right to speak and be heard or whose truth claims are temporarily fixed through hegemony and manifested in categories, symbols and practices (Bourdieu, 1991; Spivak, 1988).

Empirically discourses appear as discursive formation, which is defined as group of statements governed by fixed distribution principles (Jäger, 1999). The discursive formation is scrutinized with the critical discourse analysis approach developed by Jäger (1999) who argues that truth claims are universalized by two primary means: legitimization strategies and the repetition effect. Legitimization strategies draw limits to the discursive content and ways of expression by presenting own truth claims as only liable alternative while simultaneously delegitimizing others. The knowledge production is stabilized by the repetition effect, which becomes visible through recurrent subjects or strategies (*threads*) and the links connecting them (*nodes*). Consequently, the analysis of the discursive formation focuses on common discursive patterns associated with the term periphery that is treated as an empty signifier capable of absorbing different meanings projected on it (Laclau, 1996). Using the keywords *äärema\** and *perifeer\** (*roots of periphery in Estonian*)<sup>3</sup> in the time between 2011 and 2015, it builds on 296 opinion articles<sup>4</sup> retrieved from the online versions of the main Estonian dailies *Postimees* and *Eesti Päevaleht* and the rural weekly *Maaleht*, which were chosen due to their widespread readership and specific discourse positions (Section 3).

These articles also form the basis for the discursive field analysis. With its specific spatiality and temporality, the discursive field sets the conditions for the acceptance or rejection of truth claims (Bourdieu, 1991; Schwab-Trapp, 2006). On one hand, it describes the socio-historic context and institutional framework in which central debates and the resultant actions occur. On the other hand, it is constituted of opinion leaders who steer debates by disseminating different discourse positions or ideological standpoints (Jäger, 1999). These ‘interpreting coalitions’ (Bürk *et al.*, 2012, p. 339) develop widely accepted strategies and nodes that discourse participants have to follow to make their claims successfully heard. To understand who constitutes the interpreting coalition in Estonia, the articles were scrutinized for the occupation fields and institutions the authors are representing, the number of articles they published and the acknowledgement by other authors who refer to them as authorities. On the basis of this analysis, nine opinion leaders were selected for in-depth interviews. Beyond that, interviews with opinion editors of the three newspapers were conducted because they play a pivotal role as gatekeepers who regulate the access to the media debate and

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<sup>3</sup> Articles that were not freely available, duplex or referring to the Estonian surname ‘Ääremaa’ were excluded from the analysis.

<sup>4</sup> The section ‘arvamus’ (*opinion*) in Estonian newspapers resembles a regular column based on opinion-based articles incl. reader’s letters to the editor, editorial letters and opinion pieces provided by external authors.

set the rules of engagement. Moreover, they seize responsibility for the editorial letters representing the opinion of the newspaper editorials. The interviews focused on their position in the discursive field, the motivation to engage and the discursive strategies employed. The criteria for selecting or rejecting articles were an additional topic of discussion with the opinion editors. As a result of this selection process, the list of interview partners (Table 1) displaying their field(s) of occupation and the number of published articles, greatly resembles the structure of the discursive field.

**Table 1.** List of interview partners

	Name	Gender	Main Field(s) of Occupation	Articles
<i>Opinion Editors</i>	Kauri	M	Media & Journalism	
	Paavo	M	Media & Journalism	
	Anu	F	Media & Journalism	
<i>Opinion Leaders</i>	Alar	M	Media & Journalism, Politics & Public Service	3
	Eerik	M	Media & Journalism	3
	Hendrik	M	Research & Academia	12
	Ivar	M	Research & Academia, Journalism	7
	Joel	M	Research & Academia, Consultancy	3
	Kristjan	M	Politics & Public Service	2
	Maarika	F	Art & Culture, Politics & Public Service	2
	Lauri	M	Art & Culture, Research & Academia	2
	Meelis	M	Consultancy	3

Source: Illustration by the author based on in-depth interviews, names have been changed

Applying a decolonial framework, the paper explores the knowledge production on peripheries in Estonia with the help of a twofold analysis that focuses on the discursive formation and discursive field. The analysis is based on twelve in-depth interviews with representatives of the interpreting coalition and 296 online opinion articles. However, within the limits of this paper, the illustration of the analysis will rest solely upon the interview transcripts<sup>5</sup> and the 62 opinion articles or editorial letters that the interviewees seize responsibility for.

<sup>5</sup> Interviews were held and transcribed in Estonian and subsequently translated by the author into English.

## Structural and Discursive Inequalities: The Discursive Field

The knowledge production takes place against the backdrop of a rapid neoliberalization and polarization since Estonia regained its independence in 1991. As other CEE countries following the premises of the Washington consensus, Estonian politics have ever since promoted market liberalism free from state intervention (PoSCoPP, 2015; Lauristin and Vihalemm, 2009). In a process of de- and recolonization, the institutional and social structures of the socialist regime were devaluated and substituted by a capitalist system embraced in its radically neoliberal form. On one hand, this resulted in a restructuration process that replaced the former system of state and collective farms with large-scale farming, causing widespread unemployment and a downward spiral of rural impoverishment and outward-migration (Nugin, 2014). On the other hand, it led to the institutionalization of a competitiveness-based regional policy focusing on consumption-oriented place promotion and post-productivist entrepreneurialism while simultaneously dismissing policies based on egalitarian norms (Bristow, 2005; Nugin, 2014; Peck, 2010). Whereas these political changes also offered new opportunities for a diversification of rural income opportunities, they could not ensure equally distributed living standards. Instead, the polarization continues to increase in form of a (sub-)urbanization while at the same time peripheralization in small towns and on the countryside deepens (PoSCoPP, 2015; Leetmaa *et al.*, 2013).

These urban-rural inequalities are mirrored in the discursive power structures. Although the freedom of press is particularly high in Estonia, indicating a rather non-discriminatory access to the public arena, the print media discourses on peripheries are dominated by an intellectual, urban and male elite. Figure 1 indicates that the interpreting coalition consists mainly of journalists, academics, politicians and artists (86.3%). Less often, the articles are authored by consultants, entrepreneurs, interest group advocates or readers (13.7%). Hence, the majority represents newspaper publishers, state bodies, research and cultural institutions as well as consultancies or for-profit organizations located in the capital Tallinn and the second city Tartu. Only a minority of readers, rural interest representatives and municipality leaders is located in peripheral areas. Moreover, there is a noteworthy gender gap as only about 11% of the contributions are written by female authors, a trend that is common for Estonian opinion columns in general (Eurotopics, 2015).<sup>6</sup> The authors were appropriated

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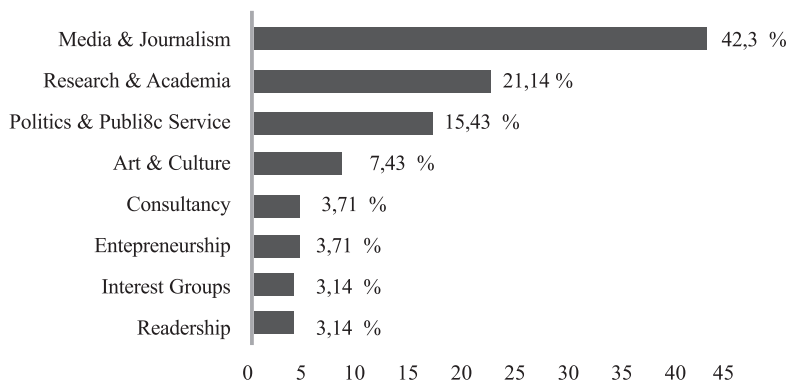
<sup>6</sup> Gender roles and the question of gender equality in Estonia certainly need a deeper analysis that cannot be provided within the scope of this paper. For an initial reading, see: Anspal and Rõõm 2010; Kaskla 2003.

due to the ascribed institutional affiliation in the articles. However, there is a common overlap of positions fulfilled by the interpreting coalition as most of them do not only participate in the (de-)peripheralization discourse but are also actively engaged in the politics and economics evolving around it.

Confronted with this discursive hegemony, the opinion editors explained it with their selection criteria, the asymmetry of article suppliers and the editing process. Unanimously, they declared good quality writing or an ‘intelligent person’s mode of expression’ (Anu) as the main criterion for article selection, which ‘for the upper elite is much easier’ to meet (Kauri). All agreed that the selection process is also influenced by the pool of authors offering articles where ‘women have been more hesitant’ (Anu). The underrepresentation of female authors is ascribed to their choice of topics that tends to ‘mirror the society’ and concentrate on ‘family issues’ instead of ‘delving into politics’ (Paavo). Finally, the newspapers’ editing process and target groups are said to influence the constitution of the interpreting coalition. Even though all headquarters are located in Tallinn, the newspapers’ regional foci and discourse positions are different. While *Maaleht*’s mission is to ‘preserve rural life’ (Anu), *Eesti Päevaleht* defines itself as ‘pretty Tallinn-centered’ (Paavo). Accordingly, the former established an editorial network covering the country, whereas the latter has no permanent correspondents outside of Tallinn. *Postimees* takes the middle ground between them as it commands a considerable regional network, but does not set its focus explicitly on rural issues.

Together, all publications cover a broad market of Estonian-speaking media, as they are among the newspapers with the widest circulation and most frequently visited websites (Balčytienė and Harro-Loit, 2009; IfM, 2015). Due to the continuous expansion of internet access, the online versions have become ever more important. They are characterized by a broad readership, high degree of interactivity and considerable overlap with the printed versions (Balčytienė and Harro-Loit, 2009). For all opinion leaders, this broad coverage constitutes the main reason to engage in the debate: ‘If one already starts talking, then after all in the biggest newspapers, to most likely reach the decision-makers or make people think’ (Maarika). The newspapers are seen as national arena for ‘different kind of truths’ (Alar) and means to strategically influence the decisions of ‘policy designers’, because ‘newspapers they read, opinions they read, but reports they never read’ (Hendrik). But the focus on market leaders also has its limits. As the three newspapers belong to the main competing media groups Eesti Meedia and Ekspress Grupp, several interviewees were ‘asked to just make a decision’ (Eerik) for either one or the other. Finally, the question ‘where the target group





**Figure 1.** Discursive field: Interpreting coalition

Source: Illustration by the author based on calculations of authors' institutional affiliation in opinion columns of *Postimees*, *Eesti Päevaleht* and *Maaleht* (2011–2015), n=296 online print media articles

[is]' (Meelis) also seems important for the opinion leaders who take the different newspaper foci into account when supplying articles.

Distributed to a wide audience, the discourses on peripheries in Estonia are dominated by an urban, male and intellectual elite that has the potential and will to influence the practices and materialities of peripheralization. Despite the dominance of actors from the center, rural politicians, interest representatives and inhabitants also participate in the debate. Hence, the subaltern can speak (Spivak, 1988), but to a much lesser extent.

### **Rural and Responsible? The Discursive Formation**

This interpreting coalition actively (re-)produces a discursive formation in which peripheries are linked to two central subjects: rurality and responsibility. As shown in great detail elsewhere (Plüschke-Altöf, 2016), while the multi-level nature of peripheralization 'in a globalizing world' (Joel) that raises the question of Estonia being 'a European periphery' (Maarika) is acknowledged in the debate, a prominent discursive node links the peripheral to the rural. Thereby, the specific discursive threads associated with peripheries are projected on rural areas in general, portraying them as economically lagging behind, geographically remote, socially problematic, politically dependent and institutionally thin (Plüschke-Altöf, 2016). However, by drawing on a rural idyll that displays the countryside as cradle of the nation, home to Estonian folk culture and untouched nature, opinion leaders also employ this discursive node

of the rural to the peripheral in counter-discourses that revert negative images (Plüschke-Altöf, 2016). The second discursive node, which is elaborated in the current section, evolves around the question who assumes responsibility for the causes of and dealing with rural peripheralization. Oscillating between the poles self- and state-responsibility, this question points to the conflicting notions of development underlying peripheralization discourses in Estonia. As the paper conveys, the media discourses thus go beyond different interpretations of rurality by manifesting a struggle over the suitable regional development model that is deeply entwined in both, post-socialist de- and capitalist recolonization.

### **Two Development Models: The Question of Responsibility**

The struggle over ‘what kind of regional and local development and for whom’ (Pike *et al.*, 2007: 1253) unfolds between two alternatives: neoliberalism and interventionism (Table 2). Both regional development models promise to deliver general well-being, but through different means. Whereas the former propagates market-liberalism and state retrenchment, the latter casts doubts on the premise that the free market is capable of balancing socio-spatial inequalities and therefore advertises market-regulation and a welfare-state system (Gyuris, 2014).

As explained in great detail elsewhere (Bristow, 2005; Peck, 2010), the neoliberal model focuses on fostering economic growth on the national level and in growth poles, which in a trickle-down process should eventually reach less prosperous regions. Development is thereby reduced to an issue of growth building on two principles: austerity and competitiveness, which constitute prominent discursive threads among Estonian proponents of a neoliberal development paradigm. Especially in the debates on the ongoing amalgamation reform, state-responsibility for dealing with peripheralization is often reduced to a matter of public austerity. On this basis it is argued for a further centralization, which is more ‘needs-based and effective’ (Meelis) or ‘reasonable’ (Maarika) than the ‘overly expensive’ (Hendrik), ‘disproportionate’ dispersed settlement that causes Maarika to ask ‘who pays for that’? This reference to cost-effectiveness and efficiency also sets the basis for delegitimizing decentralized settlements based on an alternative redistributive paradigm. It is accompanied by an emphasis on competitiveness shifting the responsibility to individual regions and thereby separating winners from losers (Bristow, 2005). This discursive thread is used to denote success stories. Via narratives of active coping and self-initiative it is shown how municipalities ‘can manage’ (Kristjan) through ‘success-oriented

leadership' (Kauri) or by employing resources such as the 'local workforce' and the 'natural and historic-cultural environment', which have until now been 'underutilized' (Hendrik). Simultaneously, attempts to shift the responsibility back to the state are delegitimized by presenting them as unjustified: 'we can't blame Estonian politics' for that (Lauri).

These truth claims are legitimized with the help of statistical data and rankings that do not only objectify the success of some municipalities, but also render an image of the rest offering 'nothing good' (Kristjan). The resultant urban-rural hierarchy is seen as without alternative or, as Alar puts it, 'some good things are inevitably farther living on the countryside than in the city. This is just the way it is'. By projecting the responsibility for development on the regions themselves while discursively neutralizing the structural factors for socio-spatial inequality, the neoliberal model links rural peripheralization with non-success or self-induced development deficits and incapacities, hence universalizes a lag discourse.

This knowledge production is opposed in a counter-discourse based on an interventionist development model positioning itself as alternative to neoliberalism, which has 'enslaved us ideologically' (Ivar). It questions the notion of development as economic growth and expands it to include also the 'inequality issue' (Joel) and the 'preservation of heritage culture, nature and language' (Lauri). By opposing austerity and competitiveness to the principles of solidarity and redistribution, the proponents shift the responsibility back to the state. In order to force the state to intervene, the first discursive thread shows the limits of self-responsibility by pointing out that the lack of peripheral capacity stems from 'global and Eurozone dependencies' (Joel), Tallinn's 'huge competitive advantage' (Eerik) and from 'not developing these regions', which 'is also a political decision' (Joel). These narratives of dependency and neglect are supplemented by a discursive strategy that presents state intervention as question of life and death for the state and the nation, or, as only option. On one hand, a doom scenario of national extinction is created, as the countryside is 'depopulated' (Ivar) while the cities prove to be 'the cemeteries of the population' (Hendrik). As the 'vis vitalis of Estonian people' derives from a 'contact with the land', further urbanization means 'the end for Estonia' (Ivar). On the other hand, rural peripheralization is linked to the whole 'security topic' (Meelis). Empty villages are thus 'a very bad thing for national security' (Lauri) as they play a crucial role in the defense of and supply for cities in times of crisis. Aware that the neoliberal responsabilization of peripheries for their underdevelopment affects 'national definitions of deservingness' (Kay *et al.*, 2012: 61), the urban-rural hierarchy is moreover reversed in a discursive thread portraying cities as

hostile surroundings full of ‘crime, drug addiction, all kinds of crap’ (Eerik) that regularly ‘run empty’ (Ivar) as ‘people flee like from a horrible accident’ (Hendrik) to the countryside full of ‘wild nature’ and people preserving ‘Estonian culture’ or ‘heritage’ (Lauri).

These truth claims are legitimized through objectification, hence by ‘finding some statistics’ (Eerik) and referring to ‘what we know from science’ (Joel). Beyond that, opinion leaders refer to authorities such as the former president Meri and the poet Tammsaare, who are seen as rural patrons, or the businessman and former mayor of Tallinn Jüri Mõis who figures as ‘radically liberal’ (Hendrik) anti-hero in the debate, as he invoked everyone to ‘come to live in Tallinn’ (Alar). Simultaneously, the neoliberal development model is delegitimized by relativizing its polarizing side-effects as ‘not normal’ (Joel) and questioning its premises: ‘the invisible hand is bullshit’ (Ivar). In some cases, it is also rejected as undesirable ‘market fetishism’ (Ivar). By romanticizing the local with the help of a rural idyll and establishing the fight against rural peripheralization as ‘state interest’ (Eerik), the interventionist model seeks to de-individualize the responsibility for peripheralization, which Massey (2004, p. 14) critically scrutinizes as form of ‘blaming all local discontents on external [or] global forces’.

**Table 2.** Discursive formation: The question of responsibility

<b>Knowledge Production</b>	<b>Neoliberal Self-Responsibility</b>	<b>Interventionist State Responsibility</b>
<i>Repetition Effect</i>	Reduction of Development: Economic Growth Public Austerity: Efficiency and Cost-Effectiveness Regional Competitiveness: Active Coping and Self-Initiative	Extension of Development: Equality and Sustainability Inability to be Capable: Neglect and Dependency Image Reversal: Rural Idyll and Urban Stereotyping
<i>Legitimization Strategy</i>	Objectification: Reference to Statistics Presentation as Only Option: Inevitability	Objectification: Reference to Statistics, Science, Authorities Presentation as Only Option: Question of Life and Death
<i>Delegitimization Strategy</i>	Relativization of Alternative: Questioning Affordability and State Responsibility	Relativization and Rejection of Alternative: Questioning Inevitability and Desirability

Source: Illustration by the author based on in-depth interviews and opinion articles published in *Postimees*, *Eesti Päevaleht* and *Maaleht* (2011–2015)

## **One Concept of Modernity: Devaluation of a Socialist Alternative**

Despite the noticeable differences, both competing regional development models rely on spatial disparity discourses that are central to capitalist modernity, either dating back to its neoclassical or Keynesian form (Gyuris, 2014). Alternatives building on socialist modernity<sup>7</sup> that propose leftist ideas based on the notion of uneven development or spatial justice are missing altogether. In decolonial terms, this striking absence in Estonian (de-)peripheralization discourses demonstrates a simultaneous capitalist re- and socialist decolonization.

It manifests in the discursive inconsistency of many opinion leaders, whose argumentations oscillate between both development models. On one hand, the majority of them lament a capitalist neocolonialism in form of a discourse hegemony where the notion of development is ‘deeply rooted’ in a ‘neoliberal understanding’ that is proliferated by a political elite consisting of ‘city boys, businessmen and radical liberals’ who have no ‘political will’ to change the faith of peripheries (Hendrik, Joel). In their opinion, this hegemony leaves the peripheries ‘without spokesmen’ (Joel) and leads to a ‘very one-sided media representation’ (Hendrik) rendering rural areas as ‘unhappy’, ‘dirty and ugly’ places where ‘only the last two alcoholics are still left’ (Alar). Thus, most interviewees declare it as their mission to offer an alternative ‘positive periphery’ (Lauri), critically scrutinize ‘negative myths’ (Alar) or depict examples of ‘country life advantages’ (Anu). On the other hand, a considerable fraction sees the current polarization as ‘inevitable’ (Meelis) and therefore tends to fall back into neoliberal discursive patterns. Meelis for instance describes how he is torn between the importance of (neoliberal) ‘economic efficiency’ and (interventionist) ‘social support’: ‘I’ve been thinking about that crazily much’. As ‘capitalism has gone nowhere’ (Hendrik) and ‘the market is very important’ (Eerik), the political aim of many opinion leaders is thus to ‘move somewhat in the direction of a welfare-state’ (Kristjan) rather than to radically change the system.

A reason for this perceived lack of options lies in the colonial history associated with socialist modernity, which prevents it from being seen as liable alternate to capitalist development models. For Stenning and Horschelmann (2008, p. 316), post-socialism ‘opens grand questions about alternatives to capitalism’. Hendrik concurs that ‘there is absolutely no sign of leftist politics here. This is a heritage of the former socialist society. Actually there was a big dissociation from socialism and a turn towards the other extreme’. Consequently, socialist modernity appears only in

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<sup>7</sup> For more information on leftist regional development debates based on Marxist, Socialist and Non-Capitalist ideas, see: Gyuris (2014), chapters 5 and 8.

form of a reference to the past. As in former studies (Stenning and Horschelmann, 2008), also in Estonia a certain ‘nostalgia’ is common among those socialized in the ‘Soviet time’ (Kauri, Meelis). Especially ‘country people’ remember ‘strong collective farms’ as places of secure employment, vivid cultural life, feeling of belonging and solid infrastructure that was ‘all lost’ during transformation (Anu, Kristjan, Meelis). However, in the discourses evolving around Estonian rural peripheries, this past is invoked solely in the form of ‘Soviet colonialism’ (Annus, 2012, p. 21). References are thus used to show things ‘in a bad light’ (Alar). On one hand, the socialist past is employed as negative contrast to show that ‘not everything is so bad today’ (Eerik). On the other hand, current regional policy is criticized by comparing it to Stalinist centralization attempts: Back then, it was a ‘foreign power’ who ‘destroyed’ rural life, now it is an ‘economic power’ that we depend on (Ivar).

While the latter can be interpreted as strong ‘political rhetoric’ (Kauri) or even ‘demagogical argument’ (Paavo) against neoliberal development, the post-socialist renouncement of the past (Jõesalu and Kõresaar 2013) also devaluates the idea of non-capitalist options altogether that are dismissed as ‘too socialist’ (Lauristin and Vihalemm, 2009, p. 20). This results in an ‘act of self-colonization’ (Koobak and Marling, 2014, p. 339) accompanied by the attempt to distance oneself ‘as far as possible from Russia’ (Maarika), hence by ‘wanting to be just like the West’ (Joel). Consequently it seems ‘obvious’ (Alar) and ‘a matter of course’ (Meelis) that Estonia is constantly compared to Northern or Western European countries while at the same time for most opinion leaders the actual development is ‘quite similar to Eastern Europe’ (Maarika). Socialist decolonization therefore leaves the interpreting coalition with no other option than to embrace capitalist modernity and Western hegemony, which perpetuates a lag discourse towards peripheries including Estonia itself. As a result, the capitalist notion of development is questioned with the help of interventionist discourses, but never fully rejected.

### **(De-)Peripheralizing Rural Spaces in Post-Socialist Estonia: Conclusion**

Based on recent conceptual debates that aim to apply postcolonial theory to post-socialist space, the paper argues that postcolonial approaches serve as useful analytical tools to explore the crucial role of discourses in peripheralization processes. To overcome the mutual silence that hitherto prevented an intersection of the post-socialist and postcolonial, a decolonial framework following the Foucauldian notion of discourses as means of knowledge production is proposed. On this basis, a twofold analysis of (de-)peripheralization discourses in Estonian

print media is conducted, which focuses on the discursive formation and discursive field. The analysis conveys that Estonian discourses are constructed by an urban, male and intellectual elite who associates peripheries with rurality and responsibility. By connecting the rural with the peripheral, rural areas are constituted as peripheries per se. The alleged development deficits are then linked to the question of responsibility for the causes of and dealing with peripheralization. Oscillating between the poles self- and state-responsibility, this question points to the competing neoliberal and interventionist development models underlying Estonian discourses on rural peripheries.

By propagating public austerity and regional competitiveness via narratives of active coping and self-initiative, the neoliberal model favors self-responsibility. Peripherality is thereby rendered as self-induced non-success. This image is opposed within the interventionist model that advocates solidarity and redistribution. To shift the responsibility back to the state, its proponents show the limits of self-responsibility within narratives of dependency and neglect and present state intervention as question of life and death for the Estonian nation. Beyond that, negative peripheral images are reversed by romanticizing the rural. Both models are legitimized by referring to statistics, science or authorities and presenting the truth claim as only option while simultaneously the alternative is delegitimized.

Despite these differences, both development concepts essentially rely on capitalist spatial disparity discourses. Due to the concurrent socialist de- and capitalist neo-colonization, the discourse participants are left with no other option than to embrace capitalist modernity. This might be questioned in interventionist discourses but never fully rejected as a regional development model building on socialist modernity cannot form a viable alternative in a post-socialist *and* postcolonial context.

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### 5.3. Case Study Setomaa

#### **Re-inventing Setomaa: The Challenges of Fighting Stigmatisation in Peripheral Rural Areas in Estonia**

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The article tackles the influence of socio-spatial discourses on rural areas in post-socialist space. While the crucial role of discursive peripheralisation has previously been researched in greater detail, in this article, the focus shifts to the merits and challenges of fighting rural stigmatisation with an image reversal strategy. Using the case of the southern Estonian region of Setomaa, it illustrates how local decision makers rely on existing ascriptions of peripherality and otherness to redefine the region as a best practice example of coping through a heritage culture development path. However, against the backdrop of polarisation and neoliberalisation, this strategy raises multiple dilemmas. On one hand, it risks establishing a discursive hegemony that disguises persistent problems or blames them on locally marginalised groups. On the other, it faces the danger of being coopted by a neoliberal discourse propagating more self-responsibility and less state intervention. Thus, the article shows how peripheral rural areas face both challenges of stigmatisation *and* idealisation.

Rural Area, Peripheralisation, Spatial Discourses, Image Reversal, Estonia, Setomaa

After experiencing the post-socialist transformation in Estonia, my interview partner Toomas (name changed by author) remembered the countless attempts to compensate for the losses during that time of “serious shock”. When trying to attract a Nordic investor at the beginning of the 1990s, he learned an important lesson in terms of image making. Convinced that the investor would take his decision based on the premise

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of neediness, Toomas provided him with the image of a peripheral region in need of external support. Puzzled by the negative result, he later learned that the reasons for the refusal lay precisely in the image he had provided to the investor:

You know, they told it this way, that there is such a depression here, this kind of, how to say, not believing in oneself, so there is no sense in investing here. And in that way, I seriously reconsidered things and then decided that the orientation has to be changed and then I searched for this kind of, let's say, social, positive attitude [...] in the way that, well, we seriously tackled this kind of Seto, let's say Seto, well let's say boundary labelling in the media, because Seto used to be a swear word before, hence, created a positive image here. (Interview with Toomas)

The interview excerpt from my case study in the southern Estonian region of Setomaa portrays concisely the difficult negotiation process in which local actors in post-socialist rural areas find themselves. On one hand, they face material deprivation and discursive stigmatisation labelling them as the “biggest losers of transformation” (Kay et al. 2012; Leibert 2013, 101).

On the other, a policy paradigm that increasingly equates regional development with competitiveness and economic growth encourages them to be entrepreneurial “place-sellers” (Bristow 2010, 160; Semian and Chromý 2014). This raises the question of how to position oneself in a context where the resource that promises to guarantee success in a neoliberal world – a positive image – is exactly the one that you are missing.

This very question confronted local decision makers in Setomaa when taking the decision to employ a common counter-strategy to territorial stigmatisation: image reversal or “trying to prove the opposite” (Bürk et al. 2012, 339). Based on strategic essentialism (Jacobs 1996) and the creation of a rural idyll (Halfacree 2006), they attempted to overwrite negative ascriptions by attaching a positive image to the region and its inhabitants. In the course of this image making, Setomaa reinvented itself as pioneer of a post-productivist development path based on heritage culture and entrepreneurship, or what Woods (2013, 120f.) calls global “playground” and “conservator”. While the strategy seems promising in overcoming stigmatisation, it also raises several dilemmas: being pursued against the backdrop of deepening socio-spatial polarisation, it runs the risk of disguising the ongoing underlying material difficulties. When acknowledged, however, the gap between idealised image and peripheral reality can lead to a blame discourse by those who have established a discursive hegemony towards those who are not able to benefit from the image reversal and are thus held

responsible for the persistent problems of the region. Finally, the proponents of image reversal find themselves in danger of being instrumentalised by a neoliberal political elite who construct Setomaa as a best practice example for dealing with peripheralisation, thereby propagating market liberalism free of state intervention.

Following Jäger's (1999) critical discourse analysis approach, the article discusses the merits and challenges of image reversal as local response strategy to a dominant discursive formation that constitutes post-socialist rural areas as peripheries *per se*. Therefore, it first theorises discourses as structuration processes that offer a room for manoeuvre (Pred 1984; Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013). In the case of Setomaa, it then goes on to explore the possibilities and limits for local actors to use this room for manoeuvre in a context of socio-spatial polarisation.

### **Discourses as Room for Manoeuvre? Conceptual Framework**

As other post-socialist rural areas, Setomaa is often portrayed as “peripheral” or “declining” (Raagmaa et al. 2012, 233). While this equation of the rural with the peripheral certainly mirrors the increasing urban-rural disparities in Central Eastern Europe (CEE) (Leetmaa et al. 2013; Leibert 2013), the critical scholarship on geographical imaginations shows that such ascriptions “are never mere representations of reality” but actively shape it (PoSCoPP 2015, 10). Moving away from fixed categories such as centres and peripheries that are ascribed to certain types of places, Keim (2006) introduced the concept of peripheralisation, which shifts focus to the emergence of socio-spatial polarisation (PoSCoPP 2015). Through the combination of theories on economic disparity, social inequality and political power, the concept defines peripheralisation as a multi-scalar and multi-dimensional process by which spatial hierarchies evolve (Kühn 2015).

As they do not only represent but also constitute inequalities, discourses form an inherent part of peripheralisation (Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013). Their mutual relations to practices and materialities are vividly illustrated by research on residential decision-making (Kährlik et al. 2012) and territorial stigmatisation (Bürk et al. 2012; Bürk 2013; Wacquant et al. 2014). Wacquant et al. (2014, 1272) demonstrate how negative images ascribed to places and their inhabitants tend “to stick”, influencing individual, as well as political, decisions and actions. As post-socialist rural areas are often confronted with particularly negative images depicting them on the negative side of centre-periphery, urban-rural and East-West divides (Kay et al. 2012), their discursive construction is

consequential. Thus, the common link between the rural and peripheral can also be interpreted as a “discursive act of peripheralisation” (Bürk 2013, 169) that further strengthens previously existing structural disadvantages.

This interpretation of discourses refers to a Foucauldian understanding of discursive practices as performative means of knowledge production by which realities are co-constituted. For Foucault (1999), discursive knowledge production is deeply embedded in power relations. On one hand, discourses institutionalise the interpretations of reality provided by those in power and thereby define what can legitimately be expressed about rural areas. On the other, it is the access to resources and positions of power which determines who has the right to speak and be heard in discourses (Bourdieu 1991; Jäger 1999). Bristow’s (2010) and Shearmur’s (2012) research indicates that the discursive power bias generally favors urban actors, who are able to institutionalise a definition of regional development and innovation that privileges the urban over the rural. Hence, rural areas are constructed in discourses that tend to be hegemonised by urban actors.

However, despite being enwrapped in power relations, discourses constitute structuration processes that are always in becoming and never complete (Paasi 2010, Pred 1984). While disabling certain forms of agency, at the same time they enable others. This also presents the opportunity for those subjected to moments of peripheralisation to counteract hegemonic with alternative discourses (Miggelbrink and Meyer 2015). Bürk et al. (2012) explore the various possibilities for local responses to discursive peripheralisation, distinguishing between those confirming and those rejecting hegemonic discourses. As discourses are performative, they have the power to influence the locals’ perception. In cases where negative ascriptions lead to a situation where they perceive the region’s future as hopeless, the hegemonic discourse is locally reproduced. Labelled “peripheralisation in mind” (Lang 2013, 230), this response represents a form of “self-stigmatisation” (Bürk 2013, 177). Beyond that, strategic self-peripheralisation can be employed to generate pity or attract external support (Bürk et al. 2012). At the other end of the scale, locals can respond to discursive peripheralisation by rejecting it or questioning the underlying socio-spatial hierarchy and the value system producing it at the first place. This form of resistance that breaks with dominant structures and discourses is discussed as “thirdspace” (Soja 1999) or “radical rural” (Halfacree 2007).

However, one of the most common responses to discursive peripheralisation is image reversal (Bürk et al. 2012). By replacing negative ascriptions with positive examples, image reversal strategies turn the existing socio-spatial hierarchy on its head. Hence, they rely on hegemonic discourses but only as far as to disprove

them. The reversal often takes place by referring to alternative constructions of rurality such as rural idyll (Halfacree 2006) or by subverting existing notions of otherness in the form of strategic essentialism (Jacobs 1996). While the room for manoeuvre offers a range of possibilities for local responses, it is defined by the hegemonic discourses and power structures in which these are embedded. Thus, it appears in the form of a discursive struggle, shifting back and forth between a discursive re- and de-peripheralisation of post-socialist rural areas.

### **Discursive Formation and Discursive Field: Data and Methods**

To scrutinise the room for manoeuvre that local actors in rural Estonia have, the analysis here treats discourses as means of knowledge production by which socio-spatial realities are described and actively constituted. According to Foucault's notion of performativity, knowledge does not simply exist but is (re)produced in discourses that universalise particular interpretations of reality or truth claims. Empirically, discourses appear in the form of discursive formations, hence as a group of statements governed by fixed distribution principles (Jäger 1999). Following Jäger's (1999) critical discourse analysis, legitimisation strategies and the repetition effect are seen as primary means that foster the universalisation of truth claims in discursive formations. Legitimation strategies draw limits to the discursive content and the means of expression by presenting individual truth claims as the only viable alternative while simultaneously delegitimising others. By their repetitive use, these are developed into common patterns, which stabilise discursive knowledge production. The legitimisation strategies and discursive nodes are manifested by "interpreting coalitions" (Bürk et al. 2012, 339) who disseminate discourse positions from different ideological standpoints (Jäger 1999). Discursive formations are embedded in a broader context where the debates, decisions and actions take place. It is the discursive field that sets the conditions for the acceptance or rejection of discursive knowledge production (Bourdieu 1991). Always in becoming and therefore subject to a specific spatiality and temporality (Schwab-Trapp 2006), the discursive field forms the socio-historic context against which knowledge production strategies are employed. The field-specific institutional framework regulates the prevalent instruments of, and access to, discursive power as well as the rules of engagement that discourse participants need to follow to make their claims successfully heard (*ibid.*). Thus, analysis in this form explores discourses in a twofold way, focusing on the discursive formation and discursive field. Both are treated as crucial dimensions of the image reversal strategy employed as local response to the stigmatisation of Setomaa.

This dual aim is pursued on the basis of a case study that includes a context analysis, quantitative media analysis and qualitative fieldwork in the region. In order to analyse the discursive field including its institutional framework and interpreting coalitions, context analysis was performed prior to entering the field. It utilised former studies focusing on Setomaa in particular and rural development in Estonia in general, “grey” literature such as strategy or development plans and socio-economic data. This was complemented by an analysis of 155 newspaper articles published between January 2009 and June 2015, which were retrieved from the website of the national daily *Eesti Päevaleht* and the rural weekly *Maaleht* and sought out major discursive threads linked to the keyword “Setomaa”.

While giving an initial overview of the regional image and development in a wider national context, these analyses cannot reveal underlying discursive strategies or shed light on the dynamics of the discursive field. They were thus supplemented by the results of my fieldwork which was carried out between June 2015 and July 2016. During this time, I conducted the twelve qualitative in-depth interviews with local decision makers that form the core of my analysis. The decision makers were selected according to the criteria I now set out. First, according to Bürk (2013) interpreting coalitions usually consist of actors from the fields of politics, administration, business as well as media, culture or marketing. Hence, interviewees were chosen to represent local organisations in these respective fields. Second, based on the context analysis and a progressive snowball sampling strategy, interviewees were considered who are externally and internally accepted as decision makers. Finally, voluntariness was applied as selection criterion. The sampling took place until a point of theoretical saturation in terms of repeated discourses. To observe discourses in a more natural setting, I also participated in local events such as song festivals, village fairs or policy conferences and meetings ‘behind the scenes’, which I was invited to by the interviewees. Moreover, I had the chance to undertake interviews with youth workers, a former inhabitant, members of a local youth club and at a focus-group like multi-generational family meeting. While certainly not being exhaustive, the latter interviews were all held with inhabitants who are not involved in the image reversal process and thus referred to alternative discourses. In order to ensure anonymity, Table 1 gives an overview of the interviewees and their fields of activity, but does not indicate the precise functions they fulfil locally. Instead, the discursive field in which they play a crucial role is outlined in greater detail below (section 4).

**Table 1.** Case study: List of interview partners (Figure by author)

	No	Name (changed)	Gender	Field(s)
Local decision makers	1	Aliida	F	Politics
	2	Andres	M	Culture
	3	Greeta	F	Journalism, culture
	4	Heiki	M	Politics, culture
	5	Jaagup	M	Entrepreneurship, community initiative
	6	Karl	M	Politics
	7	Marianna	F	Marketing, culture
	8	Marko	M	Entrepreneurship, culture
	9	Märt	M	Politics, culture
	10	Ragnar	M	Entrepreneurship, culture
	11	Tõnis	M	Politics, culture
	12	Toomas	M	Culture, politics
Locals	13	Diana	F	Youthwork
	14	Stiina	F	
	15	Youth club members	F, M	
	16	Erki, Jüri & Tarmo	M	Multi-generational family
	17	Triin	F	Former inhabitant

The interviews focused on the setup of the institutional framework, the role of the interviewee within it and the life of the region, its history and prospective future. To allow discursive fragments and strategies to be elaborated by the interviewees themselves, the questions were asked rather openly, often crossing the boundaries between a semi-structured and narrative interview. Subsequently, the interviews were transcribed and subjected to a content analysis. They were first segmented into meaningful text passages or discursive fragments associated with Setomaa and its inhabitants, to which codes were assigned. These codes were then examined for common subjects and repeated legitimisation strategies, so-called discursive threads and nodes, which create the universalising discursive effect.

In sum, the context and media analyses as well as the interviews and observations do not only form the basis for scrutinising the discursive formation and discursive field fostering the image reversal process in Setomaa, but also help to explore the multiple challenges that this local response strategy to territorial stigmatisation entails.



## **Discursive Struggles in the Context of Peripheralisation: The Case of Setomaa**

The discursive struggles evolving around Setomaa take place in the context of a continuous stigmatisation of post-socialist rural areas (Kay et al. 2012). As I have outlined in greater detail elsewhere (Plüschke-Altöf 2016), in Estonian media discourse this manifests itself in the form of a persistent equation of the rural with the peripheral by which the specific features associated with peripheries are projected onto rural areas in general. Thereby, rural areas are portrayed as lagging behind economically, socially problematic, politically dependent and institutionally thin. Being discursively linked to the question of responsibility for causing peripheralisation, this often results in a depiction of self-induced development deficits and incapacities. Earlier studies confirm this negative image of rural areas and indicate that in a CEE context discursive peripheralisation on a normative development scale affects national, regional and local levels alike (Annist 2011; Nugin 2014; Trell et al. 2012).

The hegemonic discourses occur against the backdrop of rising inequalities in form of a rapid (sub)urbanization with a simultaneous increasing peripheralisation in small towns and in the countryside (Leetmaa et al. 2013; Leibert 2013). As Lang et al. (PoSCoPP 2015) point out, the neoliberal development paradigm that Estonia and other CEE countries followed on the basis of the Washington Consensus did not succeed in ensuring equally-distributed living standards. Instead, the radical market liberalism, free of state intervention, promoted by the Estonian state from regaining its independence in 1991 onwards led to an ongoing socio-spatial polarisation (Lauristin and Vihalemm 2009). As the simultaneous devaluation of the old regime resulted in the desire to break with existing institutional and social structures, the former system of state and collective farms (*sovhozes* and *kolhozes*) was quickly dissolved and, after several waves of restructuring, replaced by large-scale farming (Nugin 2014). Moreover, egalitarian norms were dismissed as socialist in nature and replaced by notions of individualism and consumerism (Juska 2007). At the European Union (EU) level, neoliberal development was accompanied by a general turn towards regional competitiveness and economic growth, gradually taking the shape of consumption-orientated place promotion and post-productivist entrepreneurialism (Bristow 2005; Peck 2010; Woods 2013). Due to these transformation and restructuration processes, the proportion of the population involved in agriculture dropped rapidly. While this also offered new opportunities for a diversification of income opportunities, it initially triggered a downward spiral of rural peripheralisation causing increased poverty rates and a rapid outward migration to urban areas (Nugin 2014).

The image reversal strategy that Setomaa's decision makers pursue has to be seen in the light of this material and discursive peripheralisation of the Estonian countryside. Due to its geographical location, Setomaa and its inhabitants have moreover functioned as a symbol of peripherality and internal other of the national self (Annist 2011; Koreinik 2011; Petersoo 2007; Runnel 2002; Valk and Särg 2015). Situated on the border with Russia, it was incorporated into the Estonian state in 1920 as the historical region of Pechory (*Petserimaa*). After the Soviet occupation of Estonia during the Second World War, about three quarters of Pechory were unified with the Pskov oblast of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, leaving only one quarter of it on the territory of today's Estonian Republic. After Estonia regained its independence in 1991 and joined the Schengen Area in 2004, this resulted in a division of Setomaa demarcated by the external border of the EU. Currently, the Estonian part of Setomaa is administratively divided into the three municipalities Meremäe, Mikitamäe and Värskä, as well as the area of Luhamaa in Misso municipality.

Being one of the historically poorest areas in the country, marked by lower levels of literacy, education and economic welfare, Setomaa was long perceived as an insignificant region (Annist 2013; Valk and Särg 2015). Even today, its municipalities face considerable socio-economic deprivation with high unemployment rates, low income levels and a shrinking and ageing population caused by outward migration (SVL 2006). Moreover, the distinctiveness of the Seto people formed the basis of an othering discourse, which started during the nationalisation processes of the First Estonian Republic (Petersoo 2007). Due to their linguistic deviation from the Estonian standard, their cultural peculiarities and Orthodox religion separating them from Lutheran or atheist Estonians, the Seto were seen as different from the Estonian majority, bringing about repeated debates on the boundaries of national identity (Koreinik 2011; Valk and Särg 2015). The most recent Estonian census in 2011 indicated that today around 12,800 people understand the Seto language. However only a relatively small proportion of these still live in Setomaa (Külvik 2015). In a survey conducted by the Setomaa Union of Rural Municipalities (SVL 2006), approximately 1,500 of the 3,500 inhabitants in the four relevant municipalities declare themselves as Seto.

Despite this multi-layered othering and peripheralisation discourses towards the Seto and Setomaa, the region is also presented as a best practice example for dealing with peripheralisation through place marketing and an alternative rural development path (Raagmaa et al. 2012). In the Estonian context, the image reversal strategy developed in response to stigmatisation can built on the

idea of a national rural idyll that traditionally constructs Estonians as country people (Nugin 2014). Likewise, the increasing importance that heritage culture and authenticity play in place marketing (Agan and Kask 2009; Annist 2013; Woods 2013) provides local decision makers with the possibility to use existing ascriptions of otherness for their own purposes, hence built on what Jacobs (1996, 148) calls “strategic essentialism”. Finally, it can draw on the construction of rural residents as active coping agents, a discursive strategy that is often pursued in order to fight the image of passiveness and resistance towards development (Plüschke-Altöf 2016).

### **We are Taking Care of Seto Things: The Discursive Field**

The image reversal causing the “new pride” (Valk and Särg 2014, 338) in Setomaa manifests in a discursive formation portraying an holistic and authentic rural life. Yet this is also institutionalised through a complex framework that supports a development path based on heritage culture (Annist 2013). The local decision makers whom I interviewed acknowledged that the reinvention of Setomaa was actively fostered by image making campaigns and events starting with the initiation of “Seto Kingdom Day” (*Seto Kuningriigipäev*) at the beginning of the 1990s. In a time of national and regional awakening, this annual event was founded as opportunity for Seto people to meet, as only a small proportion of them live in the region (Külvik 2015). Since then, it has gradually developed into a touristic event displaying popular features of Seto heritage culture such as handicraft, folk costumes, local cuisine and the traditional Leelo choir singing that was added to Unesco’s Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Each year, at the beginning of August, thousands of tourists and locals gather in Setomaa to celebrate the Kingdom and partake in the election of the “Seto king”, the *ülemsootska*. This representative of the Seto harvest god Peko has become increasingly important. In one of the interviews I conducted, Greeta reported that many people started to “play along in the game called ‘Seto Kingdom’” and treat the *ülemsootska* as its representative. Thus, the king increasingly fulfils the role of a spiritual leader and active image maker. As the king’s representational functions have become more expansive – from interviews with journalists to the reception by the Estonian President – he or she is supported by a council formed of their predecessors (*Kroonikogo*). Kingdom Day is supplemented by several marketing campaigns such as the Leelo (*Leelopäev*) and Pop-Up Café Day (*Kostipäev*) or the cultural-touristic road (*Külaviiii*) that disseminate an image of living history in Setomaa (Setomaa Turism 2012/2014). United by the slogan

“yours authentically”, they all draw on existing ascriptions of Seto culture as being exotic and different, hence presenting a case of strategic essentialism.

A further important image campaign started in 2012 in Misso and is now also pursued in other municipalities. Faced with the risk of yet another school being closed due to population decline, local activists started the initiative called “come to the countryside” (*Tule Maale*). Based on the assumption that more people would move to the countryside if only they could, it was instituted in order to help urban dwellers relocate to rural areas (Heering 2015). While providing assistance for the interested, it also functions as an image campaign that instrumentalises the idea of a rural idyll to attract new residents to Setomaa. Under the head of the umbrella organisation *Maale elama*, it was developed into a nationwide campaign and recently added by the programme *Noored Setomaale* which supports young families in starting a life in the region (ibid.).

Both of these place marketing campaigns were enabled and performed by an institutional framework that has been set up in Setomaa from when Estonia regained its independence. It started with the (re)foundation of two organisations which today remain of great importance: the Seto Congress (*Seto Kongress*) and the Union of Rural Municipalities (*Setomaa Valdade Liit*). While the former functions as the representative body of Setomaa and Seto people, the latter coordinates the political and development-related activities of the four municipalities. The Congress meets every three years to make decisions concerning the cultural, economic or political development of Setomaa. These are then implemented and coordinated by an elected Council of Elders (*Vanemate Kogu*) as well as by the Union of Rural Municipalities consisting of representatives from the municipality administrations and an executive body. A crucial role is played by a monthly roundtable (*tsõõriklaud*) initiated by the Union and coordinates the activities of the main actors, including the central umbrella organisations focusing on tourism, handicraft, the arts and theatre, entrepreneurship or renewable energy. Moreover, the Union acts as an important lobbying organisation with close ties to the Estonian Parliament’s Setomaa support group (*Setomaa Toetusrühm*).

As a consequence of the persistent lobbying efforts by these organisations, the region receives considerable state funding via the Setomaa Development Programme (*Setomaa Arenguprogramm*) and Setomaa Cultural Programme (*Setomaa Riiklik Kultuuriprogramm*). Moreover, the municipalities and their inhabitants are entitled to apply for funds from the Borderlands Programme of the EU Leader Initiative (*Piiriveere Liider*) and other programmes such as the Dispersed Settlement Programme (*Hajaasustuse Program*). Whereas the latter

funds are also available to other Estonian regions, the former are focused solely on Setomaa. In addition, the Union of Rural Municipalities was able to ensure additional funds from a patron who originates from the region and agreed to support it financially and organisationally. On one hand, he annually adds a considerable sum to the funds that the leading Seto organisations are able to attract and thereby ensures the salaries of central actors. On the other, as co-owner of a large Estonian media enterprise, he provides an exclusive communication channel in the form of the Setomaa portal of *Postimees*, the highest circulation Estonian daily newspaper.

While local decision makers in Setomaa were able to institutionalise a support framework that benefits them in comparison to other regions, the funds are primarily designed to pave the way towards one predefined development path. Both programmes are oriented towards heritage activities or entrepreneurship based on heritage culture (Annist 2013). In a similar way, two interviewees report that a fixed amount of the project-based funding is always reserved for the main umbrella and cultural organisations such as the Leelo choirs, local museums or the Seto Institute.

The principal role of these institutions and support programmes is also acknowledged in media debates. The media analysis confirms that the development and cultural programme as well as the Union of Rural Municipalities, the Seto Congress, the king, the Seto Institute and museums are among the institutions most often discussed in relation to Setomaa. This institutional setting forms a discursive field that is supported by and supportive of local enthusiasts who describe themselves literally as “taking care of Seto things” (*ajame Seto asja*), meaning a group of people working on improving the region. Forming the interpreting coalition, they represent the majority of interviewees. As most simultaneously assume central roles in a variety of local organisations, they do not only participate in the discursive formation of Setomaa but are also actively involved in the concomitant politics and economics.

### **Now the People are Proud Again: The Discursive Formation**

The proponents of image reversal employ various strategies to overcome the negative image. The most prominent example builds on a discursive node that links the peripheralisation discourse that Setomaa faces to a story of success based on heritage culture and active coping. A resurrection narrative is thereby produced that describes a self-induced metamorphosis. However, this metamorphosis can only be told via a discursive thread that places the peripheralisation of the region and stigmatisation of its people in the past.

Whereas the origins of material deprivation are viewed as being of the Soviet occupation and post-socialist transformation, the roots of what the interviewee Heiki terms “ethnic discrimination” against Seto people are located in the time of nationalisation during the first Estonian Republic (1918-40). The interviewees report how having “a different culture, religion, habits, songs and different folk costumes”, or stemming from “a poor region, being poorly educated and talking a strange language” resulted in the perception of Seto people as “strange” and “alien” (Heiki, Marko). Further, Toomas recalls how the media at that time reported repeatedly on incidents of village parties ending with “fighting and dead bodies”, creating an image of Seto “hooliganism” that partly prevails even today. Unanimously, the interviewees describe how this produced a situation where “‘Seto’ used to be a swear word” and people hid their origins or “sold their Seto jewellery” (Marianna) that functioned as a token of cultural identity.

According to local decision makers, the stigmatisation of Seto continued during the Soviet period, added to by material deprivation. Tõnis tells how “Lenin’s urbanisation and centralisation policy” resulted in migration that caused a growing number of people to leave the region while new non-Seto community members arrived. Further, the local inhabitants remember the difficulties during what Tõnis calls the “*kolkhoz* and *sovhoz* period”. Erki, for example, recalls the immense population decrease that began even then:

I went to school there, I remember exactly, went to first grade. At this school – the school building has not been there for some time – we had 113 pupils. I finished the eighth form, there were 68 of us. This shows very clearly what was already happening at that time. I finished in ’71, started school in ’63. In the 60s it had started already. Those who left stayed away. This can be the best place on earth, but in economic terms it is the back of beyond. (Family group interview)

Peripheralisation continued during the post-socialist transformation period. In the interviewees’ stories, the loss experienced during that time is foremost symbolised by the fact that the “border got closed” due to which life “became very difficult” (Toomas). This meant that the market for the pork, cabbage and garden vegetables, which had been a substantial source of local income, disappeared. Moreover, the transformation period was a time of rural restructuring. Even though decision makers tried to build up development paths based on agriculture and productivism, these attempts were not met with success until the “pretty huge turnaround” (Heiki). Ragnar demonstrates this metamorphosis with the case of the village of Obinita in Meremäe municipality:

Obinitsa was a name and a place with which students were threatened. See, in the Soviet times there was this obligatory directing, that, you finished university and were sent to work some-where else for three years. Obligatory. And then they told you: “If you don’t study, then we’ll give you the direction to Obinitsa”. Hence, Obinitsa was this kind of, well, very bad synonym. But today Obinitsa is the Finno-Ugric capital of culture. Everyone talks about Obinitsa. That [was] this kind of, well, formation in the course of 30 years from one very negative, well, name to a very positive, well, name. And largely the Seto image is today generally positive. (Interview with Ragnar)

Similarly, when describing the situation in Setomaa today, the interviewees unilaterally refer to a discursive thread that expresses the new pride of Seto people exhibited by proudly wearing folk costume and jewellery or celebrating the Seto way of life at one of the many local events. Given the prior discursive and material peripheralisation, the question arises as to how this turnaround has come about. Both the decision makers and local inhabitants agree that this change was achieved by the hard work of a “handful of crazy people” (Andres). These Seto enthusiasts lobby for a continuation of state support by pointing out the important role of Setomaa in (1) securing the borders of Estonia and thus the EU, (2) preserving the heritage culture that has been acknowledged by Unesco and (3) sustaining diversity in times of globalisation and homogenisation. Hence, they refer to national and international discourse formations to argue against a further peripheralisation of the region. Against the backdrop of perpetually tense Estonian-Russian relations, Karl asks if it is an “effective security strategy to have emptiness at the border?”. This national security argument is often complemented by discursive fragments that focus on the international importance of Seto culture. When justifying, for instance, why local schools should be preserved, the proponents of a reinvented Setomaa argue “through culture” (Märt). Marko explains this strategy:

The entering [of Leelo] to the Unesco Intangible Cultural Heritage List has given us here locally actually this, this kind of trump card so that we can also always use it as an argument at the government level. [...] If we want to go somewhere, ask for something somewhere, wish for something, for this region, then we can always say that [...] our common goal or need is that, that we could preserve Leelo. (Interview with Marko)

Similarly, the efforts to preserve Seto culture are presented as keeping diversity in times of globalisation when “every day we have one language fewer” (Marianna).

Hence, local decision makers refer to universal values and international organisations to achieve national lobbying goals. While Runnel's (2002) study on the local *Setomaa* newspaper has shown how political and socio-economic aims are pursued through a cultural narrative, this "message of uniqueness and a special status" (Marko) is conveyed to the higher levels of Estonian politics via the Seto Congress and Seto Union of Rural Municipalities.

Alongside these lobbying efforts, place marketing initiatives form the second pillar of the image reversal strategy. Here, a positive image of Setomaa is created in order to strengthen the place attachment of locals and attract visitors or new residents. Thereby, the Seto elite follows post-productivist and consumption-orientated trends that are discussed as a new beacon of hope for regional development (Fischer-Tahir and Naumann 2013; Semian and Chromý 2014; Woods 2013). Several interviewees confirm the crucial role that regional image plays in their everyday work. While Märt believes that the regular organisation of "image events" is of utmost importance, Heiki sees it as his task that local people can say with pride that they come from the region. He explains how he, for example, would never say in public that this area is a "periphery", but instead refers to it as a place "where the European Union starts". Further, Aliida gives an account of the media monitoring that is conducted in one of the municipalities to observe image development.

Aware of the importance of image making, local activists draw on the notions of uniqueness and rurality to attach a positive image to the region. Thus, they take existing images of regional peripherality and cultural peculiarity and turn them on their head so that the peripheral location becomes the exact reason why Setomaa has "remained special" (Marianna). "When the state is far away", Greeta explained, "you can live your own life there, just as Seto people have been able to live". The border location is also taken up in discursive fragments that change the perspective so that Setomaa becomes the "gateway to Europe" (Karl) instead of Estonia's periphery. Finally, the region is described in a pastoral narrative of "pure nature" and "fresh air" (Greeta) that becomes even more pronounced when being juxtaposed to urban stereotypes:

[In cities] instead of natural problems there are now artificial problems: car theft, goddamn drug addiction, right. Then you have to be, I don't know, in *Kroonika* (popular Estonian tabloid) every month or at least once a year, otherwise you are nobody, right. Then you have to be very well dressed, different than you would maybe like to be. (Interview with Tõnis)

But the reversed image is not only used to counteract discursive peripheralisation. It is also disseminated via marketing and journalistic channels that add to its



commodification as a brand for local products and entrepreneurs or as a unique image that could attract more tourists to the local events. The Setomaa portal in the national daily *Postimees* functions as a particularly “ideal communication channel” (Greeta) for the creation of a revised regional image.

As shown in Table 2, the local decision makers initiated a counter-strategy that builds upon existing images of Setomaa and the Seto as peripheral, rural and peculiar. These alleged deficits are restated and reinterpreted in a resurrection narrative that shifts the material deprivation and cultural stigmatisation to the past while portraying the present as a success story that has led to a new sense of pride among Seto people. In this discursive formation, propagated via different marketing and lobbying channels, this pride manifests in the important role that Setomaa plays in securing the national borders and preserving world cultural heritage. By employing strategic essentialism, the image of a rural idyll and a change of perspective, the reinvented region presents itself as a gateway to Europe, offering peace and quiet as well as a “unique and genuine” experience (Külvik 2015).

**Table 2.** Interview Analysis: Image Reversal Strategy (by author)

Discursive node	The resurrection narrative			
Discursive threads	Former peripheralisation “‘Seto’ used to be a swear word”		Current success “Now the people are proud again”	
Discursive fragment	<i>Material deprivation in Soviet and transformation period</i>	<i>Stigmatisation since first Estonian Republic</i>	<i>Important role for securing national border and preserving world cultural heritage</i>	<i>Positive revaluation of peripherality, rurality and cultural peculiarity</i>

### **Fighting Rural Stigmatisation with Image Reversal? Multiple Challenges**

The image of Setomaa as region successfully fighting peripheralisation through active coping and a development path based on cultural heritage also manifests itself in the main discursive threads derived from the media analysis. As illustrated in Figure 1, with around 50%, the articles mainly broach the subject of heritage culture preservation and diversification. In the primary discursive fragments, the authors discuss various ways of developing and commodifying

Seto heritage or report on different events taking place in the region. A further 26% concentrate on ways of dealing with peripheralisation. Here, the dominant discursive fragments praise different coping strategies, among others the “come to the countryside” initiative, and describe how they result in a new sense of pride among the inhabitants.

While these major discursive threads indicate that the proponents of a reinvented Setomaa were to some extent successful in hegemonising a counter-image, the debate also mirrors the challenges accompanying the reversal strategy. A small proportion of the articles referring to ways of dealing with peripheralisation discuss to what extent political favoritism towards Setomaa is at the expense of other regions, or take a critical stance towards the missing state intervention in the field of regional policy – resulting in a situation where active coping is the sole way for the countryside to survive. Moreover, part of the debate on heritage culture critically analyses the cultural development path as jeopardising regional authenticity or causing a scarcity of resources in other areas.

Moreover, in approximately 24% of the articles, a discursive thread appears that describes the ongoing peripheralisation of Setomaa. Above all, the discursive fragments focus on the socio-economic decline causing a shrinkage in population as well as infrastructural and physical decay. Further, the geographical location of Setomaa as situated on the border to Russia and remote from the main cities of Tallinn and Tartu, as well as the peripheral position of the Seto people and language in Estonian society, are a topic of intense discussion. Mirroring cases of territorial stigmatisation, these persistent problems are further related to the social pathologies of local inhabitants and politicians through reporting on cases of alcohol abuse, local conflicts or political corruption.

Consequently, the media analysis conveys not only the (partial) success of the image reversal strategy by which certain topics were manifested as discursive threads, but also shows the limits of the response strategy. Likewise, in the interviews, multiple dilemmas when pursuing an image reversal against the backdrop of polarisation and neoliberalisation became apparent: (1) the manifestation of a discursive hegemony, (2) the neglect of and local blaming for the persistent problems in the region, and (3) a neoliberal instrumentalization of the established discursive formation by (national) politicians.

## **Seto Everywhere You Look: Discursive Hegemony**

Those “taking care of Seto things” were successful in establishing Setomaa as symbol of rural development based on heritage culture through which they do not only equate Setomaa with Seto people, but also define Seto identity through cultural activism. While this approach is certainly beneficial for the attempts at image reversal and place marketing, it also paves the way towards a tangible discursive hegemony. The persistent link between Setomaa as a region and culturally active Seto people runs the risk of excluding those who do not feel connected to a culturally-defined regional identity. This has the potential to trigger local tensions particularly in an area where only a fraction of the inhabitants define themselves as Seto and just a “small fraction of them publicly and visibly displays their Setoness” (Annist 2013, 256; SVL 2006). For example, Heiki points out that a noticeable group of people came to the region during the Soviet period as a result of “*sovhoz* directions” and strongly identify themselves as “definitely not Seto”. They are said to be those taking a critical stance towards the whole “Seto stuff” that has been “totally overblown” (Triin). However, the “pressure to deal with culture” is also criticized by those Seto “who would just like to live in peace” (Greeta). At the multi-generational family meeting, the hegemonic definition of “Setoness” based on cultural activism became the subject of discussion between father, uncle and son. Identifying themselves as Seto, they debated whether to and, if so, how to participate in the upcoming Kingdom Day:

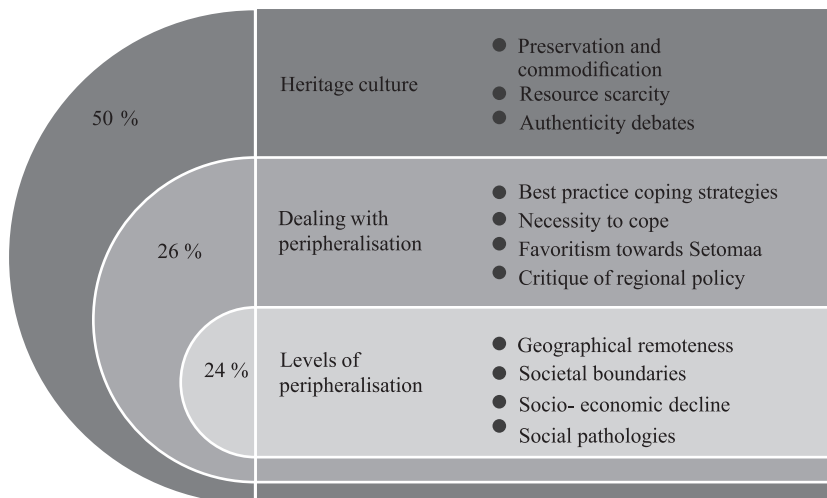
At the joint dinner table, Erki addressed his son: “Are you putting on your folk costume when going to the Kingdom Day?” Tarmo replied that he doesn’t know and still has to think about it: “I will come for sure, but just, how good I will feel there, when I am not, when I don’t feel myself as part of this thing”. Quickly, Erki’s brother and Tarmo’s uncle Jüri objected: “But you are part of it.” Trying to understand his son’s motivation, Erki added that: “If you are a representative or spokesperson there, then it is natural to dress up.” But Jüri insisted: “No, this is not important at all.” (Fieldnote by author, family group interview)

This debate indicates that the construction of Setomaa as a stronghold of Seto activism might not only result in the marginalisation of those local people who do not share Seto identity but also those Seto people who do not define themselves as active Setos. While the decision makers are aware of the “Setoification”

critique (Tõnis), they simultaneously disregard it by referring to the successes achieved through the image reversal strategy built on heritage culture:

If we didn't have that, maybe we would, I don't know, still be a total periphery. And nobody should fight against that. Well, there are some who say that there is too much of this Seto stuff. That, well, all the time and constantly it is topic of discussion "Seto Seto". That well, we don't want it anymore. But thanks to that there is a very active cultural life, not only Setos themselves but the region has changed, like into something positive. Well, actually a lot of positive things have come because of that [...]. Only a fool doesn't understand that this image [...] has caused these kind of positive, well, results. (Interview with Ragnar)

Beyond this, the dominance of Setomaa in comparison to other regions is taken under critical evaluation from outside. Ragnar, for example, speaks of a friend in Tallinn who told him that Setos are "disproportionately" represented in the media: "Everywhere you look, only Seto". Most of the interviewees are aware of this criticism reflecting a certain political favouritism towards Setomaa but interpret it as form of "jealousy about certain things, above all the two support programmes" (Marko). While this local reading mirrors the existing advantages the region enjoys in the support and publicity framework (section 4), it similarly downplays their regional policy impacts in times of resource scarcity.



**Figure 1.** Media analysis: Main discursive threads (illustration by author, n=155 articles)

Consequently, the same strategy that brought success to Setomaa's image reversal also results in a palpable discursive hegemony. This does not only set the boundaries of an accepted regional identity but also determines a development path based on heritage culture, so that the question of "what kind of development and for whom?" (Pike et al. 2007, 1253) can rarely be posed. While being conscious of the critique towards Seto dominance, local decision makers tend to justify it in discursive threads that dismiss and delegitimise this criticism as jealousy and incomprehension of the great opportunities that the image reversal strategy provides.

### **Who is to Blame? Persistent Material Peripheralisation**

A critical stance towards an image reversal strategy based on active coping and heritage culture also stands at the core of discursive threads pinpointing the persistent material peripheralisation underlying the success story. The local inhabitants in particular who are not involved in the image remaking mourn the lack of employment opportunities, decline in infrastructure and population decrease. In contrast to the decision makers, they compare the current situation to a time when life in the region was more self-sufficient because "the bank, post office and shops still existed" (Karl) and the people were able to "make everything [themselves]: milk, sour cream, pork" (Triin). The present is thus contrasted with a former and arguably better past against which things today "don't look so rosy" (Jüri). In the context of ongoing socio-economic deprivation, the sole focus on culture is questioned, arguing that "for everything there is money, just not to tackle these problems" (Stiina) or provocatively inviting others to "try to eat a song", because "we might all like culture, it's a beautiful and good thing, but it doesn't provide you with an income" (Erki).

This "peripheralisation in mind" (Lang 2013, 230) continues despite the prominent image reversal strategy. Hence, it seems as if the new successes have not yet been able to reach all local people in equal measure. During my visit to a local youth centre, this became tangible at a group interview focusing on the everyday life and future plans of young people in the region:

When asking the local youth how they felt about the region they lived in, their views seemed to be divided. Whereas the very young emphasised the beauty of nature and freedom in the countryside, the teenagers appeared to have very negative feelings. The prevailing opinion was that "there is nothing and nobody here", "it is boring" and "I definitely don't want to

stay”. In this context, leaving usually meant leaving for the city in order to “have more opportunities”. When asked about what kind of opportunities they would take up in the city, it seemed very difficult to answer. Instead they repeated that they “want to get away from here.” (Fieldnote by author, youth club group interview)

Further, Diana reported that the “young seem to have an understanding that there is nothing really to do in the countryside”. Despite the nationwide discursive formation which emphasises the crucial role of the young generation for the future of rural areas (Nugin 2014) and the local conviction that the “young are very prioritised” (Diana), the fieldnote shows that the region has not been able to create favourable conditions in which young people think they would stay. As observed in former studies (Nugin 2014; Trell et al. 2012), this illustrates that, for the young, leaving this area deemed peripheral is more important than identifying the destination.

The local decision makers are thus left with the question of how to explain this (partial) unsuccess within a discursive framework that solely builds upon success. The research on territorial stigmatisation (Bürk et al. 2012; Wacquant et al. 2014) and the rural idyll (Little and Austin 1996; Valentine 1997; Watkins and Jacoby 2007) reveals the simultaneous dangers of idealisation and stigmatisation in peripheralised areas, rendering crucial the question of “who is to blame” for persistent material difficulties. On one hand, idealising or not naming existing problems reduces the chances of dealing with them in practice. On the other, mentioning the regional decline often leads to a situation where it is ascribed to the social pathologies of local inhabitants, thereby shifting the responsibility for these problems to the residents themselves.

Accordingly, the interviewees in Setomaa refer to a discursive node linking the persistent peripheralisation to the pathological behavior of certain inhabitants. In so doing, they shift the blame for ongoing problems raised by various local parties to one specific group. Greeta and Toomas call them “those who stayed in the 80s”, at a time when they did not have to “think [about] where to get employment”. They are described as being “very demanding” while at the same time not willing “to take any responsibility”:

They have this kind of negativism by thinking: “You can’t make it, there is no chance, no point, and anyway you won’t get what you want”. On one side there is this - what I’ve noticed - kind of, well, kind of communication which is really pretentious: “There must be, should be, somebody should do something about it, well, somebody *else* should do something about

it!”. On the other side, their own initiative or action is close to zero.  
(Interview with Toomas)

This portrayal of non-activeness due to an ascribed prevailing “Soviet mentality” (Annist 2005, 157) is then connected to stories of alcoholism and social benefit abuse by those who “started to look at the bottom of the bottle” (Diana), who “actually do not want to do any kind of work anywhere” (Märt), but instead “only want social support” (Stiina). Similarly, the uneven distribution of the benefits from the chosen development path among the Seto municipalities is explained by the missing “orientation towards success” (Marianna) or “weakness” (Greeta) of the respective municipalities. Hence, precisely those people and municipalities who are not able to profit from the new development path are the ones subjected to a stigmatising blame discourse. Their inability to partake is explained by their own deficiencies and alleged resistance to development, while at the same time the principle of image reversal is left intact.

However, this stigmatisation does not only fulfil the function of blaming the victim (Bürk 2013). As the debates around the “come to the countryside” campaign show, it also serves to discipline newcomers. While locals mainly ascribe the initial problems experienced by the initiative to the misleading media coverage and its rushed implementation (Heering 2015), decision makers attribute the failures to those attracted by the campaign “who were not able to deal with their lives” (Aliida), “were indebted” (Karl) or “out of whom there would become no village developers” (Ragnar). Thereby, they create boundaries towards groups who are perceived as not being sufficiently active. In the same vein, several interviewees explain that the people who relocated to Setomaa in the first wave of the campaign were not suitable as they did not represent “the kind of active people” desired (Märt) and that they prefer people who would like to actively partake in Seto culture (Aliida, Greeta).

In sum, the idealised image of success that decision makers in Setomaa portray does not only run the risk of disguising the persistent material peripheralisation of the region. When acknowledged, the ongoing problems also raise the question of who is to blame. This can result in the local stigmatisation of marginalised groups and municipalities, who are held responsible for persistent deficits in development by discursively linking regional unsuccessfulness to their non-activism and social pathologies. Based on the notion of activism, this discursive node also reproduces a regional identity built on active Setoness.

## **There Should be More Such Active People: Neoliberal Instrumentalisation**

To actively live Seto heritage culture is also at the heart of place marketing efforts that form an essential part of the image reversal. Despite proving to be a promising development strategy in times of regional competitiveness, place marketing is rooted in a logic of commodification (Fischer-Tahir and Naumann 2013) and therefore runs the risk of essentialising and exotifying the rural to satisfy an urban gaze. Accordingly, Marianna describes how the opinion of “people from the capital” gained importance for locals in Setomaa who report to her proudly that “now people from Tallinn want to come here”. Following this commodifying trend, she continuously reminds them to accommodate the needs of (urban) visitors to the region:

If you come here and know how to ask, then you can buy *sõir* (local cottage cheese) and try it, right. But this has evolved only during recent years as we have nagged them that “listen, listen people want, right, that yeah that listen, offer”! (Interview with Marianna)

The tourists are also those who come to the region with the expectation that locals are regularly dressed in folk costume and are then surprised that “ooh, what, you don’t dress in Seto clothing every day!?” (Marianna). These stories show how exotified expectations of Seto culture are brought to locals from outside at some point even causing the commodification of local products such as *sõir* that were not previously considered special or desirable by the locals. As the cultural heritage commodification path is to a significant extent supported by people described as “not actually having Seto roots” (Greeta) yet “calling themselves Seto” (Triin), it results in debates on authenticity, analysed in detail by Annist (2013).

Especially during the annual Kingdom Day, local decision makers try to accommodate touristic expectations. During the roundtable organised by the Union of Rural Municipalities shortly after the annual event, the tension between preserving and commodifying Seto culture became a subject of discussion:

Sitting around a wooden table at a local farm house, the annual Kingdom Day was evaluated by representatives of the local umbrella organisations and municipalities. The remarks focused on issues such as the new *ülemsootska*, the number of visitors or the coverage in the national media. The enormous number of visitors that had reached the threshold of around



8,000 was approved by those at one end of the table who praised it as a great success. In opposition to that, by asking for whom the Kingdom Day is actually meant to be, others raised concerns about the day developing into a purely commercial event. (Fieldnote by the author)

The image commodification also plays a crucial role in the lobbying efforts of the local elite. For Tõnis, the key to effective lobbying is to make yourself useful: “We have to help our helpers” and if potential supporters “want to be close to those who are successful, we will let them”. If “some foreign politician needs to be impressed”, as Greeta explained, “then we are invited there as we are pretty and interesting”. This public celebration of successful coping efforts and cultural uniqueness is pursued to mutual benefit. Whereas Seto delegations help national politicians portray themselves as supporters of the countryside, the meetings also help local decision makers to “put Setomaa in the picture” as a dynamic region (Toomas).

While the give-and-take strategy definitely offers advantages, it also causes certain challenges. In most interviews, it is mentioned that the publicity created an idealised image where “from outside we seem to be better than we actually are” (Ragnar). Tõnis agrees that the place marketing and lobbying successes may leave the “illusory picture that things are crazily good here” while in fact there are still lots of problems. In a context where regional policy is largely based on competitiveness and the neoliberal ideal of self-responsibility this can result in a situation “where politicians think that you are doing so well anyway that they don’t need to support you any longer”. In one field visit, this risk of being instrumentalised as a best practice example for active engagement substituting state intervention became directly tangible:

Together with journalists and politicians from the leading Reform Party, we were visiting a local enterprise. After being shown around the business and introduced to its employees by the owner Jaagup, we all sat at a laid table. While tasting a variety of local products, Jaagup described the enormous efforts undertaken by local activists to overcome rural peripheralisation in the region. He went on to explain how he does not only try to foster local development in his function as entrepreneur but that he also is board member of seven local organisations and action groups. Picking up on this notion of local engagement, one of the politicians praised his activism and suggested that more such people are needed to boost rural development, hence he shifted the responsibility back to the local level. (Fieldnote by author)

The scene captures how, based on the image of active coping conveyed by Jaagup, the politician initiated a neoliberal discourse building on state retreat and civil engagement. Starting to understand this, Jaagup switched to a peripheralisation discourse by enumerating the ongoing problems: from missing asphalted roads over vanishing social infrastructure to the unsatisfactory state support for peripheral regions. Moreover, by pointing out that “his wife would also like to see him once in a while” he referred to a discourse of local activists being excessively burdened, which was present in other interviews too: “Those who are active have terribly overburdened themselves. I actually see that as a problem” (Greeta).

This field note also illustrates the situatedness and contextuality of discourses. When faced with the potential consequences of a neoliberal instrumentalisation of the discursive thread based on active coping, Jaagup drew on to self-peripheralisation as a strategy to generate pity and induce solidarity (Bürk et al. 2012). Others turn to a strategy by which they shift the responsibility back to the state. Pointing out that they are not to blame for living in an area which “for some geographical or historical reason has proven not to be cost-effective for entrepreneurs” (Heiki), they question “whether the state wants to develop rural areas at all” (Karl) or if they have already decided upon “the extinction of rural life” (Marianna). Similarly, Märt notes that even though they mastered the project-based development path imposed on them, they “would no longer want the support programmes” if provided with an alternative redistributive regional policy system: “But the leading party surely won’t go for that”.

Thus, in addition to the danger of a commodification of the rural with its arguable benefits and challenges as indicated in former studies (Agan and Kask 2009; Fischer-Tahir and Naumann 2013; Semian and Chromý 2014), image reversal based on active coping through heritage culture also runs the risk of being instrumentalised as a best practice example by a neoliberal discourse that celebrates individual responsibility and a retreat of state responsibilities.

## **Re-inventing Setomaa: Conclusion**

In the case of the southern Estonian region of Setomaa, the article tackles the influence of socio-spatial discourses in post-socialist rural areas. While the role of stigmatisation and peripheralisation discourses has been researched in greater detail (Bürk 2013; Lang 2013; Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013; Wacquant et al. 2014), it shifts the focus to the merits and challenges of fighting rural stigmatisation with the help of an image reversal strategy.

In a context where the increasing neoliberalisation of regional policy has reinvented regions as place marketers, this study illustrates how local decision makers turn to image reversal as a tool to overcome discursive peripheralisation in an historically stigmatised region. With the help of a resurrection narrative, the interpreting coalition takes the negative image of Setomaa as a culturally peculiar rural periphery and turns it on its head to create positive ascriptions. The reversed image is institutionalised within a discursive field built on lobbying and marketing channels. This results in a discursive formation that portrays Setomaa as a best practice example for active coping based on heritage culture.

However, against the backdrop of increasing socio-spatial polarisation in CEE in general and Estonia in particular, this strategy also poses multiple challenges. On one hand, it runs the risk of disguising the material peripheralisation existing below the idealised image. On the other, when acknowledged, the continuous decline of the region raises the question of how to explain (partial) unsuccessfulness in a discursive framework based on the notion of success. In Setomaa, this was answered by projecting the blame for persistent problems on locally marginalised groups and areas.

Moreover, the successful redefinition of the region resulted in a discursive hegemony benefiting the image reversal proponents while excluding those who favour alternative definitions of regional identity and development paths. Finally, the proponents of an idealised image find themselves in danger of being instrumentalised by a neoliberal discourse promoting commodification and competitiveness. While the attempts to commodify the reversed image raise concerns about the preservation of cultural authenticity, the positioning as a best practice coping example puts local decision makers in situations where the established discursive formation is used by the political elite to propagate neoliberal ideals of further self-responsibility and less state intervention.

The article therefore demonstrates the complex relationship between socio-spatial ascriptions and realities. While image reversal seems a promising response strategy to the stigmatisation of post-socialist rural areas, it can also create new problems of idealisation.

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## **.5.4. Case Study Valgamaa**

### **Fighting against or Hiding Behind an Image of Peripherality? Response Strategies to Discursive Peripheralization in Rural Estonia**

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Recently, regional development policies and research have paid ever increasing attention to the importance of socio-spatial discourses. Moreover, since the breakthrough of the neoliberal “creative competitiveness” paradigm, image making and place marketing are promoted as central development strategies, also for rural areas that are often faced with a twofold peripheralization process that is material as well as discursive. Using the case of two controversies over the “right” kind of response strategy to the peripheralization of Valga County in southern Estonia, the paper will show how this “new” focus on regional images is deeply embedded in the “old” regional policy debate on the question of responsibility for dealing with socio-spatial disparities, which oscillates between the poles of self and state responsibility.

Peripheralization Discourses, Rural Estonia, Responsibilization, Response Strategies

**Please note: This paper is not displayed in the dissertation due to the ongoing review process at the Journal of Baltic Studies.**

## **DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS**

This dissertation set out to research the discursive peripheralization of rural spaces in post-socialist Estonia. The objective of this research was both ontological and epistemological. On the one hand, the dissertation aimed to explore the role of peripheral images for rural development in Estonia. Based on the questions as to how rural areas are constructed as peripheries, by whom and with what consequences, it analyzed the specific discursive formation in Estonian print media, the opinion leaders producing it, as well as the relevance of, and responses to, such discourses in two rural areas labelled as peripheral. On the other, going beyond the case of rural areas in Estonia, it aimed to critically scrutinize the role of discourses in peripheralization processes as these are not only representations of socio-spatial realities but actively co-constitute them. This chapter briefly reviews the results of the four empirical studies that this thesis is based on (Plüschke-Altöf 2016, 2017, 2018a/b) and discusses their implications and limitations.

### **6.1. How?**

#### **The Discursive Formation**

The question as to how rural areas are constructed as peripheries was answered through analysis of the discursive formation (Foucault 1999, Jäger 1999) that is based on an examination of Estonian online print media articles and in-depth interviews with national opinion leaders and newspaper editors. Based on the research results as detailed in the first and second articles (Plüschke-Altöf 2016/2017), Table 5 shows that the discursive struggles pertaining to places labelled as peripheries in Estonia evolve around two central discursive nodes.

The first equates the peripheral with the rural. As a result of this link, the hegemonic discourse in Estonian media tends to shift the specific features of peripheries – described as lagging behind economically, geographically remote, socially problematic, politically dependent and institutionally thin – to rural areas in general. This link between the peripheral and the rural is employed in the counter-discourses as well, which draw on the idea of a rural idyll that depicts the Estonian countryside as cradle of the nation, home to folk culture and untouched nature, in order to reverse the peripheral image of rural areas. The discursive struggle evolving around the first node thus heavily draws on modernist and pastoral constructions of rurality that have become common counter-poles in rurality discourses in general (cf. Shucksmith et al. 2009).



Going beyond that, the second discursive node shows a remarkable resemblance with (capitalist) spatial disparity debates oscillating between self- and state-responsibility for rural development (cf. Gyuris 2014, Pike et al. 2007). It therefore evolves around the question of responsibility for the causes of rural peripheralization and dealing therewith. Whereas the former builds on narratives of active coping and “successful” self-initiative or counter-narratives of self-induced ‘failures’, the latter emphasizes the limits of self-responsibility within narratives of dependency and neglect, as well as presenting state intervention as a question of life and death for the Estonian nation.

These two discursive nodes are deeply embedded in the discursive field structured by the process of post-socialist transformation and resulting in deepening urban-rural disparities and an increasing neoliberalization of regional policy (Section 6.2.). Moreover, they also show that Estonian media discourses on places labelled as peripheries are more than mere representations of these socio-spatial realities, but rather an incidence of *discursive peripheralization* (Bürk 2013, Plüschke-Altöf 2016) of rural areas. By linking the topic of peripherality with rurality and the question of responsibility, these debates take the form of a discursive struggle as regards suitable and desirable rural development policies that legitimize either neoliberal or interventionist policy options. As such, they constitute a case of performative knowledge production that people living in peripheralized rural places have to relate to (Section 6.3.).

**Table 5.** Research Results I. The Discursive Formation

<b>Research Question</b>	How	Performativity
		Knowledge Production
<b>Conceptualization</b>	Discursive Formation	Nodes
		Legitimization Strategies
<b>Research Results</b>	Peripheral = Rural	Resemblance with Rurality Discourse: Modernist vs. Pastoral Narrative
	Peripheral = Responsible	Resemblance with Regional Policy Debate: Self- vs. State Responsibility

Source: Illustration by author based on first and second articles (Plüschke-Altöf 2016/2017)

## 6.2. By whom? The Discursive Field

The question of by whom rural areas are constructed as peripheries was answered through a study of the discursive field (Bourdieu 1991, Schwab-Trapp 2006), based on a context analysis and in-depth interviews with national opinion leaders and newspaper editors. Table 6 illustrates the research results discussed in more detail in the first and second articles as well as the research context (Plüschke-Altöf 2016/2017, Section 4). While also considering the institutional framework of the Estonian print media landscape, the discursive field analysis focused on the socio-historic context in which peripheralization discourses evolve, as well as on the interpreting coalitions steering them.

Despite the complexity of developments and experiences characterizing the situation of rural areas in Estonia, the backdrop against which their discursive peripheralization takes place is characterized by three major processes: the specific path of post-socialist transformation, the ongoing neoliberalization of (regional) politics, and the deepening urban-rural polarization. The striking absence of non-capitalist and/or left-wing policy options<sup>1</sup> in popular debate – as well as a politics that might address urban-rural disparities through the prisms of uneven development and spatial justice – can be interpreted in particular as a result of the socialist de-colonization and capitalist recolonization in post-socialist (rural) areas in general and in Estonia in particular (cf. Kay et al. 2012, Koobak and Marling 2014, and Lauristin and Vihalemm 2009). These processes do not only influence the materialities of rural life, which have been subjected to multi-level and multi-scalar peripheralization since Estonia regained its independence in 1991, but also the range of debatable policy solutions.

Moreover, despite the rather non-discriminatory access to the public arena suggested by the particularly highly-rated level press freedom in Estonia (Freedom House 2016, Reporter ohne Grenzen 2016), the print media discourses on places labelled as peripheries are dominated by a group of opinion leaders that can be characterized as “intellectual, male and urban” (Plüschke-Altöf 2016/2017). Consequently, this interpreting elite represents a discursive power bias that generally favors urban actors who thereby have the potential to institutionalize a definition of regional development and innovation that privileges the urban over the rural (cf. Bristow 2010, Shearmur 2012).

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on leftist regional development debates based on Marxist, Socialist, Non-Capitalist ideas, see: Gyuris 2014 chapter 5/8

Rural areas are thus subjected to peripheralization discourses that tend to be hegemonized by urban actors.

This discursive field sets the scene for discursive knowledge production. It structures the space for, and limits of, the thinkable, sayable, and eventually also the doable (Bourdieu 1991). This becomes apparent not only in the peripheralization discourses at the national level evolving around the discursive nodes of rurality and responsibility that greatly reflect the deepening urban-rural disparities and increasing neoliberalization of regional policy (Section 6.1.), but also in the local response strategies (Section 6.3.).

**Table 6.** Research Results II. The Discursive Field

<b>Research Question</b>	By whom?	Discourse and Power
		Knowledge Production
<b>Conceptualization</b>	Discursive Field	Socio-historic Context
		Interpreting Coalitions
<b>Research Results</b>	Neoliberalization, post-socialist transformation, urban-rural polarization	Socialist de- and capitalist re-colonization
	Urban-rural power bias	‘Intellectual, Central, Male’ Opinion Elite

Source: Illustration by author based on first and second articles (Plüschke-Altöf 2016/2017) and research context (Section 4)

### 6.3. With what Consequences? The Discursive Room for Maneuver

The question of with what consequences rural areas are constructed as peripheries was answered through an exploration of the discursive room for maneuver (Meyer and Miggelbrink 2013, Pred 1984) on the basis of two case studies in places labelled as peripheries. Conducted in the southern Estonian regions of Setomaa and northern Valgamaa, these included in-depth interviews with local decision-makers and inhabitants as well as participant observation. As illustrated in Table 7, the research results focus on the relevance of the discursive formation and responses to this (Section 6.1.) within the context of the specific discursive field in Estonia (Section 6.2.). They are outlined in greater detail in the third and fourth articles (Plüschke-Altöf 2018a/b).

Two central strategies for coping with the hegemonic ascriptions of peripherality were identified: (strategic) self-peripheralization and image reversal. Against the backdrop of the twofold peripheralization of rural areas in post-socialist areas – discursive as well as material, – the results reveal that image-based response strategies can work counter-intuitively. While the employing of image reversal discussed as a new beacon of hope for rural development through means of place marketing attempts to combat the stigmatization of the region, it might also disguise or idealize persistent material difficulties. Through this, it can deepen neoliberal policies propagating more self and less state responsibility for an equitable regional development. On the contrary, the open (strategic) portrayal of the pre-existing peripheral image that risks re-stigmatizing the region can function as exoneration of the local by shifting the responsibility for regional development back to the state.

Both strategies, however, resemble an internalization of the discursive peripheralization that rural areas currently face, even if it is used for their own purposes. Resistance strategies rejecting urban-rural hierarchies and the norms that produce them in the first place (cf. Bürk et al. 2012) could rarely be observed. The peripheralization discourses analyzed in the case of national print media therefore appear to be of relevance for local subject formation. On the one hand, the local struggles over the “right” kind of response to discursive peripheralization greatly resemble the patterns of discourses and counter-discourses at the national level, which are at times even directly referred to as discursive resources. On the other, the striking absence of norm-rejecting strategies shows the limits of local agency in the discourse represented by the difficulty in escaping the discursive hegemony fostered by an interpretive elite embedded within broader power relations.

**Table 7.** Research Results III. The Discursive Room for Maneuver

<b>Research Question</b>	With what consequences?	Structure vs. Agency
<b>Conceptualization</b>	Discursive Room for Maneuver	Subject Formation
<b>Research Results</b>	(Strategic) Self-Peripheralization	Relevance <hr/> Responses <hr/> - Danger of Discursive Re-Stigmatization - Exoneraton of the Local / Responsibilization of the State
	Image Reversal	- Danger of Disguising/ Idealizing Materialities - Exoneraton of the State / Responsibilization of the Local

Source: Illustration by the author based on third and fourth articles (Plüschke-Altöf 2018a/b)

## 6.4. Implications and Limitations: Author's Note

As the thesis is interdisciplinary, located between sociology, human geography and economics, it represents innovation in several aspects, conceptual as well as practical, and is therefore not only relevant for academic debates but also for practitioners.

### 6.4.1. Conceptual Implications

As a border case between human geography, sociology and economics, the thesis adds fruitful new perspectives to the academic debate in all three disciplines. At the focus of this dissertation is the relation between images and development, or put differently, between discourses and materialities, which are bridged by socio-spatial practices. It therefore enriches prominent discourse analytical approaches in human geography and sociology by strongly emphasizing that socio-spatial discourses are more than mere representations of inequalities in space, but are instead crucially influencing socio-economic developments. In order to conceptualize this performativity of discourses, it is pivotal to not only have an eye for the discursive formation but also for the way that this formation is constituted, meaning by whom and in which socio-historic context (*discursive*

*field*), and the consequence and practical implications for people subjected to it (*discursive room for maneuver*). On the other end of the spectrum, the thesis also adds discourse analysis as a novel approach to (regional) economy literature by emphasizing that processes of uneven development are the result of both: material structures as well as of socio-spatial discourses. This focus on the role of images then also adds to the research on behavioral economics (cf. Thaler 2015) that has questioned the logic of rational decision-making and pinpointed the importance of factors that go beyond 'simple' cost-benefits analysis. These include social norms and beliefs, and - as the thesis argues - also socio-spatial images that we believe to be true, which influence our behavior in space by for example affecting residential decision-making.

#### **6.4.2. Practical Implications**

The interdisciplinary approach of the thesis (see Section 1.2.) also proves relevant for practitioners, especially in the fields of journalism and policy-making on the national as well as on the local level. Firstly, by taking a critical theory approach, the dissertation questions objectified spatial truths. With the help of a discourse analytical approach it shows that the common link between peripherality, rurality and responsibility is neither self-evident nor inevitable but actively made by an 'interpreting coalition' that has universalized these equation. This has implications especially on the field of journalism. As newspapers act as national discussion forums that reach a wide audience, they also play a crucial role in the construction or labelling of peripheries. Through the selection of authors, topics, perspectives and cases, which are chosen to report on the issue of peripheralization, they contribute to the discursive manifestation of *rural* peripheries - a fact that often remains unreflected. However, the deconstruction of the discursive knowledge production on peripheries implies that if such images of the rural are made, they can also be *unmade*. This means that print and online media could play a crucial role in providing a forum for counter-discourses as well.

The different *unmaking* attempts are analyzed in two case studies in Estonian rural regions that are labelled as peripheries in the media discourse and feel the need to respond. They convey the feasibility of response strategies such as image reversal and strategic self-peripheralization that local decision-makers can use for different purposes. However, they also show the challenges that the locals face in counteracting the hegemonic rural peripheralization discourse. As these regions and their inhabitants are still being subjected to a discourse that is made somewhere *else*, the analysis reveals the limits of what can be done locally in order to combat rural peripheralization. It therefore critically scrutinizes the role

of dominant power structures in the processes of peripheralization. On one hand, this concerns the hegemony of urban actors who act as an opinion elite on the issue of peripheralization whereas rural voices are heard to a much lesser extent. On the other hand, it also questions the feasibility of the prevailing neoliberal regional policies, which are strongly based on the idea of resilient regions actively taking over the responsibility for their own development.

Finally, the dissertation raises awareness on the role of images for place development. While place images have been ascribed ever more importance in regional competitiveness debates where they are treated as useful development tool for place-marketing to attract visitors, residents and investors or as endogenous resource to enhance the social capital of a region, the research results convey the limits of image making as solution to rural peripheralization. On one hand, image making and place marketing strategies can be used to turn negative images of rural emptiness, passiveness and backwardness on their head by portraying the areas as rural idylls, heritage culture or active holiday destinations. On the other hand, peripheral rural images still seem to prevail in public discourse. Moreover, the successful implementation of such marketing strategies requires local resources such as a certain a-priori visibility, multi-scalar networks and financial support that are not available to all regions. Against the backdrop of a rural peripheralization that is material, manifesting also in the lack of resources necessary for image making, as well as discursive, manifesting the subjection of rural areas to a peripheral image that is created externally by urban centers, a focus on image making and active self-responsibility can thus not work as a one-size-fits-all solution to (rural) peripheralization. Hence, strategies for a more just regional development need to account for the discursive *and* the material dimension of socio-spatial polarization, which can only be addressed with an approach that sets a stronger focus redistributive regional policies in order to account for the uneven distribution of resources, costs and benefits in space.

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## SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN (KOKKUVÕTE)

### Ääremaa kuvandid kui takistus maapiirkondade arengule? Maakohtade diskursiivne ääremaastumine postsotsialistlikus Eestis

#### 7.1. Artiklite nimekiri

Doktoritöö põhineb neljal teadusartiklil, millest kolm on esitatud terviktekstidena ja üks poolelioleva retsenseerimisprotsessi tõttu kokkuvõttena.

- (1) Plüschke-Altöf, B. 2016. Rural as Periphery per se? Unravelling the Discursive Node. *Sociální studia / Social Studies* 13 (2): 11–28.
- (2) Plüschke-Altöf, B. 2017. The Question of Responsibility. (De) Peripheralizing Rural Spaces in Post-Socialist Estonia. *European Spatial Research and Policy* 24 (2): (avaldamisel)
- (3) Plüschke-Altöf, B. 2018a. Re-inventing Setomaa. The Challenges of Fighting Stigmatization in Peripheral Rural Areas. *Geographische Zeitschrift* (avaldamisel)
- (4) Plüschke-Altöf, B. 2018b. Fighting against or Hiding Behind an Image of Peripherality. Response Strategies to Discursive Peripheralization in Rural Estonia. *Journal of Baltic Studies* (retsenseerimisel)

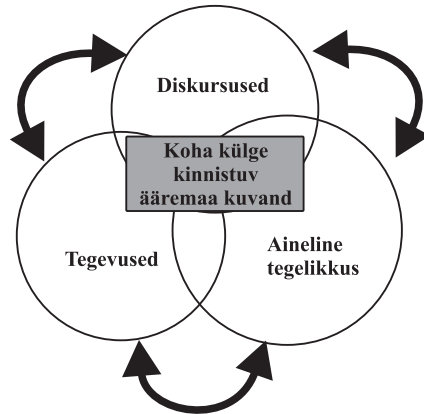
#### 7.2. Uurimistöö eesmärk ja ülesanded

Postsotsialistlike riikide maapiirkondades esinevad üldjuhul kaks omavahel seotud, kuid siiski erinevat probleemi: materiaalne puudus ja territoriaalne häbimärgistamine (Kay jt. 2012). Hoolimata nendest raskustest innustatakse neoliberaalse pöörde järgses regionaalpoliitikas maapiirkondi aktiivselt võitlema oma probleemidega positiivse kuvandi loomise ja kohaturundusega (Fischer-Tahir ja Naumann 2013, Paasi 2013, Peck 2010, Semian ja Chromý 2014). Kuidas peaksid postsotsialistlikud maapiirkonnad, mida tihti kujutatakse kui äärealasid *per se* (Kay jt. 2012) täitma “proaktiivse koha rolli” (Leetmaa jt. 2013, 17)? Sageli puuduvad äärealadel ka olulised ressursid, turundatavad kuvandid, mida neoliberaalses maailmas peetakse edukuse aluseks. Siinne doktoritöö keskendub kohakuvandile ja kuvandi mõjule koha arengus. Töös osutatakse sellele, et maakohtade samastamine äärealadega ei ole isenesestmõistetav, vaid esindab aktiivselt konstrueeritud ruumilist hierarhiat, mis allutab äärealad linnakeskustele (Bristow 2010, Shearmur 2012). Uuringud maapiirkondade

kujutamisest, sealhulgas kriitilised arutelud perifeersetest maakohtadest ja ääremaadest kui sotsiaalsetest konstruktsioonidest on domineerivat seisukohta maapiirkondade samastamisest perifeeriatega juba kahtluse alla seadnud (Cloke 2003, Cloke jt. 2006, Copus 2001, Halfacree 2007, Paasi 1995). Seda on teinud ka hilisemad empiirilised uuringud (Balogh 2015, Burdack jt. 2015, Timár ja Velkey 2016, Pospěch 2014, Steinführer 2015 jt.). Doktoritöö täiendab nimetatud uurimisvaldkonda, analüüsides põhjalikumalt dünaamikat, mis seda diskursiivset hierarhiat praktikas loob.

Sotsiaalse konstruktivismi põhimõtteid järgides, on töö eesmärk selgitada välja, kuidas ääremaid aktiivselt luuakse. Seega liigub väitekiri kaugemale domineerivast formalistlikust vaatest, mis kirjeldab ruumi kui “passiivset kohta” (*passive locus*) (Lefebvre 1974) ja keskuse-ääreala lõhet kui fikseeritud ruumilist kategooriat. Selle asemel järgib uurimistöö üha suuremat kandepinda saavat käsitust, mis uurib perifeeriaid “sotsiaalse ääremaastumise protsessi tulemustena” (Lang 2013, 225), mida on tugevalt seotud tsentraliseerimise protsessidega (Keim 2006, Kühn 2015, Fischer-Tahir ja Naumann 2013, PoSCoPP 2015 jt.).

Toetudes Lefebvre’i (1974) ruumi loomise mõistele (production of space) ja Laclau (1996) määratlusele sotsiaalsest kui sisuliselt diskursiivsest, koosnevad need polarisatsiooniprotsessid võrdselt tegevustest, ainelisest tegelikkusest (*materialities*) ning diskursustest (Joonis I). Uuringud käitumisökonomika alal on näidanud, et otsustusprotsessid ei ole ilmtingimata ratsionaalsed, vaid põhinevad tihti sotsiaalsetel normidel ja uskumustel, mis kaaluvad üle majanduslikult mõistlikud otsused (Thaler 2015). Väitekiri loob seose käitumisökonomikaga tuues välja, et meie otsused ruumis – elukoha või puhkusereisi sihtkoha valikul, investeerimisotsuste tegemisel ja muudes tegevustes ei ole tihti ratsionaalsed. Pigem on need otsused mõjutatud diskursusest lähtuvatest kuvanditest, mida seostame kohtadega, olenemata sellest, kas need kuvandid vastavad tõe või mitte. Kuvanditel on seeläbi aga laiem mõju piirkonna eluolule tervikuna, mõjutades näiteks maksutulu, mis sõltub elanike arvust, sissetulekute määra turismisektoris või regiooni suunatud investeeringute hulka.



### Joonis I. Ääremaastumise protsesside kontseptualiseerimine

Allikas: Autori illustratsioon, põhineb Miggelbrink'il ja Meyer'il (2015)

Kuvanditel on maakohtade arengus oluline roll. Seos aineline tegelikkuse ja tegevuste vahel on oluline mitte ainult perifeeriaste tekkeprotsessi mõjutamiseks, vaid ka selle peatamiseks. Kirjanduses on seoseid kuvandite ja arengu vahel kahel viisil. Koha turundamise ja brändimise uuringud on kuvandit käsitletud kui uut võimalust maakohta arengule. Uuringute kohaselt võivad turundamine ja brändimine aidata kaasa kuvandi muutmisele negatiivsest positiivseks, keskendudes näiteks maaelu idüllile või maakohale kui kultuuri hällile (vt nt Kauppinen 2014, Kašková ja Chromý 2014, Semian ja Chromý 2014, Skjeggedal ja Overvåg 2017, Woods 2013). Teisalt on kirjanduses hoiatud territoriaalsete stigmade eest. Negatiivsed kuvandid, millega seisavad silmitsi ka postsotsialistlikud maakohad, võivad muutuda stigmadeks, millega käib kaasas arengu allakäigu spiraal (nt Bürk jt. 2012, Bürk 2013, Wacquant jt. 2014).

Väitekiri lähtub diskursuse „kommunikatiivsest rollist“ (Kühn 2015, 8) ja käsitleb seda ääremaastumise protsesside sünnipärase (*inherent*) osana. Doktoritöös analüüsitakse diskursusi perifeeria-konstruksioonide kaudu, millele Eesti maapiirkonnad on allutatud. Kuigi Eesti rahvusliku identiteedi diskursustes esineb palju positiivseid kujundeid traditsioonilisest ja täisväärtuslikust maaelust, heidetakse maakohtadele ja maal elavatele inimestele tihti ka negatiivset varju, nimetades neid passiivseteks või teistmoodi perifeeriasteks (Kay jt. 2012, Nugin ja Trell 2015, Plüschke-Altöf 2016). Sarnaselt Kes- ja Ida-Euroopa postsotsialistlikele riikidele on selline ääremaastumine normatiivse arenguskaala järgi mitmetasandiline, mõjutades korraka nii riiklikku, regionaalset kui ka kohalikku tasandit (Annist 2011, Kay jt. 2012, Koobak ja Marling 2014, Timár ja Velkey 2016).

Eeldades, et Eesti maapiirkonnad ei ole üksnes aineliselt, vaid ka diskursiivselt (taas)toodetud kui perifeeriad, kerkib küsimus, kuidas, kelle poolt ja milliste tagajärgedega on nad sellistena loodud? Järgides Foucault' (1999) arusaama diskursuste performatiivsusest on väitekirja eesmärgi saavutamiseks püstitatud kolm uurimisülesannet: (1) dekonstrueerida, kuidas on ääremaad diskursiivselt loodud ja allutatud linnakeskustele, (2) analüüsida, kellel on sellistes diskursustes võim(alus) rääkida ja kuulatud saada, ning (3) mis tagajärjed on ääremaastumise diskursustel teadmiste loomise seisukohast: mis on selliste sotsiaal-ruumiliste määrangute subjektiivne olulisus ja milline on neile suunatud vastureaktsioon.

### 7.3. Uurimistöö metodoloogia ja ülesehitus

Uurimistöös käsitletakse mõistet „perifeeria“ valdavalt maapiirkondadega seotud (Fischer-Tahir ja Naumann 2013) tühja tähistajana (*empty signifier*) (Laclau 1996). Väitekirja kolme uurimisülesande lahendamisel (kuidas, kelle poolt ja milliste tagajärgedega maakohti ääremaadena kujutatakse) kasutatakse diskursiivse tähendusvälja analüüsi (Bourdieu 1991, Schwab-Trapp 2006) ja kriitilise diskursuseanalüüsi meetodeid. Kriitilise diskursuseanalüüsi meetodi arendas välja Jäger (1999) põhinedes Foucault' (1999) ja Link'i (1982) töödele.

Küsimustele, kuidas ja kelle poolt perifeeriaid diskursiivselt luuakse, saab vastata mõiste “diskursiivne perifeerumine” (Bürk 2013, 169) abil. Mõiste võtab arvesse ääremaastumise mitmemõõtmelist ja mitmetasandilist olemust, mis on tingitud paljudest teguritest, rõhutades samas olemuslikku rolli, mida diskursused selles mängivad (Plüschke-Altöf 2016). Põhinedes Foucault'le (1999) mõtestab see ääremaastumise diskursuseid kui midagi *performatiivset* ja võimusuhetes kinnistatut. Ühest küljest tekitavad diskursused võimusuhteid, toimides kui teadmiste loojad – nad üldistavad teatud tõlgendusi sotsiaalsest reaalsusest ja defineerivad seeläbi, mida õigupoolest saab ääremaade kohta väita (Foucault 1999, Jäger 1999). Veel enam, need diskursused loovad subjektiivseid tõdesid, millega äärealade elanikud peavad toime tulema (Meyer ja Miggelbrink 2013). Teisest küljest saavad diskursustes peamiselt rääkida ja ka kuulatud saada need, kelle käes on võim ja vahendid (Schwab-Trapp 2006). Kuna ääremaa diskursused ei eksisteeri vaakumis, otsustavad ühiskondlikud võimusuhted, kelle konstruktsioonid saavad mingil hetkel läbi hegemoonia fikseeritud ning sümbolite, kategooriate ja institutsionaalsetes praktikate kaudu avaldatud (Bourdieu 1991, Jäger 2008, Paasi 2010, Spivak 1988).

Kui maapiirkonnad seostatakse diskursuses ääremaa kuvandiga kerkib küsimus, millised on diskursiivse perifeerumise tagajärjed maapiirkondade

elanikele? See küsimus haakub Giddens'i (1984) ning Pred'i (1984) struktuuri ja agentsust (indiviidi võimet ühiskonna struktuuris toimida) vastandava käsitusega. Kuigi diskursused on hegemoonilised, on nad ka pidevas muutmises ja lõpmatud, võimaldades seeläbi manööverdamisruumi, kus konkureerivad osalejad saavad erinevate ühiskondlike agentide poolt vormitud võimusuhetes läbirääkimisi pidada (Foucault 1999, Meyer ja Miggelbrink 2013).

Arvestades eelnevalt kirjeldatud diskursuse kontseptsiooni on uurimistöö jaotatud kaheks omavahel seotud etapiks. Uurimistöö esimene etapp keskendub diskursiivse formatsiooni ja diskursiivse tähendusvälja analüüsile. Etapis analüüsiti esmalt Eesti suuremate ajalehtede arvamusrubriikides avaldatud tekste, et selgitada välja korduvaid diskursiivseid mustreid ja nende legitimeerimise strateegiaid. Tekstide analüüsile järgnesid süvaintervjuud arvamusliidrite ja ajalehtede toimetajatega, et mõista paremini sotsiaalajaloolist ja institutsionaalset konteksti ning „mõjugruppe“ (*interpreting coalition*) (Bürk jt. 2012, 339). Uurimistöö esimese etapi tulemusena selgus, kuidas ja kelle poolt soodustatakse teatud üldistusi ääremaade kohta Eesti avalikus diskursuses. Uurimistöö teises etapis analüüsiti kahes juhtumiuuringus hegemooniliste määrangute subjektiivset asjakohasust ja vastureaktsioone Eestis ääremaaks nimetatud kohtades. Teises etapis kasutati uurimismeetodina individuaal- ja grüpiintervjuusid aga ka osalejate vaatlust. Juhtumiuuringute analüüsi tulemusena saadi vastused, kuidas need, kes on vastamisi sarnase diskursiivse ääremaastumisega, omistavad sellele erinevat tähtsust ja rakendavad erinevaid toimetulemise strateegiaid.

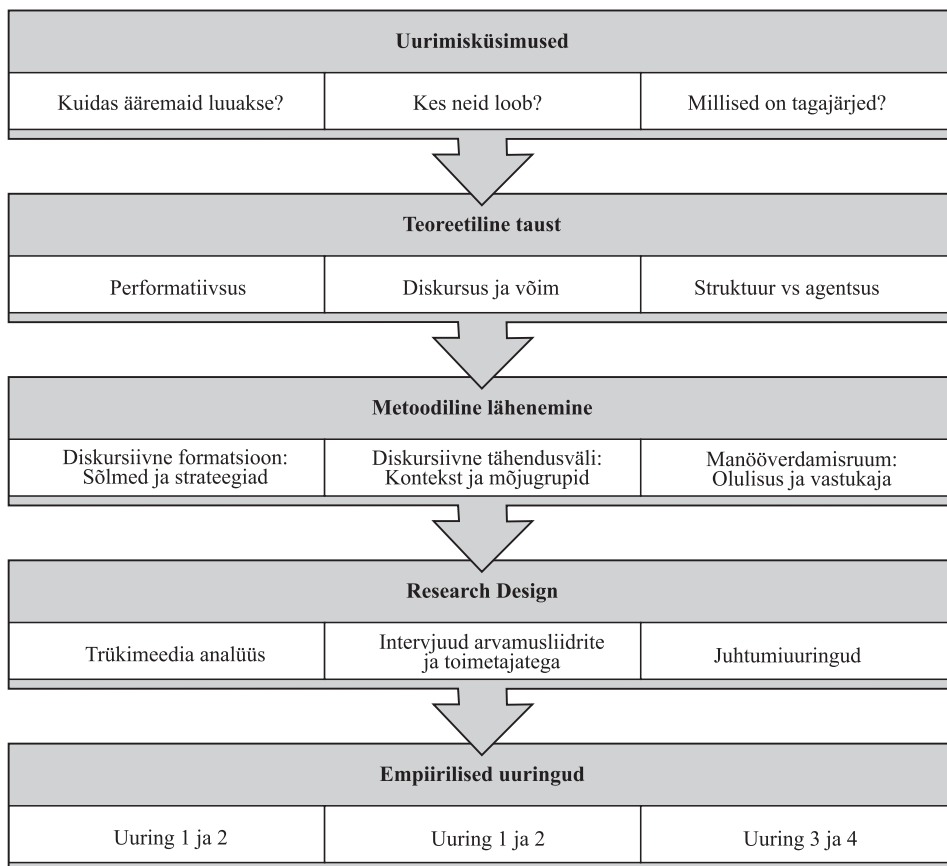
Tabelis I on esitatud ülevaade eespool välja toodud uurimistöö aluseks olevate uuringute metodoloogiast. Esimene ja teine uuring keskenduvad küsimustele, kuidas ja kelle poolt maapiirkondi perifeeriatena kujutatakse. Kolmas ja neljas uuring keskenduvad aga ääremaastumise tagajärgedele. Tervikuna hõlmas analüüs riiklikku, piirkondlikku ning kohalikku tasandit, või teisiti öeldes makro-, meso- ja mikrotasandit ning kasutas erinevaid kvalitatiivseid meetodeid, sh diskursiivset analüütilist raamistikku, mistõttu illustreerib tabel ühtlasi ka väitekirja mitmetasandilist ning multimetoodilist lähenemist.

**Tabel I.** Metoodiline lähenemine empiirilistes uuringutes

Uuring	Uurimisküsimus	Andmebaas	Ulatus
(1)	<b>Kuidas?</b> Maakohtade kujutamine ääremaadena	Arvamusartiklid Eesti trükimeedias	Makro
(2)	<b>Kes?</b> Mõjugrupid (Interpreting Coalition)	Intervjuud riiklike arvamusliidrite ja ajalehetoimetajatega	Makro
	<b>Kuidas?</b> Ääremaastumise diskursus kui heitlus regionaalarengu vastutuse küsimuse üle	Arvamusartiklid Eesti trükimeedias	
(3)	<b>Milliste tagajärgedega?</b> Olulisus ja vastureaktsioonid	Intervjuud kohalike otsustajatega ja kohalike elanikega	Meso- Mikro
		Osalejate vaatlus I juhtumiuuringu ajal	
(4)	<b>Milliste tagajärgedega?</b> Olulisus ja vastureaktsioonid	Intervjuud kohalike otsustajatega ja kohalike elanikega	Meso- Mikro
		Osalejate vaatlus II juhtumiuuringu ajal	

Allikas: Autori koostatud

Eespool kirjeldatu kajastub ka joonisel II illustreeritud väitekirja struktuuris. Keskendudes teoreetilisele taustale ja metoodilisele lähenemisele, selgitatakse kahes peatükis kontseptuaalset raamistikku üksikasjalikumalt. Teises peatükis asetatakse doktoritöö laiemasse epistemoloogilisse raamistikku ja arendatakse edasi diskursiivset ääremaastumist kui peamist teoreetilist kontseptsiooni, küsides kuidas, kelle poolt ja milliste tagajärgedega maakohti ääremaadeks (taas) luuakse. Kolmandas peatükis kirjeldatakse empiirilise uuringu kava, mis põhineb kriitilisel diskursuseanalüüsil, keskendudes diskursiivsele moodustamisele, diskursiivsele tähendusväljale ja diskursiivsele manööverdamisruumile. Uurimistö neljandas peatükis antakse põhjalik ülevaade postsotsialistliku Eesti maapiirkondadest kui uuringu kontekstist. Väitekirja keskmes on viiendas peatükis esitatud neli empiirilist uuringut, mis hõlmavad Eesti maapiirkondade ümber tekkinud diskursiivseid kuvandeid ja heitlusi, nii riiklikul kui ka kohalikul tasandil. Väitekirja lõppeb tulemuste kokkuvõttega ja lühikese aruteluga nende mõjude ning piirangute üle kuuendas peatükis.



**Joonis II.** Ülevaade: Doktoritöö struktuur

Allikas: Autori illustratsioon

## 7.4. Uurimistöö aktuaalsus ja olulisus

Siinne doktoritöö on interdistsiplinaarne, seostades nii sotsioloogiat, inimgeograafiat kui ka majandust. Seetõttu ei ole väitekiri oluline ainult akadeemilistes aruteludes, vaid ka praktikas. Kasutades kriitilise teooria lähenemisviisi, on selle põhieesmärk kahelda kohtadega seotud „tõdedes“ millel on tagajärjed nii käitumises kui ka ainelises tegelikkuses. Seetõttu on oluline mõelda nende vaidlustatava ja seega ka muudetava olemuse üle. Käsitledes „ääremaa“ terminit kui tühja tähistaja (*empty signifier*), mis võib endas kanda sellele projitseeritud tähendusi (Laclau 1996), tõstab käesolev väitekiri teadlikkust tähenduse andmise protsessidest ja selles osalevate agentide rollidest.

Keskendudes ääremaastumise diskursustele postsotsialistlikus Eestis, on väitekiri mitmes aspektis uudne. Kontseptuaalselt rõhutades diskursuste rolli ääremaastumisel, täiendab doktoritöö siiani domineerivat strukturalistlikku

lähenedist. Tänašeni on regionaalseid ebavõrdsusi peamiselt seletatud läbi majandusliku polarisatsiooni, sotsiaalse marginaliseerumise ja poliitilise ebavõrdsuse (Gyuris 2014, Kühn 2015). Kuigi Keim'i (2006) ääremaastumise arusaam juba rõhutas ruumilise hierarhia (PoSCoPP 2015) protsessuaalset, sõltuvat, mitmetasandilist ja mitmemõõtmelist olemust, on kommunikatsiooni-dimensiooni tähtis roll jäänud suurema tähelepanuta (Meyer ja Miggelbrink 2013). Sotsiaalteaduste kultuurilise pöörde järgselt on hakatud rohkem tähelepanu pöörama sotsiaal-ruumilistele kuvanditele. Rakendades diskursiivse ääremaastumise kontseptsiooni maakohtade konstrueerimisele Eesti meedias, täiendab väitekirjari empiirilist kirjandust ruumi tähenduse kohta Eestis (vt nt Alumäe 2006, Annist 2011, Kährrik jt. 2012, Nugin 2014, Nugin ja Trell 2015, Pfošer 2014, Sooväli 2004, Sooväli jt. 2005, Trell jt. 2012, Virkkunen 2002).

Sellegipolest koheldi neid kuvandeid tihti kui vaid eksisteeriva ruumilise hierarhia representatsioone. See lähenedine on päädinud "kultuurilise pöörde dematerialiseeriva mõju" märkimisväärse kriitikaga (Timár ja Velkey 2016, 321; Woods 2010). Kuna sotsiaal-ruumilised määrangud mitte ainult ei esinda, vaid ka tekitavad ruumilist hierarhiat, siis keskendub väitekirjari diskursuste, käitumiste ja ainelise reaalsuse seose uurimisele, sest seal on tuvastatud oluline uuringute tühimik keskuse-perifeeria teemal (Kühn ja Bernt 2013, Meyer ja Miggelbrink 2013). Väitekirjari uudsus seisneb kuvandite mõju uurimisel koha arenguvõimalustele, käsitledes diskursusi performatiivsetena, mis loovad teadmisi ruumi ja seal elavate inimeste kohta (Foucault 1999).

Viimaseks uurib väitekirjari ka sotsiaal-ruumiliste diskursuste tagajärgi, analüüsides läbi kahe juhtumiuuringu nende asjakohasust ja vastureaktsioone Eesti maakohtades. Diskursusi vaadeldakse seega struktureerimisprotsessina, mis pakuvad kohalikele osalejatele, kes peavad neile määratud kuvanditega toime tulema, ka teatavat manööverdamisruumi (Pred 1984, Meyer ja Miggelbrink 2013). Veelgi enam, väitekirjari uurib diskursiivsele ääremaastumisele esitatavate erinevate vastureaktsioonide potentsiaalseid eeliseid ja puudusi. Seega, see uurib kriitiliselt koha kuvandi tekkimise protsesse, sh ka koha turundust ja koha brändimist, millel on üha tähtsam roll regionaalarengu strateegiates (vt nt Kauppinen 2014, Kašková ja Chromý 2014, Paasi 2013, Semian ja Chromý 2014, Skjeggedal ja Overvåg 2017, Woods 2013).

Kokkuvõttes, uurides ääremaastumise diskursuseid Eestis, täiendab väitekirjari olemasoleva teaduskirjanduse puudusi:

- (1) (taas)rõhutades ääremaastumise diskursiivset dimensiooni;
- (2) analüüsides meedias esinevate ääremaa-diskursuste performatiivsust;
- (3) uurides diskursiivset manööverdamisruumi ääremaaks nimetatud kohtades.



## 7.5. Peamised tulemused ja järeldused

### Kuidas?

#### Diskursiivne formatsioon

Küsimusele, kuidas maapiirkonnad luuakse ääremaadeks, vastati diskursiivse formatsiooni analüüsi kaudu (Foucault 1999, Jäger 1999), mis põhines Eesti trükimeedia artiklite analüüsil ja süvaintervjuudel riiklike arvamustulude ning ajalehetöötajatega. Uurimustulemused, mis on esitatud nii esimeses kahes artiklis (Plüschke-Altöf 2016/2017) kui ka tabelis II näitavad, et diskursiivsed heitlused Eestis ääremaaks nimetatud paikades keerlevad ümber kahe keskse diskursiivse sõlmpunkti.

Esimene sõlmpunkt samastab maapiirkonnad perifeeriatega. Selle seose tulemusel kipub Eesti meedias toimuv hegemooniline diskursus laiendama spetsiifilised ääremaa omadused nagu majanduslikult mahajäänud, geograafiliselt kaugel, sotsiaalprobleemidega, poliitiliselt sõltuv ja institutsionaalselt nõrk, maapiirkondadele üleüldiselt. Seost ääremaade ja maapiirkondade vahel kasutatakse ka positiivset vastudiskursustes, mis keskenduvad maaelu idüllile, kirjeldades Eesti maakohti kui rahvushälle, mis on koduks rahvuskultuurile ja puutumata loodusele. Sellisel viisil lükatakse ääremaastumise kuvandeid ümber positiivsete kuvanditega. Diskursiivne heitlus, mis ringleb esimese sõlme ümber, toetub seega tugevalt modernistlikele ja pastoraalsetele konstruktsioonidele maaelust, millest on saanud tavapärane vastasseis maaelu diskursustes üleüldiselt (vrd Shucksmith jt. 2009).

Teine diskursiivne sõlm näitab märkimisväärset sarnasust (kapitalistlike) ruumilise ebavõrduse aruteludega, mille keskne teema on, kas regionaalarengu eest vastutajaks peaks olema riik või omavalitsus (vrd Gyuris 2014, Pike jt. 2007). Seega on põhiküsimuseks, kes põhjustas ja kes peaks tegelema ääremaastumise tagajärgedega. Kui esimene tugineb aktiivse toimetuleku ja “eduka” enesealgatuse narratiividele (seistes vastu isepõhjustatud “läbikukkumise” narratiividele), rõhutab viimane enesevastutuse piiranguid sõltuvuse ja hooletussejätmise narratiivides, ning esitab riigi sekkumist kui Eesti rahva elu ja surma küsimust.

Need kaks diskursiivset sõlme on sügavalt kinnistatud diskursiivses tähendusväljas, mida struktureerib postsotsialistlik ümberkujundamise protsess, mille tulemuseks on linna- ja maapiirkondade erinevuste süvenemine ja regionaalpoliitika üha suurenev neoliberaliseerumine. Veelgi enam, need näitavad, et Eesti meedia diskursused ääremaaks nimetatud kohtadest on rohkem kui nende sotsiaal-ruumiliste reaalsuste pelk kujutamine, vaid pigem nende maakohtade diskursiivse ääremaastumise juhtum (Bürk 2013, Plüschke-Altöf

2016). Seostades ääremaastumise teema maakohtadega ja vastutuse küsimusega, toimub diskursustes arutelu sobiva ja soovitud maaelu arengu poliitika üle, mis õigustavad neoliberaalset või sekkumist hõlmavat poliitikavalikut. Sellega luuakse performatiivselt teadmisi, millega ääremaade elanikud hakkavad suhestuma.

**Tabel II.** Diskursiivne formatsioon

<b>Uurimisküsimus</b>	Kuidas	Performatiivsus
		Teadmiste loomine
<b>Kontseptuali-seerimine</b>	Diskursiivne formatsioon	Sõlmed
		Legitimeerimise strateegiad
<b>Uurimistulemused</b>	Ääremaa = Maakoht	Sarnasus maaelu diskursusega: Modernistlik vs. pastoraalne narratiiv
	Ääremaa = Vastutav	Sarnasus ruumilise ebavõrdsuse aruteludega: oma-vs riigi vastutus

Allikas: Autori illustatsioon esimese ja teise artikli põhjal (Plüschke-Altöf 2016/2017)

## **Kelle poolt? Diskursiivne tähendusväli**

Küsimusele, kelle poolt on maapiirkonnad ääremaadeks tehtud, on vastatud diskursiivse tähendusvälja uurimisega (Bourdieu 1991, Schwab-Trapp 2006), mis põhines konteksti analüüsil ja põhjalikel intervjuudel riiklike arvamusiõidrite ja ajalehtede toimetajatega. Tabel III illustreerib uurimistulemusi, mida käsitletakse üksikasjalikumalt nii esimeses kahes artiklis kui ka uurimistegevuse kontekstis (Plüschke-Altöf 2016/2017, 4. peatükk). Arvestades Eesti trükimeedia institutsionaalset raamistikku, keskendus diskursiivse tähendusvälja analüüs nii sotsiaal-ajaloolisele kontekstile, milles ääremaastumise diskursused arenevad kui ka neid juhtivatele mõjgruppidele.

Vaatamata keerulistele arengutele ja kogemustele, mis Eesti maapiirkondade olusid iseloomustavad, võib öelda, et nende diskursiivne ääremaastumine toimub keskkonnas, mida mõjutavad kolm peamist protsessi: postsotsialistlik transformatsioon, (piirkondliku) poliitika jätkuv neoliberaliseerumine ning

üha süvenev linna- ja maapiirkondade polariseerumine. Eriti paistab silma mittekapitalistliku ja/või vasakpoolse poliitika<sup>1</sup> valikute puudumine domineerivas arutelus ja poliitikas, mis adresseeriks linna ja maa ebavõrdsust läbi ebavõrdse arengu ja võrdõiguslikkuse printsiibi. Seda võib tõlgendada kui kapitalistliku ümberkoloniseerimise tulemust postsotsialistlikus (maa)ruumis üleüldiselt, ja eriti Eestis (vrd Kay jt., 2012, Koobak ja Marling 2014, Lauristin ja Vihalemm 2009). Need protsessid ei mõjuta vaid maaelu ainelist reaalsust, mida on allutatud mitmetasandilisele ja mitmemõõtmelisele ääremaastumisele alates 1991. aastast, mil Eesti sai taas iseseisvaks; vaid ka võimalikke või võimalikuks peetavate poliitiliste lahenduste hulka.

Veelgi enam, hoolimata avaliku foorumi ligipääsetavusest ja mittediskrimineerivast olemusest, mida näitab kõrgelt hinnatud ajakirjandusvabadus Eestis (Freedom House 2016, Reporter ohne Grenzen 2016), domineerib trükimeedia diskursuseid ääremaadeks nimetatud kohtadest arvamusliidrite rühm, keda võib iseloomustada kui “intellektuaalsed, meessoost, linnast” (Plüschke-Altöf 2016/2017). Sellest tulenevalt võib öelda, et mõjugruppe iseloomustab võimu erapoolik suhtumine, mis üldiselt eelistab linnainimesi/ agente, ning kellel on seega potentsiaal formaliseerida regionaalarengu ja -innovatsiooni määratlus, ning seega asetada linnad maapiirkondadega võrreldes eelisseisu (vrd Bristow 2010, Shearmur 2012). Maapiirkonnad on seega läbi hegemoonia allutatud ääremaastumise diskursusele.

Diskursiivne tähendusväli mõjutab diskursiivset teadmiste loomist. Struktureerides ruumi ning limiteerides, mis on mõeldav ja öeldav, mõjutab see viimaks ka seda, mis on tehtav (Bourdieu 1991). Esmalt tuleb see ilmsiks riigisisestes ääremaastumise diskursustes, mis keerlevad ümber maaelu ja vastutuse küsimuste sõlmpunktide, mis näitavad linnade ja maakohtade üha suurenevaid erinevusi ning regionaalpoliitika neoliberaliseerumist. Samuti tuleb see ilmsiks kohalike toimetamisstrateegiates.

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<sup>1</sup> Lisateavet vasakpoolsete regionaalarengu arutelude kohta, mis lähtuvad marksistlikel, sotsialistlikel ning mittekapitalistlikel ideedel, vt: Gyuris 2014 peatükid 5 ja 8

**Tabel III.** Diskursiivne tähendusväli

<b>Uurimisküsimus</b>	Kelle poolt?	Diskursus ja võim
		Teadmiste loomine
<b>Kontseptualiseerimine</b>	Diskursiivne tähendusväli	Sotsiaal-ajalooline kontekst
		Mõjugrupid
<b>Uurimistulemused</b>	Neoliberaliseerumine, post-sotsialistlik ümberkujundamine, linna-ja maapiirkondade polarisatsioon	Kapitalistlik 'ümberkoloniseerimine'
	Linna-maa võimu ebavõrdsus	Intellektuaal-, linna-ja meessoost arvamuseliit

Allikas: Autori illustatsioon esimese ja teise artikli (Plüschke-Altöf 2016/2017) ja uurimistöökonteksti põhjal (4. peatükk)

### **Milliste tagajärgedega? Diskursiivne manööverdamisruum**

Küsimusele, millised tagajärjed on maapiirkondade ääremaaks tegemisel, vastati analüüsidest diskursiivset manööverdamisruumi (Meyer ja Miggelbrink 2013, Pred 1984), tuginedes kahele juhtumiuuringule ääremaaks märgistatud kohtades. Need hõlmasid süvaintervjuusid kohalike otsustajate ja elanikega ning osalejate vaatlust Lõuna-Eestis, täpsemalt Valgamaa põhjaosas ning Setomaal. Nagu on toodud tabelis IV, keskenduvad uurimistulemused diskursiivse formatsiooni asjakohasusele ja vastureaktsioonidele konkreetse diskursiivse tähendusvälja kontekstis Eestis. Üksikasjalikumalt on neid kirjeldatud kolmandas ja neljandas artiklis (Plüschke-Altöf 2018a/b).

Uurimistöökulemuseks kerkisid esile kaks keskset strateegiat tulemaks toime hegemoonilise diskursuse baasil tekkinud ääremaa kuvanditega: (strateegiline) enese-ääremaastamine ja kuvandi ümberpööramine. Postsotsialistliku ruumi maakohtade kahekordse ääremaastamise (nii diskursiivse kui ka materiaalse) taustal näitavad tulemused, et kuvandipõhised vastustrateegiad võivad ka ootustele vastupidiselt töötada. Kuigi kuvandi ümberpööramise meetod läbi kohaturunduse on olnud maapiirkondade arengu lootuskiireks, võib see ka peita või idealiseerida püsivaid materiaalseid raskusi ja seega toita neoliberaalset poliitikat, mis propageerib õiglase regionaalarengu hüvanguks rohkem enese ja

vähem riigi vastutust. Vastukaaluks võib olemasoleva ääremaa kuvandi avalik (strateegiline) presenteerimine toimida kohaliku tasandi vabastajana, suunates vastutuse piirkondliku arengu eest tagasi riigile.

Mõlemad strateegiad aktsepteerivad kumbki omal moel diskursiivset ääremaastumist, millega nad ise silmitsi seisavad, ja seda oma kindlatel põhjustel. Vastustrateegiad, mis lükkaksid linna ja maa hierarhiad ning neid põhjustavad normid tagasi (vrd Bürk jt. 2012), peaaegu puuduvad. Seepärast on riiklikus trükimeedias analüüsitud ääremaastumise diskursused olulised kohalikust situatsioonist arusaamisel. Ühelt poolt paistavad kohalikud heitlused leidmaks “õiget” reaktsiooni diskursiivsele ääremaastumisele väga sarnased diskursuste ja vastudiskursustega riiklikul tasemel, mida mõnikord isegi otseselt nimetatakse diskursiivseks ressursiks. Teiselt poolt aga näitab norme hülgavate strateegiate silmatorkav puudumine kohalikke piiranguid võitlemaks diskursiivse hegemooniaga, mida soodustavad võimusuhetes kinnistunud mõjugarupid.

**Tabel IV.** Diskursiivne manööverdamisruum

<b>Uurimisküsimus</b>	Milliste tagajärgedega?	Struktuur vs. agentsus
		Subjekti kujundamine
<b>Kontseptualisatsioon</b>	Diskursiivne manööverdamisruum	Olulisus
		Vastureaktsioon
<b>Uurimistulemused</b>	(Strateegiline) enese-ääremaastumine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Diskursiivse uuestimärgistamise oht</li> <li>- Kohaliku vabastamine/ Riigi vastutajaks asetamine</li> </ul>
	Kuvandi ümberpööramine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ainelise reaalsuse varjamise/ idealiseerimise oht</li> <li>- Riigi vabastamine/ Kohaliku vastutajaks asetamine</li> </ul>

Allikas: Autori illustatsioon kolmanda ja neljanda artikli põhjal (Plüschke-Altöf 2018a/b)

## Akadeemilised ja praktilised rakendamise võimalused

Keskendudes kohakuvandite ja piirkonna arengu vahelistele seostele, ühendab doktoritöö kolm akadeemilist valdkonda: inimgeograafia, sotsioloogia ja majanduse. Ühest küljest lisab selline lähenemine majandusliku perspektiivi inimgeograafias ja sotsioloogia laialt levinud diskursuse teematikale, rõhutades, et ääremaastumise diskursustel on oluline mõju maapiirkondade (taas)loomisele. Lisaks uurimistöö keskmes olevale Eesti juhtumile näitavad uurimistulemused, et diskursusi ei saa võtta vaid kui viise teadmiste saamiseks perifeersetest maakohtadest, vaid ka kui tõekspidamisi, mis mõjutavad maal elavaid inimesi, kes on sellisele teadmiste loomisele allutatud ja tunnevad vajadust sellele vastata. Seega mõjutavad diskursused ka koha arenguvõimalusi. Teisest küljest kombineerib doktoritöö diskursuseanalüüsi kui uudse lähenemisviisi (regionaal-)majanduslikele uuringutele näidates, et regionaalne ebavõrdsus on mõjutatud ka diskursusest lähtuvatest kuvanditest. See haakub käitumisökonoomika uuringutega, mis on näidanud, et otsustusprotsessid ei ole ilmtingimata ratsionaalsed, vaid põhinevad tihti sotsiaalsetel normidel ja uskumustel, mis kaaluvad üle majanduslikult mõistlikud otsused (Thaler 2015). Väitekiri näitab, et ka meie otsused ruumis võivad tihti olla ebaratsionaalsed, tuginedes kohakuvanditel, olenemata sellest, kas need kuvandid vastavad tõe või mitte.

Siinne doktoritöö on interdistsiplinaarne, mistõttu on sellel ka praktiline väärtus, eeskätt meedia ja poliitika valdkonnas. Dekonstrueerides protsessi, kuidas maapiirkonnad on diskursiivselt ääremaadeks loodud, toob väitekiri esile asjaolu, et maapiirkondade perifeersus ei ole iseenesestmõistetav ega vältimatu, vaid kuvand, mida kujundavad ja (taas)loovad diskursuses osalejad ja vastuvõtjad. Tähelepanuta ei tohiks jätta ka asjaolu, et kinnistatud ühiskondlikes võimusuhetes, mis struktureerivad erinevaid diskursuses osalevaid organeid, on diskursustes alati teatud manööverdamisruum, mida saavad kasutada ka need, kes on allutatud ääremaastumise kujundile. Seega, kui need kuvandid on (aktiivselt) loodud, saab seda protsessi ka ümber pöörata. Kuvandite loomisel ja nende ümber pööramisel on autori hinnangul oluline ja vastutusrikas roll eelkõige ajakirjanikel, kelle otsustest, kuidas maakohtadest rääkida mõjutab nii kuvandite loomist kui ka nende muutumist.

Ääremaastumise diskursused ei eksisteeri vaakumis. Juhtumiuuringud on esile toonud, milliste väljakutsetega kohalikud otsustajad peavad silmitsi seisma, kui nad üritavad ääremaa kuvanditega toime tulla. Siinne doktoritöö kirjeldab kuivõrd tihedalt on diskursused, sotsiaal-ruumilised praktikad ning ainelisus omavahel seotud. Diskursused ja kuvandid on regionaalarengus keskse tähtsusega, ähvardades läbi märgistamise arenguprotsesse või pakkudes uusi

arenguvõimalusi kuvandimuutuse või kohaturunduse kaudu. Siiski toob siinne uurimistöö välja, et kuvanditest üksi maakohtade tuleviku määramiseks ei piisa. Sellest tulenevalt ei tohiks ka võrdsema regionaalarengu lahendus keskenduda üksnes kuvanditele, vaid regionaalpoliitikas tuleks arvestada mõlemaga: nii diskursiivse kui ka materiaalsega.

# CURRICULUM VITÆ

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Date of Birth            08.07.1986  
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## Education

2014–...                 **University of Tartu, Faculty of Social Sciences, Doctorate.**  
                              PhD Thesis “Discursive Peripheralization of Rural Areas in  
                              Post-Socialist Estonia”  
                              Secondment at Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava

2010–2013              **Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Department of Social  
Sciences, Master of Arts**  
                              MA Thesis “Portraying the Other in Estonian Majority  
                              Discourse”  
                              Summer Schools in Estonia, Poland, Russia, Turkey

2006–2009              **Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Department of Social  
Sciences, Bachelor of Arts**  
                              BA Thesis “Gender Relations in the Transformation Process in  
                              Poland since 1989”  
                              Exchange Term at University of Warsaw

1997–2006              **Gymnasium Carolinum, High School Diploma**  
                              Exchange Year at Pirita Majandusgümnaasium in Tallinn

## Employment

2014–...                 Geomedia Ltd, Early Stage Researcher

2013–2014              Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, E-Learning and Career Service  
Coordinator

2010–2013              Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Teaching and Research  
Assistant

2008–2010              German Voluntary Service IN VIA e.V., Workshop Trainer



### **Internships and Voluntary Work**

2013-2014	Parliamentary Elections, Poll Station Worker
2011-2014	Alex Berlin WE TV Project, Production Assistant and Moderator
2011-2012	Intercultural Network Joliba e.V., Freelance Journalist
2011-2012	Rambøll Management Consulting GmbH, Intern
2009	Partnership of Parliaments e.V., Intern
2009	Amnesty International Polska, Intern
2008	Counselling for Women from Central-Eastern Europe IN VIA e.V., Intern

### **Honors and Awards**

2014	Marie Curie Fellowship, Early Stage Researcher, Tartu
2013	DAAD Scholarship, Intensive Russian Language Course, Moscow
2012	Honor of Governing Mayor for Voluntary and Civic Engagement, Berlin
2012	Scholarship by Turkish Ministry of Culture, Study Trip, Istanbul-Ankara-Erzurum
2008	Erasmus Scholarship, Exchange Semester, Warsaw



# ANNEX

## Annex 1. Media analysis

### 1.1. Data Corpus Maaleht

No.	Author	Date	Titel
1	Aunaste, Maire	23.08.2015	Ilusad pisarad
2	Breidaks, Arved	13.12.2012	Tähtis ja tähtsusetu haldusreform
3	Eesti Keskkonnaühenduste Koda (EKO)	03.07.2013	Oleme nõrдинud põllumajandusministeeriumi tegevusest
4	Gräzin, Igor	02.10.2015	Haldusreformi test: Peipsiveere maakond
5	Kaldre, Peeter	09.08.2012	Jälle häda mõistuse pärast
6	Kaljuste, Kalev	16.09.2011	Valla oma nägu on tähtis
7	Kaljuste, Kalev	21.10.2014	Võimatu missioon Tootsis ehk siin pakutakse kõike seda, mida inimesed vajavad
8	Känd, Ivo	14.04.2015	Haldusreform – lootus, mis sureb viimasena
9	Kivisilla, Veronika	10.09.2013	Hoidlikkus – meie aade
10	Kokk, Aivar	11.05.2012	Haldusreformiga edasi
11	Kose küla 124 elanikku	12.06.2015	Kose küla elanike avalik kiri: Neli aastat põrgut
12	Läänemets, Lauri	04.09.2015	Haldusreform vajab reformi
13	Lumi, Neeme	07.10.2011	Mure hariduse pärast
14	Mäggi, Janek	29.06.2014	Riigi leib – pikk ja peenike
15	Maalehe Lugeja	18.03.2013	Lugejakiri: Ettevaatust – SEBE ei armasta maainimesi!
16	Männik, Jaanus	10.02.2012	Elujõud otsakorral?
17	Mattheus, Ülo; Helme, Martin; Ojuland, Kristiina; Michal, Kristen; Aaviksoo, Jaak; Liivat, Anto; Tamme, Tarmo; Uudelepp, Annika	16.01.2015	Riigikogu valimised 1. märtsil: mida parlamenti pürgivad parteid rahvale lubavad?
18	Neivelt, Indrek	22.11.2013	Sulev Valner: Millist omavalitsust tahame XXI sajandil

19	Neivelt, Indrek	04.10.2012	Uskumatu lugu. Nagu Lollidemaal elaks.
20	Noorkõiv, Rivo	01.02.2013	Bussitoetus hoopis autoomanikule?
21	Oll, Sulev	13.01.2011	Rahva käest jäämegi küsima
22	Oll, Sulev	01.11.2012	Juhtkiri: 35 minuti reegel
23	Oll, Sulev	27.06.2013	Juhtkiri: Suurte ja oluliste valikute aeg
24	Padu, Hillar	10.07.2015	Enam eneseirooniat!
25	Paet, Urmas	29.08.2015	Nõrritavad praamijärjekorrad
26	Peksar, Arno; Ellram, Jüri; Rahumägi, Deiw	15.05.2015	Kas tööhõive teie vallas sõltub ühest ettevõttest?
27	Pöder, Andres	22.03.2015	See ürgne Maarjamaa
28	Ploompuu, Tõnu	07.04.2013	Suurvalda ootab suur tulevik
29	Raud, Neeme	30.11.2013	Eesti peab võitlema ääremaastumisega
30	Raagmaa, Garri	26.08.2011	Mitmetükiline Eesti
31	Raagmaa, Garri	23.10.2015	2,7 toobine omavalitsusreform
32	Raudla, Heiki	27.01.2013	Kahte head küll ei saa
33	Raudla, Heiki	19.02.2015	Sõna sekka: Mitu ääremaad
34	Raudsepp, Olev	14.04.2013	Kuidas ääremaadele elu sisse puhuda?
35	Rebase, Indrek	04.02.2013	Haldusreform: valdade liitmise asemel koostöö
36	Roonurm, Aivo; Selge, Are; Perv, Märt; Laasner, Aili; Pärnpuu, Linda; Rahnel, Urmas; Habakukk, Kristel; Niinemägi, Aivar; Terep, Kristi; Kusmin, Jüri	10.03.2011	Minu sõnum vastsele Riigikogule
37	Sinijärv, Karl Martin	16.02.2013	Maarahva linnad ja linnarahva maa
38	Soopan, Ivar	03.04.2015	Võimule rahva toetuseta
39	Tooming, Jaan	22.06.2014	Märkmeid Eestist
40	Uudeberg, Toomas; Kruusmaa, Rein; Vapper, Ülle; Põlluäär, Aarne; Lootsmann, Värner	29.03.2012	Mida ootate linnade ja valdade üldkogult?
41	Uudelepp, Agu	26.09.2015	Anname aga liitlastele jalaga

42	Uuslail, Taisto	02.06.2011	Peost suhu, peost pihku
43	Vähi, Risto	12.11.2015	miks arvatakse, et väikelinnade kinnisvaraturud on halvas seisus?
44	Vallik, Aidi	09.02.2013	Läänemaa ühinemisest ja kaotatud võimalustest
45	Valner, Sulev	14.04.2011	Uus inimõigus
46	Verk, Leho	15.09.2015	Traktoritest ja vastukajast
47	Viidik, Aivar	16.08.2012	Mosaiikne Eesti
48	Viidik, Aivar	29.11.2012	Juhtkiri: Pidurid ja vedurid
49	Vipp, Kaupo	09.03.2013	Torgu, regionaalpoliitika ja projektiühiskond
50	Vipp, Kaupo	07.06.2013	Rahvusriik versus haldusreform
51	Vitsur, Heido	08.02.2013	Maksumuudatuste tegelik hind

## 1.2. Data Corpus Eesti Päevaleht

No.	Author	Date	Title
1	Aasmäe, Hardo	02.11.2011	Liiga vähe omavalitsust
2	Aasmäe, Hardo	23.11.2012	Eesti ülesanded uutel piiriläbirääkimistel
3	Alatalu, Toomas	03.04.2015	The Times osaleb hübriidsõjas
4	Bahovski, Erkki	04.01.2012	Hirm jätab Eesti perifeeriasse
5	Barkalaja. Anzori	02.08.2012	Kas jäävad üksnes konveiererialad?
6	Estam, Jüri	19.04.2015	Liitlaste alaline paiknemine või mittepaiknemine Eestis määrab, kas langeme uuesti Vene hegemoonia alla
7	Estam, Jüri	21.02.2015	Nähes Debatseves rahvusvahelise üldsuse poolt üksinda jäetud Ukraina sõdurite vintsutusi ja vangilangemist, kangastuvad silme ees pildid Lõuna-Vietnami lõppvaatusest
8	Garton Ash, Timothy	20.06.2011	Euroopa rooli peab haarama naine
9	Frankel, Jeffrey	18.05.2011	Kreeka: kolm viga
10	Hansen, Regina	15.02.2012	Teid lõhub teljekoormus, mitte niivõrd kogumass
11	Herkel, Andres	06.08.2014	Vabaerakonna Nipernaadid käivad risti-rästi läbi Eesti
12	Hvostov, Andrei	01.11.2013	„Laikides” Atoneni
13	Illend, Jaanus Juhan	12.11.2013	Seisukoht: Planeerimisega getode vastu
14	Jõesaar, Tuuli	30.04.2013	Suremiseks on aega kolm aastat ja kuu?
15	Juhtkiri	20.07.2012	Alternatiive kütuseveole!
16	Juhtkiri	11.05.2012	Loodusimed ja raha
17	Juhtkiri	17.05.2012	Õhuke riik, paks inimene
18	Juhtkiri	15.05.2013	Reaalsusega sobitamine
19	Juhtkiri	29.05.2014	Globaalse küla ääremaastumine
20	Juhtkiri	12.08.2015	Bürokraadid bussi vastu
21	Juhtkiri	22.07.2015	Sotside luitunud nipid

22	Kaljuvee, Ardo	03.03.2011	Nagu poiss ja liblik
23	Kaljuvee, Ardo	14.03.2011	Mida riigikogu peab tegema
24	Kaljuvee, Ardo	26.04.2011	Juhtkiri: Ennustatavad üllatused
25	Kaljuvee, Ardo	24.05.2011	Juhtkiri: Järgmine samm allakäigutrepil
26	Kattel, Rainer	25.03.2011	Arvamus Euroopa uus normaalsus
27	Kattel, Rainer	27.09.2014	Alampalga tõstmine on hädavajalik
28	Klemm, Jürgen	28.04.2014	Körberohelised mehikesed Ämaris
29	Luik, Hans H.	04.07.2011	Määramatuses jääb vaid usaldada parimaid päid
30	Luts, Hannes	18.03.2011	Kadunud raudteed
31	Maimik, Andres	09.07.2012	Elu võimalikkusest maal
32	Maruste, Rait	02.10.2012	Aeg nõuab uut asüüliipoliitikat
33	Meesak, Märt	21.01.2011	Haldus ja omakasu
34	Mikko, Marianne	25.08.2015	Sotside vastulöökk Urmas Paeti kriitikale: Brüsseli mugavustsoonist on lihtne sõnapalle loopida
35	Mürk, Imre	22.11.2014	Valimisliitude Vabakonna manifest „Tasakaalus Eesti“: väikelinnad vajavad investeringuid
36	Narusk, Agne	10.05.2011	Suurlinna tuled lapsi ei paita
37	Nõmm, Eha	12.08.2013	Lugejakiri: Tõmbekeskuste reformi kasu on osaline
38	Nõmm, Eha	28.01.2014	Lugeja kiri: Ka Eestimaad asustavad nüüd eremiidid
39	Novikov, Andrei	20.11.2015	Kuhu me koos Euroopaga liigume?
40	Olesk, Peeter	05.08.2013	Kas riik jääb ääremaadele alles?
41	Ots, Tanel	15.06.2014	Saku vallajuht: Rail Balticuga küüditatud ehk vajame trassi, mille ääres on valmis elama ka peaminister Rõivas!
42	Paet, Urmas	07.11.2015	Estonian Air'i liinide äkksulgumine ohustab Eestit veelgi provintsistada
43	Palgi, Tanel Jan	22.03.2013	Milline on Eesti Gei-indeks?
44	Paris, Krister	07.05.2014	Repliik: Entusiasmi tapjad
45	Pärnits, Mikk	31.12.2013	Võitmine – ühe rokkstaari lugu

46	Peterson, Toomas	15.11.2014	Estonian Airi eksjuht Toomas Peterson: Kui müüakse seni maksumaksjate päästetud Estonian Airi, siis mida tegelikult müüakse?
47	Piirsalu, Jaanus	03.12.2011	Venemaa poliitika insider: Putini võib võimult tõugata ainult riigipööre
48	Poom, Raimo	01.06.2011	Mina – ülevillade kinnimaksja
49	Raagmaa, Garri	09.11.2012	Tallinnastumise viljad
50	Raagmaa, Garri	27.12.2012	Jõuluku koju!
51	Raig, Ivar	08.04.2015	Rõivas hakkab juhtima valitsust, mille peaideoloog on Mikser
52	Rand, Erik	05.12.2011	JUHTKIRI: Las arvavad meist hästi
53	Rand, Erik	24.04.2012	Maimu Berg: Eestlaste sõltuvus Soomest kujundab soomlaste suhtumist
54	Rand, Erik	26.07.2012	Repliik: Paagitais nädalas
55	Randpere, Valdo	07.11.2015	Valdo Randpere lõppmäng Estonian Airile: ostsin eile pileti Brüsselisse – Lufthansa pakkus piletit 184, Estonian Air 527 euroga... Raske valik.
56	Ratas, Jüri	04.04.2015	Jüri Ratas uuest võimuliidust: „Kindlalt edasi“ ehk kuidas Eesti allapoole triivib
57	Saar, Jüri	26.02.2015	Jüri Saar kolm päeva enne valimisi: võimuparteid istuvad rahva seljas ja tõmbavad rihma üha enam pingule
58	Salumäe, Raivo	28.08.2013	Kogukondlikkus võib olla lahendus
59	Seppel, Ly	29.06.2011	Türgi suhtes tasub olla avatum
60	Simson, Priit	14.06.2011	Miks te metsavendi ei kutsunud?
61	Soans, Hanno	16.07.2013	Pealinna turismivärvate ümbrus õhkab viletsust
62	Soonvald, Urmo	19.03.2015	Taavi Rõivase kiri Mikserile, Reinsalule, Herkelile: Läbi rääkida saab ikkagi asju rahulikult läbi rääkides, mitte neid rääkimata jättes



63	Sõrmus, Roomet	28.03.2012	Brüssel surub Balti põllumehi peksupoisiks
64	Suurkask, Heiki	18.07.2011	Juhtkiri: Linnastumisest algab Eestis allakäik
65	Tarand, Kaarel	24.01.2012	Väiksema Eesti võlud
66	Tigasson, Külli-Riin	24.05.2013	Tehnikaülikooli professor Erik Reinert: eurole üleminek oli viga
67	Tigasson, Külli-Riin	19.02.2013	Las lahkuvad Eestist?
68	Valk, Veronika	08.01.2013	Vormist väljas Eesti
69	Vassiljev, Rannar	08.11.2015	Estonian Airi üks suuremaid vigu oli ulmelise lennukeskuse rajamine Tallinnasse
70	Veebel, Viljar	29.03.2011	Euroopa väärtused: tõbine kannab tervet
71	Veebel, Viljar	20.02.2012	Päästkem Kreeka ja Portugal paralleelvaluutaga
72	Viik, Tõnu	29.03.2011	Aaviksoo, Raud ja eestluse tuum
73	Watt, Andrew	13.07.2011	Itaalia lõi vankuma: vaja on uut julget plaani kriisiga võitlemiseks
74	Zirmask, Villu	22.02.2011	Majandusprogrammid – suured erimeelsused maksudes
75	Zirmask, Villu	12.09.2013	Repliik: Ettevõtlikkus aitab

### 1.3. Data Corpus Postimees

No.	Author	Date	Title
1	Aasmäe, Hardo	29.07.2013	Igal raudteel oma elu
2	Alajõe, Sulev	19.11.2012	Pooleteise linnaga Eesti
3	Arrak, Andres	02.11.2012	Estonian Airi asemele Baltic Airlines!
4	Bahovski, Erkki	14.09.2014	Eesti ajaloo Stockholmi sündroom
5	Berg, Eiki	26.11.2013	Naabrid, partnerid ja valikud
6	Breidaks, Arved	08.12.2011	Äri peab käima kogu Eestis
7	Breidaks, Arved	22.05.2012	Maksuvaba tanklakett
8	Ennus, Raul	24.09.2014	Eestist võib kümne aastaga võrsuda kaks uut Skype'i – reaalne!
9	Eslas, Urve	15.07.2013	Kelle jalas on püksid? Kiltide all pükse ei kanta
10	Gnadenteich, Uwe	14.02.2015	Nali hakkab tõeks saama
11	Hallap, Tiiu	19.05.2012	Tulevikukool: ruumi- või veebipõhine?
12	Heidmets, Mati	11.05.2013	Eesti maailmas – usume Euroopa Liitu!
13	Henno, Kairit; Teder, Merike	13.01.2015	Miks üksikvanematoetus ei tõuse?
14	Hint, Mati	01.09.2013	Nõukogude aeg ja väärtused
15	Hõglund, Inga	20.01.2012	Martin Schulz: võitlen 27 liikmega Eli eest!
16	Ibrus, Indrek	13.10.2012	Kuidas sünnib uus kultuuris?
17	Ideon, Argo	09.11.2012	Soome tööminister: oskustöötajate värbamine välismaalt on meile paratamatus
18	Ilves, Toomas Hendrik; Sinikalda, Meribel	15.01.2015	Eestil on vaja heade ideede elluviijaid
19	Juhtkiri	16.12.2011	Kes tahaks elada töötuna väikelinnas?
20	Juhtkiri	01.11.2012	Õhuga või õhus
21	Juhtkiri	17.12.2013	Need mõned elektrita nädalad aastas
22	Juhtkiri	19.11.2013	Maailmapanga peenvaade vaesusele Eesti piirkondades

23	Juhtkiri	27.11.2013	Jalgpalli Mmi ülekanne on kohalolek maailmas
24	Juhtkiri	29.04.2014	Positiivne mõtlemine kaotab väärtusetud majad
25	Juhtkiri	02.01.2014	Autopiloodi aasta
26	Juhtkiri	07.01.2014	Porgandipirukas
27	Juhtkiri	07.11.2015	Tulevik peab olema õhust kaalukam
28	Juhtkiri	12.02.2015	Unistus Soome torust
29	Juhtkiri	29.10.2012	Homnikusöök Riias
30	Juhtkiri	29.09.2012	Piirideta mõtlemine toob kaasa edulugusid
31	Juhtkiri	20.02.2012	Haldushirm
32	Kaldoja, Evelyn	31.10.2012	Vaja on ka seletajat
33	Kallam, Aivar	28.12.2013	Thatcher on meile halb eeskuju
34	Kallas, Kaja	07.03.2014	Kolm sammu Euroopasse
35	Kangro, Tiina; Lill, Anne	29.02.2012	Lämbumas vabariigi hoole all
36	Karjahärm, Toomas; Teder, Merike	22.06.2014	Raamat Eesti riigi sünnis
37	Karnau, Andrus	26.09.2014	Hanssoni kuus punkti
38	Karuks, Tiit	22.12.2012	Esimesed kuud pensionärina
39	Karulin, Ott	27.04.2015	Perifeerias asuva kõrgkooli vajalikkus ja võimalused
40	Kask, Ülle; Teder, Merike	29.10.2013	Restart valimislubadustega
41	Kattel, Rainer	26.09.2014	Uus normaalsus ei ole normaalne
42	Kergandberg, Eerik	13.10.2013	Kakskaru jahimeestega lingvistilises metsas
43	Kivi, Ahto; Veismann, Ann; Karmin, Monika	21.10.2015	Waldorfi gümnaasiumi lapsevanemad: erakoolid tagavad hariduselu mitmekesisuse
44	Kivimägi, Agu	01.10.2013	Parem kui Lätis. Ja kõik?
45	Kontšalovski, Andrei	25.10.2013	Millisesse jumalasse usub vene inimene
46	Krastev, Ivan	31.10.2012	Euroopa lahusus
47	Kross, Eerik-Niiles	30.01.2015	Putini internatsionaal

48	Kruve, Virgo; Teder, Merike	14.05.2014	Välismaa mainerünnak e-valimiste vastu
49	Kull, Kalevi; Kuutma, Kristin; Lotman, Mihhail; Raud, Rein; Tamm, Marek; Torop, Peeter; Viik, Tõnu	25.10.2014	Eesti kultuuri süvamehhanismid
50	Kund, Oliver	28.04.2012	Lauristin: kool vajab uute majade kõrval uut moodi sisu
51	Laats, Mati; Randlo, Toomas	13.07.2015	Kuidas viia läbi omavalitsusreform?
52	Läänemets, Märt	07.01.2013	Mida toob 2013 ehk millal Aasia sajand Eestisse jõuab?
53	Langemets, Andres	20.11.2014	Kes peab kellega integreeruma?
54	Lauristin, Marju	11.11.2012	Sotsiaalteadused kui osa rahvusteadustest
55	Lepik, Kristjan	08.06.2012	Miks Krugmanile Eesti näide ei meeldi?
56	Listra, Enn	02.11.2012	Kas Eesti või õhk?
57	Lobjakas, Ahto	18.04.2012	Saksa euroopalik imperialism
58	Lobjakas, Ahto	30.01.2013	Mitte nii uhke, mitte nii üksi
59	Loomeliit	07.09.2015	Loomeliitude avalik pöördumine: Oki raportit ei saa võtta haridusreformi aluseks
60	Maasikas, Matti	10.02.2013	Kuidas kütta Euroopa tuba?
61	Mälksoo, Lauri	13.08.2013	«Tallinna käsiraamat» kui rahvusvahelise elu sündmus
62	Männi, Marian	23.03.2015	Laboririik
63	Maripuu, Sander	19.12.2013	Ennast kahe küla vahel jagades
64	Martinson, Jaan	13.08.2014	Vahva sõdur Tšonkin – Venemaa absurduse lipukandja
65	Martinson, Jaan	22.07.2014	Kuidas toidust saab seesamune ehk seiklused seedetraktis
66	Martinson, Jaan	29.07.2014	Postapokalüptiline piibel: kas Moskva metroo päästab inimkonna?
67	Martinson, Jaan	17.09.2014	Suvorov paljastab taas: kuidas Venemaa maailma vallutada ihkas
68	Matsin, Paavo	12.12.2011	Ratsutades tiigri seljas

69	Meesak, Märt	13.08.2015	Eesti haldusreform võiks eeskju võtta Saksamaast
70	Metsar, Enn; Raun, Alo	21.12.2011	Debatikohtunik: küll oli täna frustreeriv väitlus
71	Metsis, Madis	19.03.2012	Taome ajud atradeks
72	Mihkelson, Marko	26.10.2013	Eesti välispoliitika kompassist ja eesmärkidest
73	Mikita, Valdur	14.12.2014	Mikroetnos
74	Mikita, Valdur	01.01.2014	Hurda tagasitulek ehk kuidas sokutada šamaanile nutitelefoni
75	Mikser, Sven	04.06.2013	Kuidas Tallinnast saaks tõesti eeskju
76	Mikser, Sven	25.08.2014	Tere tulemast progressiivse tulumaksu toetajate klubisse, IRL!
77	Minnik, Taavi	12.10.2015	Mida on Venemaa Süürias saavutanud?
78	Mürk, Imre	19.02.2013	Euroopa majanduskriis ja Eesti õppetunnid
79	Mutt, Mihkel	05.12.2011	Pudruplekk riigi rinnaesisel
80	Mutt, Mihkel	06.06.2012	puhtukeste parteid ei ole ega tule
81	Mutt, Mihkel	18.07.2012	Iseseisvusega või iseseisvuseta
82	Mutt, Mihkel	09.10.2013	Mõttele globaalselt, aga tegutseda kodus
83	Muuli, Kalle	02.12.2011	Rohud sulle, raha mulle!
84	Niitra, Nils	18.02.2012	Käed eemale ERMist Tartus!
85	Noorkõiv, Rivo	21.01.2013	Kaval-Antsud ja rahvastikuregister
86	Oidsalu, Meelis	21.11.2013	Milles seisneb kultuurilehe poliitilisus?
87	Olesk, Peeter	04.08.2013	Kui naaber mõtleb teisiti
88	Olesk, Arko	13.09.2014	Tere tulemast Laniakeesse!
89	Olesk, Arko	04.10.2014	Uni kaotab aju keerukuse
90	Oravas, Haldo	06.03.2012	Vastuoluline valdkond
91	Ossinovski, Jevgeni	14.08.2015	Otsküsitlus: lugejate küsimustele vastas Jevgeni Ossinovski
92	Paavo, Vambola	06.11.2015	Kui kuuldused Estonian Airi surmast osutuvad tõeks...

93	Pao, Bruno	02.04.2014	Hoop erameditsiinile
94	Pahv, Peep	06.09.2012	Andekusest ei piisa
95	Pahv, Peep	10.04.2015	Vald pole firma
96	Palling, Kalle; Randlo, Toomas	12.06.2015	Pagulased vankrit vedama, mitte järgi lohisema
97	Palo, Urve	09.09.2014	Edu seisab töökohtade taga
98	Palts, Tõnis	30.01.2014	Värskast kuivade setu sussidega Manhattanile
99	Pärismaa, Sirje; Teder, Merike	21.12.2014	Direktorid korraga kahel toolil
100	Pärna, Ott; Teder, Merike	22.05.2013	Strateegilised välisinvesteeringud ja äriturism vajavad panustamist
101	Past, Liisa	14.01.2012	Normatiiv-Eesti
102	Pere, Peeter	02.05.2013	Pealinn provintsis
103	Peterson, Toomas	11.10.2012	Suur Estonian Air väikses Eestis
104	Peterson, Toomas; Randlo, Toomas	21.09.2015	Miks peaks Estonian Airist saama odavlennufirma
105	Petti, Kalev	11.01.2012	Maalt linna, pisarateta
106	Piirsalu, Jaanus	23.10.2014	Ivan Zassurski: normaalset meediaäri Venemaal enam pole
107	Pöldvee, Aivar	06.04.2013	Kuidas «sünnitati» eestlastele Vanemuine?
108	Poom, Uve	08.01.2013	Kommunismikuritegudest ja inimõigustest ja minevikust jagusaamisest
109	Raag, Ilmar	20.02.2012	Kannatuse jäävuse seadus?
110	Raagmaa, Garri	21.12.2011	Kas tahame Eestisse väikest Ameerikat?
111	Raagmaa, Garri	12.10.2012	Suurlinna tulede petlik sära
112	Raagmaa, Garri	24.10.2012	Hobuvankril XXI sajandisse
113	Raagmaa, Garri	15.06.2013	Euroopa köis – las lohiseb!
114	Raagmaa, Garri	22.09.2013	Kas linnriik Eesti?
115	Raagmaa, Garri	14.08.2014	Kasiinokapitalismi lõpp ja Eesti eluruumi kestmine
116	Randlo, Toomas	13.02.2014	Reedel Sirbis: põlvkondadest, Y-generatsioonist ja virtuaalkultuurist

117	Raun, Alo	20.12.2011	Kas ääremaastumine on ikka Eesti ühiskonnale kahjulik?
118	Raun, Alo	24.08.2012	Luman: kooliharidus vajab jõulist riigi kätt
119	Raun, Alo	30.09.2012	Krista Kerge: keelekorralduse põhimõtted
120	Raun, Alo	06.11.2012	Kihnu Õhu päästmine
121	Raun, Alo; Kallas, Kaja; Eesti Väitlusselts	01.01.2013	Online-väitlus: Karmid euroliidu riigiabi reeglid kaitsevad Eestit
122	Raun, Alo; Noorkõiv, Rivo	07.05.2013	Ekspert haldusreformist: Varasemad kurameerijad võtavad pulmakingi välja
123	Raun, Alo; Raagmaa, Garri; Eesti Väitlusselts	21.12.2011	Online-väitlus: Ääremaastumine on Eesti ühiskonnale kahjulik?
124	Raun, Alo; Raagmaa, Garri; Eesti Väitlusselts	21.12.2011	Online-väitluse 2. osa: Ääremaastumine, kas halb või hea?
125	Remsu, Olev	03.12.2012	Põhiseadusefantaasia
126	Reps, Mailis	01.02.2013	Uus PGS tuleb kõige nõrgemate arvelt
127	Rõivas, Taavi	10.04.2015	Taavi Rõivas: pika vaatega Visadusliit
128	Rõivas, Taavi; Kangro, Karin	08.04.2015	Rõivas ristas loodava koalitsiooni visadusliiduks
129	Rõivas, Taavi; Tagel, Liisa	23.07.2015	Mul on hea meel, et Elis jäid pagulasküsimuses peale Eesti seisukohad
130	Roonemaa, Henrik	08.05.2015	Kuus põhjust Uberile uks avada
131	Roostalu, Priit	06.04.2014	Euroopa Liidu marginaliseerumine
132	Saar, Jüri	18.02.2012	Liiga suure unistuse hoidja
133	Saar, Vello	13.04.2015	Miks soovitakse tappa lüpsvat lehma?
134	Salu, Mikk	23.07.2012	Ärge kiusake bensiinivedajaid
135	Sarv, Mikk	04.04.2012	Meie vaimse iseseisvuse kants
136	Selart, Anti	11.01.2013	Ajaloolased ei pea rahvuslikku identiteeti looma
137	Sepp, Kalev	19.11.2015	Maastike kaitsekorraldus vajab paindlikumat lähenemist

138	Soosaar, Raivo	28.09.2012	Kas peame riigivõla pärast muretsema?
139	Stewart, Tuuli	15.02.2012	Lugeja kirjutab: võrdsuse valem
140	Talts, Karina; Laurits, Peeter	25.12.2013	Loovus ja kultuuripoliitika
141	Tamm, Marek	07.09.2014	Jacques Rupnik: eurooplased on viimased taimetoitlased lihasööjate maailmas
142	Tarand, Kaarel	19.12.2012	Selle lõbu nad maksavad kinni
143	Tarand, Kaarel; Teder, Merike	13.03.2015	Elu pärast rohelisi
144	Teder, Merike	23.04.2015	Reedel Sirbis: Viljandi kunstist, teatrist, muusikast, linnaruumist
145	Teder, Merike; Ossinovski, Jevgeni; Nutt, Mart	18.09.2013	Online-väitlus: Kas Euroopa Liidu liikumine föderatsiooni suunas on Eesti huvides?
146	Tiit, Ene-Margit	21.02.2014	96-aastase riigi rahvastik
147	Tõnisson, Tõnis	03.12.2013	Mis saab vabast ajakirjandusest?
148	Trei, Jan	11.12.2014	Korrigeerimisest ja sancerimisest
149	Treimann, Tarmo	23.01.2013	Hea teema valimiste aastaks
150	Turay, Abdul	13.12.2012	Hartalaste maailm
151	Vaikla, Nils	10.09.2012	Õppetunnid Euroopale rahaliitude ajaloost
152	Vallimäe, Tanel	12.05.2013	Väärikus, individualism ja Eesti liberaalid
153	Valk, Veronika; Teder, Merike	27.09.2013	Hajamajandav Eesti?
154	Valner, Sulev	31.01.2012	Kedagi ei jäeta maha
155	Vassiljev, Rannar	20.12.2013	«Saatanad» inimhinge jahil
156	Vaux, Pierre	02.07.2014	Venemaa kaugjuhitav sõda
157	Veebel, Viljar	23.04.2013	0,18-protsendine hääleõigus
158	Veidemann, Andra	22.09.2012	Diagnoos – ebaõiglane ebavõrdsus
159	Veidemann, Rein	10.12.2011	Humanitaaria valgustatuse ja viljakuse nimel
160	Veidemann, Rein	30.01.2012	Hüljatud ühiskond
161	Veidemann, Rein	29.02.2012	Juri Lotman ja/kui Eesti tekst
162	Veidemann, Rein	07.05.2012	Eesti apooria



<b>163</b>	Veidemann, Rein	28.10.2012	Kuhu oled jõudmas, eesti kultuur?
<b>164</b>	Veidemann, Rein	29.12.2012	Kolmas äratus
<b>165</b>	Veidemann, Rein	06.06.2013	Raamat-monument eestluse mõttekojale
<b>166</b>	Veldre, Eimar	16.11.2012	Usaldust vääriv poliitika eeldab tõsiselt võetavat riigikogu
<b>167</b>	Veskimees, Siim	22.01.2014	Euroopa Liidust. Lagunemisest
<b>168</b>	Veskimees, Siim	13.03.2014	Eesti – edukas laip?
<b>169</b>	Villems, Richard	11.02.2015	Seks, vägivald ja liikide kodustamine
<b>170</b>	Virmavirta, Jarmo	22.04.2013	Iseseisvuse ime

## 1.4. Data Corpus Setomaa

No.	Author EPL	Date	Titel
1	Adorf, Margit	12.07.2011	Nädalavahetusel tabas politsei arvukalt joores sõidukijuhte
2	Eesti Päevaleht	23.09.2011	Pihkva konsul: venelaste huvi Eesti külastamise vastu kasvab pidevalt
3	Eesti Päevaleht	21.12.2011	DASA, DASA jõulukellad kajavad...
4	Heinapuu, Ott	03.07.2009	Kihnu muuseum avas pärast põhjalikku remonti taas ukсед
5	Heinapuu, Ott	28.07.2009	Setod tahavad udmurtidelt õppida, kuidas käsitööd paremini müüa
6	Heinapuu, Ott	05.08.2009	Setomaa uus sootska Õie Sarv: setodelt ei tohi kooliharidust ära võtta
7	Heinapuu, Ott	03.09.2009	Kaubanduskoda: uus keeleseadus läheks Eesti ettevõtetele kalliks
8	Heinapuu, Ott	25.09.2009	Suursaadik ärgitas setusid koostööle Ukraina vähemustega
9	Heinapuu, Ott	11.12.2009	Endine minister: setud võiksid Venemaal saada põlisrahva staatuse
10	Käärt, Ulvar	01.09.2010	Setud saavad loa jälle kuuritsaga kala püüda
11	Kask, Kalev	30.09.2009	Setu leelo sai UNESCO kultuuripärandiks
12	Meiessaar, Maris	04.08.2009	Setumaa valis uue sootska – ikka demokraatlikult
13	Nõu, Ursula	04.07.2014	Homses Laupäevalehes LP: Jalmar Vabarna: Kõik arvavad, et olen laulja, aga ma ju tegelikult ei ole
14	Nutov, Mirjam	12.01.2012	Haani keel ei kõlba loendusel emakeeleks
15	Pihl, Kristjan	05.08.2011	Vabaõhumuuseumi ehitatav külapood Coca-Colat ja krõpse müüma ei hakka
16	Rand, Erik	06.03.2010	Pihkva kuberner loodab setod Eestist minema meelitada
17	Reimer, Andres	07.08.2010	Ilves: seto leelonaised väärivad riiklikku kaitset

18	Sarjas, Aive	14.12.2011	Jaauanuaris alustab pealinnas tööd seto laste kool
19	Sarv, Mari	09.03.2013	Jalmar Vabarna, rõõmus moosekant iga ilmaga
20	Sikk, Rein	05.10.2009	Valimised: Setumaal sebiivad nagistavad naabrid
21	Sikk, Rein	13.11.2010	Analüüs: Võrumaa ime algas setode suureks saamisest
22	Sikk, Rein	08.10.2011	Setod peavad Värskas X kongressi
23	Sikk, Rein	01.02.2012	Täismahus: Vähetuntud Korela külakene lööb ükshaaval Eesti külmarekordeid
24	Sikk, Rein	30.03.2012	Setomaal võib sündida Seto vald. Või hoopis Seto Mikro- maakond?
25	Sikk, Rein	04.12.2012	Seto müstika: üks Venemaa küla, kaks muuseumi, kolm elanikku
26	Sikk, Rein	17.12.2012	Setode plaan: Ostame vene muuseumi ära!
27	Sikk, Rein	03.01.2013	Eestil on võimalik Venemaa seto muuseum ära osta
28	Sikk, Rein	04.07.2013	Obinitza pürib ost-ugri kultuuripealinnaks
29	Sikk, Rein	22.08.2013	Kuuekümnne vallaga Eestimaa sündi takistavad vanad karid
30	Sikk, Rein	12.12.2013	Teil on juhuslikult üks kultuurimaja üle? Pakkuge muuseumile
31	Sikk, Rein	03.03.2014	Kagu-Eesti 2025: mahe maakond ja Eestist suurem linn
32	Taro, Igor	21.10.2013	Bensiinimüüdi piinlik edulugu
33	Vanatumr, Ilma; Umbsaar, Tiina; Nõmm, Eha	25.09.2013	Lugejate kirjad
34	Veenre, Tanel	05.11.2011	Õigeusu pühamud tsässonast katedraalini
35	Villak, Hetlin	20.01.2009	Setod paluvad valitsuselt piiriületamise probleemile inimlikku lahendust
36	Villak, Hetlin	16.02.2009	Petseri koolist võib taas saada Eesti gümnaasium

No.	Author (Maaleht)	Date	Titel
37	Aarma, Jüri	17.05.2015	Ülemsootska Annela I: Õppige setodelt piiririigis elamist!
38	Eestielu.ee	23.08.2013	Tõmbekeskused lõhuvad seto identiteeti?
39	Klaats, Erika	23.04.2010	Miks seto kindad lähevad teistest paremini müügiks?
40	Lattu, Kirsi	16.03.2011	Setumaa kultuuriprogrammist jagus toetusi rohkem kui poolesajale ettevõtmisele
41	Lõhmus, Alo	29.01.2010	Kas antiikautorid mainisid muistset setu veeteed?
42	Lõhmus, Alo	15.11.2012	Sunduslikud kultuuriajakirjad tolmuvad niisama riiulitel
43	Lõhmus, Alo	18.12.2014	Riigikogu jagas raha ka kirikute katustele
44	Maaleht	16.07.2009	Kas olete puhanud Eesti turismitaludes?
45	Maaleht	21.03.2013	Kodanikualgatus viib kokku kogukonnad ja maal elamisest huvitatud inimesed
46	Maaleht	09.04.2013	Peipsiveere regionaalprogramm laieneb
47	Maaleht	02.06.2013	Fotod: Võrokeelsest laulupeost Uma Pido võttis osa 8100 inimest
48	Maaleht	12.08.2013	Nädalavahetusel on Setumaal kohvikutepäev ehk Seto Külävüü kostipäiv
49	Maaleht	12.09.2013	Küsitlus: Kas elu teie kodukandis on läinud paremaks või halvemaks?
50	Maaleht	01.11.2013	Kohanimed on eestlastele olulised
51	Maaleht	18.02.2014	Setod: lepime piirilepinguga, aga nõuame viisavaba piiriületust
52	Maaleht	10.03.2014	Saatse kandi inimesed on mures Värsksa-Saatse riigimaantee pärast
53	Maaleht	10.03.2014	Soome-ugrilased otsivad uut kultuuripealinna
54	Maaleht	24.03.2014	Regionaalarengu projekte toetati mullu enam kui 62 miljoni euroga

54	Maaleht	07.04.2014	Kodanikualgatus aitab Saatse elanikel tee korda saada
56	Maaleht	08.04.2014	Riigikogu väliskomisjon arutas Setomaa esindajatega piiriala arendamise küsimusi
57	Maaleht	07.05.2014	Setomaad toetatakse tänavu enam kui veerand miljoni euroga
58	Maaleht	23.05.2014	Vaata, kus toimuvad sellesuvised kalapeod!
59	Maaleht	02.06.2014	Obinitsa Muuseumis avatakse setu identiteeti lahkav näitus „SETO?“
60	Maaleht	05.06.2014	Setud otsivad setot
61	Maaleht	02.10.2014	Obinitsa Muuseumis arutatakse seto kogukonna teemadel
62	Maaleht	05.11.2014	Õpilasfirmad lähevad ja tulevad üle piiri
63	Maaleht	29.12.2014	Obinitsast saab jaanuaris 25 miljoni inimese kultuuripealinn
64	Maaleht	20.02.2015	Viisteist ettevõtet pälvisid ökoturismi kvaliteedimärgise EHE
65	Maaleht	11.05.2015	Maapiirkonna ettevõtluse hoogustamiseks töötatakse välja uus toetusprogramm
66	Maaleht	20.06.2015	Kuhu minna: jaanituled Eesti maakondades 2015
67	Maaleht.ee	18.05.2009	Selgus kõige kurvem maamees
68	Maaleht.ee	12.07.2011	Hiline jaanipäev tõi autorooli uue laine purjus juhte
69	Maaleht.ee	08.08.2011	Galerii: Setomaa Kuningriik pidutses
70	Malkov, Pille	10.09.2013	Meremäe valla külasid hakatakse kujundama ideekonkursi tulemustele tuginedes
71	Mikovitš, Bianca	21.01.2009	Piirivalve korjas piirialadel passe ära
72	Mikovitš, Bianca	08.03.2009	Tulemas Setomaa maavarade uuringu tutvustus
73	Mikovitš, Bianca	03.08.2009	Setomaa sai endale uue sootska
74	Mikovitš, Bianca	25.08.2009	Stockholmi Eesti majas kõlas seto leelo

75	Mikovitš, Bianca	15.09.2009	Setomaa koguteos kaante vahel
76	Mikovitš, Bianca	03.11.2009	Seto Talumuuseum tähistab 15. Sünnipäeva
77	Mikovitš, Bianca	15.02.2010	Kirikutes algab sel nädalal suur paast
78	Mikovitš, Bianca	04.08.2010	Sel nädalal saabub XVII Seto Kuningriik
79	Mikovitš, Bianca	11.10.2010	Välisminister Urmas Paet külastab Setomaad
80	Mikovitš, Bianca	26.11.2010	Värskas tuleb esmaettekandele "Seto Sümfoonia Peko"
81	Mikovitš, Bianca	08.12.2010	Piusal tunnustati Põlvamaa parimaid turismitegijaid
82	Mikovitš, Bianca	15.12.2010	Kirikutes algab sel nädalal suur paast
83	Mikovitš, Bianca	13.05.2011	Seto Talumuuseum läbis värskenduskuuri
85	Mikovitš, Bianca	15.07.2011	Kuningriigipäevaks
84	Mikovitš, Bianca	02.08.2011	Kauksi Ülle värsked näidendid viib viikingiaegsele Setomaale
85	Mõttus, Aive	18.02.2013	Külaelu edendajad võitlevad põllumeestega toetuste pärast
86	Mõttus, Aive	26.02.2013	Meremäe aasta tegijad annetasid saadud rahasumma suurperedele
87	Mõttus, Aive	12.03.2013	Setomaa muuseumides algab fotode kogumisaktsioon
88	Mõttus, Aive	09.04.2013	Lõuna-Eesti kutsub: tule maale elama!
89	Mõttus, Aive	07.05.2013	Setomaa külateatrite päeval sai kogeda äratundmisrõõmu
90	Mõttus, Aive	29.10.2013	Eesti esimene mungaklooster rajatakse Beresjesse
91	Mõttus, Aive	18.12.2013	Setomaal pandi päikesepaneelid miljöö hoidmiseks katuse asemel künkanõlvale
92	Mõttus, Aive	22.01.2014	Tervest Setomaast saab üks vald
93	MTÜ Setomaa Turism	29.04.2014	Turismimarsruut Seto Külävüü on nüüd korralikult tähistatud
94	Nutov, Mirjam	17.11.2011	Buss sõidab, kui rahvas tahab

95	Nutov, Mirjam	15.03.2012	Emakeelepäeval anti Kimmäs Seto ja Hindätiidmise avvu hinnad
96	Nutov, Mirjam	05.04.2012	Setumaa vallad soovivad eristaatust
97	Nutov, Mirjam	19.04.2012	Koolisööklad söövad ettevõtjate tulu
98	Nutov, Mirjam	19.10.2012	Setumaal taastati tsässon
99	Nutov, Mirjam	14.12.2012	Setu köögi kokaraamat teel maailma parimaks
100	Nutov, Mirjam	09.05.2013	Petseri saab tarkuse maja
101	Nutov, Mirjam	24.04.2014	Kohalikud on pahased, et vald eelistab uusasukaid
102	Nutov, Mirjam	11.08.2014	Vaimustav! Obinitza valiti 2015. Aasta ost-ugri kultuuripealinnaks
103	Nutov, Mirjam	24.10.2014	Fotod: Vaata, kuidas Tsirk Obinitza lendas
104	Nutov, Mirjam	08.01.2015	Igor Taro: lähen poliitikasse, sest tahan, et mu lastel oleks hea elada
105	Nutov, Mirjam	18.08.2014	Suur fotogalerii: Seto külavüü kostipäev tõi rahvast kohale nagu murdu
106	Nutov, Mirjam	23.01.2015	Seiklusrikas elu tõi suksud ja suuskadega vankri
107	Oil, Sulev	06.03.2010	Ülemsootska tervitas Põlva pärimusaastat
108	Oil, Sulev	21.11.2010	Hiie söber 10223 on Mari-Ann Rimmel
109	Oil, Sulev	19.01.2012	Koolireformija: Osa koole on pigem sotsiaalasutused
110	Ots, Andres	08.07.2013	Pärimusteater tõstatab seto kogukonnas olulisi teemasid
111	Pähn, Külli	28.11.2010	Setod otsivad võimalust setokeelse sate taastamiseks
112	Pähn, Külli	14.12.2010	Lätlased ja setumaalased suurendavad metsanduses koostööd
113	Pähn, Külli	17.01.2011	Fotod: Setomaal algas uus aasta
114	Pähn, Külli	11.07.2011	Muinasrokk viljakusjumal Pekost meeldis president Ilvesele väga
115	Pähn, Külli	20.02.2012	Tatimäätsa hamsahus – mis toit see veel on?

116	Pähn, Külli	03.04.2012	Moskvitšist elektriautoni – Orava vald 20
117	Pähn, Külli	23.07.2012	Setomaa piirkonnad korraldasid II nurga kokkutuleku
118	Pärismaa, Sirje	21.05.2009	Eesti Maaülikool laiendab vastuvõttu
119	Pernits, Peeter	26.03.2009	Toomas Vitsut: Riigile on omavalitsused justkui prügikast
120	Raamets, Heli	11.04.2013	Võru- ja Setumaa tegid turismilõksu
121	Raamets, Heli	27.02.2015	EHE märgis lubab turistile ehtsaid elamusi
122	Raudvere, Rein	15.01.2009	Venemaa viisa kompensatsioonitaotluste esitamise tähtaeg pikenes
123	Raudvere, Rein	22.01.2009	Setumaal tuleb külade aasta
124	Raudvere, Rein	03.12.2009	Setude mure – tahad oma vanemaid näha, maksa 15 000 krooni
125	Raudvere, Rein; Oll, Sulev	23.02.2011	Kogu tõe Eesti iibest: 2/3 valdades ületavad surmad sünde
126	Raudvere, Rein	06.10.2011	Omavalitsuste unistused: Mikitamäe lootis aatomist rikkust
127	Raudvere, Rein	22.11.2012	Lõuna-Eesti kutsub rahvast linnast maale
128	Raudvere, Rein	15.12.2012	Setud hakkavad nüüd ise raamatuid tegema
129	Raudvere, Rein	12.04.2013	Kolige parem maale!
130	Sarjas, Aive	08.05.2009	Maaelu päästerõngad: õnnelike inimeste õhtud ja külasaun
131	Sarjas, Aive	31.08.2009	Eesti setod käisid Venemaal leelotamas
132	Sarjas, Aive	11.10.2009	Obinitsa külakeskus pakub tervist ja tegutsemisrõõmu
133	Sarjas, Aive	23.09.2010	Kodune ja kadunud kolgaranna kiel
134	Sarjas, Aive	27.09.2010	Setomaal saab tänasest handsasepi osta
135	Sarjas, Aive	13.10.2010	Setod ja võrokased soovivad määrata oma etnilist kuuluvust
136	Sarjas, Aive	14.12.2010	Setod usuvad endasse ning tunnevad uhkust oma kultuuri üle



137	Sarjas, Aive	10.01.2011	Venemaa võtab setodelt õiguse Petseri rajoonis maad omada Täiendatud
138	Sarjas, Aive	18.02.2011	Setod saavad pulmadeks riigilt toetust küsida
139	Sarjas, Aive	02.03.2011	Setomaa rahaline seis on tänava varasemast viletsam
140	Sarjas, Aive	17.08.2011	Seto Instituuti hakkab juhtima ülemsootska
141	Sarjas, Aive	31.08.2011	Pihkva kuberner soovib, et setod Venemaale elama tuleks
142	Sarjas, Aive	03.10.2011	Algab seto kultuuri nädal
143	Sarjas, Aive	10.10.2011	Setomaa vallad ootavad ost peresid, kuid lasteaedadesse panustavad kesiselt
144	Sarjas, Aive	14.11.2011	Setomaal hakkab sõitma buss, mille marsruut kujuneb vastavalt sõitjate soovidele
145	Sarjas, Aive	21.11.2011	Setumaa elujõu tagavad töökohad
146	Sarjas, Aive	22.11.2011	Setu kultuuri edendamiseks anti ligi 9000 eurot
147	Sarjas, Aive	23.11.2011	Käsiraamat õpetab, kuidas kodus energiat säästa
148	Sarjas, Aive	13.12.2011	Andres Arrak elu võimalikkusest Setomaal
149	Sarjas, Aive	14.12.2011	Jaanuaris alustab pealinnas tööd seto laste kool
150	Sarjas, Aive	17.01.2012	Uskumatu, aga tõsi: "Jaroslavli naised" on tegelikult seto baabad
151	Sarjas, Aive	25.04.2012	Rahvuskultuuri Keskus vahendab paikkondlikele kultuuriprogrammidele üle poole miljoni euro
152	Sikk, Rein	11.09.2014	Setud said naissoost sootska
153	Sikk, Rein	07.10.2014	Soome-Ugri kultuuripealinna sümbol-lind jõuab Setomaale
154	Simson, Kai	30.04.2009	Mis toimub nädalavahetusel maakondades
155	Taro, Igor	02.12.2014	Anne Vabarna kultuuripremia saavad Igor Taro ja Seto Talumuuseum

## 1.5. Data Corpus Valgamaa

No.	Author	Date	Titel
1	Eek, Eveliis	26.03.2013	Kohtumajas võib näha valgust tunneli lõpus
2	Eiland, Einar	04.10.2011	Õpetaja, õpetaja – millal sina tuled
3	Jaska, Vello	04.07.2013	Nagu haige tiivaga lind
4	Juhtkiri	08.07.2014	Panga saadik ääremaadel
5	Juhtkiri	29.12.2015	Andkem aega atra seada!
6	Jullis, Kiur	18.04.2013	Kiri: Eesti kahel kiirusel
7	Kängsepp, Heino	08.11.2012	Iga kala hakkab alati mädanema peast
8	Kõiv, Henri	08.07.2014	Ratastel pangakontori argipäev — hajameelne Jüri ja kass Kostja
9	Kõiv, Henri	16.07.2014	Otepää kohalikud: trall on ära tüüdanud
10	Kõiv, Henri	31.08.2014	Rikkaliku ajalooa Pikasilla kooli viimane ohe
11	Kõiv, Henri	04.09.2014	Tööstuspark investoreid ligi meelitada ei suuda
12	Kõiv, Henri	16.09.2014	Mida annab arengukava Valgamaa inimesele?
13	Kurg, Koidula (?)	20.02.2014	Kiri: Turvalisus – kodaniku enda asi?
14	Kütt, Helmen	10.01.2013	Hooldajad vajavad tuge
15	Lemmik, Sirje	31.05.2011	Kunagi pole hilja loobuda suitsetamisest
16	Lemmik, Sirje	19.06.2012	Pealinlased peavad Valgamaad Eestimaa Siberiks
17	Lemmik, Sirje	04.03.2013	Külaselts haaras ohjad
18	Lemmik, Sirje	05.03.2013	Riisali külaselts haaras ohjad
19	Lemmik, Sirje	25.07.2013	Valla hammas hoonete remondile peale ei hakka
20	Lemmik, Sirje	14.09.2013	Maakonna liidrina jätkab Otepää vald
21	Lemmik, Sirje	12.10.2013	Tõrva kandidaadid rõhuvad ettevõtluse arendamisele
22	Lemmik, Sirje	14.02.2015	Maksud, alampalk ja haldusreform tekitavad erimeelsusi

23	Lemmik, Sirje	05.03.2015	Näitus näitab koha kätte
24	Lemmik, Sirje	07.03.2015	Näitus andis keskusele üllatava ilme
25	Lemmik, Sirje	09.05.2015	Valgamaa pered said kutse pidupäevakontserdile
26	Lemmik, Sirje	02.11.2015	Valga linn hoogustab ühinemisläbirääkimisi naabritega
27	Lenk, Heimar	02.06.2012	Riik ei soosi ettevõtjat
28	Lepik, Margus	20.12.2012	Kuidas tulevikus ellu jääda?
29	Lõhmus, Eleri	11.08.2012	Ka maal saab kino
30	Margus, Lea	08.11.2014	Muuseumi saatus endiselt lahtine
31	Margus, Lea	09.04.2015	Põhjanaanaber sattus tohtriga pahuksisse
32	Margus, Lea	18.07.2015	Omaenda eksminister
33	Margus, Lea	18.07.2015	Jeti küla – ei mingeid lumeinimesi, vaid armsad mägiveised
34	Margus, Lea	17.12.2015	Elva kiikab liitujate otsingul kahe Valgamaa valla poole
35	Martinson, Riina	09.05.2013	Peagi võib postiljon ravimid koju tuua
36	Niitsee, Taavi	19.09.2015	Koduloo väärtus seisneb juurtes
37	Niitsee, Taavi	05.12.2015	Suurvalla nime küsimus küttis õhu kuumaks
38	Palling, Kalle	11.09.2014	Miks Eesti vajab nii hädasti ühendusi Euroopaga?
39	Paur, Toomas	27.01.2015	Võtke õppust esiisade tarkusest
40	Ploom, Liisi	19.09.2015	Ilmjärve – küla, mis on koondunud kiriku ümber
41	Ploom, Liisi	11.10.2015	Sangastes arutati ühinemise võimalusi
42	Randver, Rein	18.06.2013	Lahendusi on tarvis nüüd ja kohe
43	Randver, Rein	17.11.2015	Lõpuks tuleb ka lõigata
44	Rapp, Jaan	12.09.2013	Valgamaale võimekuse edetabel suurt rõõmu ei toonud
45	Rapp, Jaan	12.10.2015	Valgamaad väisasid suursaadikud
46	Rapp, Jaan	10.12.2015	Riigikogu võttis vastu riigieelarve
47	Raudsepp, Olev	05.03.2013	Aidates ääremaid, aitame kogu riiki

48	Renno, Olav	27.01.2011	Milles Eestimaa valijad siis ikkagi kindlad võivad olla?
49	Rüstülainen, Jüri	10.12.2015	Valga linnaarhitekt jagab Viljandis kogemusi
50	Säinas, Rein	13.12.2014	Klubi eestvedaja haub Läti vallutamise plaane
51	Säinas, Rein	29.10.2015	Võimlemisfestivali kava töötab kirevat vaatamängu
52	Säinas Rein	01.11.2015	Galerii: Võimlemisfestival pakkus ilusat vaatamängu
53	Säinas, Rein	03.11.2015	Võimlemisfestival tõi lavale suured ja väiksed
54	Salumäe, Karl-Eduard	20.05.2014	Üksikkandidaadid räägivad oma eesmärkidest
55	Sarv, Kalmer	03.10.2013	Tasa ja targu tähtede poole
56	Sinivalu, Urve	29.05.2012	Tagurpidi-Antsu tegemised
57	Sinivalu, Urve	03.12.2013	Väikevaldadele peaks jääma võimalus jätkata
58	Sinivalu, Urve	03.04.2014	Sõjajapanikast ja turvatundest
59	Suur, Neeme	18.10.2011	Valdade sundliitmine ei too paremat elu
60	Suur, Neeme	26.03.2013	Kuhu ikkagi ehitada?
61	Tamberg, Kaido	17.12.2015	Sündida võiks võrdsete liit
62	Väikenurm, Marge	21.01.2013	Euronõue sunnib kalu joonlauaga mõõtma
63	Väikenurm, Marge	07.03.2013	Vallajuhte ühinemistoetuse tõus liituma ei ahvatle
64	Väikenurm, Marge	27.04.2013	Kadri Simson: naispeaminister tuleb ehk Reformierakonnast
65	Väikenurm, Marge	31.01.2014	Elron etteheidetega ei nõustu
66	Väikenurm, Marge	24.04.2014	Kas Lüllemäel üritatakse lahti saada kultuurimaja juhatajast?
67	Väikenurm, Marge	29.05.2014	Volikogu otsustas kultuurimaja tegevuse lõpetada
68	Väikenurm, Marge	21.08.2014	Lasteaed Kaseke sai uue juhi
69	Valgamaalane	10.02.2011	Meeli Tuubel

70	Valgamaalane	11.02.2011	Tarmo Tamm
71	Valgamaalane	25.03.2011	Otepää valla elanikud algatasid ootamatu eelnõu
72	Valgamaalane	07.02.2013	Valgamaa alustas kampaaniat Tallinnas
73	Valgamaalane	01.06.2013	Riik hakkub, kui lapsed on vaesed
74	Valgamaalane	08.10.2013	Mida tahavad teha Valgamaal kandideerijad?
75	Valgamaalane	19.12.2013	Küttepuude tootja valmistab ette laienemist
76	Valgamaalane	09.02.2014	Riigieksamitele on registreerunud üle kümne tuhande õpilase
77	Valgamaalane	10.07.2014	Täpsustus
78	Valgamaalane	12.02.2015	Vastavad Riigikogu kandidaadid
79	Valgamaalane	17.02.2015	Vastavad Riigikogu kandidaadid
80	Valgamaalane	13.10.2015	Valgamaad väisasid suursaadikud
81	Vihmann, Viljar	23.04.2015	Elust ja ärist ääremaal

## Annex 2. Case Studies

### 2.1. Case Study Estonia: List of Interview Partners

	No.	Name (altered)	Date	Gender	Main Field(s) of Engagement	Length (rounded)	Documentation
<i>Opinion Editors</i>	1	Kauri	13.05.2016	M	Media & Journalism	45 min	Transcript
	2	Paavo	16.05.2016	M	Media & Journalism	60 min	Transcript
	3	Anu	12.05.2016	F	Media & Journalism	60 min	Transcript
<i>Opinion Leaders</i>	4	Alar	23.05.2016	M	Media & Journalism, Politics & Public Service	60 min	Transcript
	5	Eerik	29.04.2016	M	Media & Journalism	80 min	Transcript
	6	Hendrik	13.04.2016	M	Research & Academia	100 min	Transcript
	7	Ivar	10.05.2016	M	Research & Academia, Journalism	45 min	Transcript
	8	Joel	14.06.2016	M	Research & Academia, Consultancy	60 min	Transcript
	9	Kristjan	18.05.2016	M	Politics & Public Service	60 min	Transcript
	10	Maarika	12.05.2016	F	Art & Culture, Politics & Public Service	50 min	Transcript
	11	Lauri	26.04.2016	M	Art & Culture, Research & Academia	60 min	Transcript
	12	Meelis	23.05.2016	M	Consultancy	90 min	Transcript

## 2.2. Case Study Estonia: List of Participant Observations

No.	Event	Date	Location	Documentation
1	Public Presentation of KOV Index, Ministry of Interior	10.10.2014	Tallinn	Field Diary
2	Rural Parliament “Listen for Village Voices”, Estonian Village Movement Kodukant	07.-09.08.2015	Särevere	Field Diary
3	Information Day “Register-based population census”, Statistics Estonia	22.09.2015	Tallinn	Field Diary
4	Workshop “Rural Development in a Global Countryside”, Ministry of Rural Affairs	11.05.2016	Tallinn	Field Diary
5	Conference "Place Branding as an Effective Tool to Generate Attraction for Investments, Talents and Tourists", Enterprise Estonia (EAS)	02.06.2016	Tallinn	Field Diary
6	Rural Life Networks' Leader Information Day, Rural Economy Research Centre	15.-16.06.2016	Jämeda	Field Diary
7	Opinion Festival   Arvamusfestival	12.-13.08.2016	Paide	Field Diary
8	Tartu Planners' Conference   Tartu Planeerimiskonverents	03.-04.11.2016	Tartu	Field Diary

### 2.3. Case Study Setomaa: List of Interview Partners

No.	Name (altered)	Date	Gender	Main Field(s) of Engagement	Length (rounded)	Documentation
<i>Local Decision-Makers</i>	1	28.04.2016	F	Politics	45 min	Transcript
	2	08.09.2015	M	Culture	50 min	Transcript
	3	11.08.2015	F	Academia	60 min	Field Diary
	4	07.07.2015	F	Journalism, Culture	60 min	Transcript
	5	07.09.2015	M	Politics, Culture	100 min	Transcript
	6	07.09.2015	M	Politics	80 min	Transcript
	7	03.07.2015	F	Marketing, Culture	60 min	Transcript
	8	06.07.2015	M	Entrepreneurship, Culture	120 min	Transcript
	9	08.09.2015	M	Politics, Culture	70 min	Transcript
	10	04.08.2015	M	Academia, Consultancy	80 min	Transcript
	11	29.04.2016	M	Entrepreneurship, Culture	120 min	Transcript
	12	03.07.2015	M	Politics, Culture	80 min	Transcript
	13	09.07.2015	M	Culture, Politics	120 min	Transcript
<i>Locals</i>	14	20.06.2016	F	Youth-Work	35 min	Transcript
	15	19.05.2016	F	Youth-Work	45 min	Field Diary
	16	27.05.2016	F, M	Youth-Work	60 min	Field Diary
	17	02.08.2016	M	Multi-Generational Family	120 min	Transcript
	18	10.09.2015	F	Former Inhabitant	80 min	Transcript



## 2.4. Case Study Setomaa: List of Participant Observations

No.	Event	Date	Location (Municipality)	Documentation
1	Presentation of Leelo Choir, Seto Farm	28.11.2014	Värska	Field Diary
2	Seto Easter Celebration, Seto Community Centre	12.04.2015	Meremäe	Field Diary
3	Seto Kingdom Day	01.08.2015	Meremäe	Field Diary
4	Internal Development Meeting	03.08.2015	Meremäe	Field Diary
5	Põlvamaa Development Conference	28.04.2016	Põlva Linn	Field Diary
6	Parliamentary Visit to Local Enterprise	29.04.2016	Misso	Field Diary
7	Visit to Local Youth-Centre	27.05.2016	Mikitamäe	Field Diary
8	Song Festival “Uma Pido”, Intsikurmu Laululava	28.05.2016	Põlva Linn	Field Diary
9	South-Estonian Opinion Festival	22.06.2016	Kanepi	Field Diary

## 2.5. Case Study Northern Valgamaa: List of Interview Partners

No	Name (altered)	Date	Gender	Main Field(s) of Engagement	Length (rounded)	Documentation
<i>Local Decision-Makers</i>	Egert	27.06.2016	M	Politics, Culture	65 min	Transcript
	Merike	29.06.2016	F	Entrepreneurship	80 min	Transcript
	Piret	29.06.2015	F	Culture, Marketing	55 min	Transcript
	Kaarel	30.06.2016	N	Politics, Culture	95 min	Transcript
	Peep	22.07.2016	M	Politics, Culture	110 min	Transcript
	Leela	01.08.2016	F	Politics, Youth	70 min	Transcript
	Imbi & Andrus	23.11.2016	F	Culture	80 min	Transcript
	Reili	01.12.2016	F	Journalism	60 min	Transcript
	Helle	01.12.2016	F	Journalism	35 min	Transcript
<i>Locals</i>	Kersti	30.06.2016	F	Inhabitant	35 min	Field Diary
	Eneli	30.06.2016	F	Youth-Work	60 min	Field Diary
	Pensioners Club Members	01.06.2016	F, M	Social Work, Inhabitants	120 min	Field Diary
	Gregor	01.08.2016	M	Inhabitant, Community Initiative	55 min	Transcript

## 2.6. Case Study Northern Valgamaa: List of Participant Observations

No.	Event	Date	Location (Municipality)	Documentation
1	Amalgamation Negotiations	17.09.2015	Tõrva	Field Diary
2	Amalgamation Negotiations	18.11.2015	Põdrala	Field Diary
3	Amalgamation Ceremony	21.06.2016	Tõrva	Field Diary
4	Roundtrip with Pensioners Club	01.07.2016	Mulgimaa	Field Diary
5	South-Estonian Opinion Festival	22.07.2016	Kanepi	Field Diary
6	Hella Wuolijoki Memorial Day	23.07.2016	Helme	Field Diary
7	Village Fest and Entrepreneurs' Reception	23.07.2016	Helme	Field Diary
8	Vision Conference	21.10.2016	Valga	Field Diary
9	Mulgi Primer Reading & Mulgi Kultuuri Instituut 20. Anniversary	23.11.2016	Helme	Field Diary
10	Mulgi Language and Culture Autumn School	25.11.2016	Halliste	Field Diary
11	Mulgimaa Arenduskoda Annual General Meeting	30.11.2016	Viljandi Vald	Field Diary

## 2.7. Exemplary Interview Guideline Opinion Leaders\*

<b>Introduction</b>	
<p>Hello! My name is Bianka and I am a PhD student at the University of Tartu within the EU research project RegPol<sup>2</sup>. My dissertation focuses on regional development in Estonia and the peripheralization debate. To understand how ‘peripheries’ are discussed in Estonia and what they are associated with, I conducted a media analysis. Under investigation were all opinion articles that concerned topics related to ‘peripheries’ in Postimees, Eesti Päevaleht und Maaleht. The analysis focused on the way the debate is structured and on the main authors and journalists who are taking part in it. The results showed that you are one of the main authors, therefore I would be very interested to discuss this topics with you. Do you agree to the interview being recorded? Do you have any questions before we start?</p>	
Main Question (Variable Order)	Additional or Alternative Question
<b>Ice-breaker questions</b>	
<p>You have actively participated in the peripheralization debate. My analysis conveyed that during the last five years, you have written at least [no. of articles] that particularly focused on [topics]. What motivates you to actively engage in the debate and since when do you participate?</p>	<p>Why did you think it was important to engage in the debate? And/or questions concerning author’s biography and institutional background</p>
<b>Discursive Field and Formation</b>	
<p>On what occasions / for which reasons do you decide to engage in the debate and in which newspapers?</p>	<p>I have for example noticed that you [specifics of engagement]</p>
<p>It seems that you have been following the debate for quite some time already. If you look back, could you describe the debate’s development to me?</p>	<p>When and where did it start, when were the peaks? What differences do you notice between the respective newspapers? Who are the main actors and where is the dividing line between the actors/arguments?</p>
<p>On which side of the dividing line do you see yourself?</p>	<p>Who are your main opponents and which of your arguments do they oppose?</p>
<b>Reflection of Discursive Nodes</b>	
<p><b>In the next part I would like to briefly summarize the main arguments I read in your articles and would like to hear your feedback.</b></p>	

\* Translated from Estonian

<p>What concerns the current situations in peripheries, you mainly understand peripheries to be places that [meaning of periphery for the author].</p> <p>You see the reasons for this state of affairs in [reasons for peripheralization]</p>	<p>The analysis showed that in Estonia, peripheries are often associated with the countryside. Also in your articles you frequently link peripheries to rural areas. Why exactly to them?</p> <p>Looking at the topics that peripheries are associated with peripheries in Estonian newspapers, it becomes clear that peripheries are rather connected to problems than to development opportunities or positive images. Where do you see the reasons for that?</p>
<p>To deal with peripheralization you suggest [solution] according to [criteria, terms, etc.], because [reasons for this solution]</p>	<p>If I understand you properly, your main argument is that the government should [...]</p>
<p>Your main reason why this solution should be applied is [argument]</p>	<p>You criticize the current policy as [...] / You emphasize the importance of [...]</p>
<p><b>Reflection on Main Discursive Strategies</b>  <b>In the following I would like to concentrate on the way that you present and substantiate your arguments.</b></p>	
<p>To convince your opponents/readers to deal with the situation of peripheries in your proposed way, you are [discursive strategy]</p>	<p>Such as: describing a rural idyll, creating a national doom scenario, comparing current to soviet politics, warning of peripheralization threat, etc.</p>
<p>To support your arguments, you frequently refer to good and bad practice examples from which one should learn: [examples]. Can we compare the situation of Estonian peripheries to [examples] and why should we take them as a model?</p>	
<p>Your arguments are also frequently based on statistics such as [examples]. What advantages and problems do you see with the use of statistical data?</p>	<p>You frequently criticize the use of statistics such as [examples]. What advantages and problems do you see with the interpretation of statistical data?</p>

<p>Finally, I noticed that with the help of [arguments] you criticize [regional development model]. Which development model are you supporting or how would your alternative look like?</p>	<p>The analysis conveyed that the peripheralization debate often takes the form of a struggle between two regional development model. Simplified: One that promotes a free-market, self-responsibility and limited state interference and another, which favors a welfare-state, more regulated economy and state-responsibility. In your opinion, in which direction should Estonian regional policy be heading?</p>
<p><b>Conclusion and Final Questions</b></p>	
<p>We are already coming to an end and I would really like to thank you for your time! It was very interesting to listen to your arguments and explanations. Would you like to add some last thoughts and/or questions?</p>	<p>Could you recommend other influential actors whom I should discuss this topic with?</p>
<p><b>If there are no further questions or comments from your side, I would like to thank you once again that you agreed to take part in my research!</b></p>	

## 2.8. Exemplary Interview Guideline Opinion Editors\*

<b>Introduction</b>	
<p>Hello! My name is Bianka and I am a PhD student at the University of Tartu within the EU research project RegPol<sup>2</sup>. My dissertation focuses on regional development in Estonia and the peripheralization debate. To understand how ‘peripheries’ are discussed in Estonia and what they are associated with, I conducted a media analysis. Under investigation were all opinion articles that concerned topics related to ‘peripheries’ in Postimees, Eesti Päevaleht und Maaleht. The analysis focused on the way the debate is structured and on the main authors and journalists who are taking part in it. I would be very interested to discuss this topics with you as editor of the opinion column in [newspaper]. Do you agree to the interview being recorded? Do you have any questions before we start?</p>	
Main Question (Variable Order)	Additional or Alternative Question
<b>Ice-breaker questions</b>	
Let’s start with your role in the editing team of [newspaper]. How did you become the opinion editor?	
Looking at the editorial desk of [newspaper] in general, which role does the opinion column play? What are your main tasks?	
How would you characterize your ‘typical’ reader or whom/what does [newspaper] stand for?	
<b>Discursive Field and Formation</b>	
Including you, your team consists of [no.] journalists. However, opinion articles are also written by external authors. How would you characterize your ‘typical’ author? What kind of people send their articles to you and how do you decide who writes your articles?	My analysis conveyed that the people engaging in the peripheralization debate are mainly opinion leaders from different field, above all from journalism, academia and politics. It is noticeable that the majority of them belongs to the so-called elite, are male and are representing urban institutions. Less often we can read articles from readers, interest group representatives, rural inhabitants and female authors. In your opinion, what are the reasons behind that?

\* Translated from Estonian

<p>The debate on 'peripheries' had different peaks, for example during the last population census or election times. But often also at the end of the year. Would you describe this as a particularity of the peripheralization debate or do you notice such seasonality in general?</p>	<p>Where do you see the peaks?</p>
<p>How do you select the topics which are represented in the opinion columns? What role does peripheralization/ do peripheries play as a topic in [newspaper]?</p>	<p>In terms of the topics associated with 'peripheries' in [newspaper], it became apparent that the articles mainly focus on [topcis]. Does this mirror the general focus of [newspaper]? In your opinion, why are exactly these topics often displayed in [newspaper]?</p>
<p>What is the opinion editorial role concerning the wording/phrasing of articles and what are the important criteria that authors need to follow?</p>	<p>This figure shows how 'peripheries' are generally described in Estonian print media. Also in [newspaper] they are mainly depicted as [meaning of periphery]. Less is written about [meaning of periphery]. Can the depictions influence how we imagine places to be like? What role do newspapers play in spatial image-making?</p>
<p>Newspaper articles often deal with topics through concrete examples. Reporters for instance go to concrete places to report on happenings in the 'periphery'. Could you describe to me how the places are selected that [newspaper] reports about?</p>	<p>The analysis showed that peripheries are often associated with rural areas or small towns. The articles report about [examples]. But [newspaper] also reports about concrete places such as [examples]. In your opinion, why are 'peripheries' associated exactly with these regions and generally more with rural than urban areas?</p>
<p><b>Reflection of Discursive Nodes and Strategies</b></p>	
<p>In general, how does the editing process influence opinion articles or – in other words – how free are authors in choosing their arguments and the way they present them?</p>	<p>To support their arguments, the opinion authors often use [discursive strategies]. In your opinion, why are these the most popular persuasion strategies?</p> <p>I also noticed that in the articles the current situation is often compared to Soviet times, especially when criticizing it. Did you also notice that and why do you think are such comparisons used?</p>



<p>During the last five years, [newspaper] has repeatedly positioned itself in the peripheralization debate through at least [no.] editorial articles. Can you describe to me how the topics and authors of editorial articles are chosen in your newspaper? Are there certain principles which have to be followed?</p>	<p>The figure shows the main topics that were depicted in the editorial articles in connection to 'peripheries'. It is apparent that peripheralization is often presented as [discursive strategy]. Why do you think this is such a central argument?</p> <p>The analysis conveyed that the peripheralization debate often takes the form of a struggle between two regional development models. Simplified: One that promotes a free-market, self-responsibility and limited state interference and another, which favors a welfare-state, more regulated economy and state-responsibility. Generally it seemed that [newspaper] supports [regional development model]. Do you agree with this conclusion? Which is the regional development model that [newspaper] supports and why?</p>
<p><b>Conclusion and Final Questions</b></p>	
<p>We are already coming to an end and I would really like to thank you for your time! It was very interesting to listen to your arguments and explanations. Would you like to add some last thoughts and/or questions?</p>	
<p><b>If there are no further questions or comments from your side, I would like to thank you once again that you agreed to take part in my research!</b></p>	

## 2.9. Exemplary Interview Guideline

### Local Decision-Makers and Inhabitants\*



<b>Introduction</b>	
<p>Hello! My name is Bianka and I am a PhD student at the University of Tartu within the EU research project RegPol<sup>2</sup>. My dissertation focuses on regional development in Estonia and I am especially interested in South-Estonia and the local development processes here. I would be very interested to hear about and learn from your experiences as a local / as you have been actively engaged in [field] as [function]. Do you agree to the interview being recorded? Do you have any questions before we start?</p>	
<b>Local Decision-Makers</b>	<b>Local Inhabitants</b>
<b>Ice-breaker questions</b>	
<p>As [functions] you have been actively engaged in local development processes / in the region. Can you describe to me how you came to be engaged as [function] and what motivates you to engage? How are you personally connected to the region?</p>	<p>At [event] when we got to know each other I learned that you are [connection to the region – work, residency]. Could you tell me more about how you are connected to the region?</p>
<b>Discursive Formation (Regional Development and Image)</b>	
<p>Could you tell me in your words what [region and inhabitants] mean to you? Can you outline the [region] in your own words, where are its borders, peripheries and centers? What role does [region] play in Estonia? What does it mean to be [inhabitant]? How do you draw the line between [locals] and [non-locals]?</p>	
<p>In your opinion, which are the biggest challenges and problems for [region] that have to be dealt with? And vice versa, what are the biggest opportunities and resources? How has the region developed over the years?</p> <p>In your function as [...] / At the [event] you emphasized that [quote]. Why is that a [problem, solution] for [region]?</p> <p>Are these challenges and opportunities different from other [places, rural areas] in Estonia? How? What role does [specifics of the region] play?</p>	<p>When we already talk about [region], could you tell me more about your life here? How has life changed over the years? How do people earn their money, spend their freetime, are supported by (state) services? Do you imagine to live anywhere else? Why (not)?</p> <p>The media often talks about the problems of rural areas. In your opinion, which are the most tangible problems in the area? What are the advantages of living here? Do you agree with the media reports that it is difficult to live on the countryside? Why (not)?</p>

\* Translated from Estonian

In your opinion what should local politicians and inhabitants do for regional development? And what should the government do? What are you doing/ have you done to solve the problems of the [region]? What is locally possible? (possibility to discuss concrete projects)	In your opinion what should local politicians and inhabitants do for regional development? And what should the government do? (possibility to discuss concrete projects)
What is your vision for the future of [region]? What is needed to implement it?	How do you see [region's] future? Do you see your own / family's future here?
In regional development statistics and indexes the [region, municipality] is often placed at the bottom and named as "problematic" or "peripheral". Do you agree to that / think this is justified? Why (not)?	
Lately, the amalgamation negotiations between [municipalities] received a lot of attention. In your opinion, what (dis-)advantages are involved in amalgamation? Can it help against peripheralisation? The name proposals for the new municipalities were [...]. How did you feel about that?	
How do people from outside talk about [region and inhabitants]? Does the internal image that people have here depart from this?	Now we have talked a lot about how you see your life here, but how do others see the [region]? In your opinion, how is [region] talked about?
In the [newspapers] it was reported that [image-related report]. How do you relate to that? Does this really mean that [message of the report]?	Do you follow the news on you region? Is it important to you how the region is depicted in the news?
In your opinion, does this image of the region influence its development? How?	In the media it is often reported about [incidents in the region]. How do you feel about that? Do you think this is justified?
How is the [place] connected to [historical region]? What does the [historical region] mean to you? Does the belonging to [historical region] influence the development opportunities of [place]? (possibility to discuss pros and cons of concrete place-marketing)	The [place] is often connected to [historical region]. Would you also say that? Does this play a role in your everyday life? Do you think it plays a role for the development of [place]? (possibility to discuss pros and cons of concrete place-marketing)

<b>Discursive Field (Actors and Institutions)</b>	
<p>I am also interested in your practical experiences. Can you describe to me what are the objectives of [institutions]? From your experience, which role does [institution, function] play for [region]? What is expected of [institution, function]? How has the [institution] developed over the years? What were the biggest challenges you faced? With whom does [institution] cooperate? How is it financed?</p>	
<p>One of the objectives is to [image-related objective]. Let's talk about this [initiative, campaign, etc.]. What do you want to achieve with that? Which image of the region do you want to portray? / Does this mean that you want to actively influence the image of the region? Why?</p>	
<b>Conclusion and Final Questions</b>	
<p>We are already coming to an end and I would really like to thank you for your time! It was very interesting to listen to your arguments and explanations. Would you like to add some last thoughts and/or questions? Could you recommend others whom I c/ should talk to?</p>	
<p><b>If there are no further questions or comments from your side, I would like to thank you once again that you agreed to take part in my research!</b></p>	

## 2.10. Interviewee Confirmation Sheet Template

 		
<b>CONSENT FORM</b>		
<p><b>Full title of Project:</b> Development Perspectives of Village Communities in Rural Estonia (Eesti küllakogukondade arenguvõimalused)</p> <p><b>Researcher:</b> Bianka Plüschke-Altolf, PhD candidate University of Tartu, pluschke@ut.ee</p>		
	<b>Please tick box</b>	
I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I agree to take part in the above mentioned study.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<b>Please tick box</b>	
	YES                      NO	
I agree to the interview being audio recorded.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

Taken from: Website of Oxford Brookes University <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/Research/Research-ethics/Guidelines-for-informed-consent/> (state: 20 May 2014)

## 2.11. Database Context Analysis

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<b>Comparative Statistics</b>	
Riikide võrdlus (EL 28)	<a href="http://www.stat.ee/ppe-46916">http://www.stat.ee/ppe-46916</a>
Maakondade võrdlus	<a href="http://www.stat.ee/ppe-45400">http://www.stat.ee/ppe-45400</a>
Omavalitsusüksuste võrdlus	<a href="http://www.stat.ee/ppe-46953">http://www.stat.ee/ppe-46953</a>
Rahva ja Eluruumide Loendus 2011	<a href="http://pub.stat.ee/px-web.2001/Database/Rahvaloendus/databasetree.asp">http://pub.stat.ee/px-web.2001/Database/Rahvaloendus/databasetree.asp</a>
Statistika Andmebaas Rahvastik	<a href="http://pub.stat.ee/px-web.2001/Database/Rahvastik/databasetree.asp">http://pub.stat.ee/px-web.2001/Database/Rahvastik/databasetree.asp</a>
Statistika Andmebaas Majandus	<a href="http://pub.stat.ee/px-web.2001/Database/Majandus/databasetree.asp">http://pub.stat.ee/px-web.2001/Database/Majandus/databasetree.asp</a>
Statistika Andmebaas Sotsiaalelu	<a href="http://pub.stat.ee/px-web.2001/Database/Sotsiaalelu/databasetree.asp">http://pub.stat.ee/px-web.2001/Database/Sotsiaalelu/databasetree.asp</a>
Statistics Estonia 2016 „Population by ethnic nationality”	<a href="http://www.stat.ee/34278/">http://www.stat.ee/34278/</a>
<b>County Statistics</b>	
Põlva Maakond	<a href="http://www.stat.ee/ppe-polva-maakond">http://www.stat.ee/ppe-polva-maakond</a>
Valga Maakond	<a href="http://www.stat.ee/ppe-valga-maakond">http://www.stat.ee/ppe-valga-maakond</a>
Võru Maakond	<a href="http://www.stat.ee/ppe-voru-maakond">http://www.stat.ee/ppe-voru-maakond</a>
<b>Municipality Statistics</b>	
Helme vald	<a href="http://www.stat.ee/ppe-50910">http://www.stat.ee/ppe-50910</a>
Hummuli vald	<a href="http://www.stat.ee/ppe-50913">http://www.stat.ee/ppe-50913</a>
Meremäe vald	<a href="http://www.stat.ee/ppe-55744">http://www.stat.ee/ppe-55744</a>
Mikitamäe vald	<a href="http://www.stat.ee/ppe-53400">http://www.stat.ee/ppe-53400</a>
Misso vald	<a href="http://www.stat.ee/ppe-55745">http://www.stat.ee/ppe-55745</a>
Põdrala vald	<a href="http://www.stat.ee/ppe-50946">http://www.stat.ee/ppe-50946</a>
Tõrva linn	<a href="http://www.stat.ee/ppe-50966">http://www.stat.ee/ppe-50966</a>
Värska vald	<a href="http://www.stat.ee/ppe-53419">http://www.stat.ee/ppe-53419</a>
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<b>Development Plans</b>	
<b>Case Study Estonia</b>	
National Spatial Plan 2030+	<a href="https://eesti2030.wordpress.com/">https://eesti2030.wordpress.com/</a> <a href="https://eesti2030.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/estonia-2030.pdf">https://eesti2030.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/estonia-2030.pdf</a>
National Reform Programme “ESTONIA 2020”	<a href="https://riigikantselei.ee/sites/default/files/elfinder/article_files/eesti_2020_en.pdf">https://riigikantselei.ee/sites/default/files/elfinder/article_files/eesti_2020_en.pdf</a>
Estonian Rural Development Plan 2014-2020	<a href="https://valitsus.ee/sites/default/files/content-editors/arengukavad/mak_2014-2020.pdf">https://valitsus.ee/sites/default/files/content-editors/arengukavad/mak_2014-2020.pdf</a>
<b>Case Study Setomaa</b>	
Meremäe Municipality Development Plan 2015-2020	<a href="http://vald.meremae.ee/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Arengukava_2015_2020.pdf">http://vald.meremae.ee/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Arengukava_2015_2020.pdf</a>
Mikitamäe Municipality Development Plan 2012-2019	<a href="https://www.riigiteataja.ee/aktiis/4061/1201/2059/Arengukava2012.pdf">https://www.riigiteataja.ee/aktiis/4061/1201/2059/Arengukava2012.pdf</a>
Misso Municipality Development Plan 2013-2025	<a href="http://www.misso.ee/arengukava">http://www.misso.ee/arengukava</a>

Värskas Municipality Development Plan 2012-2024	<a href="https://www.riigiteataja.ee/aktivilisa/4170/4201/3022/Arengukava%202012%20muudatustega.pdf">https://www.riigiteataja.ee/aktivilisa/4170/4201/3022/Arengukava%202012%20muudatustega.pdf</a>
Setomaa Development Plan 2009-2013 Vision until 2015	<a href="http://www.setomaa.ee/docs/file/Arengukava_kinnitatud_2009-2013.pdf">http://www.setomaa.ee/docs/file/Arengukava_kinnitatud_2009-2013.pdf</a>
Setomaa Development Plan 2015-2025	<a href="http://www.setomaa.ee/docs/file/Setomaa%20arengukava_2015-2025.pdf">http://www.setomaa.ee/docs/file/Setomaa%20arengukava_2015-2025.pdf</a>
Setomaa Joint Tourism Development Plan 2014-2020	<a href="http://www.setomaa.ee/setomaa-turismiarengukava-aastateks-2014-2020">http://www.setomaa.ee/setomaa-turismiarengukava-aastateks-2014-2020</a>
Piirivere Leader Development Strategy 2015-2020	<a href="http://www.piiriveere.ee/userfiles/file/strateegia%20okt%202015.pdf">http://www.piiriveere.ee/userfiles/file/strateegia%20okt%202015.pdf</a>
Piirivere Leader Development Strategy 2008-2013	<a href="http://www.piiriveere.ee/userfiles/file/PVL%20strateegia%202008-2013.pdf">http://www.piiriveere.ee/userfiles/file/PVL%20strateegia%202008-2013.pdf</a>
<b>Case Study Northern Valgamaa</b>	
Helme Municipality Development Plan 2010-2025	<a href="https://www.riigiteataja.ee/aktivilisa/4261/0201/6016/Arengukava%20_14102016.pdf">https://www.riigiteataja.ee/aktivilisa/4261/0201/6016/Arengukava%20_14102016.pdf</a>
Hummuli Municipality Development Plan 2010-2020	<a href="https://www.riigiteataja.ee/aktivilisa/4081/0201/4012/Hummuli%20valla%20arengukava%202015_2020.pdf">https://www.riigiteataja.ee/aktivilisa/4081/0201/4012/Hummuli%20valla%20arengukava%202015_2020.pdf</a>
Põdrala Municipality Development Plan	<a href="https://www.riigiteataja.ee/aktivilisa/4291/0201/5004/Lisa.pdf">https://www.riigiteataja.ee/aktivilisa/4291/0201/5004/Lisa.pdf</a>
Tõrva Town Development Plan 2014-2025	<a href="http://torva.kovtp.ee/torva-linna-arengukava">http://torva.kovtp.ee/torva-linna-arengukava</a>
Mulgimaa Arenduskoda Development Strategy 2014-2023	<a href="http://www.mulgimaa.ee/userfiles/strateegia-2014-2020/dets2016%20muudetud%20strateegia/30112016_MT%C3%9C%20Mulgimaa%20Arenduskoja%20Strateegia%20%202014_2023.pdf">http://www.mulgimaa.ee/userfiles/strateegia-2014-2020/dets2016%20muudetud%20strateegia/30112016_MT%C3%9C%20Mulgimaa%20Arenduskoja%20Strateegia%20%202014_2023.pdf</a>
Mulgimaa Arenduskoda Development Strategy 2008-2013	<a href="http://www.mulgimaa.ee/userfiles/toetuse-taotlejale/Mulgimaa%20Arenduskoja%20Strateegia%202008-2013%20muudatustega%20_09.12.10_.pdf">http://www.mulgimaa.ee/userfiles/toetuse-taotlejale/Mulgimaa%20Arenduskoja%20Strateegia%202008-2013%20muudatustega%20_09.12.10_.pdf</a>

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Tootsen, J. 2011. Uus Maailm. A Documentary.	<a href="http://www.efis.ee/et/filmiliigid/film/id/11465/">http://www.efis.ee/et/filmiliigid/film/id/11465/</a>
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Setomaa Valdade Liit (Ed.), Reidolf, M. (author) 2013. Setomaa arengukava uuendamiseks. Setomaa Olukorraanalüüs	<a href="http://www.setomaa.ee/docs/file/Setomaa%20arengukava%20uuendamiseks%20hetkeolukorra%20analyy%202006-2012_11_03_2013.doc">http://www.setomaa.ee/docs/file/Setomaa%20arengukava%20uuendamiseks%20hetkeolukorra%20analyy%202006-2012_11_03_2013.doc</a>
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Piirsalu, T.; Kõivupuu, M. 2013. Setomaa kultuuriprogrammi 10 aastase (2003–2013) toimimise uuring.	<a href="http://www.setomaa.ee/docs/file/Setomaa%20kultuuriprogrammi%20mojude%20uuring(1).pdf">http://www.setomaa.ee/docs/file/Setomaa%20kultuuriprogrammi%20mojude%20uuring(1).pdf</a>
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<b>Databases</b>	
<b>Case Study Estonia</b>	
Rural Economy Research Centre: Leader Projects and Groups	<a href="http://www.maainfo.ee/index.php?page=3738&amp;">http://www.maainfo.ee/index.php?page=3738&amp;</a> <a href="http://www.maainfo.ee/data/trykis/Local_Food_2012_Estonia_54_pages_eng_distr.pdf">http://www.maainfo.ee/data/trykis/Local_Food_2012_Estonia_54_pages_eng_distr.pdf</a> <a href="http://www.maainfo.ee/public/files/marka%20leaderit-ENG-netti.pdf">http://www.maainfo.ee/public/files/marka%20leaderit-ENG-netti.pdf</a> <a href="http://www.maainfo.ee/data/Maaeluvirgustik/Leader_EDU_2010_web_eng/pdf/LEADER_EDU_ENG_web.pdf">http://www.maainfo.ee/data/Maaeluvirgustik/Leader_EDU_2010_web_eng/pdf/LEADER_EDU_ENG_web.pdf</a> <a href="http://www.maainfo.ee/public/files/Leader_Info_leaflet_2011_GER%281%29.pdf">http://www.maainfo.ee/public/files/Leader_Info_leaflet_2011_GER%281%29.pdf</a>
<b>Case Study Setomaa</b>	
Folk Culture Center: Organisations and Members	<a href="http://www.rahvakultuur.ee/Asutused_ja_organisatsioonid_liiki_147">http://www.rahvakultuur.ee/Asutused_ja_organisatsioonid_liiki_147</a>
Village Movement Kodukant: Village Elders and Initiatives	<a href="http://kodukant.kovtp.ee/andmebaasid">http://kodukant.kovtp.ee/andmebaasid</a>
Village Movement Kodukant: County Members	<a href="http://kodukant.kovtp.ee/liikmed">http://kodukant.kovtp.ee/liikmed</a>
Piiriveere Leader Group: Projects and Members	<a href="http://www.piiriveere.ee/liikmed">http://www.piiriveere.ee/liikmed</a> <a href="http://www.piiriveere.ee/volinike-koosolek">http://www.piiriveere.ee/volinike-koosolek</a> <a href="http://www.piiriveere.ee/elluviidud-projektid">http://www.piiriveere.ee/elluviidud-projektid</a>
Seto Instituut: Seto Bibliography	<a href="http://www.biblioserver.com/setod/">http://www.biblioserver.com/setod/</a>
Setomaa Studies Overview	<a href="http://www.setomaa.ee/uuringud">http://www.setomaa.ee/uuringud</a>
Setomaa Community Initiatives	<a href="http://www.setomaa.ee/seltsid-ja-uhendused">http://www.setomaa.ee/seltsid-ja-uhendused</a>
Setomaa.ee Development Plans Overview	<a href="http://www.setomaa.ee/arengukavad">http://www.setomaa.ee/arengukavad</a>
<b>Case Study Northern Valgamaa</b>	
Folk Culture Center: Organisations and Members	<a href="http://www.rahvakultuur.ee/Asutused_ja_organisatsioonid_liiki_147">http://www.rahvakultuur.ee/Asutused_ja_organisatsioonid_liiki_147</a>
Village Movement Kodukant: Village Elders and Initiatives	<a href="http://kodukant.kovtp.ee/andmebaasid">http://kodukant.kovtp.ee/andmebaasid</a>
Village Movement Kodukant: County Members	<a href="http://kodukant.kovtp.ee/liikmed">http://kodukant.kovtp.ee/liikmed</a>

Valgamaa/Mulgimaa Leader Groups: Projects and Members	<a href="http://www.mulgimaa.ee/mak/mtu-mulgimaa-arenduskoja-strateegia/mulgimaa-arenduskoja-piirkonna-leader-projektid/">http://www.mulgimaa.ee/mak/mtu-mulgimaa-arenduskoja-strateegia/mulgimaa-arenduskoja-piirkonna-leader-projektid/</a> <a href="http://www.valgaleader.ee/images/ELLUVIIDUD_projektid_2009-2014_seisuga_11.06.pdf">http://www.valgaleader.ee/images/ELLUVIIDUD_projektid_2009-2014_seisuga_11.06.pdf</a> Liikmete nimekiri (personally requested)
Valgamaa Studies Overview	<a href="http://valga.maavalitsus.ee/uuringud">http://valga.maavalitsus.ee/uuringud</a>
<b>Websites</b>	
<b>Case Study Estonia</b>	
Ministry of Rural Affairs	<a href="http://www.agri.ee/en">http://www.agri.ee/en</a>
Ministry of Interior Ministry of Finance Estonian Agricultural Registers and Information Board (PRIA)	<a href="https://www.siseministeerium.ee/en">https://www.siseministeerium.ee/en</a> <a href="http://www.fin.ee/en">http://www.fin.ee/en</a> <a href="http://www.pria.ee/en/">http://www.pria.ee/en/</a>
Estonian Rural Development Foundation (MES) Statistics Estonia	<a href="http://www.mes.ee/en">http://www.mes.ee/en</a> <a href="http://www.stat.ee/en">http://www.stat.ee/en</a>
INTERREG Estonia	<a href="http://www.interregeurope.eu/in-my-country/estonia/">http://www.interregeurope.eu/in-my-country/estonia/</a>
Rural Economy Research Centre	<a href="http://www.maainfo.ee/index.php?page=9&amp;">http://www.maainfo.ee/index.php?page=9&amp;</a>
Village Movement Kodukant	<a href="http://kodukant.kovtp.ee/uldinfo">http://kodukant.kovtp.ee/uldinfo</a>
MTÜ Partnerlus (Maale Elama)	<a href="http://maale-elama.ee/">http://maale-elama.ee/</a>
Rural Fair „Maamess“	<a href="http://maamess.ee/">http://maamess.ee/</a>
Opinion Festival „Arvamusfestival“	<a href="http://www.arvamusfestival.ee/">http://www.arvamusfestival.ee/</a>
South-Estonian Opinion Festival	<a href="http://www.arvamusfestival.ee/arvamusfestival-kagu-ee蒂斯/">http://www.arvamusfestival.ee/arvamusfestival-kagu-ee蒂斯/</a>
Rural Parliament „Maapäev“	<a href="http://kodukant.kovtp.ee/xi-maapaev-2015">http://kodukant.kovtp.ee/xi-maapaev-2015</a>
Open Farms Day „Avatud Talude Päev“	<a href="http://www.maainfo.ee/index.php?page=3759">http://www.maainfo.ee/index.php?page=3759</a>
Rural Tourism	<a href="http://www.maaturism.ee/">http://www.maaturism.ee/</a>
Visit Estonia	<a href="http://www.visitestonia.com/en/">http://www.visitestonia.com/en/</a>
Puhka Eestis	<a href="https://www.puhkaeestis.ee/et/">https://www.puhkaeestis.ee/et/</a>
Postimees	<a href="http://www.postimees.ee/">http://www.postimees.ee/</a>

Eesti Päevaleht	<a href="http://epl.delfi.ee/">http://epl.delfi.ee/</a>
Maaleht	<a href="http://maaleht.delfi.ee/">http://maaleht.delfi.ee/</a>
<b>Case Study Setomaa</b>	
Võrumaa Arenguagentuur	<a href="https://vaa.ee/">https://vaa.ee/</a>
Põlvamaa Arenduskeskus	<a href="http://www.polvamaa.ee/pak">http://www.polvamaa.ee/pak</a>
Meremäe Municipality	<a href="http://vald.meremae.ee/">http://vald.meremae.ee/</a>
Mikitamäe Municipality	<a href="http://www.mikitamae.ee/">http://www.mikitamae.ee/</a>
Misso Municipality	<a href="http://www.misso.ee/">http://www.misso.ee/</a>
Värskla Municipality	<a href="http://www.verska.ee/et/vallaleht">http://www.verska.ee/et/vallaleht</a>
Piiriveere Leader	<a href="http://www.piiriveere.ee/">http://www.piiriveere.ee/</a>
Setomaa Valdade Liit	<a href="http://www.setomaa.ee/setomaa-vallad">http://www.setomaa.ee/setomaa-vallad</a>
Riigikogu Setomaa Toetusrühm	<a href="https://www.riigikogu.ee/riigikogu/uhendused/uhendus/9dbe88f4-1692-6ba7-f505-d87a247ccb76/Setomaa%20toetusr%C3%BChm/">https://www.riigikogu.ee/riigikogu/uhendused/uhendus/9dbe88f4-1692-6ba7-f505-d87a247ccb76/Setomaa%20toetusr%C3%BChm/</a>
Seto Instituut	<a href="http://www.setoinstituut.ee/">http://www.setoinstituut.ee/</a>
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Seto Kuningriik	<a href="http://www.setomaa.ee/kuningriik">http://www.setomaa.ee/kuningriik</a>
Visit Setomaa	<a href="http://www.visitsetomaa.ee/">http://www.visitsetomaa.ee/</a>
Setomaa Turismi Kohabrändi Käsiraamat 2012	<a href="http://www.setomaa.ee/docs/file/Kohabrand_peatukk1.pdf">http://www.setomaa.ee/docs/file/Kohabrand_peatukk1.pdf</a>
Setomaa Village Belt	<a href="http://www.visitsetomaa.ee/kylavyy-kaart">http://www.visitsetomaa.ee/kylavyy-kaart</a>
Finno-Ugric Capital of Culture	<a href="http://obinita.net/home-3/">http://obinita.net/home-3/</a>
Yellow Window Initiative	<a href="http://visitsouthestonia.com/marsruudid/">http://visitsouthestonia.com/marsruudid/</a>
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Postimees Setomaa	<a href="http://setomaa.postimees.ee/">http://setomaa.postimees.ee/</a>
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Eesti Film Documentary “Seto Kuningriik” Documentary Film “On the Eastern border” National Geo. “A Fairytale Kingdom Faces Real-Life Troubles	<a href="http://www.efis.ee/et/filmiliigid/film/id/3446">http://www.efis.ee/et/filmiliigid/film/id/3446</a> <a href="http://www.euborderregions.eu/dissemination/film-estonian-russian-border-area">http://www.euborderregions.eu/dissemination/film-estonian-russian-border-area</a> <a href="http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/10/setomaa-culture-estonia-russia-photographs/">http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/10/setomaa-culture-estonia-russia-photographs/</a>
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Noored Setomaale	<a href="http://www.setomaa.ee/docs/file/Tegevuskava%20Noored%20Setomaale.pdf">http://www.setomaa.ee/docs/file/Tegevuskava%20Noored%20Setomaale.pdf</a>
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Tule Maale Värska	<a href="http://tulemaale.ee/kogukond/verska">http://tulemaale.ee/kogukond/verska</a>
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Helme Municipality	<a href="http://www.helme.ee/">http://www.helme.ee/</a>
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Põdrala Municipality	<a href="http://www.podralla.ee/main.php">http://www.podralla.ee/main.php</a>
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Valgamaa Tourism	<a href="http://www.turism.valgamaa.ee/">http://www.turism.valgamaa.ee/</a>



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